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Myth Versus Reality: Revisiting Mythology in Shivaji Sawant's *Mrityunjaya*

ANUKRITI BADOLA & AMBUJ KUMAR SHARMA

Abstract

A myth is a customary tale that functions to elucidate the collective perspective of a culture, whereas reality denotes the actual condition of the world. In Indian mythology, the two great epics *the Ramayana* and *the Mahabharata* have immensely affected the Indian way of life. They have played a pivotal role in shaping up the Indian psyche. The modern writers are retelling these classic Indian tales to suit the modern sensibility. The revisionists who are revisiting the mythology have a tendency of bringing these myths closer to reality. The characters are suffused with a new life and their individual character is highlighted making them more human and less divine with all their flaws. One such revisit is *Mrityunjaya* where the character of Karna is brought forth by the legendary Marathi writer, Shivaji Sawant. *Mrityunjaya* gives a humane viewpoint into the happenings of *the Mahabharata*. It's an exploration of human psyche. Karna is portrayed with all his flaws and not just eulogised as a great, generous warrior. This paper aims to explore the elements of reality infused by Sawant in his revisiting of mythology through Karna's point of view.

Keywords: myth, reality, *the Mahabharata*, Karna

A "myth" refers to a traditional story, narrative, or belief that has been passed down through generations within a particular culture or society. Myths often incorporate elements of folklore, legends, or religious narratives. They are not necessarily based on verifiable facts but are deeply rooted in the cultural and historical context of the society in which they originate and serve various functions, such as explaining natural phenomena, providing moral and ethical guidance, defining cultural identity, or elucidating the beliefs and values of a community. Myths can involve supernatural beings, events, or explanations that are not necessarily consistent with scientific or empirical understanding. They offer insights into the collective mindset, worldview, and values of a culture. They reflect how a society perceives itself, its origins, its place in the world, and its relationship with the divine, nature, and other cultures. Reality, on the other hand, pertains to the objective, factual state of the world as understood through empirical evidence and rational observation. It is the state of the world as it really is. And myth is the symbolic way of representing the truth. One of our great works of Indian mythology, *the Mahabharata* has deeply influenced the Indian readers and their way of life. Among many other influential characters, there is the character of Karna, a complex and multifaceted character. His story is one of tragedy and honour. Shivaji Sawant in his

great work *Mrityunjaya* revisits *the Mahabharata* and represents Karna in a new light that brings him closer to reality and even closer to our hearts by making him more human.

Shivaji Sawant's magnum opus, *Mrityunjaya* stands as a literary masterpiece that reimagines the *Mahabharata* from the perspective of Karna, one of its most enigmatic and tragic figures. Published in 1967, this novel has earned acclaim for its profound portrayal of Karna, a character who transcends the boundaries of heroism and embodies the complexities of human existence. The story of Karna's life is narrated on a semi-autobiographical note, parts by himself and parts by the people closely associated with him. Sawant's representation of Karna is a rich tapestry woven with intricate threads of emotion, morality, and destiny. The novel goes beyond the conventional portrayal of Karna as a heroic figure and delves into the intricacies of his humanity. He is intensely human who is neither a malevolent accomplice to villainous Duryodhana nor a gullible innocent misled by Duryodhana. Through meticulous storytelling, Sawant achieves a level of emotional depth and authenticity that allows readers to connect with Karna on a profoundly human level. In Sawant's Mrityunjaya "the personal and private side of Karna's life is brought to the foreground. His relationship with his surrogate parents, with his wife and sons, and with his brothers, is given much more emotional importance." (Thorat 132)

Shivaji Sawant embarks on a remarkable journey to humanize Karna, a character traditionally seen as a valiant warrior and an unwavering ally of Duryodhana. In *Mrityunjaya*, Karna is no longer a one-dimensional hero; he emerges as a multifaceted individual with a rich inner life. Sawant dives deep into the psyche of this complex character, peeling away layers to reveal a man of both virtues and flaws. According to Thorat, *Mrityunjaya* represents Karna "as a middle class family man" (132). This nuanced approach to characterization allows readers to connect with Karna on a profound emotional level.

Sawant painstakingly unravels the complex emotions that churn within Karna's heart. "I collected the loose strings of my mind firmly together: Karna the charioteer's son, Karna the Kaurava warrior, humiliated Karna, shuddering-with-revenge Karna. I tied them tightly together and flung them in the corner of my body." (Sawant 359).

Karna's loyalty to Duryodhana, his half-brothers, and his own sense of righteousness collide, creating a constant battle of conscience. Karna's inner conflicts are most poignantly showcased during pivotal moments in the story, such as the infamous game of dice and the subsequent humiliation of Draupadi: "Where was I? What was happening in front of me? ...Was this an assembly of royal Kauravas or a den of lustful, drunk, and stupid people? Throw away that crown, Karna, make your way from Hastinapur to Champanagari." It was a voice from within me, shrieking advice."(Sawant 355)

Sawant's Karna is not an idealized hero devoid of flaws; he is a complex individual with strengths and weaknesses. Sawant provides readers with insight into Karna's thoughts and feelings during these events, offering a unique perspective that challenges conventional interpretations of the *Mahabharata*.

Karna's interactions with his birth mother, Kunti, reveal his internal struggle between loyalty to his newfound family and a yearning for maternal love and acceptance. These emotional complexities add depth to Karna's character, as readers can empathize with his yearning for love and belonging. Sawant's portrayal of Karna's relationships with other characters from the *Mahabharata* is depicted with depth and nuance. His friendships, rivalries, and familial bonds are authentic and relatable. Karna's unwavering friendship with Duryodhana, for instance, is presented as a genuine and profound connection that transcends mere loyalty. Karna's relationship with Duryodhana is a testament to the depth and authenticity of the characters in *Mrityunjaya*. Sawant explores the complexities of their friendship, which goes beyond mere loyalty and ventures into shared dreams, unwavering support, and mutual respect. This portrayal of friendship mirrors real-life bonds.

Karna's rivalry with Arjuna, the Pandava prince, is a central element of the *Mahabharata*. Sawant delves into the intricacies of this rivalry, portraying Karna's complex feelings of competition, respect, and animosity toward Arjuna. Their encounters on the battlefield are depicted with gripping intensity, allowing the reader to empathize with the dynamics of competition and camaraderie.

Karna's interactions with other key characters, such as Lord Krishna and Kunti, are also explored in a relatable manner. His encounter with Lord Krishna, where Krishna attempts to persuade Karna to switch sides in the Kurukshetra War, serves as a thought-provoking exchange. Karna's unwavering commitment to Duryodhana and his refusal to be swayed by Krishna's arguments serves as a testament to the integrity of his character.

In *Mrityunjaya*, Sawant doesn't shy away from portraying the moral complexity of Karna's choices. While Karna is often seen as a noble character, he also makes decisions that raise moral questions. His loyalty to Duryodhana, even when aware of his friend's flawed intentions, showcases the inner conflict between duty and morality. This moral ambiguity humanizes Karna, as real people often grapple with similar dilemmas. Sawant even showcases the very human emotion of retribution when the pride of an individual is hurt. Karna's wounded pride compelled him to seek retribution for the insult he had suffered at Draupadi's hands during her Swayamvara. The recollection of his humiliation, coupled with Draupadi's failure to seek his aid in defending her honour, led him to utter harsh words against her within the Kaurava Sabha. Nevertheless, Karna's inner self suffered damage when Draupadi, while appealing for assistance from many others, conspicuously neglected to seek his aid. Anger welled up within him, leading him to exact retribution by labelling her 'unchaste' and branding her as an adulteress. However, when Duhsasana attempted to disrobe her, Karna was overwhelmed by the impulse to shield her modesty with his shawl. He envisioned his own wife, Vrishali, in Draupadi's place, and this caused him profound mental anguish for having participated in her humiliation: "Seeing Vrishali in place of Draupadi, I immediately opened my eyes. Even before my wide eyes, I saw Draupadi one instant and Vrishali the other. Draupadi! Vrishali! Stripped Draupadi! Ah, stripped Vrishali! Vrishali! Ah, she should be covered up." (Sawant 366).

This highlights the inner turmoil experienced by Karna, torn between the desire for revenge and his moral responsibilities. On one hand, his moral compass urges him to protect Draupadi's dignity, while on the other, his anger compels him to humiliate Draupadi in the hope that she might experience a similar humiliation as he did. It's worth noting that Karna's inclination to safeguard Draupadi's honour is not explicitly explored in the epic. Shivaji Sawant seeks to rationalize Karna's actions by offering a fresh interpretation of the events.

Karna's physical and emotional suffering is vividly depicted in the novel. Karna's early experiences as a charioteer's son and his struggle for recognition exemplify his emotional anguish. Sawant's portrayal of Karna's pain at being excluded and marginalized underscores the universal theme of seeking acknowledgment and acceptance.

Sawant includes everyday moments in Karna's life that make him relatable. These moments humanize Karna, showing his interactions with common people, his sense of humour, and his capacity for empathy. By including these mundane aspects of Karna's life, Sawant bridges the gap between myth and reality. Karna's diverse life experiences, from his humble beginnings to his rise as a formidable warrior, reflect the challenges and triumphs that individuals face in real life.

Mrityunjaya explores universal themes such as friendship, love, identity, and the human quest for meaning and purpose. Karna's journey becomes a vehicle for addressing these timeless themes, making him a character who resonates with readers across cultures and eras. The novel brings to fore staggering philosophical questions like the meaning of living, significance of Dharma and Karma, the inevitability of business and politics, the purpose of a human being etc. Sawant goes beyond simplistic motivations for Karna's actions. He delves into the character's deeper motivations and desires, revealing that Karna is driven not only by loyalty and duty but also by a yearning for recognition and a sense of self-worth. These complex motivations make Karna's character more authentic and real. Karna's loyalty to Duryodhana is underpinned by a profound sense of duty, but it is also influenced by his desire for recognition and acceptance. Sawant's portrayal of Karna's multifaceted motivations adds depth to his character. Karna's desire for recognition and a sense of self-worth is a universal human yearning. Through his meticulous storytelling and deep exploration of Karna's inner world, Sawant achieves a level of realism and relatability that allows readers to connect with Karna on a profoundly human level. Shivaji Sawant's portrayal of Karna in "Mrityunjaya" achieves a level of realism and relatability that brings this mythological character closer to reality. By exploring Karna's emotional, psychological, and moral dimensions, as well as his relationships and everyday experiences, Sawant creates a character who is not just a hero of mythology but a reflection of the complex and multifaceted nature of humanity. Karna in "Mrityunjaya" is not merely a character on the pages of an epic; he is a mirror through which the readers can examine their own emotions, struggles, and journeys. The author establishes that no character is truly good or bad and shows humanity in all its glory as well as darkness. Sawant's *Mrityunjaya* is a testament to the enduring power of literature to bridge the gap between myth and reality, exploring the depths of human experience.

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Metropolitan Culture and the Emergence of New Woman with Special Reference to Shobhaa Dé's Select Novels

AMIT KUMAR PANDEY & ARCHANA DURGESH VERMA

Amit Kumar Pandey

Abstract

Shobhaa Dé emerges as a contemporary novelist championing women's empowerment and liberalization. The odyssey of the New Woman takes on a captivating dimension within Shobhaa Dé's realm, where she deploys a myriad of tools and strategies to embolden her female characters. These women, portrayed by Dé, transcend traditional norms, freely navigating society and puncturing conventional moralities. Far from being mere shadows of men, they aspire to carve their own paths and excel in societal spheres. The New Woman in Shobhaa Dé's narratives is a byproduct of modern technological advancements, educational growth, and the evolving social landscape. What sets her apart from other Indian women novelists is her distinct perspective on contemporary reality. Shobhaa Dé's extensive knowledge, honed through her roles as a journalist and magazine editor, is deeply intertwined with the world of Mumbai Cinema. This close association provides her with an intimate understanding of the often concealed, dark facets of life behind the screen, replete with its unseemly and sordid details. According to R. Morgon (1983), Dé's female characters, such as Anjali and Karuna, exert their power to dismantle the male ego. Shobhaa Dé's voracious reading habits and active journalistic engagement equips her with profound insights into Indian women's lives before conceiving her New Women protagonists.

Keywords:, perversion, empowerment, liberalization, accumulated, new woman, strategies eroticism

Shobhaa Dé, in her literary exploration, poignantly portrays the intricate complexities of life in Mumbai, with a specific focus on the city's elite. The lens she employs is not just focused on the glittering façade of the metropolis but extends deep into the harrowing lives of middle-class women who, despite societal challenges, embody over-ambition and a fervent passion for sex and glamour. Dé's portrayal transcends mere storytelling; she captures the pulse of Mumbai's dynamic culture, employing the latest fashion terminology and embracing slang speech that resonates with the vibrancy of the city. She skillfully weaves in images and phrases borrowed from pop music, Western-style dances, trendy hairstyles, high heels, mascara, and Hollywood magazines, creating a narrative that pulsates with the very heartbeat of the city. In Shobhaa Dé's works, each woman protagonist takes on the formidable task of deconstructing the traditional patriarchal structure that has long confined women to predefined roles. These characters emerge as rebels in society, fiercely pursuing their ambitions independently, challenging societal norms that have perpetuated male domination and patriarchal

Archana Durgesh Verma

oppression. Dé's narratives resonate with a strong protest against ingrained mindsets, advocating for a paradigm shift in societal attitudes towards gender roles.

The women presented by Shobhaa Dé epitomize the ultra-modern, revolutionary outlook of the New Woman[1] – progressive in ideas, spirited fighters for rights and justice. Their struggle for inordinate ambitions becomes a focal point, as they confront and resist male domination. In contrast to the traditional narrative of submissive suffering, Shobhaa Dé's New Women embody a relentless pursuit of joy and success in life, using every means available to shape their destinies. Nisha Trivedi's observation that post-colonial women writers explore individual consciousness and project images of cultural change resonates with Dé's portrayal of women who defy stereotypes and cultural expectations. The characters in Dé's books work on the notion that individual choice determines one's role in society, freely expressing their inner potential. Aasha Rani, Anjali, and Karuna, among others, embody this spirit of freedom, passionately embracing the quest for hedonistic pleasures. Their journey, however, leads them into the complexities of sexual filth and sensual eroticism, uncharted territories where societal norms are continually challenged. Shobhaa Dé grants her characters full freedom to navigate success and glamour, even if it means selling their bodies on their own terms.

Shobhaa Dé's narrative takes a bold turn in works like *Socialite Evenings*, where the naked body of Nisha is strategically employed as an object of otherness. The bed becomes a powerful tool, not just for physical intimacy but also as a means for women to assert control and take revenge. The women in Dé's narratives face hardships, exploitation, and defeat, yet their resilience remains unbroken. Instead of succumbing to discouragement, they persist in challenging patriarchal norms, fighting against slavery, oppression, and exploitation. As Shobhaa Dé rebels against existing moral codes and social norms, she emerges as a formidable personality in pursuit of her identity. Sarah Grimke's observation that the evolution of the New Woman is a result of centuries of male oppression finds resonance in Dé's portrayal of modern feminism, ruthlessly dismantling old images of women and launching a crusade against female subjugation. Shobhaa Dé's novels redefine the ideology of love, sex, marriage, and family, breaking away from the traditional narratives.

In essence, Shobhaa Dé's literary canvas paints a vibrant tapestry of Mumbai life, where the New Woman rises above societal constraints, challenges ingrained norms, and paves the way for a new era of empowerment and self-discovery. Through her characters, Dé not only tells stories but initiates a discourse on societal transformation, calling for a reevaluation of gender roles and the liberation of women from historical oppression. Shobhaa Dé, often dubbed as the D.H. Lawrence of India, emerges as a trend-setter who delves into the inner turmoil of modern women burdened by conventional morality and patriarchy. Her novels, particularly *Socialite Evenings*, not only shattered age-old taboos but also garnered attention for their shocking sensual scenes, revealing the struggles of women in a society constrained

by traditional norms. This exploration of female sexuality and rebellion earned Dé the reputation of a literary icon who excavates the complexities of the modern woman's experience.

The New Woman, as portrayed by Shobhaa Dé, disrupts conventional marital relationships to fulfill her innate human desires. Dé challenges the traditional views held by novelists regarding marriage, depicting the relationship between man and woman as mechanical, hollow, and ineffectual. Her female characters often suffer as oppressed wives, rejecting the colonization of their bodies. These characters, despite their suffering, are not passive victims; instead, they confront their dilemmas with boldness and assertiveness. Anjali, a character in *Socialite Evenings*, exposes the prevailing male chauvinism, illustrating how men feel threatened by self-sufficient women challenging cultural and social norms. Shobhaa Dé draws from the ideas of Simone de Beauvoir, highlighting the constraints imposed by religion and culture on women, inhibiting their growth and freedom.

A striking feature of Shobhaa Dé's New Woman is her sexual liberty within human relationships. Dé introduces a generation of lusty female protagonists who emerge as radical lesbian feminist separatists, challenging societal norms. Shobhaa Dé ventures into the realm of pornography, using fiction as a tool to uncover the truth about female sexuality. The character Karuna, the protagonist of *Socialite Evenings*, exemplifies this liberation. She defies the institution of marriage, seeking extra-marital relationships for social and financial security. Karuna becomes a modern heroine who controls her situation boldly and seeks vengeance against her male partner. *Socialite Evenings*, created a literary sensation, propelling Shobhaa Dé into international celebrity status. Her work was groundbreaking, pushing the boundaries of societal expectations and unleashing a narrative that resonated with women's struggles against exploitation, especially in the vibrant yet claustrophobic environment of Mumbai. Shobhaa Dé's focus extends beyond individual stories; she becomes a voice for the exposure of the exploitation of women in various dimensions. Themes of libidinal fantasies, domestic violence, sexual oppression, rape, and depression resonate throughout her works. Mumbai, characterized by a money-centric culture akin to New York, becomes a microcosm where working middle-class women grapple with the challenges of a glamorous yet stifling city.

The strength of Shobhaa Dé's narrative lies in her exploration of male hegemony and its destructive impact on the female body. She unveils smug and selfish husbands who exploit their wives not for love but for social respectability. Legal issues surrounding the rising divorce rates and the perceived futility of marriage in metropolises like Bombay are also discussed, challenging societal norms and advocating women's equality. In *Socialite Evenings*, Karuna serves as the lens through which the reader visualizes the world of pretension and deceit in Mumbai. Her suffering symbolizes the polarity between activity and passivity, disrupting traditional perceptions of women as symbols of passivity. Karuna, belonging to an orthodox family, uses a web of lies to navigate the harsh society of Mumbai, illustrating the challenges faced by women who aspire to break free from societal constraints. In essence, Shobhaa Dé's exploration of the New Woman becomes a manifesto for female empowerment,

challenging societal norms, and advocating a more liberated existence. Through her literary endeavors, she not only excavates the multifaceted struggles of modern women but also prompts a broader societal discourse on gender roles and the liberation of women from historical oppression.

Karuna, the central figure in Shobhaa Dé's *Socialite Evenings*, undergoes a transformative journey from a middle-class girl to a renowned celebrity. Her life unfolds in three distinct phases—pre-marriage, post-marriage, and a sensational period when she breaks free from traditional marital norms. Throughout these phases, Karuna epitomizes the New Woman, marked prominently by her rebellious spirit. During her school days, Karuna's defiance takes a unique turn, driven by her desire to stand out in a society where affluence is highly valued. As she reflects, "I wanted to be different because I wasn't rich" (SE, 9). A problematic student, Karuna challenges conventional transportation methods, refusing to use trains or double-decker buses. Her dressing habits are provocative, deliberately seeking attention by donning stretch pants and adjusting the hem of her dress higher than allowed. In contrast to her hardworking and studious sisters, Karuna rebels against academic pursuits, boldly declaring, "Fuck studies" (SE, 13). Her eccentric manners, revolting etiquettes, and provocative habits depict her as a dissatisfied and protesting girl.

Shobhaa Dé delves into the glamour world. Ambitious women in this generation are portrayed as willing to compromise traditional morality for wealth and fame. The novel unfolds the patriarchal oppression that alienates Karuna, pushing her towards an attitude of stubbornness. Her orthodox father's moralistic talks and stringent rules contribute to her rebellious nature. Karuna is subjected to strict army-like regulations, including lights out at 10 P.M., waking up at 5.30 A.M., and prohibitions on eating between meals or engaging in "idle talk" over the telephone. Karuna's ambition is evident from her school days, fostering a nearly insatiable curiosity to explore the outside world. Envious of the affluent girls in Mumbai who enjoy life's luxuries, she is inspired by her friend Charlie to venture into modeling for an advertising agency, defying family traditions. An unauthorized publication of her photographs in a newspaper marks a turning point. The discovery by her father leads to a slap, intensifying Karuna's rebellion against parental authority. The recurrent appearance of her ads in newspapers signifies both financial gain and a thrilling ego-satisfying experience.

Despite being deceived by Charlie's Uncleji, the trajectory of Karuna's modeling career is set in motion. Her father's stern rebuke, akin to a Bluebeard Patriarch, fails to quell her rebellion. Karuna despises the middle-class mentality of her parents, expressing her disdain for the monotony and shabbiness of her background. Her cultivated rebelliousness resurfaces with even greater vigor, as she boldly declares, "But the rebelliousness I had cultivated in school now surface with vengeance. The ads kept appearing again and again and again –but the slaps stopped" (SE,20-21). In essence, Shobhaa Dé crafts Karuna's character as a symbol of the New Woman, navigating societal expectations and breaking free from conventional norms. The narrative intertwines themes of rebellion, societal critique, and the pursuit of individuality, offering a profound exploration of a woman's journey from dissent to self-

discovery. Karuna's friendship with Bunty, a young man disapproved of by her parents, marked a significant turn in her life. The disapproval from her parents only fueled Karuna's rebellion against the traditional norms. Bunty, described as a management trainee at a multinational company, became a symbol of defiance for Karuna, representing "only one more step in my rebellion" (SE, 21). Her feelings towards Bunty became complex, entangled in the web of societal disapproval and personal defiance.

Shobhaa Dé, in her portrayal of Aasha Rani, delves into more profound aspects beyond mere sexual desires. Aasha Rani's birth was marred by bitter agony, characterized by a childhood lacking parental love, emotional security, and plagued by poverty and starvation. Forced into the world of adult film production by her own mother, Aasha Rani's life takes a dark turn. A critical analysis of the text reveals Shobhaa Dé's exploration of the hopes and aspirations of a modern young woman motivated by success, glamour, and wealth. Nicknamed the "Sweetheart of the millions," Aasha Rani strategically deploys sex as a tool to navigate the anxieties and dilemmas of life. She emerges as a female gangster, employing various sexual strategies to ensnare and expose men, highlighting the theme of complete emancipation for women. Shobhaa Dé underscores the idea of liberating women through self-realization, making Aasha Rani's journey towards total liberation simultaneously intriguing, thrilling, sensational, and revolutionary. Aasha's quest for total liberation unfolds through sensual encounters, such as those between Mallika and her husband Binny Malhotra on a moonlit night before their marriage. Despite her endeavors, all her experiments prove counterproductive as she becomes ensnared in the whirlpool of lust and sexual pleasures.

In Shobhaa Dé's novels, the women protagonists embark on a journey toward moral decay and self-corrosion. At the conclusion of each novel, these protagonists suffer from fractured identities and cultural displacement, severed from friends and close relatives. While achieving commercial success, they pay a hefty price, experiencing a loss of self and a disorientation of the mind. The weight of guilt becomes overwhelming for some, leading them to contemplate suicide. Shobhaa Dé masterfully narrates the tale of Aasha Rani, who confronts a myriad of situations in her pursuit of stardom in Bollywood. The novelist portrays her New Woman in a glamorous and erotic role, providing a faithful portrayal of the film world with all its intrigues, perfidies, glamour, crimes, lies, and sexual exploitation. Her narrative weaves together societal rebellion, sexual liberation, and the harsh realities of the entertainment industry, leading to a compelling exploration of the complexities of modern womanhood.

Aasha Rani, much akin to Karuna, hails from a small town with a middle-class background, embarking on a life journey fueled by her ardent desire to become a star in the bustling world of Mumbai. Despite her reluctance, Aasha Rani's mother compels her to transform into a money-making machine in her youth. As tears stream down her cheeks, Aasha Rani, resembling a caged bird, finds herself reluctantly thrust into the realm of adult films, facing the cruel force of her mother's actions whenever she resisted. Before the explicit session, she finds herself helplessly crying, protesting, and fervently pleading with her mother, referred to as

Amma, to spare her from this harrowing experience. The poignant cry echoes her constant haunting by the traumatic events of her past: "*Amma* please don't. I am scared. That horrible man. How can I take off my clothes in front of all these strangers" (SN, 71). In Nisha Trivedi's article, "*Search for IdentityinStarry Nights*," featured in *The Fiction of Shobhaa Dé*, she offers a critical review of the novel. Trivedi highlights the post-independence fiction writers' focus on contemporary problems, delving into the crucial realms of individual consciousness and projecting captivating images of cultural change rather than mere transformation (Trivedi, 180). This analysis resonates with the struggles faced by Aasha Rani, whose life becomes a canvas illustrating the broader cultural shifts occurring during that period.

Karuna's character takes on a strange obstinacy, a development she candidly acknowledges, saying, "But now I was so inured to their disapproval of nearly everything about me that it was really their approval of anything that scared me" (SE, 22). This admission reveals the psychological impact of societal disapproval on Karuna, shaping her into a complex character with layers of defiance and vulnerability. In short, Shobhaa Dé's portrayal of Karuna encapsulates not only an individual's struggle for identity but also serves as a poignant reflection of the societal dynamics and cultural transformations prevalent in post-independence India. The novel becomes a canvas depicting the multifaceted challenges faced by women like Karuna, whose personal journeys intersect with broader shifts in cultural paradigms. Fate intervenes, and Karuna encounters Anjali, the wife of a wealthy playboy, marking the initiation of her transformative journey. The revelation of Anjali's lifestyle, emblematic of the New Woman in Shobha Dé's narrative, leaves Karuna awestruck. However, Karuna's familial ties are strained by her friendship with Anjali, met with disapproval as her mother was aware of the unsuitability of their friendship. Undeterred by parental objections, Karuna rebels, drawn to Anjali's ultra-fashionable, bold, and socialite persona, complete with possessions like French perfumes, Impala in silver grey, and a fancy place in Malabar Hill.

Anjali becomes a pivotal influence on Karuna, guiding her strides in fashion designing and advertising, fueling Karuna's aspiration to amass wealth in the glamorous world. However, this friendship is not without its challenges. Anjali accuses Karuna of bitchiness, lechery, and an insatiable appetite for sex. As the plot unfolds, Karuna encounters Anjali's husband, Abe, characterized as womanish and an expert in seducing women. Anjali candidly warns Karuna about Abe's promiscuity, openly discussing his sexual weaknesses, labeling him a "bastard." Anjali's revelation emphasizes the seduction strategies Abe deploys, lamenting, "I have lost all my girlfriends to Abe. The minute he meets them, he starts his seduction plans. It doesn't take very long. One lunch, two drinks-and boom- they're in bed. I don't want to lose you" (SE, 43). This revelation introduces a Faustian element to Karuna's narrative, as she grapples with the lure of wealth and freedom while navigating the treacherous terrain of relationships.

Karuna adopts an epicurean and materialistic approach to life, casting aside moral values to immerse herself in the fashionable world, a transformation propelled by her association with Anjali, a middle-aged and prominent socialite. Shobhaa Dé subtly details two pivotal

episodes that propel Karuna into a new phase of life. First of all, her rendezvous with a New Delhi ad film maker in London sparks excitement as she perceives the Western society with a sense of superiority, fostering assertiveness and boldness. Subsequently, her stay in America nurtures confidence and egotism, strengthening her belief that she is not suited for the monotonous life of the middle class. The turning point in Karuna's life is her connection with Bunty, her boyfriend. Their dating experiences, referred to as "We dated for a bit … not real dates, what we called 'group outings'. Safety in numbers" (SE, 65). Unfold a chapter of pleasures and exploration. Through these experiences, Karuna's character metamorphoses, entwining her fate with Bunty, and steering her towards the inexorable allure of a hedonistic and adventurous lifestyle.

Shobhaa Dé meticulously unfolds Karuna's married life in Chapter Seven, a period marked by her retreat into a fantasy world. The marital discord between Karuna and Bunty becomes apparent, fueling Karuna's growing guilt over having married "the wrong man for the wrong reasons at the wrong time." In Karuna's eyes, Bunty embodies the archetype of an average Indian husband— "unexciting, uninspiring, untutored." Karuna, inherently critical, acknowledges the detrimental impact of extramarital relationships on her psyche, understanding their negative consequences. However, propelled by her desire for material comforts and success, she succumbs to the allure of these illicit affairs. Despite her awareness, Karuna recognizes the traditional role of a husband as a sheltering tree, a rock for the wife, and yet, her rebellion against male superiority persists.

In conclusion, Shobhaa Dé emerges as an ultra-modern author who utilizes sex as a therapeutic lens to alleviate the tensions and anxieties experienced by women oppressed within a male-dominated society. Despite the controversial nature of her novels, Dé fearlessly tackles bold themes and embraces ultra-feminism, puncturing traditional morality. Her narratives advocate women's empowerment and liberalization, drawing inspiration from the sexual liberties enjoyed in American society. Dé's works challenge societal norms, prompting a reconsideration of established values and advocating a more liberated and empowered role for women.Shobha Dé's self-chronicling feminism is entirely apart from that of the women authors of her era. She works to free women from the grip of patriarchal conventions and behaviours by encouraging them to be true to themselves in their decisions, look within for strength, and rely on their inner fortitude while facing challenges. In her memoirs, Shobha Dé tells the story of a successful lady rather than that of one who strives for survival. Her memoirs extends an invitation to Indian women to lead prosperous lives.

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'Unconscious is Structured as Language' and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*

DIPAK KUMAR BAR

Abstract

It appears Samuel Beckett's groundbreaking work *Waiting for Godot* shows the significance of language by giving an adieu to language. Using the article, the theories of psychoanalysis, structuralism and post–structuralism, explore how language acts as a mirror to reflect the logical order of the unconscious realm of mind. The apparent unknown content of the play, the very notion of absence-negativity or nothingness, ceaseless talking and waiting for some mysterious figure named 'Godot' throw light on the elusive nature of the unconscious. The characters, representing signs in their pathetic plight of being and non-being, lack the 'signified' and so skeptical philosophy or anxiety of language or an unreliability of the 'language game' of truth is seen through the deceptive nature of language of the play.

Keywords: language, language structure, Saussurean linguistics, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, structuralist and post-structuralist outlook

Samuel Beckett's revolutionary work *Waiting for Godot* is reviewed, explored and examined from countless perspectives, while this paper offers a critical analysis on the deceptive nature of language, focusing on the Lacanian logic in unconscious psychoanalysis. The psychoanalyst is always both using and examining language and tries to establish unconscious as a kind of verbal science as complex as the structure of a language. It appears, in the play *Waiting for Godot*, the traumatic and dreadful effect of the post-war reality has been reflected through the void and senseless style of language, creating a breakdown in language with an attempt to articulate the meaninglessness, hopelessness and destitution of modern life. The notion of absence-negativity or nothingness serves to illustrate the elusive nature of the unconscious to us. The two trumps' – Vladimir's and Estragins's – perpetual talking and waiting for some enigmatic figure by the name 'Godot' is not for naught but to affirm their existence. The characters, here, as signs or signifiers, lack the 'signified' and this lack of signification creates a desire for 'transcendental signifier' which they mistake for Godot, an unattainable object of desire, a sense of identity through Godot or what Lacan calls eternally absent 'object-petti a'. We see the significance of all Godot throughout the whole play but we never find out precisely what is signified within it and so the role of the characters in linguistic system of significance is reduced to wordiness or limited language. Vladimir has always been afraid that he and Estragon would reduce to one single signifier or Estragon would start identifying

himself in his unconscious and his sense of self or individuality would be annihilated. It implies a tormenting in-between condition, the human finitude. Another crucial interpretation, it appears, Vladimir and Estragon are engaged in a 'language game' without realizing its significances. But they have difficulty in believing 'gaming is enough', and so they seek to legitimize their discourse and wish to have the security as provided by some 'grand narrative' of modernist stage. But it is parodied in Lucky's 'think' near the end of first Act, suggesting a parody of the totalizing, metadiscoarse of philosophy and religion, a practical deconstruction of 'language game' of truth.

It appears Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* itself is an embodiment of the unconscious, unknown or something uncertain. We find, broadly speaking, nothing of the theme or content of the play, except ceaseless talking or act of waiting by the two tramps – Vladimir and Estragon – for someone by the name 'Godot', without knowing much about who he is, where he is coming from or for what purpose. The aspects of the nature of language also reflect the unknown content of the play. The content of the unconscious, by definition, is unknowable but everything we do is, often, affected by it and we can gaze at the nature of the content by observing its effect. The ceaseless talking without realizing its meaning, waiting or gesture on the part of the two tramps show they are not wholly on their conscious state of being. So, they are not sure about anything like whether they have come to the right place or on the appointed date or on the right time, suggesting their unconscious state of being. The widespread suffering and disillusionment, caused by the World War II and the Cold War, have been reflected in the background of the play's pessimistic, nihilistic conception of the war. The psychologically traumatized condition or dreadful effect of the World War II, it seems make the two tramps oblivious of everything or wakening of their memories. It implies their tormenting in-between condition of being and non-being, like Lacanian split of the self. They have in possession only a limited vocabulary of their own, which they use as a kind of tool to identify themselves in relation to each other as they need to remind their existence. Otherwise, if they start forgetting their limited language of insufficient vocabulary, they will simply cease to exist. So, these two men constantly talk to each other to keep busy and occupy their time as best as they could. Not only that, in bare surroundings or setting of the play, they find no object around them to identify, compare or differentiate themselves with except only a willow tree on a lonely and deserted road.

Vladimir does not let Estragon sleep for long since he believes the break in their communication caused by sleep might result in the loss of language or that, Estragon intellectually frail as he is, would start identifying himself in his unconscious and his will, thus, become psychotic. Vladimir is the character who fumbles for meaning but the sense remains hidden. His endeavours are abridged to disjointedness and, finally, silence by his companion Estragon. Beckett, here, tries to establish language as the central tool of deception. Nevertheless, his language is used as structure, devoid of content and elusive in nature, which merely interchanges with itself. Mark Taylor-Batty and Julliete, Taylor-Batty consider the language of *Waiting for Godot* as something of unique quality that amuses its readers like

music does to its listeners. Beckett's language is hardly found together in the identical narrative. It is gloomy, mysterious, round, opposing, ironic, sometimes full of violence or fierceness, even disjointed and fragmented, as we often experience in a dream, suggesting 'terrifying insight into the meaninglessness of human life.

Beckett's genius lies in establishing a kind of literary work but imposing no meaning to it. Beckett was frustrated with the lavish use of language by his predecessors, where the true value of language was lost in the extravagant spectacle of style. He reversed James Joyce for being a proponent of modernist literature with his iconic use of language. For Beckett, Joyce has achieved what he had wanted to but he considered himself working with an 'impotent' thing. He wanted to work with the very notion of absence, a topic that has not been successfully explored in literature but was a property of philosophical studies.

In the play *Waiting for Godot*, it assumes the notion of absence or nothingness or uncertainty serves to illustrate the elusiveness of the unconscious to us. So, is the absurdity or complexity of the play regarding space, time, truth, imagination, narrative or the origin of the characters. To investigate the unconscious, the psychoanalyst has taken the help of language by both using and examining it with an attempt to establish unconscious as a kind of verbal science, an orderly network as complex as the structure of language itself. What the psychoanalytic experiences discover in the unconscious is the whole structure of a language. And, we find, the discourse of the characters, their gestures and silence, what they say and do afterwards and also the sound effect, all are the evidence of something enigmatic, elusive or unconscious in nature.

We see the discourse of the characters is troubled with meaningless words. But, it appears, they (words) pretend to be potential with reasons that make the dialogue inexplicable and it becomes difficult for the reader to make sense whether it is the cause of memory weakening or language significance, one clearly accompanying the other. Thus, in Lucky's case, a distressed memory is blended with 'partial aphasia and ultimately total silence' (Romana and Janis 54). This condition often demonstrates itself in stammering and hesitancy. Despite the aphasia, there is some indication of a certain amount of speech collapse that is ellipsis and stammering, which we observe in Pozzo's speech from the stress of Vladimir's criticism.

I cannot bear it…… any longer…… the way he goes on…… you've no idea…… it's terrible…… he must go…… (he waves his arm)…… I am going mad (he collapses his head in his hands)…… I cannot bear it any longer.

Here is an instance of the general insufficiency of speech at the individual level, showing limitation of language to manage diversity of circumstances and also suggesting difficulty in making a coordination between speech and memory or thought, or conscious and unconscious states of being.

A note of vagueness, ambiguity or absurdity always remains inherent in their discourse such as 'nothing to be done', Estragon engaging with his shoes, Vladimir their boring existence and their incapability to amend it. We also see misunderstanding steams from unclear syntax

when Pozzo asks – "Are you friends?" And Estragon interprets saying this is to give the sense "Are you and Vladimir friends?" and Vladimir has to clarify that Pozzo is asking whether Vladimir and Estragon are friends of his. Sometimes, it appears Beckett has exploited ordinary people's language or ordinary conversation in an abnormal style, which is evident in his use of tautology, malapropism, spurious logic, verbal inconsistency, improper grammar, etc. All these, in a sense, are the elements of the unconscious and so the style, it appears, is void and senseless, indicating no real desire to communicate. In Beckett's play, we also notice hollow sound effects supporting the theme of horror and conversational emptiness. Staccato sound repetitions occur in such phrases as "Dis, Didi" and in Vladimir's lullaby which is comprised of words as "Do, do, do" and "Bye, bye, bye" (Waiting for Godot 71). Beckett seems to be saying that communication through silence and gesture as in the Pantomine is just as real and perhaps more so than communication through spoken words. Knowlson has aptly remarked "We are left with an image of two creatures, searching to communicate in a world where effective communication is virtually difficult" (James 113)

Structuralist critics believe in linguistic system and emphasize language constitutes or shapes the world in a way of scientific coolness, i.e., rule, grammar, convention, governing verbal behaviour and such types, and thus, they are inherently confident about the possibility of establishing objective knowledge or attaining reliable truth of things. But post-structuralist critics don't have full faith in linguistic system, method or notion of reasons. They inherit the habit of scepticism and intensify it and thus, explore the difficulty of achieving secure knowledge about things. This post-structuralist view of linguistic scepticism or linguistic anxiety is seen throughout the whole play *Waiting for Godot*. According to Ferdinand de Saussure, meaning or significance is not a kind of core or essence within things, rather meaning is arbitrary, attributed, relational and constructive. Saussurean model of language shows language is a sphere, where signs only get their meaning from their assigned position in the system and this position is generated from the relationship and differences the signs have with other signs in the system. In *Waiting for Godot*, the characters as subjects are the signs or signifiers. They lack the signified, i.e., the fulfillment in their existence as subjects and this lack of signification creates a desire for 'transcendental signifier', but language always produce this lack which restricts the characters in an 'eternal non-event', and so is an eternal hunt for the 'transcendental signifier', which they mistake for Godot, an unattainable object of desire, a sense of identity through Godot or what Lacan calls eternally absent 'object petti a'.

In language, there is endless play of signifiers but no simple connection with any signified beyond language. Here, we see the significance of Godot throughout the whole play but we never find out precisely what is signified within it, i.e., the signified is always missing, losing. In this play, it appears, Godot is an entity that belongs to what Lacan calls 'the Real', outside the symbolic order and filled with presence. Thus, Vladimir's and Estragon's desire comes from the lack of presence in this world. The desire for 'the Real' comes from its very unattainability.

Lacan's attention always moves from the conscious self to the unconscious. He regards "unconscious as the kernel of our being" and lays down a dramatic challenge to Descarte's philosophical consensus "I think therefore I am" by reversing it into "I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think" and he also asks "Who is this other to whom I am more attached than to myself since at the heart of my ascent it is still he who wages me". There is no exaggeration in saying In *Waiting for Godot*, this other is none but absence-negativity, nothingness or non-being, equal to non-existence. The recurrence of the phrase, we are waiting for Godot, 'which becomes synonymous with we are waiting for nothing', establishes absence as the very element-constitute of Didi's and Godot's condition as existence. Vladimir has always been afraid that he and Estragon would finally be reduced to one single signifier and their sense of individuality would be annihilated. Thus, their wait for Godot is not a futile wait but it is a wait for their affirmation as individual in the linguistic system and thus the material wait. (Velissarious 51)

It appears the characters in the play are devoid of any sense of self in their complex sado-masochistic relationship. On the one hand, Vladimir is practical, neurotic and intellectual. He has more feminine personality. On the other, Estragon, the intuitive, persistent and escapist, is more masculine. Among the other pair, Pozzo and Lucky, the former is a sadistic master, powerful and extrovert and the latter is the submissive slave, timorous and introvert. The partner in each pair find themselves interlocked but their nature obviously conflicts and so, they should part, but they cannot as they are complementary to each other. None of them could identify themselves as separate entities if not for these differences in their relationship. Pozzo has a narcissistic identification of himself, whereas Lucky is merely what Freud calls a 'neurotic animal'. Here, Pozzo as a signifier can differentiate its position in the system in comparison to others (Lucky) and Pozzo considers Lucky to be beneath the species that he belongs to. When blustering Pozzo has changed into a sightless depreciate. He begins his new identification and gets out of his imaginary sense of self that he is deprived from his unbridled sadistic pleasure, inflicting pain upon Lucky. Thus, his role in the system of signification is reduced as without sight he would not be able to identify himself with any object or the 'transcendental signifier' and in turn, lose his touch with language and be doomed as a mere signifier hovering at the border of linguistic chain as Lucky. Here, Beckett has tried to establish a similarity between the plight of Vladimir and Estragon and that of Pozzo and Lucky if they are unable to keep up whatever little communication they have now. When we speak of ourselves, we become an object through our very speech and the speech is made by the subject as Vladimir needs to affirm himself as subject, so, when Estragon is sleeping, Vladimir tries to create a narrative when he is both the enunciator and the subject. This is apparent in the scene "He goes feverishly to-and-fro, halt finally at extreme left, broads!" When the messenger boy appears, Vladimir does not inform Estragon immediately, but this boy is their only connection to Godot. He creates a narrative for himself. When the boy asks Vladimir what to tell Godot, he says,

"Tell him… (he hesitates)… Tell him you saw me and that… (he hesitates)… That you saw me (pause, Vladimir advances, the boy recoils. Vladimir halts, the boy halts with sudden violence). You're sure you saw me, you won't come and tell me to-morrow that you never saw me."

Lawley has correctly recognised the scene "His (Vladimir's) desperation that the boy will testify both to Godot and to Vladimir himself to having seen him expresses precisely the sense of the absence of self. He must be witnessed." (84)

Pozzo and Lucky hardly communicated among themselves. What they did was to amuse themselves to escape the reality of their non-being. Lucky, having been stripped of human liberty, his ability to speak, has been thrown out of the human linguistic chain and so, his unconscious dominates his existence. When he starts speaking, he is at the frontier of this chain that accommodates some word from his unconscious and thus, he is locked in a single imagination in a symbolic order. His only relationship to language remains in his unconscious and not in his utterance.

For Freud, conscious personality and its behaviours need to be interpreted and understood in the light of the working of the unconscious, whereas, for Lacan, Freudian discovery of the unconscious is followed to its logical conclusion. His emphasis is on the unconscious, i.e., in the unconscious our true selfhood lies, suggesting "self's radical excentricity to itself, but all these are shown to be merely a linguistic effect, not an essential entity. But language precedes all and exists as a structure before the individual enters into it and language is a part of what Lacan calls the 'other' and the 'other' constitutes the unconscious and 'the symbolic' order. The impenetrability of the unconscious makes it impossible to have any control over language. In fact, the unconscious is an abyss until a child starts identifying itself with language and as an effect of language, it is exposed to, then, unconscious is 'created'. In a seminar, Lacan says "The unconscious is constituted by the effect of speech on the subject, it is the dimension in which the subject is determined in the development of the effect of speech. Consequently, the unconscious is structured as a language."

In the play *Waiting for Godot*, the two tramps – Vladmir and Estragon – often appear to be as two children, who are just acquiring language, did not yet know what they want and don't understand precisely their desire of waiting for Godot. In Lacan's 'mirror stage', a child sees its reflection in a mirror and the child gets an impression of a false 'unified' image of itself through 'misrecognition'. In the play, it may be said Pozzo and Lucky act as a mirror for Vladimir and Estragon to identify them. Vladimir and Estragon repeatedly 'misrecognise' themselves in their relationship with Pozzo and Lucky. They, at first, mistake Pozzo for Godot and then, want to make a master out of Pozzo, but ultimately become disrespectful of him due to his cruel master-slave treatment of Lucky. Thus, the role of Pozzo and Lucky serve to illustrate the metonymic nature of the 'imaginary' stage, where relationships and differences are always made out of misrecognition.

A philosophy of life almost similar to that of Lacan can be traced in Beckett. Beckett is preoccupied with the problem of being or search for the self or identity of self – Who am I? and the idea of God or Godot may be said as something nullity or just the expectation, which helps to bear our existence as Estragon puts it "We, ourselves, find something eh Didi to give us the impression we exist". The two men contemplate suicide but without much determination, despite their agreement to leave the place, they cannot. It may be that they are in different places while waiting for Godot but that is unlikely since they never actually move in the text. They are doomed in their present plight and can only talk about their plight with each other. The play makes it clear in Estragon's comment "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful". The messenger boy intensifies both the certainty and the uncertainty – Mr Godot "would not come this evening but surely tomorrow". Here is an indication of both Freudian confident assertion of the unconscious and Lacanian sceptical philosophy of the unconscious and so, we see the complexity, absurdity and ambiguity remains inherent throughout the whole play. One critic wittily but inaccurately remarked! "Nothing happens twice".

Such a criticism is natural about a play where no serious conflict of any kind or complex story of love relationship or even of pure comic laughter is presented. It appears Beckett has rejected the conventional views of plot and characterization. The characters in Beckett's stage may be interpreted in the light of the Lacanian deconstruction of liberal humanistic notion of the unique individual selfhood. Beckett explores a static situation, the essential sameness, uncertainty is certain there. The paradox of change and stability, necessity and absurdity, irreducible ambiguities are some of the essential elements of its total impact. His plays may not be constructed along with traditional line like exposition of situation, development and peripetia conflict and catastrophe, but based on repetition, return of leitmotif originating from the conflicting realm of the conscious and unconscious realm of mind. The most obvious return of leitmotif is "We are waiting for Godot, which recurs in different guesses a dozen times, but there are other such, nothing to be done". It appears Beckett has taken his elements for the play from the popular source of entertainments like Circus, Acrobats, Clown, Mimic Film, Music Hall, etc., which have become instrumental in shaping a balancing of elements in the play.

Beckett's originality lies in evolving a style which succeeds in shaping comey and tragedy, the grotesque and the sublime. There is no exaggeration in saying Beckett and the absurdist playwrights like Arthur Adamov, Eugene Ionesco and others have created a particular type of drama, making a revolution in the dramatic stage of the world. They have adapted and modified the millennial art of stage to the expression of anxiety and destitution of present age. Hence the critic Martin Esslin coined the term 'Theatre of the Absurd', drawing from the existential philosophy of Albert Camus. Above all, Beckett's major plays and novels are considered classics of modern literature as the work of Isben or Kafka or James Joyce. And we also know the Nobel Prize citation puts it in 1969 – "he was worthy of high and great respect for writing which, in new form and style for the novel and drama, acquires its elevation for the destitution of modern man".

It appears Beckett shows the significance of language by giving an adieu to language, making it something enigmatic, illusive or unstable. For instance, in the play *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon seem to be engaged in 'language games', without realising its significance, which provide them the social identity, and they are self-contained and self-validating. There is no transcendental reality behind them. The notion of language as self-contained and self-validating relates closely to Lyotard's idea of disappearance of the realm as something enigmatic, illusive, imaginary image of God or Godot. Jeffrey Nealon in his *Samuel Beckett and Post-modern: Language Games, Plays and Waiting for Godot* says "it is the play of Vladimir and Estragon's words, not any agreed upon meaning for them which constitutes their social bond. Waiting for legitimation of their in Godot, is from the very beginning, unnecessary." But, they are in very much difficulty in believing that gaming is enough. They don't have full faith in the security provided by some grand narrative of modernist stage, which explains and gives significance to apparently meaningless details and trails of our daily life. But, they wish to have the security and so, they are trapped in modernist stage. Hence, it may be said that Vladimir and Estragon seek to legitimate their discourse and it is parodied in Lucky's 'think' near the end of the First Act. This is a practical deconstruction of language game of truth, a parody of the totalizing, meta-discourse of philosophy and religion.

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Women Health Narratives: Illness, Stigma and Media

SRISHTI RATURI & VISHAL JOSHI

Srishti Raturi

Abstract

This article is based on two Indian women narratives; Shabana, a drug addict, and Sarika, a cancer patient. Shabana's and Sarika's narrative is an intertwined journey of stigma around a woman's battle with substance abuse and another's story of healing towards survival. Illness, media, and stigma all play a significant yet complex role in shaping women's health experiences in society, culture, and themselves. Media discourse reflects the communicative significance that engages with health, emotion and a whole being. A disease deals with diverse identities and psychological illness sabotages physical disease, behaviour, and perception as a whole.

Keywords: health, illness narratives, stigma, society

Introduction

Illness narratives are an account of "innate human experiences", (Kleinman) reflecting deeply on the sufferer and their society. Living with physical distress can affect a person's work life, family, expectations, social life, and mental health. The whole structure of physical, psychological, spiritual, and social is interconnected to form the reception of the ailment the person goes through. The stirring accounts of illness experiences of individuals struggling and dealing with problems related to all aspects of their surroundings are channeled to their bodily symptoms. Therefore, narratives of illness are not merely stories of anatomical discomfort individuals talk about but furthermore, a reflection of their material and cultural basis of their life. Women's illness is often stigmatised in several aspects, be it their reproductive health or a common disease they ought to have or have. The stigma around women's health in India incorporates innumerable factors, concepts, and theories.

This research streamlines two Indian women's narratives and their accounts of experiencing ill health indicate the reception of their illness, the expression via subjective experience, their positive emotions, and how the narratives give power and validity to their own experiences—taking the argument of women's illness beyond its diagnosis and connecting to the social and cultural impact on it. Women's coping with an illness is often associated with the 'recognition of severity' of that illness which entails in the material and cultural discourse. The social, psychological, and psychosocial aspects of Indian women's illness raise certain questions like, is medicine enough for the material body to deal with her hopes, fears, and failings?

How do we bridge the gap between women and the stigmatisation of their agency in India? And how media discourses formulate the communicative power in formation of gender identity?

Vishal Joshi

Illness, Stigma and Media

The two diverse situations and characters' experiences deal with hopes, feelings, and failures in their suffering. These prompt one to dive into the deeper aspects to analyse the subjectivity of their experiences and the true picture of their health and wellness with their narrative. It facilitates the recognition, interpretation, and reconstruction of illness stories. These illness narratives of women attempt to acknowledge the articulation of their distress besides the physical suffering, comprehending the role of healers and healthcare providers in the intersections of physical and social space. Shabana is a substance abuser from urban India, who started taking drugs in quite different circumstances. Her narrative exemplifies the problems faced by women in Indian households and the howness of the reception of their illness can open up the space for us to realise that the essential nature of their addiction lies in everyday life, situations, and people. Another story is about Sarika Rana, a cancer survivor from Uttarakhand, whose positive journey inspires us to never give up in life.

Indian women's narratives around illness are given subsequent space in urban Indian communities. Shabana started taking drugs at a very young age and became an intravenous drug user at the age of sixteen. Shabana's family environment wasn't as positive as a supportive family system is to be, she explains: *'Ghar mein koi bada nahi tha . . . koi poochne waala nahi tha'* (there was no elder person at home, no one to ask things to me). Shabana's father and uncles were heroin addicts and this instability led her to leave her home for another place. Her partner, with whom she eloped at school urged her to drugs use the way in which– *'usne zabardasti nashe ki lat laga di',* (he forcefully dragged me to be a drug addict) Shabana describes her life indicates the level of control she has over her life choices and distress and fear of handling her choices on her own. For six years she struggled with her extreme dependency on opioids and while fighting this physical struggle, mentally she was feeling the absence of her mother and sister, whom she described as her only family. "She recalled: *Nashe ki wajah se mujhse mere apne bichhad gaye, mujhe meri ammi aur behen ki bahut yaad aati thi. Main apni behen ki shaadi mein bhi shaamil nahi hui, meri ammi ko sab kuchh akele hi karna padaa*" (Illness Narratives 176).

Later this twenty-three-year-old young woman, coming to a treatment centre with her mother, got to know about her father's and uncle's deaths due to heroin overdose. This incident was like a reawakening for her to regain herself and her family. Her mother was very supportive of her as she positively said on being asked about her daughter's marriage as she was HIV positive, that she would get her married to an HIV-positive partner. This outlook created space and agency for her daughter rather than associating it with the stigmatised notion of criticising her for ruining her life forever. The progressive narration identifies the

judgement or action in Shabana's story, indicating the acceptance and acknowledgement of her past actions, leading to a better healing journey.

Another narrative is of Sarika Rana from Uttarakhand who was diagnosed with cancer in 2013. She was pursuing her higher education in Biotechnology in Delhi. Cancer was diagnosed in its early stage which leads to 6 months-long treatment of pain and suffering. Sarika reflects, "I felt pain, had bouts of crying fits, and lost all my confidence." Throughout the whole process, she observed the social stigma and myth around cancer as a disease. The negative atmosphere of fear emotionally challenged her in her process of recovery. "This not only leads to a late diagnosis or wrong faith in faulty alternative treatment but most importantly it also affects the quality of life of the people who have completed their treatment," Sarika explains. Cancer has always been linked with fear despite the medical advancement and the solutions, especially for women. Mass media significantly spread awareness and preventive measures through health policies and stories depicting personal experiences. Media discourses fulfilling superficial layers of their ideological functions represent the personal and political levels of a social cause or issue. Media reflect "values, beliefs and morality that support the established order and the class interests that dominate it" (Waitzkin 223).

Media manufactures a certain picture of women's pain and suffering which perpetuates understanding of their health in a labelled and fragmented manner. A true picture of a woman's health doesn't just revolve around her diagnosis; she experiences it before, during, and even after the treatment. Stigma has potential impact and interventions in a person's life. Especially women have been a bigger victim of the stance that holds innumerable factors that contribute to creating stigma. One of the latest qualitative studies of lived experiences of mental health of Indian women living with HIV and experiencing intersectional stigma has shown that the burden of stigma significantly leads to the poor mental and physical health of women living with HIV. A purposive sample of 31 women with HIV was taken during 2020-2021. Another latest study on perinatal psychological disorders among women in low to middle-income countries found more than 20% of women are affected by it. The social and political dynamics around health adhere to all levels of media's representation, thereby creating common stereotypes and mental health stigmas.

Both Sarika's and Shabana's stories came through certain media, pictures, and interviews, the manufactured mass media at its ideological level has a lot of layers in portraying a certain story, particularly of women. The media are 'stitched into the fabric of daily life, underpinning its routines, lubricating its conversations and affirming its quotidian realities' (Scannell 333).

'If we are to have a comprehensive account of the role of media discourse in the reproduction of social life, then it must include the interpersonal dimension of talk as well as its ideational aspects - the social-relational as well as the ideological' (Montgomery 88).

As a multidisciplinary field, media discourse reflects cultural, psychological and sociological diversity. It's a process of what goes on to make it at an ideological level. According to Foucault, "discourses are structures of possibility and constraint; they are historically

constituted social constructions in the organisation and circulation of knowledge" (Talbot 11).

Media discourses pave the way for representation but to argue and facilitate more than just representation is necessary. These discourses integrate both the ideational and interpersonal dimensions. The intellectual as well as societal shaping around media discourses affects social interaction (relations) and engagement among people. Shabana's story has had so many inter-relational aspects to it; drug-addicted uncle and cousins in the family, her educational background, her husband's addiction, and the forced interaction and conditioning, all breeding to a very complex media narrative. The bits and pieces of her statements, quoted as it is, definitely blur the line and create a touching and plausible narrative to understand and interact with as a reader. Representation and Interaction stem from a range of perspectives through which individuals, events, and concepts are portrayed in media. Drawing from an individual's direct or indirect observations, personal and cultural representation should be free from a non-reciprocal approach and concerns with communication ethos. The interviews of both Sarika and Shabana map a positive outlook at the end, but the emotional aspect has a responsive approach which hinders the standpoint of readers in forming their outlook of the story.

Paul Ricoeur believes that reciprocity seeks recognition, thereby concerning each other. Ricoeur asserts "The idea of a struggle for recognition is at the heart of modern social relations" (Helenius 2). This promotes a comprehensive self-understanding emphasising mutual recognition as guidance of cultural objects. Mutual recognition foremost begins with self and then extends to the other. Reciprocal recognition is a primary part of being. A better narrative understanding has to have reciprocity to apprehend cultural, social and political dynamics that affect self-reflexivity as much as a personal narrative does. Shabana's and Sarika's accounts expose the external factors that hinder the interaction and concerns that are mediated in a less apparent manner.

"However, it is also the case that the existential pressure that illness exerts on the person suffering, and on the caregivers too, goes beyond issues of poverty and resource constraints, though these conditions can never be bracketed" (Afflictions 113).

Illness requires an investment of emotions, silence, resilience, and the shared human experience to process and retain the mental effect of the bodily disease. It's not just upon the female body suffering from the illness but also the socio-cultural discourse and practices persisting around them. The reception of ailment or suffering is conditioned around in social as well as psychosocial discourse of a being. Cure differs from healing, the cultural and social phenomenon attributes to gender, caste, class, ethnicity, and sexuality, giving a larger spectrum of belonging to medical perceptions of illness and health. Media in any form of communication, accentuates this belongingness by giving power and validation while feeding the masses with communicative power and understanding. It leaves a significant impact in creating a poignant

environment of psychosocial understanding of identifying with particular information provided in a context.

The psychological distress will truly be understood when the voice of a woman dominates the discourse of women's illness. Distress is an unpleasant subjective feeling characterised by sadness, restlessness, nervousness, and hopelessness (Ross and Van Willigen 1997). The social and psychological attributions are connected and defined in a community. The caste, class, and religion are significant to understanding their perception of their distress and suffering. Therefore, a woman's well-being is directly linked to her social and physiological well-being.

Conclusion

The reception of a woman's narrative interconnects with emotional subjectivity and the ongoing process of the stigmatised voice of societal norms. Narratives and media play a major role in shaping women's illness narratives. Shaban's realization is centered on the death of her father and uncles, envelopes the story to see how a significant portion of her narrative is overpowered by the legacy of the male members of her family. On the other hand, Sarika ending up in a positive emotional discourse of taking up the cancer stigma helped in the articulation of her psychological and psychosocial being. The stigma from internalisation to resistance to change needs a social dimension of communicative ethos which promotes a holistic understanding of interactions. A woman's illness is fitted in the society in a certain way that the fear and stigma foregrounds every aspect of her physical and psychological being. Research and experiments relating to women's disease still lacks on the ground of personalised care. Therefore stigma, illness and media coalesce to facilitate the recognition and transition of illness stories transferring them into another perspective.

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Indian Nationalism and Identity Formation

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Abstract

This paper is a study of Indian nationalism and how it has been discussed by different Indian writers both before and after the independence of India that has helped in identity formation of the nation as well as of the writers. It examines how nationalism had helped Indians to unite together to free India from the foreign rule and some of the illustrious works of Indian English as well as Hindi writers played significant roles in shaping the movements and giving nationalism new flavours and how in recent decade new nationalism took birth that is close to religious-nationalism and jingoism, and far from spirituality. It also explores how and what Mahatma Gandhi, Bhimrao Ambedkar and some other makers of modern India envisioned free India from the lens of nationalism. Comparison and contrast between nationalism and patriotism have also been made for bringing out the essence of Indian nationalism.

Keywords: Nationalism, patriotism, identity, social-justice, renaissance, spiritual unity

1. Introduction

There have been long debates on nationalism but there is no common agreement on a single definition to be accepted by all. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines nationalism as "loyalty and devotion to a nation". This definition suits to the masses, and therefore, everybody agrees that he is a nationalist. But its practicality has been challenged often. Though for a better understanding of this term, the same dictionary has provided a comprehensive definition and clarified difference between nationalism and patriotism because often these terms are understood as synonymous but they are not. In India many nationalist-writers have discussed nationalism in their own way, particularly during the freedom struggle but their credence is always not close to each other. This debate has created many aspects of nationalism – "political", "ethical", religious, cultural, etc.

The analysis of nationalism by philosophers and historians has remained close to "ethical" and "political" debate and far from "intellectual" debate. There have also been attempts for "collective identity" as the most ideal state of nationalism. But it is not accepted by all in practice. Merriam-Webster Dictionary describes nationalism as "a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups"

(www.merriam-webster.com). Jingoism is a similar ideology of stronger feeling towards one's own culture and believing that one's own culture is the best. It is different from nationalism in a sense that it believes in "military aggressiveness". In this context patriotism draws our attention. Both nationalism and patriotism signify "strong feelings for one's country" but "placing" one's country "over others" makes nationalism different from patriotism. Patriotism strengthens the scope of coexistence and favours multiculturalism and multilingualism, and therefore, a patriot finds beauty and fragrance in multi-religious and multiethnic nation, and appreciates it. The identity of such a nation is based on all-embracing nature. Patriotism binds the citizens together in a single thread but nationalism at its peak leaves scope for separatism. The difference between patriotism and nationalism is that the former binds and the latter blinds the people.

Nationalism helps identify the ethnic group(s). It is also responsible for creating identity of a nation. The origin of nation developed the ideology of nationalism or vice versa. It is not of recent origin. Though it flourished in the modern times and moved from Europe to Asia and Africa. The modern nationalism dates back to the 17th century England and "the influence of the Bible gave form to the new nationalism by identifying the English people with ancient Israel." (Kohn, *Britannica*) It affected the whole world, particularly the countries under a foreign rule. Therefore, "the 19th century has been called the age of nationalism in Europe, while the 20th century witnessed the rise and struggle of powerful national movements throughout Asia and Africa." (Kohn, *Britannica*) Along with the Age of Enlightenment in Europe, "French nationalism" is said to be influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau who promoted "national will" and "his regard for the common people as the true depository of civilization." (Kohn, *Britannica*) Such spirit also prevailed in India during freedom struggle, and its outlandish form got intensified in recent decade too. Thus gradually nationalism changed its form and distanced itself from patriotism. For "intellectual debate" on nationalism, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi and Bhimrao Ambedkar are important for their progressive and inclusive vision.

This study also entails some of the illustrious works of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, and of Hindi writers like Bharatendu Harishchandra, Mahaveer Prasad Dwivedi, Premchand, Maithili Sharan Gupta, Jaishankar Prasad, Subhadra Kumari Chauhan, and Ramdhari Singh Dinkar.

2. Indian Nationalism and Identity Formation

2.1 Chatterjee, Tagore and Aurobindo

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Anandmath* (1882) is one of the most popular works written in the light of freedom struggle of India. His song "Vande Mataram" written in 1876 and published in the novel *Anandmath* created a great patriotic vibe throughout the country. This book, though written as a fiction, shows the struggle of the protagonists Mahendra and Kalyani but has the background of "the sannyasi rebellion" (1770-77) against the British

rule. Through another protagonist, Prafulla, of his novel *Devi Chaudharani* (1884), Chatterjee inspires Indian women to participate in the freedom struggle. Its influence on Indians can be understood by the evidence that the British government banned this novel.

After Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Tagore and Aurobindo are two illuminating figures in Indian English Literature. Tagore's concept of nationalism encompasses truth, spirituality, "racial unity", "the moral culture of brotherhood," "man's moral nature", "moral adjustment", and "the least feeling of enmity against aliens." There is no place for "man's baser passions of greed and cruel hatred" (*Nationalism* 97-102). For him, nationalism should help "discover", "moral power of love" and our "soul in the spiritual unity of all living beings" (*Nationalism* 102). Tagore writes that nationalism should not engender pride because "pride in every form breeds blindness at the end … that is misleading" (*Nationalism* 104). Nationalism should never be connected with religion. When other scholars confine nationalism within a boundary of a nation, Tagore believes in the "pluralistic conception of nationalism" like that of Mahatma Gandhi. It is the true spirit of nationalism that unites Indians together. Tagore's oft quoted lines of *Gitanjali* echo in the minds of Indians even today: "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; …./ Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake." (1-8) He dreams of a free India where knowledge can be attained freely. He believes in the world that does not divide on the name of domestic issues. For him, "truth", "perfection" and broadmindedness ("Vasudhaiva kutumbakam") are great weapons of nationalism. Lajpat Rai comments on him, "While" "Tagore is to some degree losing in the estimation and affection of his own countrymen by somewhat sacrificing nationalism to art, he is gaining in world reputation." (223)

Thus Tagore's view of nationalism is close to "transnationalism" and "internationalism or universalism" (Dutta 1-3). For him, "There is one history – the history of man. All national histories are merely chapters in the larger one." (*Nationalism* 99) His nationalism is found in the "spirit of cooperation" and "the common interest of all." (*Nationalism* 100) Tagore compares India with America and Europe and establishes "the ideals of humanity" and does not accept America's justification of "Western civilization to the East." (*Nationalism* 103-07) His awareness of "the absurdity" caused by nationalism is also reflected in his book, *Personality.* He had predicted that, "economics", "politics" and "consequent militarism" will not bring all development in the world. The future of all nations will depend on "world-wide social cooperation" coupled with "spiritual ideals of reciprocity" (*Personality* 218). Tagore does not support appropriation of nationalism in his writings. He writes, "With the growth of nationalism, man has become the greatest menace to man." (*Creative Unity* 146) This statement perfectly suits New India or the shining India or the divided India all due to political and religious hypocrisies that can bring temporary joy but its future consequences can make a nation unfit in the world. Even fifty and sixty years before India's independence Tagore was very much aware about the consequences of nationalism that India has witnessed in recent decade. In his words, "Nationalism is the training of a whole people for a narrow ideal; and

when it gets hold of their minds it is sure to lead them to moral degeneracy and intellectual blindness." (*Creative Unity* 148)

Aurobindo was also well aware about the result of such "blindness", therefore, he gave importance to "The religion which embraces Science and faith, Theism, Christianity, Mahomedanism and Buddhism and yet is none of these" ("Essays in Philosophy and Yoga" 6). He writes that, "This *sanatan dharm* has many scriptures, Veda, Vedanta, Gita, Upanishad, Darshana, Purana, Tantra" but this religion does not "reject the Bible or the Koran." ("Essays in Philosophy and Yoga" 6) In him we find such a yogi who treats nation as a Motherland and "Mother Goddess", therefore, nationalism for Aurobindo is a "religion", "*Shakti"* (power) and an *"avtar"* (incarnation). His blend of nationalism and spiritualism is different from other Indian thinkers. For him, nationalism is immortal. He believes that as mother sustains her children, so children should also be true patriots to save their motherland. So in Aurobindo we find no difference between patriotism and nationalism. For him, both words have the same significance and engender spiritual experience in nationals. Like Tagore, Aurobindo also believes that "to help in building up India for the sake of humanity" comes from "the spirit of the Nationalism" ("Essays in Philosophy and Yoga" 6). Both of these writers created an identity of humanism through their approaches to nationalism.

2.2 "Lal-Bal-Pal"

Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal, hardliner-triumvirate ("Lal-Bal-Pal"), tried to create an identity of India that was forgotten due to aggression, hypocrisy and "hypnotism" of the British rulers. They were the champions of nationalist movements through their scholarship and nationalist activities in India and also on the foreign lands. Indians called them "revolutionaries" but British officials called them "seditionists", "anarchists" and "terrorists". (qtd. in Fischer-Tine´ 326)

Generally Indian nationalism is said to be created on the Indian soil and the contribution of foreign land is neglected. Lajpat Rai, in a chapter on "world forces" of his book, *Young India* (1916), writes that "There can be no doubt that Indian nationalism is receiving a great deal of support from the world forces operating outside of India." (221) He boldly asserts that the "forces of European nationalism" shaped the Indian national movement." (221) He clarifies that "The Indian nationalist is an ardent student of the history of Modern Europe, of England, France, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Russia, Austria, and last but not least, of Turkey and the Balkan States." (221) This book also vindicates that Indian nationalists were active even in England, the USA, and some other countries. Lajpat Rai gives credit to the foreigners and Indians together for the rise of Indian nationalism. His "Nationalist Calendar" contains the names of "Washington, Cavour, Mazzini, Bismarck, Kossuth, Emmet, Parnell, by the side of Partap, Ram Das, Guru Govind Singh, Sivaji, Tipu Sultan, and the Rani of Jhansi." (*Young India* 221)

Tilak, being a scholar and a visionary leader, was influenced by the West. He saw nationalism from the eye of a reformer – social and administrative. Even being an extremist-nationalist,

he appreciated Indian Councils Act of 1892 (that was passed to provide the indirect election of representatives from the local bodies and economic associations). He termed the Act a "gain" from the British rule in India. His idea of nationalism was accepted by most of the countrymen, and therefore, he was conferred with the title of "Lokmanya" (accepted by the people, in other words a mass leader). Though, at the same time the British authorities called him "The father of the Indian unrest". Through his identity of an advocate of "Self-Rule" (Swaraj) he strengthened nationalist movement in which his association with Annie Besant in the Home Rule Movement proved vital. According to Vishwanath Prasad Varma, Tilak's "political thought represents a synthesis of the some of the dominant conceptions of Indian thought and the nationalistic and democratic ideas of the modern west" (15).

> … freedom according to Tilak was a divine attribute. Freedom was equated with the autonomous power of creativism. Without freedom no moral and spiritual life was possible. Foreign imperialism kills the soul of a nation and hence Tilak fought against the British empire. Thus there were philosophical foundations for the political struggles for liberty in which Tilak was engaged. (Varma 15)

The third champion of the nationalist movement, Bipin Chandra Pal, finds "pure hypnotism" of the British rulers that he discusses in his book *The Spirit of Indian Nationalism* (1910). He had identified it ("pure hypnotism") in the common masses as they were made believe that "… India stood on a lower plane of humanity, and England's mission was to civilise the semi-barbarous native" (Pal 42). Indians were also made believe that they were really "weak" and "foreign Government was strong" therefore, it is better to be ruled by them (Pal 42). For Indians, "the crooked ways of civilized diplomacy" was "as gospel truth" (Pal 42). But the identity of barbarism was not accepted by educated Indians. Therefore, Pal also begins the Preface and the first chapter of his book with "Om", the very religious term, to touch the psyche of the people and entice them towards patriotism and nationalism. For Pal, Nationalist Movement was "not really a conflict between the progressive and conservative elements of Indian society" but "a conflict between aggressive European and progressive Indian culture." (44) Foreign rulers used all hypocrisies to establish themselves in India, but Pal, for the sake of "national consciousness", tried to spread the messages of Hinduism and Buddhism to reveal "India's place in the evolution of modern world-culture." (44) He tried "to create a new pride of race; and in this pride of race was really born the new National Spirit in the country." (44)

2.3 Hindi Renaissance and Nationalism

Hindi Renaissance is said to be started by Bharatendu Harishchandra. He promoted nationalist spirit ingrained in collective consciousness. He also "sowed the seeds of Hindi nationalism." (Bhardwaj, Web.) Along with him, Mahaveer Prasad Dwivedi, Premchand, Maithili Sharan Gupta, Jaishankar Prasad, Subhadra Kumari Chauhan, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar and many others made Indian literature a vehicle of nationalism. They intensified national consciousness by voicing "poverty", "slavery", and "exploitation" in their works. Bharatendu's popular play *Andher Nagari* (1881) is an allegory for British rule in India. His understanding of

"drain of wealth" as the "chief evil of foreign rule" and bringing it out in the public lecture with facts and figures helped open the eyes of the people.

Dinkar, though influenced by Milton, Keats, Tagore, and Iqbal, was "moulded" out of "anti-colonial consciousness" (Singh 71). Even being in the government job, he continued spreading spirit of nationalism through his poetry, and for this he was transferred 22 times in 5 years by the British government. On the way to a fierce nationalist, he turned to be a Gandhian. Through his poem "Himalaya" (published in *Renuka* in 1935) he tries to bring back identity and self-respect of his motherland whereas through *Hunkar* (1938) and *Kurukshetra* (1946) he prepares the base for anti-colonialism.

Premchand created a wide readership through his eye-opening stories. His novels and short stories were warmly welcomed by Hindi readers. Through his characters he placed before the readers the real identity of India lying in poverty during British rule. His popular novel *Karmabhoomi* (1932) has the protagonist Amarkant who loves Sakina. Once he wants to meet her at her home when it is evening. When Amarkant calls her out, she replies to him to wait and she comes to meet him after an hour has passed. The reason behind her delay was that she had only one sari with patches that she had washed and put out to dry. When Amarkant came to meet her, she was actually naked. Through Sakina, Premchand has portrayed the actual picture of Indian life during British rule. Poverty rose due to exploitation done by the colonizers and also by the native moneylenders who were close to the British rulers who had invented compound interest for the borrowers. His another novel, *Rangbhoomi* (1924), has a blind character, Surdas, who epitomizes Mahatma Gandhi and nationalist politics.

Mahaveer Prasad Dwivedi, during his editorship (1903-20) of *Saraswati* (Hindi journal), revolutionized the people by his editorials and publishing the works of other writers of his time including Premchand and Maithili Sharan Gupta. Jaishankar Prasad's "Arun yeh madhumay desh hamara" and Subhadra Kumari Chauhan's "Jhansi ki raani" and "Veeron kaa kaisaa ho vasant" reawakened the consciousness of the people about national identity and glory of the motherland. Maithili Sharan Gupta's "Bharat Bharati" (1910) is a landmark poem of nationalism in which he enthuses the people to bridge the gulf between the past and the present of India during the struggle for freedom. Hindi writers also produced songs on the India's glorious past that deepened people's affection for land, language and culture whereas the prevalent "racial tension" strengthened national consciousness and inspired people to join freedom movements.

2.4 Gandhi, Ambedkar and Nationalism

In contemporary social, religious and political scenario, the prominence of Gandhi and Ambedkar has become very relevant. While Gandhi epitomizes nonviolence, Ambedkar epitomizes social-justice, an umbrella term for the rights and respect for the marginalized. Ambedkar has surpassed all makers of modern India due to his unparalleled foresight and sagacity for independent India. For him, "nationalism was a modern phenomenon that has supplanted religion as the primary carrier of identity for most people." (*Dr. Babasaheb*

Ambedkar 423) Ambedkar differentiates between communalism and nationalism as "Any claim for the sharing of power by the minority is called communalism while the monopolizing of the whole power by the majority is called Nationalism." (*Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar* 427) Radhakrishnan goes one step ahead. For him, it is a "selfish nationalism. It is an organised form of human greed and avarice." As a "nation wants earth", an "individual wants wealth" (*The Philosophy* 100). In this condition, everlasting evils spring up on the name of religious organisations and under the umbrella of nationalism and patriotism; the evil deeds that were not imagined even in an uncivilized society that have become common in the civilized society today. Radhakrishnan writes that, "civilisation has based itself on cannibalism." (89) These are due to "the infection of hatred" (Rajagopalachari, 4 Sept. 1947, qtd. by Guha 83). Living in such "false spirit of nationalism" democracy has lost its meaning due to the absence of fraternity. (Radhakrishnan, *The Philosophy* 264) According to Ambedkar, "This is fraternity, which is only another name for democracy. Democracy is not merely a form of Government. It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellowmen." (*Annihilation of Caste* 14.2)

Conclusion

This paper posits that British-Indian encounter paved the way for Indian nationalism and shaped national identity from colonial identity in which Bengal Renaissance and Hindi Renaissance played significant roles. The foundation of the Bengal Renaissance by Raja Ram Mohan Roy for social, cultural, artistic and intellectual movement from the late 18th century to the early 20th century and separation of Bengal in 1905 prepared a base for nationalism and identity formation. Nationalist writers writing in English, Hindi and in other Indian languages all played vital roles in national identity formation through their writings without fear of the imperial government. Hypocrisy and "hypnotism" of British rulers worked for establishing them in India but the literature produced during the British rule infused the spirit of nationalism in the people for the sake of "Self-rule". Though India became free from foreign rule the recent decade has brought another challenge to it. British India saw an amalgamation of nationalism and spirituality but today's India sees "the infection of hatred" in nationalism.

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Transcreating Shakespeare to Cinema: The Case of Akira Kurosawa's *Ran* as a Culturally Embedded Text

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Abstract

Art-forms emanate from a creative source that often defies classification and categorisation into genres. Essential elements of art have certain commonalities, acting as intergeneric links between forms of expression. This paper examines the commonalities as well as distinctions marking two classic auteurs and their works; William Shakespeare and Akira Kurosawa. The paper explores Kurosawa's Shakespeare adaptations, with special reference to *Ran*, Kurosawa's retelling of *King L*ear. The paper argues that, rather than an indigenisation or domestication of the Shakespearean classic, the plot changes in the movie emanate organically from the Japanese milieu adopted. The paper attempts to contextualise a classic example of literary adaptation and the resultant intertextuality.

Keywords: adaptation, domestication, originality, transcreation

Introduction

"The content of a movie is a novel or a play or opera" (McLuhan 40)

The universal nature of human emotions renders the core of artforms extremely similar as emotions and experience serve as the inspiration for art. Generic classifications of forms of art often entail complications and overlapping, and precise boundaries are difficult to trace. Literary intertextuality is a phenomenon that is acknowledged and something that creates exciting layers of interaction between the source texts and the translated/ transcreated texts.

This paper analyses the creative interactions between two maestros in their fields, Akira Kurosawa and William Shakespeare. The paper argues that Akira Kurosawa undertakes a systematic indigenisation of Shakesperean master plots to a Japanese milieu, placing the stories, in backdrops embedded in Japanese culture, in a way that even the plot gets driven by the context, resulting in major changes from the source, while retaining what can be called an essence of the Shakespearean original. These retellings in turn reflect the underlying complexities of East Asian civilizations presenting it to a global audience in an unprecedented manner. The discussion reveals that Kurosawa adopts a different approach to each of his Shakespeare adaptations, *Throne of Blood* (1957), *The Bad Sleep Well* (1960) and *Ran* (1985). This paper focuses on *Ran*, Kurosawa's adaptation of *King Lear*, to elucidate the

proposed argument. The paper analyses how the migration of the setting to Japan impacts the plot line and the features of Japanese culture revealed through these changes.

Virtuosos across time and cultures have adapted as well as transliterated Shakespeare, while Shakespeare himself has borrowed from a plethora of sources. Dr. Johnson decodes the secret of Shakespearean mimesis, "Imitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind" (Preface 39). Originality and adaptability thus attain a unique stature in the narratives of Shakespeare, leading to a curious case of intertextuality.

All three of Kurosawa's movies inspired by Shakespeare plays have been called 'loose adaptations'(Nicholson). *The Throne of Blood* was called an 'autonomous work of art' (Blumenthal) and was a creative conversation between two geniuses in their own fields. Western critics viewed the amalgamation of Japanese elements to the Shakespearean plot as shocking and unprecedented. Military nationalism of post war Japan as well as the American influence and occupation of the country was blended into the storyline, rendering it a broad adaptation. *The Bad Sleep Well* deviates from *Hamlet* in its omission of most of the famous scenes from the play and transplanting the story to a corporate setting in Japan. Crucial plot changes are made to match the revised backdrop, rendering it the freest adaptation of the three. Set in the power-hungry corporate world, and the enormous corruption there, the contemporary elements in the movie overpower the Shakespearean plot. *Ran*, the epic retelling of Shakespeare's King Lear, is set in a feudal warlord clan of 16th century Japan. Shakespeare's poetic language is replaced by visual poetics in Kurosawa in all the three films.

Kurosawa adapted *King Lear* when he was in his seventies. Even though a world-renowned film maker by then, he struggled to find funding, that pushed this movie towards the fag end of his career. Many critics consider this epic drama the iconic film maker's swan song even though it was not his last film. The film traces the history of the Ichimonji clan, a feudal warlord family in Japan through a couple of generations. The story is about an aging feudal baron named Lord Hidetora Ichimonji, in his twilight years, deciding to relinquish his kingdom to his three sons, Taro, Jiro and Saburo. What ensues then is an epic battle of human emotions and greed, true to the Japanese title of the film, "Ran", literally meaning chaos.

Domestication of the Shakespearean Classic

Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Kurosawa's Hidetora Ichimonji are not identical characters. Hidetora is not really Lear, nor is *Ran* a *King Lear* transposed to feudal Japan. In the true sense of the word adaptation, Kurosawa borrows loosely from Shakespeare and amalgamates the plot with the well-known Japanese legend of Motonari Mori, a 16th-century warlord whose three sons were regarded as examples of filial virtue in Japan. The first major change in the plot line is the replacement of King Lear's daughters with Hidetora's sons. King Lear's three daughters Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia are represented in *Ran* by Hidetora's sons Taro, Jiro and Saburo. The essentially patriarchal setting in Japan could not have accepted daughters inheriting the father's wealth. The fierce masculinity displayed in the film can be

attributed to the replacement of daughters in the Shakespeare play with three sons in the adaptation.

Thus, gender equations play a crucial role in the Japanisation of King Lear. While Kurosawa assigns prominent characters to men by replacing King Lear's daughters, ironically, the entire tragedy can be subsumed to Lady Kaede's revenge upon the Ichimonji clan. This can be read in line with the Eastern veneration and fear of the female energy or the female principle. Traditionally the role of women in Japan has been based on 'three submissions' young women submit to their fathers, married women submit to their husbands, and elderly women submit to their sons. (Cooper)

Marked differences can be observed in the courtship traditions in the two texts. While *King Lear* depicts scenes where Cordelia is being wooed by her suitors, Lady Kaede, major woman character in *Ran* is the victim of treachery and treason by Hidetora. Her marriage to Taro is seen as an opportunity to annex her family's wealth. Her entire family was massacred by Hidetora. Kaede had left her castle in order to marry Taro. After the wedding, Kaede's family reduced security to their castle and Hidetora used this opportunity to surprise them and destroy the family. Kaede's mother took her own life in the main hall in the castle, injuring Kaede for life and kindling the flame of revenge in her.

The revenge tragedy structure is an original thread introduced by Kurosawa. The entire plot of *Ran* can be analysed as Lady Kaede avenging her family's death. In the rugged landscape that Ran is set in, masculine energies battle for prominence. However, in Japanese mythology, the Goddess of Mount Fuji is the patron of all volcanoes in Japan, and justifies Hidetora's demeaning parade through the volcanic plain where the revengeful feminine energies engulf the masculine. While the masculine battles are fought with pompous words and a lot of bloodshed, the feminine ones are silent and schematic.

Gender plays a prominent role in a crucial plot juncture in the texts- the test that the parent puts their offspring through. The test that King Lear challenges his daughters to, a narcissistic exercise in which they must linguistically proffer their eternal love to him, is replaced in *Ran* by a physical challenge. Hidetora puts his sons through the 'bundle of arrows' test, expecting to cultivate a spirit of unity as well as cooperation between the brothers. Lear proposes a test of love for his daughters while Hidetora proposes a test of intelligence as well as strength for his sons. Kurosawa's largely masculine tale and unforgiving, rough terrain invokes a tale of machismo which is then ruthlessly deconstructed by the fire of feminine revenge. This complex balance of the male-female energies at play in the work sets it apart from the Shakespearean original.

Filial Relations

Power relations within the most compact and considered most sacrosanct social structure, the family, interested both Shakespeare and Kurosawa. The idea of filial ingratitude, remains the major theme of both the works under consideration, even though the treatment is largely

culture specific in both the tales. Parental authority interfering with individual freedom and expression of children is the complex situation addressed in the works. At a deeper level, both the works question the extent and meaning of elemental emotions like love, gratitude and revenge.

Certain aspects of filial relations in Japan are alien to a western perspective. A note on Ran DVD tries to explain this divide. Duty prevailed even in familial relationships.

> A Japanese influence not immediately apparent to western viewers is the underlying theme of "giri," the complex system of interpersonal obligations that is a fundamental concept of Japanese culture. The title Ran, which may be translated as "chaos," can be thought of in this sense as the destruction of the bonds of duty uniting a son to his father, a brother to his brother, and a samurai to his lord. (*Ran)*

16th century Japan, the temporal backdrop of *Ran,* was a more rigidly ritualised social context than Lear's Britain. The tenderness and affection with which Lear treats his daughters is absent in *Ran,* depicting a more formal and volatile relationship structure. Hidetora wants his sons to be brave warriors, while Lear wants his daughters to be efficient and accomplished wives. The change in testing pattern emanates from this basic difference. While relationships are more expressive in Lear, they are duty bound in Ran.

Even though Hidetora wants his sons to be successful, he does not want them to be more powerful than himself. He is too narcissistic to accept any kind of criticism from his sons, and revels in flattery. Saburo falls out of grace with his father because of his honest observations about his senility.

"What madness have I spoken? Wherein lies my senility?" He asks Saburo

"We live in a world barren of loyalty and feeling. You spilled measureless blood, you showed no mercy, no pity. We too are children of this age, weaned on strife and chaos. We are your sons, yet you count on our fidelity. In my eyes, that makes you a fool, a senile, old fool". (*Ran* 45:23)

Hidetora cannot accept this truth, especially from his son, just like Lear. Ego clashes between generations act as reason for conflict in both the works. Flattery and dishonesty qualify the seemingly pure and innocent parent- child relationships in the worlds of both Lear and Hidetora, leading the characters to disillusionment and ultimately losing their sanity.

Cinema, Theatre and Architecture

Costume, setting, props, architecture are some factors that accentuate the depiction of Japanese culture in the film. Mis-en-scene analysis of the film reveals an image-centric approach rather than a text-centric one, rendering the two works distinct art forms. The opulence of Kurosawa's frames contributed by colourful costumes and Samurai uniforms suggest a culturally rich period in Japanese history. The eloquent language of Shakespeare's dialogues is transliterated into the richness of visual language. Dialogue is reduced to a bare

minimum, but the images that Kurosawa uses to convey the complex mindscapes of his characters speak louder than words. Unlike Lear who laments in heart breaking agony at his fate, Hidetora delineates the propensity of his fate through his staggering walk that deteriorates to an insane, stumbling gait in the climactic scene.

The setting amidst the plains of the largest active volcanic mountain in Japan, Mount Aso, renders a unique sublimity to the theme. The director procured special permission to shoot in the volcanic plains as well as ancient castles in Japan. No miniature models were used for the shoot and even the burned down castle was a life size model. This accentuates the cinematic effect of the scenes, rendering an eerie realism to the film.

Kurosawa made elaborate story boards for various scenes in the film, working on it for almost a decade. Ran was shot in over nine months, costing 11 million dollars, making it the most expensive Japanese film till then. The film is made in the backdrop of Japanese medieval warrior code called *Bushida,* requiring elaborate warrior attire and many horses. Kurosawa reportedly collaborated in the designing and the film won an Oscar for costume design. The permission to film at ancient Japanese shrines Himeji and Kumamoto was unprecedented in the history of Japanese cinema.

Regarding the cinematic aspects of the film, Kurosawa focussed on long shots and rarely used close-up shots for the film. Kurosawa's unique 'three camera set-up' is used in *Ran* to capture the scene from multiple angles. The narrative technique in Lear is more forward looking whereas in *Ran* it is attached to a specifically sketched past. The use of colourful costumes and grand castles against a desolate landscape is a deliberate effort to emphasise the meaninglessness of human existence. However, the interior arrangements in the castle are minimalistic, indicating a warrior lifestyle.

Kurosawa uses the Japanese Noh and Kabuki theatrical traditions to represent the intricacies of the relations portrayed. Noh theatre is a form that employs elaborate masks to hide the actor's faces. The heavily made-up faces of the actors in *Ran* invokes the Noh tradition. Samurai tradition of 16th century Japan also finds an ample space in the classic film. Samurais, the warrior class in Japan, created a distinct lifestyle based on discipline. The instances of *Seppuku* (ritual suicide by disembowelment) in the movie marks the crux of Samurai ethos, and was considered a respectable alternative to dishonour. Use of these esoteric elements in the film orchestrates the cultural embedding of the plot and renders it a successful adaptation.

The Father Vs the Ruler

Kurosawa explores the theme of conflict between the father/ ruler in *Ran,* a theme specific to the film as King Lear is portrayed more as the father than as the ruler. Hidetora's sons are used to seeing their father as the ruler and when he exhibits fatherly affection it is interpreted as a sign of weakness. Hidetora was the Great Lord even to his sons. This is why he gets annoyed when Saburo tells him the truth about his senility and foolishness.

The fact that his dear son insulted him, hurt the ego of the ruler/father and banishes the son who spoke the truth. However, deep inside, Hidetora acknowledges that Saburo is right. Old age is a challenge even to the most powerful. However, in Shakespeare, the reader is exposed to Lear the father more than Lear the ruler.

Eastern persistence on the value of the spoken word is palpable throughout *Ran*. Hidetora could easily have absolved his order and reinstated himself as the ruler instead of Taro. However, an inexplicable loyalty to his own order declaring Taro as the ruler guides his subsequent actions. The unwritten edict that a ruler never goes back on his word gets embodied in Hidetora.

The ruler enjoys a larger-than-life persona in the film. The theme music and the backdrop, turn majestic when Hidetora appears on screen. One of the rights Hidetora retained even after stepping down was to keep his retinue of soldiers. His sons however were afraid of these men accompanying their father. Both Taro and Jiro banishes their father's retinue. The Great Lord however, stands by his men and leaves the spaces where his men were not welcome. When Jiro confronts his about his men, Hidetora says "The great lord goes nowhere alone." (*Ran* 01:23:42) All this worldly glory comes to an end when Hidetora amples across the volcanic plain, all alone, in front of his soldiers. This demeaning parade of his helplessness purges him of his ego and pride. However, Goodwin points out that "Kurosawa considers his film more hopeful than Shakespeare's tragedy" (212) The fact that Hidetora regrets his past and wants his sins to be atoned makes him less tragic a figure than Lear, according to Kurosawa.

Similarities and Differences

Even though both works declare a resignation towards fate, *Ran* takes a more pessimistic view suggesting no resolution to the crisis. In *King Lear*, we hear the spine-chilling speech, "As flies to wanton boys we are to the Gods. They kill us for their sport." (Act IV, Sc1). But in *Ran*, violence is mostly attributed to humans, wanton and bloody, and God is depicted as a frozen and heedless entity. In both Kurosawa and the Bard, the deterioration and ultimate catastrophe awaiting humankind is juxtaposed with the grandeur and wilderness of nature.

The hunt, a central motif in *King Lear*, is graphically established in *Ran*, raising questions about the place of man in the natural order. *Ran* opens with a glorious action-packed hunting scene. Like Shakespeare's play, where nature and forces of nature play an important role, *Ran* is concerned with the relationship between humankind and animal. The talented director employs plenty of animal imagery through furniture, tapestry, costumes and other properties used in the film. The number of aerial and long shots in *Ran*, emphasising the grandeur of the landscape and the puniness of human lives inhabiting it, suggests a deviation from anthropocentric grand narratives. While the climactic storm in *King Lear* is more of an aberration than an everyday reality, Kurosawa reminds us of the absurdity of human actions

in every frame of the film. Thus, the film proposes a species-oriented worldview than an anthropocentric one.

Conclusion

This paper attempted to prove that in the process of indigenising Shakespeare's tragedies, Japanese maestro Akira Kurosawa made significant plot changes to the Shakespearean originals and the paper argues that plot changes made were engendered by the revised milieu adopted by the film maker. The analysis undertaken proves the argument and lists instances such as Lady Kaede's revenge as examples. In the iconic last scene of the movie, Lear/Hidetora's insanity is portrayed wonderfully by Kurosawa. Hidetora is shown as ampling through a volcanic plain, with a gait signifying insanity. In an interview Kurosawa admitted the scene to be reflective of the nuclear apocalypse that befell Japan in the second world war. The film is saturated with the anxiety of the post-Hiroshima age. Thus, Kurosawa curated a masterpiece of his own in *Ran*, peppered with temporal references, while staying true to the essence of the Shakespearean originals.

In his three-film long love affair with Shakespeare, Kurosawa enriches his repertoire as well as the Shakespearean tradition. These films were path breaking in the complex world of adaptations, striking the difficult balance between staying true to the original as well as being original in their own right. Thus, I would like to conclude that Akira Kurosawa's interest in and engagement with William Shakespeare's great tragedies was a mutually enriching enterprise for both cinema and drama and the plot changes are driven and justified by the complex process of domestication of the Shakespearean classics.

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Women's Quest For Identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*

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Abstract

The issue pertaining to the recognition of the quest for identity has been a matter of great significance and preoccupation for humanity across all societies throughout history, and has consistently served as a prominent theme in literary works. The condition of quest for identity is perceived as a state that profoundly impacts the psychological well-being of an individual or a collective, characterized by the presence of internal contradictions thereby potentially resulting in various forms of imbalance and instability. This article undertakes an exploration of the relentless quest for identity and self-discovery as depicted in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel, *Americanah (2013)*. *Americanah*, a contemporary literary masterpiece, delves deep into the arduous struggles endured by a Nigerian woman and other women characters residing in the United States. The analysis uncovers how the foreign environment coupled with the pervasive issue of gender-racial discrimination, complicates the quest for identity of these women characters.

Keywords: quest, identity, woman, race, discrimination

The quest for identity has been a major concern for humanity and a recurring theme in literature. The state of being in the throes of an identity crisis is thought to have a significant effect on the psychological health of a person or group, as it is marked by internal conflicts that may lead to imbalance and instability in different forms. The novel *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie portrays a Nigerian woman and other female characters living in the United States as they go through a great deal of hardships in their quest for identity. This quest for identity is complicated by their foreign surroundings and the widespread problem of racial discrimination.

Quest for identity refers to the struggle one undergoes to attain meaning and value in one's life. It can be called a journey towards self-assertion. While in the case of some individuals, it might be a process to leave their social/cultural group; in the case of others, it could be a process that involves physical as well as psychological turmoil and an understanding of the individual self. This quest forms the central theme in the majority of contemporary women's writings. Afro-American writers also deal with this theme in the context of black women's life. The women's struggle for identity becomes all the more complex because of their status as women and belonging to black ethnics. The bitter fact is that in a patriarchal society, a woman does not have her own identity. As Simone de Beauvoir says, "one is not

born, but rather becomes, a woman," (Beauvoir 14). So a woman's quest for identity becomes a struggle against all those patriarchal forces that bind her in chains and reject her as a being in comparison to man. This quest is a very crucial phase as it involves a kind of crises to one's identity or what can be called fragmentation of identity. It is noteworthy that a fragmented identity crisis typically arises in response to significant life changes experienced by an individual. When an individual undergoes severe trauma, their identity, encompassing facets such as personality and emotions, undergoes a process of fragmentation. This entails the division of various traits and emotions within the individual, which are subsequently compartmentalized into smaller sections, some of which remain concealed until a safe space for expression becomes available.The emergence of an identity crisis can be attributed to the postcolonial era and the formidable circumstances confronted by newly independent nations as they endeavour to establish and delineate their sense of self. During this phase a character's identity is divided into smaller, unconnected pieces. This can evoke feelings of ambiguity, bewilderment, and disarray, which mirror the fractured and fragmentary character of human existence. However, under the influence of feminism, women are marching ahead in their quest for identity. As Germaine Greer in her book *The Whole Woman* has stated "All the time women have been agitating for freedom and self determination they have been coming more and more under a kind control that they cannot even protest against" (Greer 114).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a well-known and vocal writer who is one of the many modern authors addressing the depiction of women's quest for identity not only in her fictional works but also in non-fictional works. Her "TEDx talk" titled "We Should All Be Feminists" delivered in 2012, turned into an essay, is now regarded as a feminist credo by many. The Swedish Women's Lobby has selected it as one of the books that every 16-year-old girl in the nation should read to promote gender equality. Adichie, embodies the central theme of this TEDx talk as:

> We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller. We say to girls "You can have ambition but not too much, you should aim to be successful but not too successful, otherwise you will threaten the man." […] Because I am female I am expected to aspire to marriage I am expected to make my life choices always keeping in mind that marriage is the most important. Now marriage can be a source of joy and love and mutual support but why do we teach girls to aspire to marriage and we don't teach boys the same? […] We raise girls to each other as competitors not for jobs or for accomplishments which I think can be a good thing but for the attention of men. we teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings in the way that boys are. […] feminist: the person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes.
>
> (Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists* 27-34)

Moreover, Adichie defines a feminist as "a man or a woman who says, Yes, there's a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix, we must do better" (Adichie 48).

Adichie, gained critical acclaim for her literary works. One of her notable works, the third novel titled *Americanah*, which was published in the 2013, delves into the experiences of a

young Nigerian female grappling with her quest for identity in the face of racism while residing in the United States. This novel achieved significant recognition within the literary sphere, as it emerged victorious in the prestigious 'National Book Critics Circle Award' category for fiction. Furthermore, it was handpicked by the editors of the renowned New York Times Book Review, who acknowledged it as one of the top ten exceptional literary creations of the year 2013. In the novel *Americanah,* Adichie masterfully captures and highlights the myriad challenges and obstacles that individuals encounter when undertaking the arduous quest for identity.

The novel *Americanah* delves into the narrative of an intelligent and resolute Nigerian woman known as Ifemelu, who embarks on a journey to the United States in pursuit of enhanced educational and professional prospects. However, her experience in America metamorphoses into a nightmarish ordeal fraught with racial discrimination. The narrative portrays her arduous endeavour to navigate through the harsh realities she encounters in the American landscape, a struggle that persists upon her return to Nigeria. The choice of the title "Americanah" for Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel is a decision that holds great significance and uniqueness, as it manages to encapsulate a myriad of key themes and ideas that are central to the story. This title, "Americanah," is derived from Nigerian slang, and it serves as a descriptor for individuals who have adopted American customs and mannerisms after an encounter with American culture. By employing this particular title, the author effectively emphasizes the novel's central theme of cultural identity, as well as the experiences of immigrants who grapple with the complexities of adapting to a new culture while still preserving their roots.

The novel weaves the tale of Ifemelu's love with Obinze and her romantic entanglements with various other male characters within the storyline to foreground her quest for identity. However, despite the surface impression of a romantic narrative, the novel probes the intricacies of African existence within the postcolonial milieu, shedding light on the complexities faced by African women striving to carve out a life in a foreign land such as America. The text examines the existential dilemma of identity that comes to the forefront once Ifemelu steps foot on American soil. Her reflections shed light on the stark contrast between her experiences in Nigeria, where her skin colour was not a defining factor, and the abrupt labeling she encountered upon her arrival in America.

The perception of America she held in her mind before her arrival had undergone a complete transformation after her physical presence in the country. Before her journey, she had envisioned America as a utopian realm devoid of any concerns, yet overflowing with joy and affluence. However, upon her arrival, the stark reality she faced consisted solely of destitution and the squalid conditions prevalent in Aunty Uju's vicinity. The idealized version of America she had constructed within her consciousness materialized as a mere illusion, starkly contrasting with the actual state of affairs. In the days of her residence in Nigeria, there existed a prevalent discourse extolling the virtues of American society, portraying it as a realm abounding with prospects and flourishing opportunities. However, this idealized depiction

eventually revealed itself as a mere fabrication, a myth perpetuated by the inhabitants of America. Adichie may be directing this critique towards African parents who, by exalting America as a land of dreams and boundless opportunities, inadvertently diminished the value of their native land. This sentiment is encapsulated in the dialogue between Ifemelu and her father, where he underscores: "America creates opportunities for people to thrive. Nigeria can indeed learn from them" (Adichie 205). Ifemelu had to work because her scholarship wasn't enough to cover her entire tuition. However, her student visa prohibited her from working in any employment, forcing her to labour illegally under a false name and blurring in Nigerian identity:

> "All of us look alike to white people," Aunty Uju said. "Ahn-ahn, Aunty!" "I'm not joking. Amara's cousin came last year and she doesn't have her papers yet so she has been working withAmara's ID. You remember Amara? Her cousin is very fair and slim. They do not look alike at all. Nobody noticed. She works as a home health aide in Virginia. Just make sure you always remember your new name. I have a friend who forgot and one of her co-workers called her and called her and she was blank. Then they became suspicious and reported her to immigration" (Adichie 121).

Ifemelu, being a woman, has unique experiences in the community that are exclusive to her gender. Additionally, she has experiences that highlight her status as a Nigerian black woman. Some of these encounters include being sexually exploited by the tennis instructor while she goes job seeking, and since she is a black immigrant woman, she also finds herself immediately attracted to and understanding Wambui, a Kenyan classmate, and Boubacar, a visiting professor from Senegal. All these characters have perceptions of themselves that are influenced by societal constructions rather than actual physical deformities. They do not find their appearances attractive or acceptable in the new land. For instance Ginika, Ifemelu's childhood friend sheds pounds after moving to America. She goes without food to the point of nearly being anorexic to acquire the slender body that is preferred in her new society.

> "Look at you!" Ginika said, gesturing, jangling the many silver bangles around her wrist." Is it really you?" "When did you stop eating and start looking like a dried stockfish?" Ifemelu asked (Adichie 122).

Not only Ifemelu and Ginika but other woman characters also face a threat to their identity in different ways. Racial discrimination becomes an additional hindrance in their quest for identity as is evident in the discriminatory attitudes towards them based on their physical appearance. When embarking on the arduous journey of seeking employment opportunities, Ifemelu found herself compelled to conform to societal norms by altering her natural hair texture through straightening methods, as it was widely believed that most corporate entities held a bias against hiring black women with naturally curly hair. When Ifemelu arrives at a black salon in the first chapter to get braids, Aisha, a black employee, asks her, "Why don't you have relaxer? I like my hair the way God made it" (Adichie 120). We see that when Ifemelu chooses natural hair over hair that is superficial, hair becomes to represent freedom. Black women are supposed to adhere to American ideals of beauty; according to Aisha,

having your hair relaxed makes you appear more like a white lady. Ifemelu's refusal to let her hair down is a protest against the way that American culture disregards black beauty." If you have braids, they will think you are unprofessional" (Adichie 119). Moreover, she encountered a distressing incident where she was refused a basic grooming service of waxing her eyebrows at a local salon, a service that she was only able to access after the intervention of her Caucasian partner. Commenting about the challenges in her search for identity Adichie says:

> She applied to be a waitress, hostess,bartender, cashierand then waited for job offers that never came, and for this she blamed herself. Ithadto be that she was not doing something right, and yet she did know what it might be. Autumn had come, wet and gray-skied.Her meager bank account was leaking money (Adichie131).

These financial constraints and restraints rose pathetic elements to her search for selfhood.

> Each day, there seemto be a letter for her on the kitchen table, andinside the envelope was a tuition bill, and words printed in capital letters: YOUR RECORDS WILL BE FROZEN UNLESS PAYMENT IS RECEIVED BY THE DATE AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS NOTICE (Adichie 132).

Drawing parallels to this poignant narrative, one is reminded of Toni Morrison's seminal work, *The Bluest Eye*, wherein the character of an eleven-year-old black girl named Pecola Breedlove is depicted as internalizing and grappling with the detrimental impact of negative stereotypes and perceptions imposed on African-American women.

The inquiry into skin complexion about the perception of beauty emerges as a significant and thought-provoking question within the narrative of *Americanah*, particularly highlighting the traumatic experiences during women's quest for identity and selfhood. The pervasive influence of Western media in idealizing fair skin as the epitome of beauty further exacerbates the underlying tones of racism prevalent among individuals residing in Western societies. Adichie masterfully illustrates this societal phenomenon through the character of Aunty Uju, who engages in skin-lightening practices to present herself as more refined and polished for the General, her affluent companion.

The idea that curly or kinky hair is unprofessional and unpleasant is merely a white woman's fabrication meant to demonstrate white women's superiority over black women. This perception is a constant threat to the identity of almost all women characters in the novel. These women strive to integrate themselves into American society by completely forsaking their own cultural identity and embracing the American way of life, exemplified by Aunty Uju. Aunty Uju can be observed altering her way of speaking to adopt an American accent, particularly evident in her conversations with white Americans. Not content with her naturally curly hair, she consistently opts to straighten it, associating beauty exclusively with straight hair and considering herself unattractive when her hair is not straightened. This highlights a significant shift in her identity in response to the societal norms prevalent in America. Uju's relocation to the United States engenders feelings of vulnerability and alienation as she struggles to assimilate fully into the new environment. Her acute awareness of being perceived as an

outsider, as well as her experience of 'double consciousness', compels her to mimic the predominant culture and speech patterns while endeavouring to be as affable and accommodating as possible. Ifemelu contacts Aunty Uju in America, and their dialogue unfolds:

> "yes, this is Uju," she pronounced it you-joo instead of oo-joo.
> "is that how you pronounce your name now?"
> "It's what they call me." "well, that isn't your name" (Adichie104).

Thus her quest for identity is linked to the pre-conceived notions and biases revolving around women's skin, colour, thin or fat body and style of hair. These women have to face more formidable challenges than their male counterparts have to face.

To conclude, it can be said that in the novel *Americanah* by Adichie, there exists a discernible portrayal of women's quest for identity in their newly adopted country America. This quest is more challenging because they are not only from another country and race but also because they are women. Adichie has brilliantly brought it out through the character portrayal of Ifemelu and other supporting women characters like Aunt Uju and Ginika. Adichie has masterfully demonstrated that the quest for identity for women is a very complicated and traumatic process due to the complex interplay of gender, culture and ethnicity and the novel *Americanah* fictionalizes this through aesthetically appealing and effective narrative and character portrayal.

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Negotiating Margins: Auto-ethnographic Insights into Subaltern Realities in Bama's *Karukku* and Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life*

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Abstract

This research paper presents an auto-ethnographic analysis of two seminal autobiographical works, Bama's *Karukku* and Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life*, authored by prominent Dalit women writers in India. Employing auto-ethnography as a methodological framework, this study delves into the personal narratives within these texts to illuminate themes of caste discrimination, gender, identity, and resistance. Both narratives provide intimate accounts of the authors' lived experiences as Dalit women, offering a unique vantage point to explore the complexities of their dual identities and the profound impact of societal norms on their lives. Through auto-ethnographic reflection, the authors critically engage with their own subjectivities, biases, and transformative journeys, further enhancing the authenticity of their narratives. In *Karukku*, Bama's auto ethnographic lens reveals the persistent caste hierarchies within the community, the intersection of caste and gender discrimination, and her own pursuit of self-acceptance and activism. Meanwhile, Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* provides a window into the experiences of the Mahar community, where caste discrimination intertwines with gender oppression. Through comparative analysis, this paper examines the similarities and differences in the authors' auto–ethnographic approaches, shedding light on the broader implications of using auto ethnography as a method to amplify marginalized voices in literature. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersectionality of caste, gender, and identity in the context of Dalit literature and serves as a testament to the power of personal narratives in effecting social change.

Keywords: auto-ethnography, caste, Dalit, gender, resistance

Introduction

Auto-ethnography is a research methodology that involves analyzing personal experiences within the context of cultural understanding. It is a genre of ethnographic research where personal experiences are connected to broader cultural, political and social meanings and understandings. Bochner and Ellis state that auto-ethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research which displays numerous layers of consciousness and connects the personal to the cultural. 'Auto' means 'self', and 'ethno' implies culture; 'graphy' refers to the process, and thus auto-ethno graphic implies the writing about one's culture and the self. It is a form of research where the author uses self-contemplation to disclose their experience

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and relates to the broader context of culture. Though auto ethnography contains constituent elements of autobiography, it surpasses the surface level of 'self' and reaches the collective self and their collective experiences.

They use their dialect, gestures, culture, and rituals to establish their uniqueness, and want their language to be heard and their culture to be understood. This also gives auto ethnography uniqueness. Dalits use this genre as the best literary tool to voice their unfulfilled hopes and present them uniquely. Thus Dalit autobiography is not a story of the individual self but a document of the social, economic, religious, political and cultural conditions of the Dalit community and society. This paper attempts to study Dalit women's autobiographies with a particular focus on Bama's *Karukku* and Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* as illustrations of auto ethnography as it focuses on collective experiences rather than personal ones.

Auto–ethnographic Approach

The concept of auto-ethnography involves an individual (or a group) reflecting on and documenting their personal experiences and observations within a specific cultural or social context. It is a research and writing method that combines autobiography and ethnography. It involves individual (or a group) reflecting on and documenting their personal experiences and observations within a specific cultural or social context. Auto-ethnography is a way to explore and understand the relationship between the personal and the cultural, offering insights into how one's individual experiences intersect with broader cultural, social, and historical forces. Key aspects of auto ethnography include personal narrative, cultural-social context, reflexivity, subjectivity and emotion, analytical framework and authenticity.

Auto ethnography emphasizes the use of personal narratives and stories. Individuals often draw their own experiences, memories, and emotions to create a rich and authentic account. Auto ethnographers place their personal experiences within the context of larger cultural, social or historical phenomena. They explore how their individual stories relate to broader societal issues or themes and also engage in reflexivity, meaning they critically reflect on their own perspectives, biases and subjectivity. They acknowledge their role as both the researcher and the subject of study. Auto ethnographic writing often includes the author's subjective experiences and emotions. It allows for a more personal and empathetic connection with the reader. While auto ethnography is personal, it is also analytical. Auto ethnographers analyze their experiences using relevant theoretical frameworks, concepts, or academic literature to draw broader conclusions.

Auto–ethnography seeks to provide an authentic and often vulnerable account of personal experiences. It aims to convey the emotional and human dimensions of a particular topic. Auto-ethnography is commonly used in various academic fields, including anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and qualitative research, to explore topics such as identity, culture,

social issues, and personal transformation. It allows researchers to bridge the gap between the subjective and the objective, providing a unique and nuanced perspective on complex issues.

On analyzing the texts, it is found that the personal experiences, the collective experiences of Dalit women, and their life of being suppressed and subjugated are traced by Bama and Urmila Pawar. Whatever they mention as an individual experience, thus, becomes a collective one. The subject 'I' thus becomes the community's collective identity and voice. Their work becomes the testimony of the general Dalit community and Dalit women.

Both Bama and Urmila Pawar takes into account the experiences of Dalit women as gendered subaltern, their self and their connections with the other world, their assertion of identity and their knowledge of themselves and identification with the outer world are all dealt with in the texts *The Weave of My Life* and *Karukku*. They identify themselves as subjects and voice their concerns for the first time. They use language as a tool and narration as a medium to voice their protests. They affirm and re-affirm their identity by voicing their individual experiences and connecting these experiences to the broader arena of collective experiences, thus establishing a collective identity.

As an affix to her third novel *Vanmam*, Bama says,

> Before 1993, I was unknown; today, when I say "I", indicates people like me. All these things together form our collective identity and help us act together. I cannot claim for myself as an individual, a Dalit woman; I am part of collective awareness; I carry their voice. (*Vanmam* 151)

Bama writes about the marginalization and dual oppression of Dalit women at the hands of the upper caste patriarchal society. Poverty, inequality, and class difference all contribute to Dalit women's oppression. Even in the first chapter of *Karukku*, Bama opens with a collective 'our'. "Our village is beautiful"(*Karukku* 1), and she uses the collective phrase when discussing her community. She says, "Most of our people are agricultural labourers." (*Karukku* 1)

Bama writes her autobiography, *Karukku*, to expose the injuries she has faced since childhood. *Karukku* can be seen as an auto-ethnography, as it investigates the broader context of culture and places the individual in a social context. It includes individual involvement with the outer world. *Karukku* is set in an unnamed village in Tamilnadu, and Bama presents her village as somewhat dissimilar to other writers of the same flock.

The town is presented as,

> At dawn and dusk, the eastern and western skies are splendid to see. When we used to go out in the early morning to relieve ourselves, a bright red sun, huge and round, would wake up in the east and climb up into the sky. (*Karukku* 5)

The narrative persona is not an individual "I" but a blend of "we". The first pages of the narrative give a picture of the topography of the unnamed village that Bama presents. Before

being introduced to the protagonist, the reader gets a screening of the whole society. Bama, the author or the persona of the narrative, tries to convey that she is just another member of that community and will not present her personal life but the life of the village in the first pages of the text. The initial four pages of the text describe the village where this narrative is set.

The narrative style of a mainstream writer differs remarkably from a marginalized writer because the marginalized writer uses the quotidian language without any revival. Bama's characters speak indecent language even in public, and she powerfully uses style incorporating their regional slang and dialects.

The collective experiences of the community and the everyday sufferings of the folk are highlighted by the use of "we" instead of "I" and "our" instead of "my". She acts as a witness to the grief of the community. At the same time, she grieves with them and summons the readers to listen to their stories/experiences and become a secondary witness.

Thus *Karukku* can be called a collective story, which brings forward the severe atrocities faced by the Dalits. Bama shares her pain and anguish of being humiliated and ill-treated by the upper caste society. Even her community questioned and scolded her for recording and revealing their life.

The title "Karukku" refers to Palmyra leaves sharp-edged on both sides. Thus, the title becomes a metaphor for double-edged Palmyra leaves, which can act like a sword that cuts through the predominant caste system that had wounded her community from time immemorial. *Karukku* attempts to contest, resist and replace all the authoritative principles or doctrines that have dehumanized the Dalit community. *Karukku* exposes the disgraceful facet of the Indian societal structure.

Bama appeals to her fellow beings to conceptualize and reassert their collective and individual identities to claim their niche in the social order. She presents a series of anecdotes and draws a lively portrait of her village where Dalits were considered outcastes and had never experienced freedom and human dignity. Bama's narrative is non-linear, non-chronological, where past and present intermingle and gives a glimpse of numerous incidents during the different phases of her life. Bama says that her writing mainly aims to share experiences with people. She uses the pen as her weapon to fight for the unprivileged.

Urmila Pawar uses her memoir *The Weave of My Life* to celebrate herself. Society expects a Dalit to be submissive, introverted, illiterate, ignorant and inferior. Pawar challenges the hegemonic norms of society. She has ushered in a life of self-respect and dignity which beacons other women folk to celebrate their self-hood. Her memoir also does not start with I, but she begins her narrative by delineating the women of her village.

"Women from our village travelled to the market at Ratnagiri." (*The Weave of My Life* 1)

Her education, exposure to the outer world, and participation in public programmes give her an independent identity. She helps her fellow women be strong and courageous and reminds them to face life's challenges courageously.

Pawar says:

> Life has taught me many things; it shows me much, it has also lashed out at me till I bled. I do not know how much longer I will live, nor do I know in what form life will confront me. Let it come in any form; I am ready to face it stoically. This is what my life has taught me. This is my life, and That is me.! (*The Weave of My Life* 320)

Urmila Pawar presents the life of her parents and her struggle in the backdrop of a Konkon region and the entire Mahar community to gain sustenance and livelihood, despite the harsh rural and discrimination inclined upon them by the upper-caste people.

The text begins with a detailed description of the Konkon region's rugged landscape and Dalit women's relationship with the landscape. The harsh and strenuous life of Dalit women is almost similar to the rough terrain of that area. The women had to bear the weight of the firewood on their heads and cross the hills to reach the market. No one considers how much pain they have gone through to gather wood. The wood and bamboo ware they sell are hard-earned and of good quality, but they get little value due to a lack of knowledge of proper branding.

Bama asks the Dalits to stand united, strive hard and fight vigorously for a decent life. She dreams of a society where all are treated equally and justly. Pawar believes that change is possible only through a battle, and she exhorts that one should follow the commandments of Ambedkar - educate, agitate and organize for a better future.

> Are Dalits not human beings? Do they not have common sense? Do they not have such attributes as a sense of honour and self-respect? Are they without any wisdom, beauty, or dignity? What do we lack? They treat us however they choose as if we are enslaved people who do not even possess human dignity. (*Karukku* 27)

Pawar refers to ceremonies conducted with great festivity in *The Weave of My Life*. She describes the wedding ceremony of the Mahar community, which reflects the strong bond among the people of her community. Marriage ceremonies of a Mahar family are thus festivities of the community.

Bama's *Karukku* and Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* appear to be a manifesto to the community rather than the autobiography of an individual. Rather than a mere description and discussion of the community's plight, the protagonists of these memoirs present their personal experiences that encompass the general experiences of the community.

In *Karukku*, Bama insightfully recounts the experience of discrimination faced by Dalits even within religious institutions. She highlights how caste hierarchies persist and her auto ethnographic narrative provides first-hand accounts of exclusion, the denial of sacraments

and the social segregation faced by them. Her personal experiences serve as a powerful critique of caste discrimination.

Urmila Pawar's auto ethnography delves into the experiences of her Mahar community, which has historically been subjected to extreme caste discrimination. She narrates instances of being denied access to public spaces and basic amenities due to her caste. Pawar's personal stories provide a window into the everyday oppression faced by Dalits, particularly Dalit women. Her narrative underscores the pervasive nature of caste based discrimination.

Bama also addresses the gender issues, the double burden faced by the Dalit women who experience caste discrimination and who also confront patriarchal norms. Bama's auto ethnographic account reflects her own struggle for agency as a Dalit woman and the challenges she encountered within her family and society. *The Weave of My Life* explores the intersection of caste and gender and discusses the unique challenges that Dalit women face, such as the triple burden of caste, class and gender discrimination. Pawar's auto ethnography sheds light on the resilience and resistance of Dalit women as they navigate oppressive social structures.

Karukku, Bama's auto ethnography, is a self-discovery and identity formation. She grapples with her dual identity as a Dalit and as a woman, which leads to a profound exploration of her sense of self and her place within the broader society. Her narrative reflects the complexities of identity, belonging and self-acceptance.

Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life*, similarly examines the construction of identity. She reflects on her transformation from a young girl facing caste-based oppression to an empowered Dalit woman who embraces her identity. Pawar's narrative underscores the importance of self-awareness and empowerment in shaping one's identity.

Karukku highlights the theme of resistance. Bama discusses her involvement in social activism and her commitment to challenging caste-based discrimination. Bama's narrative serves as an inspiring example of personal and collective resistance against oppressive social structures.

The Weave of My Life showcases resistance within the context of the Mahar community. Urmila Pawar discusses the efforts of Dalit women to challenge caste and gender based inequalities. Pawar's narrative demonstrates how resistance can be a powerful force for social change.

The narrative of subaltern women writers is woven around communal identity. A plural self in Dalit women's autobiographies is identified due to their rigid connections with the community. In both *Karukku* and *The Weave of My Life*, the authors' auto ethnographic narratives provide deeply personal and emotionally charged accounts of their experiences within the intersection of caste, gender, identity, and resistance. These narratives not only shed light on these themes but also contribute to a broader understanding of the complexities of social justice issues in the country.

The focus of the autobiographies shifts to the protagonist, close relatives, members of the community, and the subaltern community bounds all. Dalit autobiography is a memoir that tells the anecdotes of the community. They bring to the limelight the lives of specific communities left undiscussed in the nation's discourse. The personal I is displaced with a collective and cultural we. They consider others' suffering as their own. They cannot separate themselves from the community. They cannot think of themselves outside the community. They identify themselves with the community's people and emerge as spokespersons.

Bama's candid account of her own experiences of discrimination and social ostracization within the community serves as a clear instance of auto ethnography. She narrates her feelings of being treated as an outcaste within the society due to her Dalit background, saying, "In this society, if you are born into a low caste, you are forced to live a life of humiliation and degradation until your death. Even after death, caste difference does not disappear."(*Karukku* 26) Bama's internal struggle with her identity as a Dalit and her eventual decision to embrace her Dalit roots is another auto ethnographic element. She reflects on her journey, writing, "I wanted to change myself. I wanted to break the chains that held me down." (*Karukku* 22) Bama's interactions with her family and community members, where she questions societal norms and challenges the status quo, demonstrate her auto ethno graphic exploration. Her conversations with her parents and relatives reveal the complexities of caste and identity within her personal life.

Urmila Pawar's vivid recollections of her childhood experiences of caste discrimination in her Mahar community offer an auto ethnographic lens into her life. She narrates instances of being denied access to water or temples due to her caste, highlighting the deeply ingrained social hierarchies. Pawar's journey from a young girl facing caste based oppression to becoming an educated and empowered woman is the central theme of the narrative. She reflects on her pursuit of education and her determination to break free from the traditional constraints placed on women within her community. Pawar's auto ethnographic exploration extends to her discussions about the cultural traditions and rituals of the Mahar community.

Dalit women's narratives represent them as marginal beings. They empower themselves by articulating the oppression. The Dalit female voice, which has been silent for a long time, is broken by voicing their dissent and protest. The life narratives selected for study, *The Weave of My Life* and *Karukku*, deal with Dalit subjectivity from a new perspective. They remap the limits of the autobiographical genre with a faithful representation of Dalit female identity and subjectivity. These life narratives reveal the bold attempts of Dalit women to challenge oppression. Dalit women's narratives are mimetic representations of the family of Dalits. The horrors of Domestic Violence, where the dutiful and selfless women are tortured and victimized by patriarchal husbands, are portrayed in the narratives. Bama's *Karukku* and Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* are examples of auto-ethnography because these texts reflect the anguish of the whole community and use voice and writing as protest tools. The act of writing about oneself helps them understand their own culture. They place themselves close to the Earth and close to nature.

Auto ethnographical writings are a place where the individual and the culture meet. The act of self-writing helps the writer understand society and culture, whereby the writer identifies that one voice, one narrative, and one story represent the numerous untold stories and silent narratives. Since Bama's *Karukku* and Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* articulate collective identity and collective liberation, they can be categorised as auto-ethnographic writings. It dissolves the border between one and the other. Articulation and self-discovery not only redeem but enlighten others still at the fringes. It is a movement from oppression to expression where the narrator speaks for the whole community and invites others to relate and share their emotions with the narrator. They were not litterateurs but were forced to write their stories to liberate, help, and emancipate.

Conclusion

Bama and Urmila Pawar use personal experiences, reflections, and introspections to weave their auto ethnographic narrative into their respective texts. Their writings provide valuable insights into the intersection of caste, gender and identity, making them significant contributions to the genre of auto ethnography within the context of Dalit literature. Both narratives offer personal glimpses into the authors' experiences as Dalit women, providing a singular vantage point to investigate the complexities of their dual identities and the significant influence of societal norms on their lives. By critically engaging with their subjectivities, biases, and transformative journeys through auto ethnographic reflection, the authors further increase the authenticity of their narratives.

Although autobiography has some of the same essential elements, auto-ethnography goes beyond the individual self and touches on the collective self and their shared experiences. They want their language to be heard and their culture to be understood, and they do this by using their dialect, gestures, culture, and rituals to establish their distinctiveness. Additionally, this distinguishes auto ethnography. Dalits use this genre as the best literary medium to express their unmet expectations and to present them distinctively and forcefully. As a result, Dalit autobiography is not a personal account but rather a record of the social, economic, religious, political, and cultural circumstances of the Dalit community and society.

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Caste as a 'Phenomenon': An Analysis of M. Kunjaman's Memoir *Ethiru*

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Abstract

Caste is an ubiquitous Indian phenomenon which is a decisive determinant of one's identity. The fact that the cultural segregation, social exclusion, economic deprivation, denial of access to material resources and other dehumanising practices perpetuated by caste system against Dalits had a devastating effect on their self-perception and self-image is unequivocally articulated by Professor M Kunjaman's memoir *Ethiru* (2021) which may be translated as "Dissent" or "Defiance". Caste, rather than being an 'objectivational' phenomenon, has been a matter of subjective experience as its dehumanising effects and inscrutable nature would become clearly perceivable only to the subject who experiences its grating effects. The article seeks to foreground the phenomenological perspective with which Kunjaman unravels the nefarious operations of caste system and its disastrous effects on the subjected self of the Dalit, by using his self as a frame.

Keywords: caste, Dalit, dissent, phenomenological, thing-in-itself, thing-for-itself

"To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time" (James Baldwin 205).

The above statement from the African-American writer James Baldwin, who through his novels, essays and plays was eloquent on the subject of racism in America, aptly parallels the situation of the 'thinking and experiencing' Dalit self in the caste-contused Kerala. Kerala has been lauded by economists and social historians for its notable achievements in social development indices in par with the developed nations. Land Reforms, procurement of equal wages, universalisation of education and improvement in health care conditions etc have been suggested by the supporters of the much touted 'Kerala Model' of inclusive development as the main reason for this achievement. However, amidst these positive developmental indices, it is noteworthy to mention that the centuries-old caste prejudices and caste consciousness still persist in the Malayali's mindset.

A further analogical extension of the statement of James Baldwin, hugely suits the title and content of the acclaimed economist, writer and academic Prof. M Kunjaman's memoir *Ethiru: The Life Struggle of the Son of Cherona and Ayyappan*. Kunjaman describes the book as a social opposition against the segregation, isolation, marginalisation and the exclusionary tendencies of the mainstream reinforcing the historically perpetrated social and

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economic disadvantage of the lower castes in Kerala. Caste as an invisible enemy in post-independent Kerala society rather than being an 'objectivational' phenomenon, has been a matter of subjective experience as its dehumanising effects and inscrutable nature would become manifestly perceivable only to the consciousness of those who experience its grating effects in everyday life. Hence, the article, in the context of Kunjaman's memoir *Ethiru*, seeks to explore the impact of caste on the consciousness of the subjugated Dalit.

In Kunjaman's book, the narrative functions at multiple levels. The writer uses the first person singular and plural, I and We, interchangeably to narrate his personalised memories of caste oppression followed by his reflections on them. At the surface level, the memoir functions as the story of a Dalit - A Dalit bildungsroman – where one hears the voice of the author, his protest against caste, and sees his struggles to break the caste obstacles to obtain social mobility; but at a deeper level one also hears innumerable Dalit voices who also undergo similar plights as the author-narrator. This is evident from the very first chapter onwards. In the first chapter titled "Don't Call Me Pannan", Kunjaman recollects painfully the memories of his childhood in a remote village in Malabar steeped in caste orthodoxy. An incident that he narrates is demonstrative of the inhumanity of caste system:

> When the stomach begins to burn with hunger, we turn to the houses of the Janmis. There they serve us gruel not in the plate but in a leaf placed in a pit dug in the field outside the house. When I was fourteen-year-old, I went to a Janmi's house nearby for gruel. I was given gruel in a pit along with Janmi's dog. The ferocious animal came barking at me and bit me in its greed to eat the food. When I look back, I understand that it was not a fight between a man and a dog but a fight between two dogs for survival. So wretched was my condition. The job of our community was making Olakkuda[2]….Whenever there was a feast in the upper caste households, it was our job to remove the food waste after the feast and we really relished the taste of the leftover food. (13) (Translated by Anne Placid)

Each encounter with caste is an epiphanic experience to the author since through such encounters he realises some hidden truth about life and society. It is not the feeling of hatred that Kunjaman has towards the dog that snatched his food and bit him. On the other hand, he feels empathetic towards the poor animal who like himself is involved in the struggle for survival. The book is filled with innumerable epiphanic moments of the writer's encounter with caste system. In fact, the self-narrative of Kunjaman has an epiphanic structure since after each painful caste experience his philosophic mind reflects over it and elicits a lesson or vision about his self and society.

The book follows a consistent narrative pattern throughout. Using the first-person point of view, 'I' or 'we', Kunjaman narrates from memory, a past experience of caste discrimination which then is followed by his ruminations on the caste question. In his reflective commentary, the author uses a third person perspective to generalise his experience. For instance, in the chapter titled "Caste in the University", Kunjaman talks about the role of caste in the affairs

of the university of Kerala where Kunjaman worked as teacher. He categorically states that the teachers in the university observed caste and everything was decided on the basis of the caste identity of the individuals(37). In order to substantiate his statement Kunjaman narrates an incident. While he was working as a reader in the Economics department of the University, an upper caste teacher was given promotion to the post of Professor which Kunjaman rightly deserved. At that time Kunjaman was also a member of University Grants Commission. Kunjaman alleges that he was sidelined, though he was better qualified, because of his Dalit identity. Although Kunjaman had complained to the authorities he was denied justice, in spite of the fact that there were several lower castes in the university Syndicate and the Vice Chancellor himself belonged to a lower caste community. This leads Kunjaman to reflect over the caste politics in the country:

> Brahminism is gradually waning in India today and the lower caste identities are getting strengthened. Though the lower castes are against the *savarnas*, they are not opposed to caste system as Dalits are. In fact, they are supporting caste ideology in order to emerge as a powerful social class by amassing wealth, position and power. Hence, they oppose any radical change in the existing social order. On the contrary, Dalits are against caste system and what they are demanding is a total annihilation of the caste based social system (39).

Through his reflective comments, after each caste episode, Kunjaman dovetails his personal struggles with the struggles of Dalit community in India. He always suffered from an anxiety about the desperate straits of the fellow Dalits. He confesses: "I always suffered from an anguish about my people" (18).

What strikes the reader most in Kunjaman's memoir is the expression of a split Dalit consciousness foregrounding the division between the 'thinking' and 'experiencing' Dalit self of the author-narrator. Autobiography has been a favourite genre with Dalit writers ever since the inception of Dalit Literature. It is in Dalit autobiography that one finds a complete representation of the problems of Dalit self in relation to caste. Through distinctive literary genres like autobiography, the Dalit writer articulates her/his experiences of discrimination, deprivation and denial of rights. While the mainstream autobiography in India, as a distinctive narrative genre, like its western counterparts, reinforces the Enlightenment view of self as a unified, coherent entity, Dalit autobiography depicts a split, incoherent self, due to the devastating effect of caste on the subjected Dalit self.

Genuineness and sincerity are the two key features of Kunjaman's book which make it typical of Dalit life writing. *Ethiru* testifies the dilemma- stricken, confusion-ridden state of the mind of the author-narrator. The two selves of the author: the real self and the assumed self, are presented in the dual narrative perspectives adopted. As already demonstrated, using a first-person perspective, Kunjaman narrates his past experiences and using a third person perspective provides his reflective commentaries on them, which renders to the reader, his mind's vexations and frustrations, doubts and apprehensions, confusions and conflicts, as well as his thoughts about the predicament of Dalits at large. The sense of lack and defeat ever present in Kunjaman's mind which is a vestige of the bitter experiences of his past, the

discrimination and deprivations he suffered on account of his out-caste-ness in the society. In order to better apprehend the dilemma of Dalit agency portrayed in Kunjaman's Memoir, one has to adopt a psychological perspective on caste.

Although caste feelings and caste emotions are deeply rooted in the Indian psyche and the psychic wounds inflicted by caste are difficult to heal, the general tendency is to view caste as a sociological problem rather than a psychological one. In spite of the concerted efforts of diverse movements spearheaded by Dalit-lower caste social revolutionaries like Dr B. R. Ambedkar, Jyotiba Phule, Ayothi Das, Mahatma Ayyankali, Guru Ghasidas, Sree Narayana Guru to eliminate caste; the perplexing phenomena of its persistence and resurgence persist. A discerning analysis uncovers that the deeply entrenched nature of caste bias in social consciousness stands as a paramount factor contributing to this alarming trend. Legislative and policy measures notwithstanding, the deeply ingrained mindset continues to perpetuate discriminatory practices, casting a shadow over the efficacy of initiatives aimed at dismantling the caste-based hierarchy. Contending that caste, is not merely a social or structural issue but fundamentally a psychological problem, Ambedkar held that annihilation of caste can be achieved only through a change in mindset. Caste is deeply ingrained in the consciousness of individuals, suggesting a pervasive and profound psychological impact. According to Ambedkar: "Caste is a state of mind. It is a disease of the mind" (Ambedkar, 1936). Kunjaman's memoir testifies to the ravaging effect of caste on the psychic consciousness of the subjected Dalit self.

The very opening lines of the Memoir is indicative of the deeply ingrained nature of caste in the human consciousness as it foregrounds Kunjaman's pessimistic vision of his life which he inherited from the dehumanising caste experiences: "My life was full of darkness, my community gave me only fear…" (13). Further, Kunjaman narrates the effects of the past experiences of caste humiliations on his self which had made him diffident, cowardly, introverted and how he suffered from inferiority complex. He concludes his narrative saying that what he has presented through his memoir are the ruminations of a vanquished mind. He says that the thoughts of the defeated individuals too have a place in history as the present world and posterity have many a lesson to learn from it (156).

The thinking and experiencing Dalit self, expressed in Prof. M Kunjaman's memoir demonstrates his deep phenomenological perception of caste and its implications in the Kerala context. Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl, the Austrian-German philosopher and mathematician was the founder of the phenomenological movement, and an early account of the elaboration of the phenomenological approach is found in his 1900 lecture titled "Pure Phenomenology: Its Method and Its Field of Investigation". In the talk Husserl observes: "No object of the category "work of art" could occur in the objectivational world of any being who was devoid of all aesthetic sensibility, who was, so to speak, aesthetically blind." According to the above statement, one becomes aware of an object only when it appears in one's consciousness. Thus, a 'noumenon' or a thing that exists independent of human

perceptions and human senses is of no importance and how that thing might appear to human perception or human sense which is then termed as 'phenomenon' is what matters.

In Kunjaman's memoir, his lived experience as a Dalit in the caste ridden social milieu of Kerala society gets transmitted in its psychological complexity and social materiality. The understanding of caste as a social noumenon, as something existing above and beyond the realm of Dalit experience is quite inadequate to comprehend the deep psychological impact of caste on the Dalit self. The note of pessimism and self-reproach underlying his Memoir, in spite of his manifold achievements in life: his trailblazing career as an academic in a prestigious TISS (Tata Institute of Social Sciences), his enviable position as a member of UGC, his reputation as a foremost economist and a great Dalit thinker, is a result of Kunjaman's deep phenomenological perception of caste. Though Kunjaman states that the inhuman caste oppression that he and his lot have been subjected to has left his self in shreds, making him timid and diffident, as K Venu writes in the Forward to *Ethiru*, the book contains numerous instances where Kunjaman demonstrates great courage and willpower (5). In fact, *Ethiru* reveals a spirit reluctant to be vanquished by the traumatic life experiences, a lifeforce which turns the bitter experiences to an impetus to fight the odds of life. This split consciousness expressed in *Ethiru* is a result of the difference between the 'narrating self' and the 'experiencing self' of the author-narrator.

As already stated, the existence of an object as a "thing-in-itself", to use Immanuel Kant's famed phrase, is of little consequence to phenomenologists, because in that form it is not available to the human consciousness. And as it is beyond human consciousness, there is no way that it can be consciously known or explored or even validated as something that really exists. Objects from a phenomenological perspective is hence, only the phenomenon and not the noumenon, because only the former can be known, explored and validated and one can never be sure of the latter. Reading Kunjaman's memoir in the context of phenomenology, it can be argued that caste is not a "thing-in-itself" and as such, its implications are not identifiable through objective perception. On the other hand, it is a "thing-for-itself" and as such caste and its inferences can only be experienced by the subject through his/her emotional and psychic consciousness.

The dehumanising and dismembering effect of caste on Dalit self can only be properly understood when it is perceived through the consciousness of the knowing and experiencing Dalit self. Thus, it is only when perceived through the insider's perspective that one can fully apprehend the reason for the overarching sense of lack and defeat that informs Kunjaman's consciousness as expressed in his memoir. While most Dalit life writings draw the trajectory of the protagonist's journey from the world of struggles to achievement, Kunjaman leaves the feeling that nothing significant has been achieved, no heights have been really scaled, which, as already mentioned, when examined against his manifold accomplishments in life puts the reader to bewilderment.

Kunjaman's memoir also reflects on the changing socio-political climate in the country. In contemporary India, Dalits are getting more access to education and employment opportunities compared to the past, since the constitutionally vouchsafed regulations demand so from the mainstream. However, Kunjaman is acutely aware of the extreme discriminations that the Dalit students are facing in the HEI s in the country, a fact brought to the forefront of the nation by the suicide of Rohit Vemula. The case of Rohit Vemula is pertinently referred to by Kunjaman, accenting the predicament of the scores of such empowered Dalits whose acute realisation of their ignominious position and inability to find concrete ameliorative steps desperately drive them to suicide. Kunjaman writes, "Vemula's dissent was a basic one; he could not grow intellectually. His suicide was a result of the comprehending the hindrance to it. He had to end his life because he was the one who refused to compromise with the systems" (56). In Kunjaman's opinion, Vemula's suicide is demonstrative of the predicament of Dalits today, their inability to break the caste obstacles and their refusal to compromise with the system. Thus, Kunjaman views Vemula's suicide an assertion of his Dalit self; a dissent against the negation of his agency.

Kunjaman's account of Rohit Vemula's suicide foreshadows Kunjaman's death as she committed suicide three years after the publication of his Memoir. Perhaps like Vemula's suicide, Kunjaman's death too can be considered a "Dissent" against caste. His memoir is rightly titled as "Dissent". It is also pertinent here to mention that Kunjaman had refused to accept the Kerala Sahitya Akademi award for *Ethiru* in 2021, yet another act of defiance from the author who led his momentous life "in opposition to the social order" based on caste hierarchy.

Throughout the text, Kunjaman argues for a life and attitude based on the thinking and imagining self, rooted on ideas derived from the socio-political atmosphere where the individual is situated. He emphasizes the need for Dalits to develop a conscious liberating self within themselves, by the power for thinking and having a definite independent stance, which in turn evolves from one's access to modern education and ideas. Over and again in the text, Kunjaman emphasizes the importance of having a thinking mind which is enriched by vibrant ideas. He says "though awareness is a social product, we cannot belittle the value of ideas in this regard" (36). Quoting Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind he categorically states: "idea is a subject, social situation is a predicate" (36).

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Exploring Post-Truth Realities: Analyzing Truth, Perception, and Deception in Shehan Karunatilaka's *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*

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Abstract

In the current scenario of post-truth, where facts are often indistinguishable from fiction, the concept of truth undergoes constant manipulation. This study delves into the intricate dynamics of truth, perception, and deception as depicted in Shehan Karunatilaka's novel, *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* that spotlights on the societal and political turmoil of the Sri Lanka at that times. Through a post-truth theoretical framework, the research analyses how the narrative unfolds the protagonist Maali's devastating journey amidst the backdrop of the Sri Lankan Civil War, (1983-2009) a 26-years old conflict that has left an indelible mark on the nation's collective consciousness. The study reveals how truth can be manipulated and twisted, blurring the lines between reality and fiction. Through textual analysis and critical inquiry, this research sheds light on the ways in which the novel *The Seven Moons* of *Maali Almeida* elucidate the multifaceted nature of truth in a post-truth era. It emphasis the urgency of understanding and navigating the ambiguous borders between reality and fiction in contemporary literature and society.

Keywords: post-truth, truth, perception, deception

Introduction

The term "post-truth" refers to a societal environment where beliefs and opinions are often guided more by personal feelings and convictions rather than factual evidence. While commonly associated with politics and media, its relevance extends into the realm of literature, highlighting the prioritization of subjective interpretation over objective truth. This phenomenon gained prominence in the early 21st century, particularly in response to the proliferation of fake news, disinformation, and manipulative narratives in political and media spheres. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "post-truth" as a descriptor for situations where emotional appeals and personal convictions wield more influence in shaping public perceptions than verifiable facts. This shift towards subjective interpretation and emotional resonance in shaping public discourse is a significant aspect of contemporary cultural and intellectual landscapes, impacting not just politics and media but also literary expressions and narratives.

This paper delves into the intricate dynamics of truth, perception, and deception from a post-truth prospective within contemporary literature. The term "post-truth," which characterizes an era where personal beliefs and emotional appeals overshadow factual evidence,

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forms the backbone of this analysis. Post-truth originated in political and media contexts as a result of the emergence of fake news and disinformation, but its consequences extend to the literary domain, where subjective interpretations frequently triumph empirical reality. This phenomenon is well represented in Karunatilaka's 2022 novel, *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* which delves into the murky seas of life, death, and the afterlife. The story presents the harsh truths about war, political corruption, and hidden identities, forcing to distinguish reality from distorted perceptions. Maali Almeida's journey from self-interest to moral awareness emphasises the theme of discovering hidden truths, which parallels society's struggle against deceptive stories. The narrative highlights the protagonist's mission to reveal his life's work and expose wartime atrocities, underlining the importance of truth in an age dominated by emotional and subjective interpretations. Thus, the aim of this research is to demonstrate how post-truth realities are not simply a political and media concern but also a critical lens for examining modern literature's connection to truth, perception and deception.

In the exploration of post-truth dynamics, the insights of Bruno Latour and Hannah Arendt are indispensable. Bruno Latour, renowned for his work in science and technology studies, challenges the traditional view of objective truth by asserting that facts are socially constructed through networks of human and non-human actors. His critique of modernity's rigid dichotomy between nature and society underscores how truth is negotiated and contingent upon collective processes. Latour's perspective is crucial in understanding the post-truth era, where the credibility of scientific and political institutions is frequently questioned, leading to a climate where subjective beliefs often overshadow empirical facts. Hannah Arendt, a prominent political theorist, provides a complementary yet distinct viewpoint. In her seminal essay *Truth and Politics*, Arendt emphasizes the inherent tension between factual truth and political narratives. She argues that while opinions are vital for political discourse, the deliberate manipulation of factual truth through propaganda poses a significant threat to the public realm. Arendt's analysis of totalitarian regimes illustrates the fragility of truth when confronted with organized lies, a scenario reminiscent of the post-truth landscape where misinformation proliferates. Together, Latour and Arendt illuminate the complexities of maintaining truth in contemporary society. Their theories provide a robust framework for analyzing how truth is constructed, contested, and often subverted in the post-truth era, highlighting the intricate interplay between knowledge, power, and perception.

The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida, originally appeared in the Indian subcontinent in 2020 under the title *Chats With the Dead*. It was reedited for a global audience. Still, the narrative is loaded with references for those who are familiar with Sri Lanka's history. This work of literary fiction intertwines fictional elements with real-world dilemmas, creating a compelling narrative that resonates with contemporary societal issues and moral complexities. Sri Lanka's present is haunted by traumatic memories of the civil war that ravaged the island for over 26 years, from 1983 to 2009. The war was mainly a clash between the Sinhalese-

dominated Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a Tamil insurgent group fighting for an independent state for the Tamil minority. The war's toll was devastating, with widespread casualties, displacement of communities, and economic disruptions. Although the Civil War ended in 2009, the current situation in Sri Lanka has only partially improved. A large portion of the Tamil population remains displaced. Despite less political and civil rights challenges, torture and enforced disappearances persist occasionally in later times.

The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida by Shehan Karunatilaka explores the intricate relationship between life and the afterlife within the realm of literary fiction. The book's narrative handles challenging subjects such as the harsh realities of war-mongering politicians and covert homosexuality, providing readers with an opportunity for serious introspection and contemplation. The plot revolves around Maali Almeida, a wartime photographer who prioritises money at first but becomes later fearless because of the mysterious red bandanna he wears. However, a pivotal moment prompts Maali to question his choices, realizing the consequences of his actions too late and succumbing to the whims of fate. Despite these obstacles, Maali finds hope as he finds the way to rectify past wrongs in the "In Between''(Karunatilaka 13) realm. He has the duty with a time-sensitive mission: to find out who killed him as well as safeguard Jaki, his girlfriend, from the attackers and also lead his friends to the hidden legacy of his life's work, unveil it to the world, exposing the atrocities committed by those who profit from wars and innocent lives lost. In his afterlife, the protagonist's encounters with otherworldly entities unveil further layers of distortion and deception, mirroring the weird dance of truth and falsehood in the living world. His journey is not just a personal odyssey but a reflection of the broader struggles for transparency and accountability in a corrupt dystopian society.

The novel adeptly illustrates the pervasive influence of post-truth dynamics, where the delineation between truth and falsehood is obfuscated by subjective narratives and manipulative discourse. Maali's encounters with supernatural entities in the afterlife parallel the deceit and distortion prevalent in the living world, reflecting a broader societal struggle for transparency and accountability. The dystopian setting amplifies the challenges posed by post-truth, where objective facts are often overshadowed by emotional appeals and misinformation. *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* portrays the experiences of its protagonist to explore the pervasive nature of misinformation and its profound effects on both personal and societal levels. Through the lens of Maali's life, disappearance, and death, Karunatilaka critiques the ease with which misinformation can distort reality, manipulate public perception, and influence personal identities. The novel serves as a poignant reflection on the post-truth era, highlighting the challenges of navigating a world where objective truth is increasingly elusive. In doing so, it calls for a critical examination of the sources and motivations behind the information we consume, urging readers to remain vigilant and discerning in the face of pervasive misinformation. Thus, *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* serves as a poignant exemplar of post-truth in a dystopian society, highlighting the complex interplay of perception, deception, and the pursuit of truth amidst a corrupt and morally ambiguous environment.

Corruption, wielded by people in positions of authority for self-serving purposes, has spread like a deadly illness throughout societal systems. The use of power for personal benefit alters the core of governance, resulting in a pervasive culture of deception and exploitation. Through the characters ASP Ranchagoda, Detective Cassim, Stanley Dharmendran and Major Raja Udgampola Shehan Karunatilaka portrays the deceptive authorities, like a malignant force flourishes in disguise, undermining the rule of law and perpetuating a vicious cycle of injustice and inequity. The novel mirrors real-world political scenarios, where the twisted use of authority extends beyond financial misconduct to encompass nepotism, bias, and the destruction of meritocracy. In today's post-truth world, facts and objective truth are often overshadowed by personal beliefs and emotional appeals, allowing such corruption to thrive unchecked. This systemic corruption spreads like an insidious disease, infecting every aspect of society and destroying democratic frameworks. The resulting culture of deception becomes normalized, with misinformation and propaganda further entrenching these corrupt practices. As these corrupt activities spread, they infect every aspect of society, corroding institutions, losing public trust, and destroying democratic framework. "Typical government office. Take a number and sit down until you forget why you came". (Karunatilaka 93)

Karunatilaka's portrayal is a stark reflection of contemporary issues, emphasizing the urgent need to address these corrupt activities. The novel calls for immediate action to detect, confront, and eradicate this insidious disease. In the context of post-truth theory, where the boundary between truth and falsehood is increasingly blurred, the novel highlights the importance of holding those in power accountable. The deceptive authorities in *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* are emblematic of how, in a post-truth era, the manipulation of truth can lead to widespread societal decay. The narrative underscores the critical need for vigilance, transparency, and integrity to restore public trust and uphold democratic values in the face of such pervasive corruption. "Evil is not what we should fear. Creatures with power acting in their own interest: that is what should make us shut" (Karunatilaka 19)

In the context of the post-truth era, politicians often manipulate information and narratives to serve their interests, even at the expense of truth and public welfare. The funds donated as aid from other nations are being misused or siphoned off by corrupt officials, neglecting the intended purpose of public development projects. Politicians in the post-truth era strategically craft narratives that resonate with their base, often relying on emotional appeals rather than factual accuracy. This aligns with Karunatilaka's portrayal of decision-making based on profit motives rather than public good, as seen in the preference for the lowest bidder or non-execution of projects for maximum profitability. The intertwining of political corruption, profit-driven agendas, and disregard for truth in the novel reflects broader societal challenges where truth is manipulated for political and economic gains, contributing to the erosion of public trust and the perpetuation of systemic injustices.

"The World Bank and the Dutch government once donated money towards rebuilding these canals. A bulk of it ended up in well-stitched pockets. A feasibility study was rejected and

filed next to plans for unbuilt highways and skyscrapers. In Sri Lanka, everything is built by the lowest bidder or, most profitably, not at all." (Karunatilaka 20)

In the novel, Sena Pathirana emerges as a pivotal character who encapsulates the revolutionary fervor and political turbulence of 1980s Sri Lanka. As a former chief organizer for the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), Sena's Marxist ideology and radical activism are emblematic of the era's socio-political struggles. His brutal murder by the government transforms him into a spectral figure in the afterlife, where he befriends the protagonist, Maali Almeida. Sena's unwavering determination to recruit an army of the dead underscores his relentless pursuit of justice and vengeance against the oppressive capitalist state. Through Sena, Karunatilaka poignantly reflects on the enduring impacts of political violence and the haunting legacies of ideological battles, setting a powerful backdrop for the novel's exploration of truth, perception, and deception. Sena's human experience in the novel exemplifies the post-truth dynamics that govern societal hierarchies and power structures. Sena's narrative reveals how individuals from impoverished backgrounds are systematically conditioned to accept and perpetuate their subordinate status. From a young age, they are brainwashed into addressing mediocre individuals as "hamu" and "sir," reinforcing a social order that privileges the wealthy and powerful. This conditioning is not merely a matter of respect but a survival strategy in a society where economic disparity dictates one's access to opportunities. Sena's recounting of his life as a servant boy and a street vegetable vendor, despite holding a degree, underscores the persistence of this ingrained deference. The necessity for people like him to call the rich "sir" to navigate certain parts of the city illustrates how truth and perception are manipulated to maintain the status quo. The post-truth theory elucidates how these societal norms are not grounded in objective reality but are constructed and perpetuated through repeated assertions and social conditioning. By distorting truth and conditioning the minds of the lower classes, those in power ensure the continuation of an inequitable system. This manipulation of truth serves to entrench societal divisions, making it challenging for the poor to break free from their imposed roles. Sena's story is a poignant reflection of how post-truth mechanisms operate on a micro level, shaping individuals' perceptions and interactions in a way that sustains broader structural inequalities.

By presenting the spectral alliance of Sena's ghost army, which utilizes Drivermalli to almost defeat their tormentors, Karunatilaka underscores the collective power of shared suffering and the intrinsic human need to resist oppression. This ghost army, made up of tortured and deceived individuals, portrays a collective awareness bound by agony, emphasising the essence of truth in their oneness. Karunatilaka's depiction is a powerful commentary on the necessity of action against injustices, resonating with post-truth theory by illustrating how truth and perception are manipulated, yet how collective action can still challenge and disrupt these deceptions.

The protagonist's transformation into a ghostly emissary of truth is not without its challenges. His dismembered body, a grim reminder of his violent end, lies submerged in the tranquil waters of Beira Lake—a poignant symbol of the juxtaposition between serenity and

brutality in his narrative. Despite the encroaching shadows of the afterlife, his determination to expose the truth remains unwavering. His existence is a testament to the enduring power of truth, even beyond mortality's grasp. Before his demise, the protagonist meticulously documented Sri Lanka's darker facets through his lens, capturing the grim realities that lurked beneath the surface. These haunting images, now etched in his spectral memory, hold the key to unraveling the political machinations and manipulations orchestrated by figures like the corrupt minister Cyril Wijeratne and others. The photographs he left behind serve as a damning indictment of a society plagued by moral decay and political malfeasance.

Maali, is acutely conscious of his vulnerable position in a politically volatile society. Determined to avoid being labelled a traitor by the government for his sensitive work, Maali wears cyanide capsules hidden among other things around his neck as a final option against compulsion. This precautionary measure, while intended to protect his integrity and secrets, paradoxically subjects him to superficial judgments. Stanley Dharmendran's judgement of Maali's appearance exemplifies society's inclination to make immediate conclusions based on external appearances, a trait amplified by the post-truth era, in which perception frequently wins objective reality. The post-truth context, which is defined by the blurring of reality and fiction, emotional manipulation, and the spread of misinformation, distorts society's perceptions of individuals.

The post-truth theory illuminates how subjective impressions prevail over objective reality in this story. Stanley's refusal to see beyond his prejudices leads to a misleading picture of Maali, obscuring the truth behind his death. The plot twist, revealing the death of Maali, serves as a powerful example of post-truth, where personal beliefs and political agendas distort reality. Karunatilaka masterfully uses this twist to highlight how truth is manipulated by those in power and perceived through biased lenses.The reader, along with Maali, is led through a labyrinth of misinformation and half-truths, illustrating the profound impact of perception on the understanding of truth. This deception, rooted in both personal and political realms, underscores the novel's critical engagement with post-truth realities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has delved into the complex dynamics of truth, perception, and deception within contemporary literature, specifically through the lens of post-truth theory as exemplified in Shehan Karunatilaka's *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*. The exploration of the post-truth era, characterized by the prioritization of personal beliefs over factual evidence, has unveiled profound insights into how subjective interpretations often overshadow empirical reality. The novel's portrayal of war, political corruption, and hidden identities serves as a stark reminder of the blurred lines between truth and fiction in our society, where deceptive narratives and manipulative discourse thrive.

The characters in *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* symbolize the pervasive influence of post-truth dynamics, particularly through the depiction of deceptive authorities and the normalization of corruption. Karunatilaka's narrative acts as a mirror reflecting contemporary

issues, emphasizing the urgent need to address systemic corruption and restore integrity in governance. Furthermore, the novel's exploration of societal hierarchies and power structures underscores how truth and perception are manipulated to maintain the status quo, perpetuating inequalities and injustices. Sena's narrative, in particular, illuminates how post-truth mechanisms operate on a micro level, shaping individuals' perceptions and interactions within a broader framework of structural inequalities.

Ultimately, *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* serves as a poignant exemplar of post-truth in a dystopian society, highlighting the complex interplay of truth, perception, and deception amidst a corrupt and morally ambiguous environment. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on post-truth realities, emphasizing the critical importance of vigilance, transparency, and integrity in navigating a world where truth is often obscured by subjective narratives and manipulative agendas. As we confront the challenges posed by the post-truth era, it is imperative to heed the lessons gleaned from Karunatilaka's narrative, fostering a culture of critical thinking, accountability, and a steadfast commitment to upholding objective truth in the face of deceptive practices and manipulative discourses.

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Mapping Intersectionality of Gender and Sexuality in Abha Dawesar's *Babyji* through the Mirror of Queer Feminism

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Sunita Kumari

Abstract

Queer feminism challenges traditional feminism by addressing issues like racism, imperialism, and shaming of transgender individuals. It promotes a more inclusive society and opposes restrictive feminism. Queer feminism a research methodology as combines queer theory and feminist theory. It is here used to analyze Abha Dawesar's novel *Babyji*. The proposed paper is an attempt to examine Anamika Sharma's journey, patriarchal power dynamics, and the intersectionality of gender and sexuality in Indian society through the parameters of queer feminism. Queer feminism examines the intersectionality of gender and sexuality, the cultural context of India, and the power dynamics in Anamika's relationships. This approach tends to enrich the analysis of Dawesar's work and contributes to the ongoing discourse on queer and feminist issues in literature.

Keywords: queer feminism, intersectionality, gender, sexuality

Introduction

A wide range of ideologies and activities together referred to as feminism aims to define and realize social, economic, and political equality for women. In 1837, the French philosopher Charles Fourier coined the expression. The desire to resist the marginalization of women and other marginalized groups in the building of the global society gave rise to the feminist movement. But in the process, the movement made the same mistakes, turning into an imperialist, racist, homophobic, and transphobic movement. Queer feminism was so ostracized and isolated from the broader feminist movement. The term "queer" was first used as a form of homophobic abuse in 1894 by the Marquis of Queensberry, John Sholto Douglas. In the late 1800s, it was used disparagingly for same-sex relationships. In the late 1980s, queer academics and activists reclaimed their identity as different from gay political identity. Queer feminists and queer feminism are radical groups opposing patriarchy and embracing queer individuals alongside LGBT and other minority groups.

Queer feminism is feminism with a difference. It challenges traditional feminism by addressing issues such as racism, imperialism, genocide, strict gender rules, shaming of transgender individuals, and promoting a more inclusive society. It opposes the restrictive nature of feminism, which excludes non-binary genders and ignores the serious problems caused by patriarchy, which harms people of any gender. Queer feminism emerged as a

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response to societal expectations of gender and sex negativity. It explores diverse sexual identities, communities, and politics, distinguishing between insiders and outsiders. The queer theory maintains boundaries and contests heterosexual identities while opposing racism, imperialism, homophobia, and transphobia. Queer feminism stands against patriarchy and aims to challenge these issues. Judith Butler, a prominent feminist and queer theorist, posits that gender norms are shaped by societal features and that every human act should be seen as an expression of "psychic reality," not as superior or inferior.

Objectives

- To examine queer identities and relationships, focusing on the protagonists' journey in discovering and experiencing their sexual orientations
- Examine how the book challenges the expectations and standards that patriarchy places on women, regarding their autonomy and sexuality.
- To evaluate through character portrayal, the depictions of resistance to Intersectional tyranny, including both overt and covert acts of subversion.

Research Methodology

Queer feminism embraces a research methodology that combines the perspectives of queer theory and feminist theory to analyze Abha Dawesar's novel *Babyji*. The novel follows the life of Anamika Sharma, a sixteen-year-old student in Delhi, who explores her sexual awakening, societal norms, and relationships with three women. The novel explores themes of sexuality, identity, and the tension between tradition and modernity in Indian society. Queer feminism examines the Intersectionality of gender and sexuality, the cultural context of India, and the power dynamics in Anamika's relationships. It also considers her age and authority, the fluidity of sexuality, her self-discovery and resistance to conforming to societal expectations, and the representation and visibility of LGBTQ+ identities in literature. The methodology helps to understand Anamika's journey, the power dynamics, the cultural context, and the role of resistance in her self-discovery.

Discussion

The present paper attempts to analyze the novel *Babyji* using the lenses of feminist and queer philosophy. The novel *Babyji* was written by Abha Dawesar an Indian novelist and visual artist writing in English. She is well known for writing about the theme of interpersonal relationships. Written in 2002 *Babyji* is the recipient of the Lambda Literary Award in 2005 and Stonewall Novel Award for Lesbian Fiction in 2006. The narrative outlines the story of the self-discovery and emancipation of Anamika Sharma, a high school student in Delhi who is curious about her sexual orientation.

The story takes place in India, where cultural expectations and conventions shape Anamika's experiences. Her acts are interpreted as manifestations of resistance, emphasising both political and individual resistance, against heteronormative and patriarchal systems. *Babyji* has received accolades for portraying a young, lesbian lady in contemporary India honestly and unabashedly. It greatly enhances the portrayal of LGBTQ+ identities in modern Indian literature, encouraging readers and authors to discuss feminism and sexuality. Dawesar's artistic output bears witness to the continuous fight for gender and sexual equality. It explores desire and identity through Anamika's journey, highlighting the power dynamics and intersections of identity, desire, and societal expectations. It also presents India's sociopolitical environment and the impact of individual experiences.

Babyji is a queer feminist novel. It explores Anamika's same-sex interactions and desires, defying societal norms and highlighting the uncertainty of sexual identity and desire. One could see Anamika's sexual experiments as an attempt to show her independence in a society that values conservatism. The analysis of queer feminist theory offers a thorough comprehension of Anamika's identity. A queer feminist analysis focuses on Anamika's same-sex interactions and desires as portrayed in the book. Anamika's relationships with many women—her maid, a classmate, and an old woman—allow her to defy expectations placed by heteronormative society. The novel illustrates the uncertainty of sexual identity and desire by defying exact classification. The novel has been praised for its honest portrayal of a young, lesbian lady in India, promoting discussions on feminism and sexuality.

Abha Dawesar's novel *Babyji* explores themes of power, sexuality, and identity through the experiences of its protagonist, Anamika Sharma. The allusion to the *Kamasutra* deepens the exploration of sexuality, identity, and power, placing the narrative in its larger cultural and literary contexts. The ancient classic *Kamasutra* reflects Anamika's journey of self-discovery and desires. The knowledge gained from *Kamasutra* enabled Anamika to develop sexual intimacies with Tripta Adhikari, a divorcee, Rani, the family's housemaid and Sheela, her classmate. The work *Kamasutra* acts as a catalyst for the identification of this desire, which is the desire to comprehend the essence of reality, the mysterious workings of the body, and how the body reacts to the presence of other bodies. This is where the idea of desire enters the picture. The body continues to celebrate the "lesbian continuum," which Adrianne Rich defined in her 1980 essay *Compulsive Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*, as the broad and diverse range of love and connection among women and includes same-sex relationships. By making fun of conventional language like "ageism" in her literature, Anamika successfully criticizes the arbitrary nature of social interactions. It completely suffocates her, and she finds it impossible to be unattractive to someone older than herself. She describes how Tripta Adhikari, a divorcee, captured her heart at first sight and calls her an "enigma". Anamika, a young girl, develops a strong desire for the "tangible" body, leading to a carnal awakening and craving for a person of the same sex. Her body visualization depends on her feelings about it, revealing a de-aestheticization of the body and its use as a social status indicator. Anamika's sexuality is defined by this instinctive urge, and she struggles to balance her

private dreams with social conventions. Abha Dawesar redefines the body, placing the desire for the body first and portraying it as humanistic. Anamika's understanding of the body is portrayed as a crucial part of growing up, and she upholds formal, routine tasks. Dawesar's story challenges the traditional perspective that the body is immoral, rejecting the binary between moral and physical.

Anamika, a minor in her teens, experiences a series of pauses in each relationship, often leading to self-evaluation. She fears losing her relationships, especially with Sheela, who has set social norms. She disregards her parents' lectures on leading a heteronormative lifestyle, as it doesn't accurately reflect her identity. Anamika's close relationship with her mother is more important than her father's, who is unwilling to spend time with the family. When Anamika begins dating Rani, she sees her as a surrogate mother, balancing her "playboy" personality with her desire for independence. She prioritizes female relationships over physical attraction, suppressing male subjectivity despite advances from Ajit and Chakra Dev. She says, "I had never wanted a boyfriend anyway"(11). Her friendships with a divorced woman, a housekeeper, and a young girl turn into potent weapons for challenging the dominant heterosexual language.

Anamika Sharma also known as Babyji, navigates her sexuality and personal and academic lives in a society that often marginalizes and oppresses women. Through shared experiences, Anamika and her friends, Sheela and Rani, form a close-knit community that offers empathy and solidarity. However, patriarchy also adds complications and tensions to their interactions, such as Anamika's control over Sheela and her toxic relationship with Sheela. The intersection of patriarchy and lesbianism can complicate and unify female characters' experiences:

Marginalisation and Stigmatisation; Non-heteronormative sexual orientations, such as lesbianism, are frequently marginalized and stigmatized in a patriarchal society. Because same-sex relationships are valued less than heterosexual ones and are upheld as the norm by patriarchy, lesbians may experience violence, social exclusion, and discrimination.

Control of Female Sexuality; Patriarchal systems aim to govern and control women's sexuality, frequently interpreting women's relationships and sexual aspirations in terms of male domination and pleasure. Lesbian partnerships threaten patriarchal power structures by putting women's needs and autonomy above this control.

Double Standards; When it comes to sexual behavior, patriarchal countries frequently have double standards, especially for women. While same-sex relationships between men and women are frequently criticized more harshly, relationships between men and women may be less stigmatized or even fetishized. This is a reflection of patriarchal ideas that women's sexuality is secondary to men's.

Intersectionality; It is important to acknowledge that race, class, religion, and ability intersect to shape lesbian experiences in patriarchal settings. Multiple marginalized identities can lead to compounded kinds of oppression and discrimination against women.

Lesbian visibility and representation in literature, the media, and other cultural domains may be suppressed under patriarchal institutions. Lesbians may feel alone and invisible as a result of this lack of representation, which makes it challenging for them to find support and a sense of belonging. Lesbianism can serve as a means of empowerment and resistance for women, even in the face of patriarchy's obstacles. By developing close relationships with other women and defying patriarchal expectations of what it means for women to be, Lesbians question prevailing power structures and claim their agency concerning sexuality. The relationship between lesbianism and patriarchy can be examined in literature and other media to shed light on the intricacies of identity, desire, and power structures in society. These concerns can be explored in works like *Babyji*, which provide insights into the real-life struggles faced by lesbians negotiating patriarchal societies.

Anamika's escorting style is a feminization of traditional men's roles, with her concern for her partners and macho approach. She aspires to be manly enough to protect the susceptibility of their bodies, especially when they share physical relations. Anamika's actions are seen as a gift of love and responsibility, promoting a sense of safety. She is not passive but actively seeks to create her territory, leaving an imprint of her furious sexuality on her lovers' bodies. Anamika's voyeuristic interest in the novel suggests that she seeks an understanding of human sexual behavior and social constraints. She wants mistresses in the future, expressing her desire to break free from socially defined partnerships. Dawesar's subversie style dismantles essentialist notions of identity and sexuality, as seen in Anamika's attire and her interrogation of heteronormativity.

The focus on non-heterosexual expressions of want is evident throughout the novel, and this desire continuously jolts the idea of inherent or intrinsic gender identity, as noted by Butler in *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (1997). The body has the potential to be both a power source and an effect. It is well known, that the discourse of the body and the discourse of sexuality are inextricably linked, and this relationship serves as a key criterion for choosing which version of sexual identity will predominate and which does not. Foucault shows how disciplinary practices harness and direct the inherent dynamics of bodies in *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (1975). As a result, the body is anchored in disciplinary practices serves as a platform for sexual politics. Following Foucault's theoretical stance, we may comprehend how the "body is also directly involved in a political field" (Foucault 25) and how the body "becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body." (Foucault 26). The operational power of the discourse of normative sexuality must dominate the sexual body in the book.

In her 1949 book *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir addresses several myths around lesbianism in the chapter "The Lesbian". Her contention that anatomy cannot be a "destiny" disproves the notion. She exposes how female homosexuality is a way for women to get over the social "system" that she claims keeps them from asserting their freedom. Parallel to this, Nivedita Menon wrote How Natural is Normal? in her article. The 2005 book *Feminism and Compulsory Heterosexuality* claims that the language of heterosexuality might hurt the

numerous sexualities that are non-binary by nature and that are continuously suppressed. As a result, we can see that sexual politics has its roots in the "serious world" that Butler alludes to in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947), a world with predefined standards and established authorities. Anamika stresses in her speech how she feels suppressed and how social conventions continue to dictate normative ideals: "I want to be free." I don't want to be told what to do all the time by society (338). She yearns to be free of the patriarchal society and her father's control. Her father's opinions on the *Mandal Commission* and self-immolations are not shared by her. Anamika struggles with her father's worldview lectures as well as existential and philosophical issues about life and her character. Heterosexuality which is supposed to provide stability over the lesbian body hides the true biological instinct. This is reflected in Anamika's lament that "We are just bound by so many constraints" (347). She finally gives in to society because she's afraid of being caught, which diminishes her sense of independence and unbridled sexuality. She decides to move abroad to further her education.

There is still an oscillation between resistance and repression, and queer sexuality uses this to its advantage in the mainstream discourse, which tries to attach the idea of a "mysterious physiology" to the bodies of homosexuals, as Foucault asserted in the *History of Sexuality*. Consequently, it is believed that the anatomy of homosexual bodies is distinct from that of the typical human body. Thus, the complexity and instability of the human subject position severely limits the opportunities for developing an alternative identity in the larger social environment. Understanding alternative sexuality and the restrictions on its positioning and expression is made easier by the dialectic between repression and resistance. Dawesar never seems to make it clear where this kind of sexuality goes, and it's precisely this ambiguity that makes the queer body more difficult to understand. Consequently, the body becomes entangled in the intricate network of biological instinct and biopolitical structure. The main causes of the lesbian body's status as a site of "collective contestation," according to Butler in "Critically Queer," are fear of denial, exploitation, and the force of heteronormativity. The lesbian body is a social and biological corpus that has played a crucial role in the development of queer feminism's epistemology. In India, lesbian literature emerges concurrently with women's writing and feminism, which gives them fresh hope for their identities. Unfortunately, the later-mentioned narratives fell prey to clichéd documentation that overvalued or glorified lesbian identity as the result of mature women's purely sexual dreams. The renowned work by Abha Dawesar introduces the life, inner turmoil, and upheaval of a teenage girl, setting up a pivotal moment. In addition to delving into characteristics like gender, sexual orientation, and how caste and class interact to create lesbian infancy and adolescence, the book looks at how a lesbian girl grows up in the face of a complex social structure and cultural indoctrination. When she grows up, she hopes to have "a big harem full of women." The way Dawesar portrays same-sex desire in *Babyji* contributes to the greater conversation around the representation of LGBTQ+ people in Indian literature and culture. By following a young girl on her quest to understand her sexuality, the book challenges accepted norms and highlights the diversity of human experiences.

Babyji is a psychological exploration of Anamika, a character who grapples with issues like female promiscuity, lesbian sexuality, identity, desire, and societal expectations. The novel explores the theme of lesbian love, focusing on emotional connections rather than sexual interactions. Anamika's lesbian love is portrayed as a site of comfort, peace, longing, and protection, reflecting the idea of lesbian feminists. Anamika's struggle with societal expectations and her desire for self-expression lead her to pursue higher studies in America. With the help of her friend Deepak, Anamika is awarded a grant to study and pursue her career, allowing her to experience various aspects of sexuality and life. The novel celebrates the emotional aspects of lesbian love.

Conclusion

This paper discusses the promotion of lesbian literary representation in Indian culture and society, highlighting the middle class's resistance to unconventional relationships. It explores Indian queer feminist literature, focusing on a young woman's journey to self-acceptance in a repressive society. *Babyji*, a groundbreaking work, tackles themes of female desire, sexual repression, and patriarchal domination through queer feminist lens. Its first-person perspective and rich subject material make it an essential text for queer feminist discourse, promoting discussions on feminism and sexuality.

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Magic Realism on Screen: Critiquing the Cinematic Adaptation of Toni Morrison's Beloved

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Abstract

Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, which was published in 1987, recounts the story of a family of freed slaves residing in the haunted house known as 124. The story is set in the period after American Civil War, and addresses the intricate blend of psychological, physical, and spiritual tribulations engendered by the institution of slavery; it also underscores the issues of the shredding of identity and the profound cultural void left in the wake slavery. Morrison employs the narrative technique of magic realism to convey these themes, transporting readers to a realm where the anguish of the oppressed and the scars of slavery are palpable. This surreal narrative approach not only alters reality but also serves as a potent vehicle for social critique, challenging unequal power structures and prompting philosophical reflection. The purpose of this study is to analyze the use of magic realism as a radical narrative tool as well as its potential for application in film making. It also studies the cinematic methods of magic realism as used by Jonathan Demme on screen and the political elements connected with them. Through this exploration, the study seeks to shed light on the transformative potential of magic realism in confronting historical injustices and envisioning a more equitable future.

Keywords: magic realism, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, cinematic edition of *Beloved*, post-colonialism

Introduction

The first few decades of the twentieth century are considered to be the beginning of the magic realist art trend, and Franz Roh, a German art critic, is credited with being the first person to use the phrase, *Magic Realism.* Roh connected the term with paintings that rejected expressionism and probed the hidden secrets that lie underneath reality. The phrase came to be linked with Latin American novels like those by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Isabel Allende, and Alejo Carpentier. After that, cinematic adaptations of magic realist texts started to emerge on the screen, and magic realism started to assume a significant role in avant-garde or experimental cinema while its use as a narrative tool was explored by filmmakers. Magic realism also began to appear in film adaptations of works by other authors.

In his book titled "*How to Do Things with Words*" (1995), J. L. Austin makes the argument that language does more than simply explain the world; it also helps creating it. Simultaneously,

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the world is also influenced by language. Magic realism changes reality and questions its foundation. The creative resistance that is inherent in the juxtaposition of magic and reality is both an effort to heal the historical wounds as well as a voice to oppose the power of the oppressors. Magic realism transports readers to the world of fantasy while keeping them grounded in their own. It shows a modified reality without forsaking the actual world, as opposed to the traditional approach of seeking another reality that is concealed behind what is apparent. This provides a more in-depth grasp of what lies beyond the projected reality, and as a result, the depiction of the same may not be facts but rather truth. In spite of the fact that magic realist paintings place favourable considerations on order and clarity, magic realism takes a critical stance against logic to a significant degree. According to Maggie Ann Bowers (2004), magic realism creates "a space beyond authoritative discourse, where the unrepresentable can be expressed" (p. 81). In order to give a voice to the unsaid truth and reality, time and space had to be created to express something that could not be represented. This results in the seemingly contradictory components of a lived experience being brought together in the same location at the same time.

Appropriateness of Postcolonial Theory in the Context of Magic Realism

Abdul R. Jan Mohamed, in his article "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature." (1985), expresses the opinion that the 'othering' of a large number of people by the thinking of European colonists, as well as their construction as backward or inferior, depends on Manichean dualism. Because of this dualism and otherization, binary oppositions have been created between the colonizers and the colonized on the basis of cultural and racial distinctions between the two groups. Toni Morrison employs the literary device of magic realism in her novel *Beloved* to critique the binary oppositions that were produced by colonialism. She incorporates poetry and politics into *Beloved* by decentering privileged western rationality via the use of magical myths to criticize the prevailing system of power and oppression. She does this by undermining hegemonic rationality. Her work paints a picture of a history that has been covered up and engages in a conversation with recollections from the past in order to demonstrate the inadequacy of the concept of 'rationality' within the context of the institution of slavery. In the book *Magical Realism*, Zamora and Faris (1995) claim that magic realism in *Beloved* corrects culture.They observe that magic is a cultural corrective that forces readers to question realistic assumptions of tragedy, materiality, and motive in magical realism writings (p. 3).

The story takes place in the state of Ohio, which is a free state, as well as in Kentucky which happened to be a slave state. The events of the narrative are based on a true event that occurred in the life of Margaret Garner, a slave who attempted to free herself from the shackles of slavery by murdering her children and then escaping to a world where she would not be subjected to the cruelties of the system of slavery. In the novel *Beloved*, the dead are brought back to the reality portrayed by logical western ideals. This is the magical aspect of

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the novel. The plot of the novel centres on Sethe, a free black lady who runs away from her master in Sweet Home so that she might enjoy a life unfettered by slavery. Her new life in Ohio is full of promise, but she can't shake the anxiety that comes with remembering her troubled past. Sethe was forced to make several difficult and difficult-to-understand choices in her life in order to escape from slavery. One of these choices was to murder her daughter in order to protect her from the oppressors. This aspect of Sethe's character was referred to by Stam (1941) in the narrative as her "desire to out-hurt the hurter" (Morrison, p. 276). The magical emergence of the deceased infant as a ghost in the new reality chosen by Sethe in Ohio brings to light the voice that has been stifled by the use of magic realism. The supernatural reveals a fissure in ideological constructs, namely that what is real for one group could not be real for another group. In oppressed societies, the reality of the ghost and the allusion to the fabled Abiku kid may be acknowledged. However, the oppressor, in accordance with their so-called 'western rationality', would prefer not to see or hear the ghost since, from a scientific standpoint, it is impossible for the ghost to exist. The foregoing points need to be acknowledged before there can be any awareness of the oppression that currently exists in society. The book creates an elaborate web of constructive links between the socially oppressed society, the doubly marginalized position of women, and the "dead Negro's grief" (Morrison, p. 6) in the apparition of the ghost in flesh in the actual world. These associations are woven together by the manifestation of the ghost in the real world.

Morrison's *Beloved* exposes the scars of reality and uncovers the postcolonial status of the oppressed people, in which the traumatic effects of colonialism continue to haunt and damage the lives of those who were colonized. This is accomplished via Morrison's intentional and painful engagement with the past as well as the invasion of the supernatural. As stated by George Lamming and quoted by Hulme (1993), "Psychologically, colonialism continues. It must be addressed long after colonialism ceases" (p. 120). In a consequence of the fact that colonialism is founded on the ideology of cultural hierarchy and superiority, the colonizers demolished the local cultures in an effort to exert control over the indigenous people and civilize them. The native identities of the people living in an area were shattered while it was under the rule of colonialism so that new identities could be formed and established according to the beliefs and principles of the colonialists.

Toni Morrison and other authors like her provide room for indigenous voices to be heard within the hegemonic discourse in a place in which the language that is most prevalent is not the same as "their" language. Toni Morrison makes a statement about her original culture and identity while using the narrative device of magic realism. When the language and reality of the colonizers are grabbed and reshaped into a discourse that is more acceptable to the colonized population, a further development in the link between post-colonialism and magic realism takes place. The primary function of the juxtaposition of the magical with the real is to decentralize the concept of reality and disturb the hegemonic basis of conditioning.

Within the context of postcolonial theory, Morrison's use of magic realism affords her the ability to carve out a space for blacks in the narrative of white American history. Through the incorporation of myths and magic into the resolutely logical Western worldview, the author draws attention to the rich culture and legacy of Africa. Morrison adopts a position that bridges cultural boundaries and provides a powerful voice for the displaced. In postcolonial literature, the concept of displacement emerges as a central theme. What lies beneath this dislocation is the realization that the trauma follows the oppressed wherever they go and won't leave them alone unless they face it head-on. The supernatural makes Sethe's Ohio house appear more like a person than a structure, weeping, sighing, trembling, and having fits.This is due to the fact that the given thought has been presented with an infusion of the supernatural in the text.

In addition, the reconstruction of both the individual and the social histories of black men and women in the aftermath of slavery and colonization is accomplished through the depiction of Sethe's memories through the use of magic realism and the incorporation of the ghost into living flesh. This takes place while the ghost appears in flesh form. Abiku is a figure from African mythology that is described as a kid who survives death only to be reborn to his or her own mother.

Sethe's '*bladder being full to capacity*' is a metaphor for the water break period of pregnancy, which represents *Beloved* being reborn to the same mother and emerging in flesh. This metaphor suggests Beloved will be reborn to the same mother. Abiku, an African legend which is said to be steeped in the mystical and supernatural, is a symbol of the reclaiming of lost traditions and the past. Morrison's postcolonial approach to reclaiming the past and projecting it with the desire of the oppressed to be anchored by history but not crushed by it is shown towards the conclusion of the book by the expulsion of Beloved as a ghost from the actual world. This scene takes place towards the end of the novel.

Therefore, it is not possible to deny that authors began utilizing magic realism as a strategy of resistance in order to give voice to the experiences of those who were marginalized. This was accomplished by depicting a changed world through the eyes of individuals who lacked political power. This artistic movement was an important step towards reclaiming the identities of aboriginal peoples, which had been fragmented and lost over time.

Elements of Magical Realism in Cinematic Edition of *Beloved*

Jonathan Demme is the director of the cinematic version of Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, which was released in 1998. This portion of the article will focus on analyzing the cinematic methods that Jonathan Demme used in his film to show magic realism, as well as the socio-political attitude that lies behind the adjustments that are being made in the process of adapting *Beloved* for the screen.

Sachdeva (2017) says that 'adaptation' is the process of change and shift that happens when a text from one medium is put into a different medium using a different set of signs. According to Linda Hutcheon (2004), 'interpretive creation' best describes adaptation, and

she uses translation as a metaphor to explain this concept (*A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 18). The process of adapting a source book into a film requires not just interpretation but also replication of the original material. E. H. Gombrich (1950) provides an insightful comparison that may be used to better comprehend the skill of adaptability. As a result, an adaptor who is reading a tale with the intention of turning it into a movie may or may not approach the subject from a different angle.

Numerous cinema reviewers have put up a variety of classification systems in order to better comprehend the many facets of adaptations. According to Geoffrey Wagner (1975), there are three possible categories to assess any adaptation: transposition, commentary, and analogy, which differ significantly from the source material (quoted in Sachdeva, 2017). Analogy represents a significant departure from the original work.

Considering that the nature of the language used in the book and the film is different, there are various obstacles that emerge in the process of adaptation that every director needs to cope with. When people read, they simultaneously conjure up a world in their heads, which helps them make sense of the material they're taking in. Reading, to put it another way, requires an internal translation. When watching a film, on the other hand, the audience must first be exposed to visuals in order to comprehend what is going on. When watching a movie, it is essential to have an awareness of what occurs beyond the pictures that are shown on the screen. The inherent contrasts between the languages of film and literature constitute a significant obstacle that every filmmaker must overcome. "Words in novels, to use the terminology of semiotics, are signs that do not have meaning in themselves; they communicate only through conventional agreement", is something (Sachdeva, 2017). Images, on the other hand, are direct and iconic in nature; they stand for what they represent. When converting a book into a film, the director has to confront the task of changing the text from one medium to another using a different sign system. Images, on the other hand, are more straightforward and recognizable in nature.

In the light of this information, the investigation of the cinematic techniques utilized by Jonathan Demme in the presentation of the magic realist aspects of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* becomes an area of concern for understanding how Jonathan Demme has translated Morrison's words into images utilizing the language of film, as well as how he has dealt with the aesthetics of transcription from novel to film.

The Language in *Beloved*: Cinematic features at a Glance

The magical realism tales often include ekphrastic passages and descriptions, both of which are challenging to adapt for the screen due to the difficulty associated with selecting acceptable approaches. When writing magical realism books, it is possible to verify that the features are correct by simply marking the characteristics that are shared by both the magical and the real. On the other hand, while displaying the same information on the screen, the filmmaker must rely on the audience's consensus about the accuracy of the visual cues.According to Robert Stam (1941), "… the art adapting to cinematic version partly

consists in deciding which generic conventions can be transposed into the new medium and which need to be trashed, expanded, or substituted" (p. 6). It is an excerpt from Robert Stam's book, "Realism, Magic, and the *Art of Film Adaptation" (2000)*. To put it another way, the process of adapting a story for the big screen is definitely an artistic kind of surgery.

"*Beloved* is poly-perceptual: they engage with numerous voices and narratives by telling and retelling the same event from Sethe's, Denver's, and Paul D's perspectives" (Mask, 2005). This characterization applies to both the novel and the film adaptation of the book. When discussing the syntax of magic realism, the grotesque has a key position in the conversation. These horrific aesthetics are experienced by readers and viewers through the perspectives of a variety of characters in the story. Toni Morrison is responsible for the literary construction of *Beloved's* hideous body, while Jonathan Demme is responsible for the visual presentation of the magic realism intermingling of human and beast - trading places within the slippery hierarchy of a grotesquely carnivalized world (Mask, 2005). The idea of the grotesque may be used as an anti-hegemonic technique since it determines violations in both time and space, and then it directs attention to the process of reestablishing social order. The narrative aesthetics of *Beloved* by Toni Morrison and the film adaptation directed by Jonathan Demme traverse between carnivalesque and horrific worlds to convey the magical and real.

In addition, director Jonathan Demme employs the iconic sight of a tombstone in the very opening scene of the movie in order to bring the magic realist aspect to the forefront of the story. As the camera goes closer to the headstone, we can see the word 'beloved' engraved on it. This shot gives the audience context for the storyline and the kind of story being told. A gravestone is shorthand for a deceased person or creature and also refers to their magical look' in the movie. Jonathan Demme further radicalizes the magical realism story on film by means of an audio-visual montage that emphasizes the strangeness and mysticism of the supernatural aspect. The sequence of events during which *Beloved* materializes in the flesh and emerges from the water is shown via the use of jarring intercutting and the juxtaposition of many images in frames, one after the other. The spectators receive the impression that the magical and the mundane are blending together because of choppy, jerky, and abrupt editing. A water droplet falls, and the pattern of the river changes; the next shot juxtaposes the pattern formed in the river with imagery of trees; and finally, with another abrupt cut, a high-angle shot reveals *Beloved* walking out of the river water. The scene begins with a shot of a leaf flowing in a river; water droplets fall, and the pattern of the river changes; and so on. (*Beloved*, 30:16–31:10). When Beloved hears Sethe drawing near to Paul D., another important moment that features the magical on-screen effects, the ghost's mental agony at the prospect of losing her hold on Sethe's love is conveyed via the use of the montage method. This scene is also notable. The scene opens with a wide-angle view of Beloved sobbing and sprinting towards the river. After a cut, the frame shifts, and a high-angle shot of river water is used to show Beloved's anguish. The scene ends with Beloved sitting down on the bank of the river. The image of Denver's face emerges in the water, and after another

cut, the frame is filled with two turtles lying on top of each other to represent love. The next photo is an extreme close-up of Beloved's neck. As she rotates her neck, an image of water flowing in circles is superimposed over this shot. In the following frame, the turtles move further apart from one another, and a different colour is seen emerging in the sky. After that, a picture of varying tones of the sky is superimposed over a scene of trees, and the subsequent frame brings us back to residence 124. (Beloved, 1:25:13–1:27:21).

The interaction of the past with the present becomes significant because of the fact that the magical in *Beloved* is the reincarnated daughter of Sethe. This discussion, when depicted graphically, gives the impression of a resolution in which the language of colonizers is grasped and converted into a discourse that is more acceptable to the present and future of the group that was colonized. The way that Demme employs the flashback method ensures that it functions in a manner that is tightly linked with the psychology of the characters. The fade-in and fade-out technique is used rather often in the presentation of flashbacks in Demme's films. The face of the person whose flashback is being shown on the screen is first shown in a close-up shot; however, as the flashback progresses, the close-up gradually fades away and is replaced with scenes from the past. The change from the present to the past and back again may be explained by the movement from one temporal and geographical environment to another. This is significant in relation to magical realism narrative since the majority of magical realism tales written within a postcolonial and postmodern context have a non-linear narrative structure. When seen from a broader perspective, the nonlinear sequencing of event semerges as central element of magical realism films as well. The use of flashbacks in storytelling helps bridge the gap between linear and non-linear storytelling, the past and the present, as well as the fantastical and the mundane.

Use of Varying Colour Palettes and Symbolism throughout the Cinema

In addition to the use of montage and the fade-to-dissolve technique of flashbacks to present the fantastic and the real, as well as the past and the present, Jonathan Demme has played with the application of colour to particular images in the film. Fredric Jameson (1986) says that this represents thinking as repressed or unsatisfied desires. Jonathan Demme has also used the fade-to-dissolve technique of flashbacks. According to him, the use of colour serves as a 'punctual beat of energy' in magical realism films (Jameson, 1986). In other words, the application in question produces an unpleasant visual effect and functions as a mental stimulant. Jonathan Demme uses a changing tonal palette throughout the film to distinguish between the fantastical and the mundane, as well as the past and the present. The way Demme communicates visually with the audience is via the play that takes place between dazzling and boring tones. This change in colour tones is described by Morrison (2004) herself in the following manner: "Following her inside the door … and was immediately frozen in place by a pool of crimson, undulating light." (p. 10).

Demme has shown the existence of the supernatural in our everyday lives by referring to it as a 'red light', which he has used as a metaphor. Everything goes crimson at the moment

that Paul D is confronted by the baby ghost for the first time, and she uses a table to hurry towards him. When Beloved goes to see Paul D in the shed and requests that he touch her on the inside and speak her name, the hue red is once again used in a visual application. The shed emits a crimson light, which is symbolic of blood and sacrifice. This changing of tone palettes rejects the standard notion of reality and instead introduces sights of the magical and its depiction.

The use of red light in Demme's films is often emotionally charged, visceral, and subjective. The viewers are influenced, and their emotional state is produced as a result of the coded meaning that lies behind the change in colour palettes and the use of colour filters. In addition, Demme uses a sepia-toned colour palette to illustrate the memories. Sepia tones, in a sense, play the role of a guide for the audience in interpreting what they see on screen as having occurred in the past in comparison to the present and the real-world setting of the film.

The manner in which Demme employs visual metaphors to evoke a certain emotional state is one of the most obvious and visible characteristics of his art of adaptation. In her book, Morrison depicts the supernatural as a strange and fascinating monster. The magical part of her essay expresses a yearning to learn about and converse with the 'magical' part of her essay expresses a yearning to learn about and converse with the 'real'. Beloved has a lot of questions for Sethe to answer about the truth that she had to miss while she was dead. When Beloved is sitting in the front and asking Sethe questions about her previous existence outside of 124, the visual motif of 'burning fire' in the backdrop represents the longing of the 'magical' to know what is 'real' (Beloved, 50:02 & 2:05:24).

The fire that can be seen in the backdrop of the picture is a metaphor for Beloved's desire to learn all there is to know about Sethe and to win her attention and affection.

Close-up views have been used very successfully by Jonathan Demme in the course of depicting the actual world of the characters Sethe, Denver, and Paul D in House 124. In an interview with DGA Quarterly in 2015, Demme very frankly said that the most effective camera angle is the one in which the audience experiences the world through the eyes of a character. Jonathan Demme, with his use of close-ups, maintains the viewers intact, aware, and active even when the magic is presented on the screen, in contrast to the long views, which provide the audience a road to escape into inactivity. Specifically, in order to bring *Beloved's* magic realism to the big screen, Jonathan Demme used the grotesque aesthetic, the montage method, abrupt cutting, the juxtaposition of images in frames, non-synchronous noises, and the application of colour filters. The director of the film has depicted magical occurrences with the same intention that Morrison did, which was to just reveal magical occurrences in order to modify reality and not to forsake it altogether.

Cinematic Edition of Beloved and its Political Undertones

Beloved, is a multi-faceted work of literature that tells the harrowing experience of African Americans and how the institution of slavery has impacted their history via the use of the magic realist style. The novel contains tales from the past, not only of the main protagonist

Sethe but also of the men who were tormented by the schoolteacher and other white men at Sweet Home in Kentucky; these men's names are Halle, Paul D., Sixo, and Paul A. The novel also provides further details on the story of Baby Suggs. The novel *Beloved* gets adapted into a movie, but it doesn't give us the same multi-layered plot that Morrison gives. In the film *Beloved* directed by Jonathan Demme, the primary emphasis is not on the events that take place outside of Sethe, Denver, or Beloved's home at Bluestone, but rather on what goes on within the home, with Sethe, Denver, and Beloved as the protagonists. Despite the fact that both the book and the film depict the psychological battle of enslaved people demanding control of their minds and bodies, the choice that Jonathan Demme made to exclude the experiences of the black males in Sweet Home makes the film more focused on the lives of the women. After the infant spirit known as Beloved thoroughly seizes Sethe's mind and energies and messes with her processes, Denver becomes the focal point of the narrative, and Paul D is nearly entirely written out of the picture. Because of this, the movie is a depiction of terror within the context of a family tale in which Sethe and Denver build a little family.

Within the confines of room 124 at Bluestone, the atrocities of the system of slavery, which were previously only seen on a wider scale in the white land, are now magnified. This is where Morrison's voice comes into play, since she was the driving force behind the conception of the infant ghost in flesh as well as the usage of magic realism. Because the promise of Morrison's magic realism still speaks for 'sixty million and more' despite the fact that Demme has shifted the geographical emphasis of the horrors that the system of slavery inflicted upon its victims.

The movie has its own unique tone because of Jonathan Demme's decision to cast Oprah Winfrey in the role of Sethe, which he did for political reasons. Before the release of *Beloved*, Winfrey and Demme had both given their own humanist perspectives. Demme's representation of terror, which generally takes a more traditional method, receives an extra layer of meaning because of the widespread appeal of Oprah Winfrey and the humane perspectives she expresses. In addition, Demme's stance of changing the experiences of black males by concentrating only on the stories of the women living in room 124 suggests that the horrors of the system of slavery only impacted a portion of the community rather than the community as a whole. This is because Demme focuses only on the stories of the women residing in 124.

The film '*The Silence of the Lambs*', which was also directed by Demme and released in 1991, came under heavy fire from feminists for its poor representation of gender problems. Feminist critics are responsible for bringing to light the negative stereotypes associated with transwomen and internalized sexism. The author of *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan (2002), took issue with what she called 'the evisceration of the female body' and said: "*The Silence of the Lambs* was absolutely outrageous" (p. 98). A feminist thinker named Cynthia Freeland (2000) pointed out that Clarice's alliance with Hannibal dilutes her authority and aligns her with the psychopath who committed the murders. In *The Silence of the Lambs*,

Demme created an image of a woman with a phallic appearance, which drew criticism from certain feminists.

Beloved is a universe of women that was established by Jonathan Demme via the adaptation of a book written by an African American woman and the casting of well-known female personalities such as Oprah Winfrey and Beah Richards. As a result, he has redeemed his social voice as a filmmaker in order to right his stance as a humanist by using the women-centric interpretation and construction of Morrison's *Beloved* as an artistic tool. In addition to that, he has changed the conclusion. While the last scene of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* has a dialogue between the characters Paul-D and Sethe, in which Paul-D declares to Sethe, "Me and you, we got more yesterday than anyone. We need a tomorrow, but not just any tomorrow". The film Beloved, comes to a close with Baby Suggs delivering the last message: "Love the heart more than the lungs and the wombs, for that is the prize" (*Beloved* 2:40:02–2:40:58). However, it is important to note that despite the fact that the movie just shows one layer of the multi-layered plot that Morrison presents in the book, the movie does not leave its audience feeling satisfied with what they have seen. The director has used powerful visual imagery throughout the film in order to penetrate the mind of the audience and demonstrate the dread that goes beyond the terrifying ghost.

Conclusion

The use of magic realism as a method of storytelling is more than just a mechanism for creative writing. Its political and cultural potential speaks for the oppressed and enables the creation of an alternative reality within the context of the actual world that has been produced. The adaptation of magical realist novels may be a difficult task, but filmmakers have the ability to lessen the realism shown on screen via the use of cinematic methods. Adapting a magical realism tale to the screen is possible via the use of techniques such as the aesthetics of the grotesque, the juxtaposition of images, the montage the use of colour filters, flashbacks using the fade and dissolve technique, and non-linear sequencing. As a result, it evolved into a narrative method that was liberating and revolutionary. As stated by Maggie Ann Bowers (2004): "Magic realism is an art form that depends most on the belief, the perspective, and the willingness to change those beliefs and perspectives". It opens the door to more voices and perceptions, and it creates a sympathetic audience by developing an intimate affair between the reader or viewer and the text. Beyond everything else, it creates a sympathetic audience by developing a close relationship between reader and text.

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Reimagining lost 'Home' in Kashmir: Magic-Realism in Zuni Chopra's Young- Adult Fiction *The House that Spoke*

PALLAVI JHA

Abstract

Fifteen-year-old, Zuni Chopra's, young adult novel *The House that Spoke*, explores the social, political situation of Kashmir in the late 1980's and early 1990's leading to the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits. Using the genre of magic realism, Chopra transposes the idea of Kashmir as 'home' to the actual 'house' the protagonist lives in. The said novel is the story of the protagonist, Zoon Razdan who lives in an ancient house owned by her family for generations. The 'house' is located in Srinagar and is surrounded by pine trees and the warm sun. All is well, until her mother decides to sell the house because of the political upheaval of Kashmir, that all hell breaks loose. The 'house' was magical and 'spoke' to Zoon, that she was the 'guardian' of the house and that she had to defeat the shadows of darkness which had fallen upon 'home'/the valley.

The aim of this paper is to argue that this 'magic realist' text creates a recognisably realist world, by layering it with history, culture, landscape, folklore and contemporary events, therefore defining 'Kashmiri-*yat*' and magnifying the lived 'reality' of a young adult rescuing 'home' from 'Kruhen Chay', who possesses a politician wishing to buy Zoon's home. Layers of meaning in *The House that Spoke* are done by slowly introducing fantastical elements which are described in a manner that integrates them in Zoon's world. This young-adult novel uses the theme of militancy, of Hindu-Muslim friendship/conflict to re-iterate the importance of 'home'. Using Wendy Faris's key constituent ideas of 'magic-realism', this paper aims to examine how the layers in the text and elements of 'irreducible elements of magic', 'suspension of belief', 'merged realities and blurred boundaries' and 'defocalization' of narrative, intersect with contemporary events to sacralise the 'lived' spaces of Zoon's home and Kashmir. It would also be interesting to note that this novel is written by a fifteen-year old who recapitulates an event that took place almost three decades earlier, thus 're-iterating' the importance of a 'lost home'.

The House that Spoke (2017), is a young adult novel written by a young adult, fifteen-year-old Zuni Chopra. The author is a second generation Kashmiri Pandit, who lives in Mumbai, and has heard stories of her erstwhile home in Kashmir from her kin. Driven from Kashmir, during the brutal exodus of Kashmiri Pandits in the late 1980's and early 1990's, Zuni Chopra's parents and grandparents had witnessed firsthand the cruelty meted out to their community, and the postliminary exodus. Zuni Chopra has transposed the idea of home, to

the larger context of a troubled Kashmir, on the brink of militancy. The trope of home is recurrent in narratives about Kashmiri Pandits, like *A Long Dream of Home* (2015) by Siddharth Gigoo and *Our Moon has Blood Clots* (2013) by Rahul Pandita, amongst others. Although, Zuni Chopra does delve into politics and militancy, she has adopted the trope of home to address questions of loss, innocence, and childhood. Using the framework of post-modern magic realism, Zuni Chopra has attempted to place the text amidst a double helix configuration, where postmodernism and postcolonialism are intertwined. Magic realism, as many critics have argued, was engendered with the advent of postmodernism, as a product of the manifold peripheral voices of postcolonial nations across the world. As a result, the dominant discourse of a movement is deconstructed, and a mode of alternative reality is constructed, based on myth, legends, landscapes, and lived cultural reality. This paper argues that Zuni Chopra through *The House that Spoke* reclaims her lost Kashmiri identity, by imagining herself in her ancestral space. By constructing home through the postmodern strategy of magic realism, she reclaims her home imaginatively through the act of writing. Further, in this context, Zuni Chopra imagines the possibility of saving her home, and homes of Kashmiri Pandits, by defeating the symbolic force of evil, named Kruhen Chay, which threatens to drive them out of Kashmir. Zuni Chopra illustrates the meaning of home, rootedness, belonging, possible exile and timeless history, by using magic realism in a landscape full of contemporary harsh reality; thereby voicing a young adult's search for identity, through the idea of home.

Set in the scenic locale of Kashmir, Zuni Chopra's novel *The House that Spoke* seems to be a novel about Zoon, who tries to stop the sale of her ancestral home in Srinagar, Kashmir. However, on closer examination, this novel is about how darkness makes its way into Kashmir, in the form of Kruhen Chay, a demon that haunts Zoon's house, overshadows the narrative, and deepens the growing socio-political tension in society. The novel begins during the Mughal Empire, at the time of Akbar's reign, when Kashmiri Pandits enjoyed extensive privileges and freedom. It is at this point in history, that a Kashmiri Pandit trapped Kruhen Chay in an underground cave, and built a house above it. It was "his masterpiece", which was held together by magic. The setting soon shifts to the year 1752, to Kashmir ruled by the Afghans, when Kashmiri Pandits were mercilessly slaughtered or forced to convert to Islam, and therefore, considered by many as one of the darkest periods of Kashmiri history. The foreboding darkness is evident in the manner of the Kashmiri Pandit family, as they welcomed the British troops to stay in their home for the night. Zuni Chopra reiterates that the Pandit repeatedly warned Lieutenant Hawthorne and his soldiers not to venture anywhere near the boilers. Kout I Peterson, one of the soldiers inevitably disregards the warning, opens the boilers and sets the monster free, unleashing in Kashmir a never-ending state of darkness. Despite numerous failed attempts by the heirs of the Pandits, including Zoon's father, it now became Zoon's turn to defeat Kruhen Chay, and rescue Kashmir from a vortex of violence and unhappiness. Zoon soon realises her power of being able to access the house's magic; that speaks and interacts only with the rightful heir to the line of illustrious Pandits, her ancestors, who owned the house/ home.

Home is a recurrent trope in children's literature and a distinguishing characteristic between children and adult literature (Nodleman and Reimer, 197-198). The act of leaving home for the big bad world, returning home with a newfound appreciation for the myth of home, and the protection and warmth it offers, is a recurrent trope of children's literature. This meaning of home gradually begins to change and develop as children grow into young adults, as Virginia L. Woolf writes, "…from celebration, to adventure, to memory, to guilt, to irony - from being at home, to attempting to save a home, to internalizing its meaning and value, to recognizing the difficulty of reflecting its meaning and value in one's acts, to having its meaning and value denied" (66). Zuni Chopra, as a second-generation Kashmiri Pandit, reflects upon her lost home in Kashmir, and tries to reclaim it in her writing, as a young adult fiction writer. Chopra realizes that, as a Kashmiri Pandit, this could only be achieved by synthesizing the history and experience of her community, with the protection and warmth that home could offer. Consequently, the narrative mode of magic realism adopted by Zuni Chopra, via the synthesis of myth/history/experience, allows a full realization of contemporary reality.

MAGIC REALISM AND YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Magic(-al) realism is a narrative mode which encompasses elements of 'magic' in the lived 'reality' of the everyday. Though this term is an oxymoron, encompassing two opposed irreconcilable terms 'magic' and 'realism', it does endorse their co-existence to give meaning to the text. Coined by the German Romantic poet Novalis, its success is associated with the German art critic Franz Roh, to describe a new style of painting which highlighted the mundane magic of being. As Roh explains, "with the word 'magic,' as opposed to 'mystic,' I wish to indicate that the magic does not descend to the represented world, but rather hides and palpitates behind it" (16). Critics of magic realism, like Amaryll Chanady, suggest that magic realism presents the reader with a similar situation: the fictional world is characterized by the presence of two diametrically opposed codes which are developed to equal extents. The use of magic realism is suited to young adult fiction because both concepts lie in the "liminal" territory, which mirrors the "in-betweenness" of these two categories. For this reason, it is considered, "magical realism is a mode suited to exploring…and transgressing…boundaries, whether the boundaries are onto logical, political, geographical, or generic" (Zamora and Faris 5); hence proving suitable to appropriate it to postcolonial and postmodern writing. Homi Bhabha's theories in the postcolonial arena grant a central place to magic realism, referring to it as "the literary language of the emergent post-colonial world" (Zamora and Faris 25). In the view of Stephen Slemon, magic realism as post-colonial discourse can provide, "a positive and liberating response to the codes of imperial history and its legacy of fragmentation and discontinuity" (Zamora and Faris 26).

Magic realism plays an active role in literary decolonization, with its opposition to the master-discourse. Many magic realist texts reconfigure structures of autonomy and/to destabilize established power structures. Though magic realism presents itself in many ways, the fantastical constitutes a cardinal feature, used to highlight and challenge the setting's

paradigm, beyond a mere plot device or display, and presenting it as a part of reality. In her book, *A Territory of Desire: Representing the Valley of Kashmir*, Ananya Jahanara Kabir reveals how Kashmir's tragic history has been framed within a discourse of fantasy, to clothe Kashmir in the postcolonial nation's fetish of desire. While this construction of a narrative of paradise does dwell in the nation's imaginary, it is starkly denied by the reality on the ground. Therefore, the usual setting of the magic realist texts are areas rural, positioned away from influence over, or influence from, the political power centers. Portraying for/from the marginal/ margins, for the politically or culturally disempowered, enables magical realist texts to tell the tales of those, on the margins of political power and influential society. Kashmir, the setting of Zuni Chopra's novel, is the disputed territory between two nations, India and Pakistan. Often regarded as a post-colonial space within the decolonized state of India, as Suvir Kaul comments, the state of Kashmir has undergone violent social and political upheavals in recent times, including the exodus of the Kashmiri Pundits. Kashmir is thus an ideal space, which can be examined, re-imagined and re-claimed through the lens of magic realism. Therefore, though Faris, Wendy, Stephen Slemon, Homi Bhabha and others define magic realism in myriad ways, the ways in which it can be applied to young adult fiction (particularly in this case) is to examine the text, as a disruption of events described through magic and realism; consolidation of identity through myth and history. The elements of metamorphosis which heighten the elements of magic, negativity and reality, extend a layered meaning across all the characters and textual settings. It leads finally to questioning the social order, which may or may not be reversed, based on subjective understanding of right or wrong. As Karen Coats writes, "Young adult literature exerts a powerful influence over its readers at a particular malleable time in their identity formation…. literature has something to say about what it means to be human" (315-316). As a second-generation emigrant, Zuni Chopra is keenly aware of her lost home in Kashmir, and seeks to recover though Zoon, aided by fragments of the past, cultural tools, and through ancestral memory. This varied retrieval is not just an exercise in nostalgia, but the past is looked at with irony, self-parody, and detachment. The details are often quotidian, and small things become important as, "… they constitute the mundane materiality of everyday life, mocking in their earthiness the grand paradigms of history" (Zamora and Faris 21). The idea of a home is a combination of memory and desire, enhanced by the imaginative world of the writer, coloured by the family narrative about the home they left behind. (Zamora and Faris 194).

In *The House That Spoke*, realism is a key feature from the very beginning of the novel, and magic is intertwined inextricably in the narrative. The 'house' mentioned in the novel is located in history and, when magic is introduced, it links the rise of Kruhen Chay with the consolidation of the British Empire metaphorically linking colonial policies to the quagmire of identity politics in Kashmir. In the next chapter, readers are welcomed to "Present Day", "somewhere in Northern India… so far away… there's a line on the ground. It's a nasty little line…- Line of Control" (Chopra 20). Repeated references are made to the ongoing tension between the two countries, which has led to the militarization of the State, evident in the military posts across the city with their barbed wires "slicing Kashmir in half" (Chopra 59).

The 'othering' of the Kashmiri common man is evident in his treatment by the armed forces. The repeated clash between Kashmiri boys, "…with filthy handkerchiefs tied roughly around their matted hair and hollow cheeks…" (Chopra 60), is not an unfamiliar report in Indian media. Though Zoon lives in a highly militarized Kashmir, she is akin to any young adult, who is unhappy with her appearance, has occasional fights with her mother, and is undergoing changes in her psyche, like any other young adult. Though she distances herself from these violent clashes, the brutality finally reaches her, when Tathi (Zoon's paternal grandmother) dies of a heart-attack, brought on by a bomb blast near her home. The militarization of Kashmir, as Zoon describes in the novel, disturbs her to the core as it defiles the very landscape of her home; and the ensuing violence leads to defiling of everything sacred and Kashmir. Zuni Chopra draws the readers' attention to blackening/ darkening, repeatedly in the text, to describe the shadow of evil, which touches every aspect of Kashmiri culture, landscape and people. Instances of the shrouding of the revered Shankaracharya Hill in dark thick fog, which makes it barely visible; the waters of the Dal lake turning black and viscous like oil; the hollowed conclave belly of a stray dog, and the hopelessness of the hawkers; reinforce Kashmir's deepening misery and the growing power of Kruhen Chay, and forebodes the vortex of darkness that will engulf both Zoon and Kashmir. The political conflict in Kashmir owes a lot to its geographical location and its history. The demographic profile of Kashmir can thus be summed up from Suvir Kaul's description as the affluent Kashmiri Pandits lived in perpetual fear of the majority of Kashmiri Muslims, and created a rift never to be bridged. Caught between the crossfire of Hindu-Muslim conflict and the radicalization of the Muslim youth of Kashmir, the author asserts her identity as a doubly marginalized Kashmiri Pandit, trying to forge an identity, amidst the growing rift between the two communities.

LOCATING HOME THROUGH MYTH AND HISTORY

The House that Spoke is about a house situated in Kashmir and home for Zoon. The idea of home is always associated with spaces filled with patterns of living and memories, which sustain a family through their life. Reminiscent of the title of V. S Naipaul's novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*, which addresses a diaspora outside India, Zuni Chopra address the "diaspora" of the Kashmiri Pandits within Kashmir. While narrating the history of the 'house', two facets integral and inseparable to the Kashmiri Pandits, are juxtaposed: their home located in Kashmir and Kruhen Chay, which is central to their cultural beliefs and myths. This allows the writer to anchor the text in recognizable history, and the retelling of myth. Home, therefore, as a "localizable" idea, occupies physical space, and is created in sync with the landscape. The making of "home" begins with the construction of "non-home" which is "a fixed and solid building, full of domestic things", but it all begins as "incomplete projects, with no sign of coming out of the state of confusion, that would lead one day to the regular cycles of home…" (Douglas 289). As Zoon's ancestor, the Pandit, at the beginning of the novel, admires a "majestic infusion of wood and brick. A house. *His* house." (Chopra 1), which is situated amidst a beautiful location, hiding within it a secret, which was not to be told, but to

be always controlled. This house was constructed in the year 1591, set in Kashmir, Bharat, during the reign of Emperor Akbar. It is interesting to note that despite Zuni Chopra's attempt to situate the text in history, she has used the term 'Bharat' to denote the geographical space of political India, which is inaccurate and highly problematic. The opening of the book, with its time, and landscape, clearly outlines the realistic intertwined with Barthian "unreality effect", which facilitates the atmosphere of magic in the text, where Zuni Chopra engendered magic with a single phrase, "…It was indeed a masterpiece, *of which only a single room was breathing."* (Chopra 8) (emphasis mine). This lease of life attributed to the house, lends itself to multiple possibilities, further on in the novel.

In 1752, the successors of the Pandit who built the house were the occupants and keepers of the secret, that had been trapped into the depths of the house. The historical references in the narrative, situates the text in recognizable reality. A group of lost British soldiers, returning from Rawalpindi through Kashmir, after trying to secure the British trading Company's prospects, were looking for a place to warm themselves and spend the night. Among them, a young soldier Kout I Peterson imagines his home in London, surrounded by the warmth of a fireplace and love of his family, thus reiterating the importance of home for all. After the soldiers reach the doorstep of the secluded house, they negotiate with the Pandit, and spend a night in the house. Despite repeated warnings about "forbidden" and "prohibited" spaces by the Pandit; enticed by the singularity of the 'single room' Kout I Peterson goes to the boilers and lets out the 'evil' that the house had trapped for the past two centuries, inadvertently also killing one of their own. The 'figure' which emerges from the pit in the boiler room was, "Black. All black…. not emerging from the darkness, but darkness itself" (Chopra 12). The "figure", which was, "…worse than any sea serpent, any dark nightmare, any mythical monster…" (Chopra 12) brought to the young soldier a sense of "…nothingness, terror, misery and death" before he was burnt to the bones; and the "spirit" escaped its prison of centuries, unleashing the spirit of evil amongst the people of Kashmir. Zoon's house becomes an allegory for Kashmir, where evil was trapped and later released, invariably by the British. The gruesome sight of the house and the landscape outside compelled Lieutenant Hawthorne to muse upon ideas of "satanic", "couldn't be human", "spirits" and the notion of "voodoo", which were against his rationalised Western self. The combination of real/rational and the magical/mystical in the narrative happens through the character of Kout I Peterson and his situation in the cold and damp Kashmiri outback. This is accompanied by the mythical, magical aspect of Kruhen Chay, in the same narrative, and as a part of the everyday lived reality of the Pandit and his family. More than one critic has underscored the importance of viewing magic realism using the twin lenses of geography and culture. Cooper (4), while endorsing the "local context is of central importance in magic realist writing," brings to light the West African books which, "are moulded and constructed out of West African cultural and religious heritages" (Kluwick, 37). Though unusual, the event of Kruhen Chay's escape, and Kout I Peterson's death, do not seem out of the ordinary, as the reader is well prepared for the rise of the mythical evil.

MAGIC REALISM AND THE GROTESQUE

Magic realism can also be read as a strategy to portray violence and grotesque as a component to portray the same. Metaphor in the texts function as an allegory. Kruhen Chay, is the shapeless entity which wreaks havoc in the lives of anyone it chooses to destroy, an allegorical symbolizing evil, as a character and as an abstract idea. Magic and the contemporaneity of Kashmir and Kashmiri Pandits is fully realised in representations of the Gothic and the grotesque that appear in the book. The gothic nature of the text is evident from the very first look at the book, with its double cover, wherein the name of the book is engraved in a black cover and is highlighted by the next part of the cover, which is in red. Keeping with the Gothic tradition, the name of the novel introduces "The House which Spoke", "…since Gothic novels much more commonly than any other type of fiction were titled with the name of a house, castle or abbey…" (Pritchard, 434). This is aided by the uncanny nature of the house, which "spoke", and as the novel progresses, the house aided by its magic, almost becomes the protagonist in the novel. The mystery of the house is constructed in the spatiality of the house, where the troop of British soldiers were strictly instructed not to open the trapdoor, which led into the entrails of the house, near the boilers which trapped Kruhen Chay, in the all black figure that emerged from "the once hidden chamber" (Chopra 12) and in the grotesquely burnt body of Kout I. Peterson, where he was "…scorched in open flame; his flesh could not be discerned from the rest of him" (Chopra 15). This darkness is also felt by Zoon's house and manifests it as Zuni Chopra narrates, in the age-old Chinar tree outside the house, which slowly seems to wither away, rejuvenating only when the sale of the house is thwarted.

The gothic and the grotesque come together in the character portrayal of Mr. Bukhari. Zoon realises that the 'evil' Mr. Bukhari, is possessed by Kruhen Chay, resulting in his metamorphosis and disintegration. This representation of the grotesque points towards the integral relationship between the discourse of the body and the history in which that body is located, echoing Faris's observations of magic realism in general that "[m]any of the magically real bodies we have encountered in magical realism are literally inscribed with their social, political, cultural and geographical coordinates" (Faris, 188), pointing towards the importance of the grotesque, as Bernard McElroy has noted, the grotesque in modern texts is "by nature something exceptional, something set apart or aberrant" (McElroy, 6). The gothicity of the text is aided in the portrayal of the body grotesque, at its peak, when Zoon visits Mr. Bukhari's office. Mr. Bukhari, is portrayed as the quintessential villain, who threatens to "*steal*" (Chopra, 6) their ancestral home. The centrality of the extreme throughout the novel, the presence of the Gothic, the dead bodies scattered throughout the text, the look of horror in the face of death, bloody deaths, amongst other situations, manifest the overlap of the grotesque with magic realism. The darkness that has engulfed the characters, and juxtaposed with the deteriorating political situation in Kashmir, is prevalent throughout the text. The gothic nature of the office, in terms of its structure, resembling "a maze of narrow passageways and low ceilings" (Chopra, 142), the lack of natural light, the décor of the room with plastic flowers

and books that were bound in "black", prepares the readers for the persona of Mr. Bukhari, possessed by Kruhen Chay. From her hideout, Zoon could smell "emanating from Mr. Bukhari" (Chopra, 145), which resembled that of a rotting corpse, and she stood frozen watching him until, "…something sickeningly, horrifically lifeless, rotting and foul began to seep out of his ear and trickle onto the floor" (Chopra, 148). It moved like a slug on the floor and spoke loud and clear, Drawing Mr. Bukhari's attention to its power, and in no uncertain terms, linking its role in "…*chipping away into the heart of this merry, magical place*" (Chopra, 151) and taunts him, *"…Is it not very generous of you to aid in my rebirth?"* (Chopra, 151), before re-entering Mr. Bukhari's body. Contemporaneity is a crucial factor in the narration of Kruhen Chay, as it locates the relevance of the entity in Kashmir. The negative influences of Kruhen Chay are evident throughout the text and re-iterated through the numerous bomb blasts which rocks the city of Srinagar, the presence of armed military men manning various check posts across the city, barbed wires separating lands, clashes between Kashmiri boys and the armed forces, and the forced/ coerced acquisition of Kashmiri Pandits' homes in Srinagar.

MAGICAL REALISM AND/ IN KNOWLEDGE

The 'living' library in Zoon's house, is the memory archive, which juxtaposes the role of magic from the past with the present. The library in Zoon's home is a crucial part of the house and of the story. It is as old as the house itself, and has been created by centuries of Pandits who have lived in this very house. Zoon introduces the books in the library where, "Magic awaits in their worn, yellowed pages" (Chopra, 23). This 'magic' of the library becomes evident to Zoon, when she hears the books in the library making a "curious noise coming from…the walls" of the library (Chopra, 51). As she entered the library, all the books suddenly woke up and sought to engage Zoon's time according to the subject they dealt with, "…until the sturdy armchair…. asked me (Zoon) whether the house was going to be sold or not…" (Chopra, 53). The books, like Zoon were not happy about the sale of the house because the books, like everything else in the house, would die. The books in the library were age-old, on a range of topics spanning from the *Jataka Tales, Mahabharat, Cookbooks, Gardening Guide* and *History* books. Along with recipe cut-outs from magazines to mention a few, the collection re-iterated the century old existence of the house, as well as the various strands of culture and faith, that had influenced the 'magic' of the house. The 'magical' books in the library were symbolic of knowledge, familial as well as historical, that the generations of Pandits had carefully preserved across time. The library in Zoon's house was the space where the conflation of magic and reality took place. This is an essential characteristic of magic realism, where a juxtaposition of the realistic and the magical happens to present, as magic realism question the idea of a single reality. The instability of reality and the logic, behind the introduction of fantastic is established in the text from the beginning of the narrative, in the thematic as well as in the narrative structure. The fantastic ideas/objects are introduced in manner inextricable with the realistic world, and consequently, become an acknowledged component of the pragmatic realm, Zoon is hardly surprised when she hears the books murmuring to themselves and the old arm-chair trying to interfere, because the magic in the

house, which Zoon refers to as her "closest companion" (Chopra, 52) has infused the library with life. This is evident when the books inform Zoon that as soon as they are shifted out of the house, "slowly, little by little, the magic will flow out of us, just as it once flowed in. We'll die, Zoon" (Chopra, 56); because they will be detached from the house. The house, therefore, is not just located across time and space; but also is replete with 'magic' infused in the form of varied knowledge form which roots the house in a historical socio-temporal space. It is this knowledge which gives the house the power to fight against *Kruhen Chay*, and the proposed buyers of the house. Though Zoon is keenly aware of the power of *Kruhen Chay*, the strength of the forces of darkness and the power of magic are clearly delineated in the parallel narrative that is present in the structure, which could be read as postmodern idea of metafiction. Ann Grieve discusses metafictional texts for children and elaborates on the idea of varied textual formats for children, like picture books, games, and illustrations, as being central to the creation of metafiction in children's texts (Grieve 1). Similarly, Ommundsen identifies three different ways of accounting for self-reflexivity in children and by extension young adult texts and one of them is to locate metafiction firmly in the perception of the reader. A person perusing metafiction will come across indicators in the text, "functioning as statements about the artefact in which they figure" (Ommundsen 1990, 172). The signals in this text are present in the parallel narrative of the text, which are meant to be read separately from the main narrative, as they are included in a different font, are framed by illustrations, and lead us to a 'hyper-reality' which stands outside the control of the protagonist Zoon. The narrative therefore, intensifies the 'magic' of the house and of its situated landscape. The duality of the text is evident from the very physical structure of the book, which sports an unusual cover. The cover page of *The House that Spoke* is layered in design. The outer cover is black with beautiful motifs of vines, whereas the one below is plain red. The title of the novel engraved on the outer cover, emerges refulgent from its background in red, with a disquieting sense of forewarning. This dual cover escapes nomenclature but can be interpreted, as Gérard Genette suggests, "…the 'threshold' that frames a text and governs its interpretation. A paratext is made up of the 'accompanying productions [enabling] a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers" (Genette 1). Genette further distinguishes the paratext into two parts: peritext and the epitext, and draws a clear connection between the two which shapes reading and meaning production of the text. In Chopra's novel, the duality and the integration of magic and realism is evident in the materiality of the book itself.

The materiality of the house was not only restricted to the books in the library but extended to the fireplace and the paintings around the house as well. Zoon could never really understand the strange affinity that she shared with the house, until she found the tapestry of her family tree that was hidden out of sight in the library. This method of "defamiliariztion of familiar objects", as Scott Simpskin notes, is done "to prevent an overwhelming sense of disbelief" (Simpskin 146). Amidst the magic of the books, the tapestry revealed to Zoon, the 'reality' of her past, and fostered a recalibration of historical and the impending matters that allowed her to stake a claim to her home in Kashmir. The tapestry reveals to Zoon the secrets of her ancestors, the history of the house, all the Guardians especially of the Kashmiri

Pandits, who not only first created this house but also, "…battled the darkness for years…forcing him back with water and flame, using ancient magic to diminish his pulverizing strength…. trapped him *(Kruhen Chay)* within that hollow and surrounded it with steam… So he built a house on top of it, and he poured all his magic into the house…" (Chopra 113-14). The original Kashmiri Pandit was followed by generations until Zoon's father becomes the Guardian of the house and overestimates his own power, which led to his death. This disturbs Zoon and her understanding of life until time point of time. Amalgamation of magic and realism in books on magic realism breaks up the continuity and engenders contradictory understanding of events and unsettling doubts; which in turn, cause the very societal values and modes of presentation to be subject to scrutiny, thus questioning monolithic representation of a lived experience. At this juncture, Zoon is faced with the same dilemma, and has to carve her own identity as the next Guardian of the House. The books in the library inform her that it is her turn to become the Guardian of the house, and realize the magic in her blood, as she is coming-of-age and would soon turn fifteen.

CONCLUSION: BALANCING MAGIC AND REALITY IN YOUNG ADULT WORLDVIEW

Zoon's coming of age in the novel, is an event which most magical elements are looking forward to, because it is at this age that Zoon will fully be able to realise, not just the magic of the house, but will also be able to identify with the lineage of the Guardians of the House, and prepare for battle. This identification, with one's self and with the ancestors, points towards Zoon's being able to lose her fantasies of childhood and prepare herself for adulthood, signified in her fight with the forces of darkness, portrayed in the character of Mr. Bukhari. This liminal zone or "…this liminal territory mirrors the ''in-betweenness'' of adolescence itself—a state that is no longer childhood and not yet adulthood", and characters belonging to this territory (phase of adolescence) are referred to as young adults. Magic realism likewise occupies the liminal zone, as already discussed, allowing both the author and the protagonist to emphasize the flexibility of character and investigate the power to achieve a sense of liberation, or in this case to re-construct the lost home of their ancestors.

Though the young adulthood is usually beyond categorization based on colonial remnants of nation/ethnicity, yet inevitably they do imbibe the politically and culturally disempowered. In mind and body, their lives encompass the difficult territory of a child morphing into an adult, where breaking of barriers and overcoming institutional authority is their signature and blueprint to self-identity. Kashmiri Pandit adolescents suffer from increased complexities akin to their contemporaries from large underprivileged cultural/ethnic groups. Therefore, the magical realism culture mode is well tailored to fit the heterogenous maze of actuality faced by the adolescent bibliophile. The final word may yet lie with readers, who may argue that realist fiction or fantasy literature also subverts and allows for the fashioning of identity, in magic realism, as Don Latham (np) writes that the irreducible element of magic acts as the primary catalyst for identity formation. The merging of the magical and the real, allows for an alternate view of reality, as it does in *The House that Spoke.*

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Assimilation and Transcultural Identity: A Reading of Padma Desai's Memoir *Breaking Out*

STANCILAUS S.

The last few decades have witnessed large scale migration of people, who travel and settle in various parts of the world for studies, work, favourable living conditions etc. The contemporary world is marked by increased international connectedness. The world has shrunk into a small village and no portion of the world is beyond reach. International migration and the resultant formation of culturally varied families raise complex questions. One interesting question, for instance, is how diverse cultural experiences and surroundings contribute to the formation of a person's cultural identity. An individual brought up in a bicultural environment may show tendencies and features of both cultures or switch between the two worlds according to the situation at hand.

In today's multicultural world, individuals tend to experience new cultural forms, not evident in either of the cultures they are familiar with. They go through multiple cultural experiences during their life span which may be referred to as transculturalism. Transculturalism may be seen as an offshoot of biculturalism, to refer to individuals with multicultural experiences. Intercultural contact between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds is a prime requisite for transculturalism to develop. The reinventing of a common culture is based on the meeting and intermingling of different populations and cultures. One's identity is not necessarily one dimensional but defined and recognised in contact with the 'other'. Thus identity is not singular but multiple. In an increasingly interconnected world, where distant parts of the world are accessible in a matter of hours, individuals find themselves traversing different cultural terrains.

In the contemporary world, with advanced modes of transportation and sophisticated communication systems that made instantaneous contact possible with any individual, however, far removed, time and distance have shrunk, unlike in any previous eras. The question however, is whether these developments have truly put us in contact with the other and helped foster understanding of other cultures, races and populations. Donald Cuccioletta observes that:

> The recognition that modern societies are no longer monolithic, that the Imaginary social space has mushroomed into a multitude of identities has propelled us into a realisation that we are in an era where interculturality, transculturalism and the eventual prospect of identifying a cosmopolitan citizenship can become a reality. (Donald Cuccioletta, 2)

This transcultural experience, though enriching, often poses unique and varied challenges in forming a cohesive sense of self and identity. In an attempt to become part of a different culture, through an act of assimilation, individuals have to navigate the complex task of embracing new identities while holding on to one's own heritage, traditions and customs. The challenge here is to address the tension between a sense of belonging and a feeling of alienation.

Cultural clashes are on the rise as a result of the constant migration of people from one locality to another, often within their own national and regional provinces. Barriers imposed by racism, hatred and suspicion of the other, coupled with fear and ignorance have impeded fruitful human relations among different cultural groups. Other cultures encountered in the course of migrations and invasions were often seen worthy of either being possessed or destroyed, as in the case of the encounter between the Imperial Europeans and the native peoples of the Americas, or the Orient.

Edward Said has written extensively on the cultural clash between the Orient and the Occident in works like *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). The encounter between the Occident and the Orient is evidently a power struggle where the balance is weighted heavily in favour of the former who happen to be invaders who settle in the Orient. Said observes that knowledge of the Orient created by the Orientalists within the discourse of Orientalism paves way to the construction of the image of the Orient and Orientals as inferior and submissive and subject to domination by the Occident. The oriental is contained and represented by dominating frameworks imposed by the imperial settlers. (*Orientalism*, 40). Knowledge of other cultures is often "… a matter of representation, and representation a process of giving concrete form to ideological concepts, of making certain signifiers stand for signifieds. The power that underlines these representations cannot be divorced from the operations of political force, even though it is a different kind of power, more subtle, more penetrating and less visible". (Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, 70)

It is evident, from a close reading of historical travel accounts, which on the surface present descriptions of diverse cultures and exotic civilisations, that such narrations were completely tainted with passages of ethnocentrism. In many ways our contemporary world still functions with feelings of fear and hatred of the other. Misrepresentations, and ignorance of cultures are often the root cause of conflict between cultures. Said, for instance, has highlighted the way in which Islam has become an all-encompassing scapegoat, since the OPEC oil crisis of the early 1970s. Said observes that the hatred towards Islam, bordering on Islamophobia, spans the entire political spectrum where, "... for the right, Islam represents barbarism; for the left, medieval theocracy; for the centre, a kind of distasteful exoticism". (Covering Islam: lv)

Arianna Dagnino is of the opinion that:

> Transcultural theories have been deployed and engaged since 1940, when the Cuban scholar Fernando Ortiz coined the term 'transculturation' to describe the process of mutual - even if asymmetrical - cultural influences and fusions between so called 'peripheral' and colonising cultures. (5)

Dagnino refers to transcultural writers as culturally mobile writers:

> Imaginative writers, who, by choice or by life circumstances, experience cultural dislocation, live transnational experiences, cultivate bilingual/pluri-lingual proficiency, physically immerse themselves in multiple cultures/geographies/territories, expose themselves to diversity and nurture plural, flexible identities. (1)

While moving across different cultures, transcultural writers enjoy the freedom and embrace the opportunities that diversity and mobility hand over to them. Such writers express an emerging transcultural sensitivity, thus contributing to the development of a transcultural literature that succeeds in transcending the borders of a single culture and promoting a global perspective.

Padma Desai belongs to an illustrious group of transcultural writers, like Pico Iyer, Amin Maalouf, Michael Ondaatje, and Alberto Manguel, who have acquired a transcultural mind set and attitude.

Desai, the Indian born academic who established a successful career in America as a Professor and Director of the Centre for Transition Economics at Columbia University, turned to writing with her critically acclaimed memoir *Breaking Out: An Indian Woman's American Journey* (2012). A regular contributor to *The New York Times, The Financial Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, Desai is a prominent scholar on the Soviet Union and the emerging market economies. Desai was born and brought up in a conservative Gujarati Brahmin family. Bright in studies, she completed her Ph.D. from Harvard University and embarked on her academic journey as Professor of Economics at Harvard, Columbia and Delhi School of Economics.

Breaking Out is an inspiring tale that throws light on the personal and professional struggles and triumphs of an Indian woman of extraordinary grit and resilience. The memoir at times borders on culturalist narcissism, but succeeds in depicting with remarkable honesty an individual life in the context of the diverse cultural terrains it has travelled. Desai grew up in pre-independent India in Surat, where she had a strict and sheltered upbringing in a traditional Gujarati family. Moving to the big city of Bombay for her higher studies she fell into the trap of a man who seduced her and drove her to a forced marriage. Winning a scholarship, she moved to Harvard where she gained time and space to re-examine her past and carve out a niche of her own in the academic world.

Desai later served at the Faculty of Delhi School of Economics, and while there she met Prof Jagdish Bhagwati. The couple moved to the United States, and Desai gradually assimilated herself in the American way of life. Desai is of the opinion that her assimilation to the American culture represents such a struggle in which she moulded herself into a complete independent human being by severing all subservient ties, in her search for personal happiness and fulfilment. *Breaking Out* is a worthy addition to the life stories of Indian women born before Independence, their experiences and their hard won freedom in a patriarchal society. The memoir also chronicles the way Desai bridges cultures as an Indian woman in the US.

Desai organises the memoir around the people and locales that are integral to her life. In the first three chapters, named Father, Mother and Kaki, Desai narrates the rigid and traditional background of her childhood days. In these family oriented chapters she highlights the conservative attitude that prevailed in her family and society. She talks about her parents and her aunt Kaki who was a powerful presence in her life. She finds nurturing love and care from Kaki, the widowed sister of her father Kaki, an uneducated woman is a typical victim of the high handedness of traditional religion in the society of those times. Not surprisingly, the memoir is dedicated to Kaki.

Desai was very much attached to Kaki and refers to her plight as a widow as a representation of the unfortunate state of widows in the country. She refers to a harrowing childhood experience, when a young widow doused herself in kerosene and immolated herself, even before her husband's dead body was taken out. Kaki died of Cancer of her mouth, when Desai was at Harvard. *Breaking Out* is not merely a personal tale, it is a powerful critique of rigid Indian traditions and cultures. The chapter on Kaki for instance turns out to be a commentary on widowhood:

> I grew up instinctively sensing that Kaki "Unrespited, unpitied, unreprieved" had a marginal status, and I could ignore her wishes, the signals in the environment turning me into a thoughtless sponger. When I look at her picture, I see in her face Hinduism's timeless repression of women in her situation rather than the natural ravages of time. (58)

Kaki was cared for by Desai's parents during her last days. Her parents, may be, had the belief that Kaki lived a happy life and was content at the time of her death. Little did they acknowledge that Kaki had no choice, but to submit to decisions taken on her behalf, by others. (59, 60)

Desai adds that:

> These strictures still remain involuntary, even merciless in rural India where widowhood continues to be regarded as a stigma. In urban India, the rules of widowhood have become less stringent but the label continues. Whether carrying a stigma or a label, a widow is a widow is a widow, an imposition perpetuated by the highly priced and meticulously cultivated norms for Indian girls to be giving and self-effacing (60,61)

Desai believes that women's education can trigger a difference, but sadly educated Indian women who lose their husbands in their youth, continue to be unmarried, believing it is their choice. Desai races the question "…how can a patriarchal system that has inflicted so much pain on them attain justice for them without imagining their world, much less inhabiting it". (61)

Desai seems to read the Indian reality steeped in caste divisions, patriarchy and rigid marriage setups through a westernised perspective. She explores the question of what it means to be an upper class, privileged, educated young Indian woman stuck in a bad marriage through an American perspective. She projects the liberal values of the West which she

experienced through her stay in the US and critiques the inferior social status of women in a patriarchal conservative society. In a patriarchal society the father figure enjoys a dominant position while the mother is relegated to the role of a caregiver. The social status of widows, especially, in a Brahmanical society is deplorable. Any possibility of a remarriage was unthinkable in the earlier days. Padma Desai feels that the social status of women in America is quite progressive.

Desai is surprised to learn that there is not much distinction between the role of men and women in family setup in America. Society is quite liberal with greater importance given to materialistic gains. Family is essentially seen as a shelter for children to grow up and at an early age, they start earning for themselves. In the US, widows find no restrictions unlike in India. There is the possibility for a second marriage and society does not interfere in personal matters like marriage or choice of a partner. Emboldened by the liberal culture of the US, Desai protests against the rigid Indian cultural systems and religious practices that places obstacles in the life of widows. Kaki, the victim of patriarchy, remains a vivid, immediate presence in her American days. Desai accepts that she inherited gifts and memories from Kaki that nourishes her through her years. She pays glowing tribute to Kaki thus:

> She passed on to me the knack of facing the day's humdrum routine – making the morning breakfast, cooking the evening meal, quietly winding up the day's activities – with easy equanimity. (62)

Desai's admiration to Kaki and the nurturing role she played in her life are quite evident in her eulogy to the dead aunt. She adds:

> Her unfailing rhythm gave me the assurance to face each day as part of a journey that brings its highs and lows, its disappointments and fulfilments. She was also my refuge, my silent protector against Mother's tectonic mood shifts and Father's lack of indulgence toward me. Ultimately she helped me master the art of losing, so many things seem filled with the intent to be lost that their loss is no disaster. (62)

Desai finds it difficult to come to terms with Kaki's subhuman position in the family. She states that if she continued living in India, she would have accepted it as common place, the natural order of the day. But from the perspective of a liberated woman who traversed different worlds and cultures, the fate of Kaki is cruel beyond words.

Throughout this brave and moving memoir, Desai tells the reader how she navigated the difficult road to assimilation in American society and culture. We see her self-evolving itself to forge a balanced transcultural identity, and in the process coming to terms with cultural conflicts and assimilating a Native American culture in her stride. Transculturalism or seeing oneself in the other or assimilating elements of more than one culture is rooted in the pursuit of gaining shared interests and common values across cultural and national borders.

Assimilation to American culture and customs was not easy for Desai who belonged to a totally different world. She states that in the early days of her stay in America she tended to

judge American situations in terms of Indian norms and cultural practices. She narrates the story of her transformation, as a result of surprising discoveries and unexpected challenges she encountered in her movement from traditional Indian culture to American culture. Right in the preface itself, Desai reflects on her asymmetrical predicament when she says, "… In India, I feel too much an American. In America, no longer an Indian." (x)

Desai reveals that in her family, she was brought up under rules that were tailor made to prepare her for the role of an ideal daughter-in-law in someone else's family. Her father, despite his education and progressive views "… remained a one-step forward, two-steps backward presence", (x) during her childhood and adolescence. As a result, she had to fight silently and stubbornly each step of the way to pursue her dream to excel academically and go to America, while retaining her strong filial bonds with her father and mother.

An important aspect of the memoir is the uprooting of Padma from her homeland, and the subsequent planting in foreign soil. To her credit, it must be said that, she did all that was needed to assimilate with the place. She developed a taste for their music, their life style, cuisine and dress. She embraces America, the land that gave her for fertile soil for her academic dreams, with all warmth. The memoir narrates her search for identity - social, cultural as well as intellectual. Two different cultures are represented through the point of view of the central character. Desai qualifies as a true product of transculturalism.

She charts the wide gulf that exists between India and America, especially in relation to religious and cultural practices. Desai sees her travels across continents as both exhilarating and liberating. Her initial days in America were quite challenging – for the first time she sees vending machines, doughnuts, peanut butter and jelly. She notices the changes in vocabulary as well as accents. She turns out to a different, happier person as she assimilates in time with the changed surroundings. Desai who grew up in the perennial hot sun of the Indian Summers gets accustomed to the winter months. She gets used to dogwood flowers, though they lack the fragrance of the mango blossoms. She joyfully embraces Mozart, Verdi and Wagner. She accepts that she became another person, a sovereign self - liberated, autonomous, and disciplined. In the final stretches of her American days, she expresses a gracious and mature acceptance of life's vicissitudes. Her Indian upbringing doesn't come in the way of assimilating the new culture in totally new environment. Assimilation in American is a tumultuous process, for a person who comes from a totally different world. As part of her identity formation in America, she affects a sartorial change and switched from saris to pant suits. Desai's elite feministic attitude is evident in her critique of patriarchal attitudes that relegate widows to a subservient status in society. Jane Freedman raises a valid question about the equality of status between men and women. She states:

> It is this type of question that leads feminists to argue again over the existence of women's biological and social differences from men and about the best strategies for ending women's subordinate position in society, either through claiming equality or stating their difference. (9)

Desai too raises similar questions through her memoir about the subordinate position of women in pre-independence India, the patriarchal system and the inequality in social status.

The memoir offers a compelling study of assimilation, and the complex interplay of cultures that shapes the identities of individuals who traverse multiple cultural landscapes. Terry Eagleton observes that "… the clash between culture and culture, however is no longer simply a battle of definitions, but a global conflict" (51). This is quite evident in the experiences Desai goes through in her journey and settlement in America. Desai's journey exemplifies the dynamic process of transculturalism, as she navigates the complexities of her Indian heritage, customs and traditions while at the same time assimilating aspects of American culture.

If multiculturalism, to some extent reinforces boundaries, transculturalism tends to break boundaries based on past Cultural heritages. Transculturalism is often a recognition and acceptance of the other. This recognition of the other leads to a cosmopolitan citizenship, independent of political institutions, where each individual is aware of the multiple nature of one's culture as well as the culture of the other.

Donald Coccioletta observes that "… a journey from multiculturalism to transculturalism would open the horizons and eventually lead to a cosmopolitan citizenship, forcing us to envision the world through a cultural prism. Culture therefore becomes all encompassing, recognizing the interaction without barriers among peoples as the basis of world outlook" (7)

Breaking Out is in short an insightful exploration of the challenges and rewards of navigating a life lived across cultural boundaries. Her success story serves as an inspiration to many others who navigate the complexities of a transcultural existence.

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Formalism in the Era of 'Artificial Intelligence Assisted Art Generators': Analysing the Simulation of Artistic Techniques by Computational Creativity

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Abstract

The formative decades of the twentieth century bore witness to the unfolding of the formalist assessment of artistic expression, whereby the primacy of technique and style was emphasized as the cardinal determinants of any creative production. The paper endeavours to scrutinize the methodologies through which Artificial Intelligence generators, which burgeoned during the recent years of the twenty-first century, corroborated the contentions posited by the proponents of formalism. Moreover, it delves into the evolution of Digital Art as an esteemed discipline within academia, elucidating how the bestowal of artistic generative capabilities to the masses via technological means engenders a remarkable diversification and democratization of artistic production. In the course of its compositional stages, this study has employed an adapted rendition of the Turing Test, designed to appraise the competence of AI-generated visual art vis-à-vis the oeuvres of human artists. Drawing inferences from this discernment, the manuscript further endeavours to elucidate how AI-infused art revolutionizes the delineations between human artistic endeavours and mechanized artistic output.

Keywords: formalism, artificial intelligence, digital art, turing test

The tools employed by artists possess an exceptional capacity to encapsulate and reflect the prevailing zeitgeist of their era, surpassing all other factors that influence the creative process. The continuous march of technological advancement throughout human history has catalyzed profound and momentous revolutions within the realm of art, beginning with the synthesis of artificial pigments and culminating in the emergence of New Media Art, previously designated as Digital Art.

New Media Art transcends its characterization as a mere movement that surfaced during a notable epoch within the annals of art history. Rather, it bears semblance to a transformative voyage akin to the evolutionary trajectory of visual arts, spanning from the primitive Paleolithic cave art to the intricate craftsmanship embodied in Pietra dura. Its origins trace back to the 1960s, where a rudimentary incarnation of digital modeling and visual simulation emerged with the introduction of Sketchpad in 1963, colloquially referred to as the Robot Draftsman. This groundbreaking program, developed by Ivan Sutherland, garnered him the prestigious Turing Award in 1988, solidifying his position as a trailblazer in the field.

Within the historical tapestry of New Media Art, the seminal contribution of Harold Cohen's AARON Program stands as a pivotal milestone, delving into the simulation of human cognition and the emergence of autonomous machine-generated art. The period spanning the 1980s to the 1990s witnessed the predominance of paint programs as the primary platforms within this artistic domain, eventually supplanted by the advent of multimedia developers during the 1990s and 2000s.Though the AARON program was the watershed moment in the New Media Art, development of Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) revolutionised the modern Artificial Intelligence Art (AI Art) in 2014 . In 2015, Google launched DeepDream, generator providing optimized images after adding layers of AI induced enhancement.The researcher attempted the generation of an AI painting (Figure 2) employing the same software using a portrait of TS Eliot as the Base image(Figure 1) with a prompt " The Post Colonial Muse" .

Figure 1

Figure 2

In the era of the 2020s, text-to-image models assumed a position of heightened prominence, notably exemplified by the acclaimed DALL-E and DALL-E 2 models developed by OpenAI. The very name of this software encapsulates a captivating fusion, as it merges the renowned Pixar character WALL-E with the celebrated painter Salvador Dalí, symbolically evoking the intersection of modern technological prowess with the established realm of traditional artistic expression. These text-to-image models operate by employing prompts as catalysts for generating visual representations, optionally supplemented by a foundational image. Moreover, these AI platforms incorporate an additional layer of intricacy by providing a discretionary array of pre-existing artistic styles and techniques, thereby enabling the emulation of distinctive aesthetic features that define the creative outputs of various artists. Thus, this pivotal juncture signifies the convergence of the most critical theoretical standpoint of the early twentieth century with the foremost artistic innovation of the twenty-first century.

Formalism emerged within the domain of visual arts as a reactionary response to the prevailing inclination towards prioritizing the tangible and perceptible aspects of artworks, particularly evident in the oeuvres of Cézanne. However, it is worth noting that the earliest manifestations of Formalist thought predate the formal establishment of the movement itself. One such instance can be traced back to the artist and critic Maurice Denis, who published the seminal work "Definition of Neo-Traditionalism" in 1890. This significant contribution sought to redefine the very essence of artistic expression, elucidating the intrinsic "art-ness of art" in a novel manner.

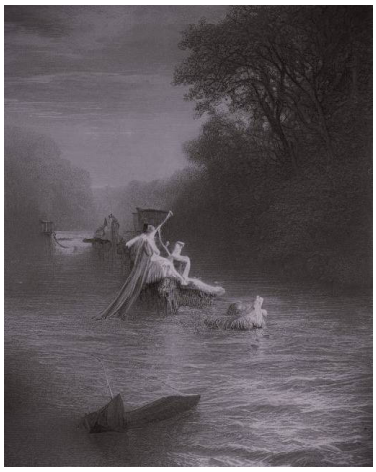
> What is it that differentiates modern painters amongst themselves? It is often (as I explained above) their way of seeing, more often it is procedure, and still more often the subject. Such identical imaginations! They all follow the same fashion (23).

The Russian and American Schools adapted the same in literary studies by the beginning of the twentieth century with the principal tenet of form being the fundamental feature that defines the literariness of a work irrespective of the subject of the creation.

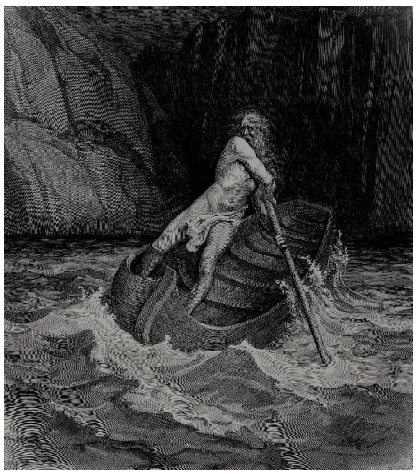
This fundamental tenet is also the core of machine induced art. The AI programs that generate the artwork principally comprehends the varied styles and techniques associated with the pre-existing production of art as well-defined pattern which requires to be employed in layering a new simulation. Pursuing a set of well-defined artistic patterns makes distinguishing between a AI product and a magnum opus of a creative artist an arduous task. For example, the following figures represent a set of AI induced art and the original work of an artist. The Set 2 represents two images in which 2A is an AI Painting with the text prompt – "sweet Thames, run softly" whereas 2B is an original illustration of Gustave Dore for Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

SET 2

2A



2B



The challenge of discerning between AI-generated art and original human creations, akin to the iconic Turing Test, exemplifies a reenactment of the inherent complexity in distinguishing between machine and human responses. In the realm of AI art, this intricacy, particularly pronounced, serves to validate the assertions put forth by the proponents of Formalism. The arguments presented by Shklovsky regarding the inseparability of art and technique find compelling corroboration within the domain of New Media Art.

The very possibility of artistic expression within AI generators predominantly stems from the realm of pattern recognition. This process can be likened to a street camera monitoring traffic violations, such as signal jumps or speeding. Observations of deviations from established patterns are meticulously recorded and analyzed. Similarly, in AI art, these patterns or forms can manifest in various aspects, such as the chosen artistic medium (e.g., acrylic, watercolor, digital), artistic movements (e.g., cubism, surrealism, fauvism), or the distinctive styles of individual artists (e.g., Dalí, Cézanne, Doré, Monet). Additional layers of input, akin to artistic choices, are incorporated to generate the final artistic output.

In this context, the base image assumes a diminished significance in AI-induced art, as the subjectivity of the production hinges predominantly upon these layers of choices and patterns. Consequently, the underlying image becomes inconsequential, highlighting the extent to which AI-driven art is detached from traditional notions of a foundational image.

The distinguishing factor between various art forms has never resided in the subject matter itself, but rather in the techniques employed and the divergent manifestations thereof. The intricacy and sophistication observed in the ancient hand paintings within the Lascaux Caves of France, dating back approximately forty thousand years, can be equated to the complexity demonstrated in Da Vinci's "The Study of Hands" (1474) or Giorgio de Chirico's "Metaphysical Interior with Hand of David" (1968). The juxtaposition of "Subjective Art" against the rigid norms and objective analysis characteristic of science offers a contrasting perspective. The closest semblance of harmony between these facets of art is discerned in the delineation of production and consumption boundaries.

Art, in its essence, is a highly technical endeavor, necessitating arduous hours of dedicated engagement with the evolutionary trajectory and technical intricacies specific to a particular art form. Thus, the process of artistic creation assumes an objective nature. Subjectivity, as perceived by the creator of the artwork, emerges from the personal ownership and voluntary choices undertaken. On the other hand, subjectivity for the consumer of the art form arises from the act of perception. Between the interplay of perception and individual choices, the process of art remains inherently objective and governed by logical principles. This fundamental premise elucidates the underlying rationale behind the remarkable success achieved by Artificial Art Generators, which generate artwork indistinguishable from the master painters who have shaped the evolution of art throughout history.

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Kitchen Maids as Silent Muses: Psychoanalytical Study on the Societal Restraints and Cultural Dynamics of 17th Century Dutch Society in *Girl with a Pearl Earring*

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Laxmi Preethi S. Kumar

Abstract

Art, as an expressive outlet, serves to unveil the traits of a particular period or time in its accurate form. It can reflect the age and the nature of the society to which it belongs. *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, an oil painting by Dutch Golden Age painter Johannes Vermeer is an exquisite painting of a woman depicted as a maid in Vermeer's household by the American-British novelist Tracy Chevalier in her novel *Girl with a Pearl Earring: A Servant's Life, a Master's Obsession, a Matter of Honour* (1999) gave more depth to the painting and a possible life to the portrait. This paper seeks to examine the psyche of the character Griet, and other characters from the novel, and thus provide a definite idea about how women were forced to puppet the invented roles rather than being women of choice and identity. Chevalier through Griet's eyes, clearly portrayed the cultural dynamics and has shown how women intended to repress their desires and thoughts for the sake of existing norms and conventions. Thenceforth, with a detailed understanding of the psychoanalytic theory proposed by Sigmund Freud, it is possible to understand the cultural and gender dynamics of the Dutch society. Thus, the socio-political, cultural and religious aspects form the foundation for this paper.

Keywords: culture, Dutch society, kitchen maids, painting

A Study on the Societal and Cultural Dynamics

Tracey Chevelier's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* celebrates the 17th Century Dutch painting of Johannes Vermeer which provides a profound impression on the cultural and gender dynamics of the then Dutch society. The muse in Vermeer's painting and the protagonist in Chevelier's novel do not mark any stark contrast other than that the latter belongs to the late twentieth century. Both the art works—the painting and the novel—confirm the genre of kitchen maids, "a domestic servant at the bottom of the social structure" (The Kitchen Maid in European painting: 17th – 18th century). Though Chevalier was inspired by the Painter, she gives a fictionalised account of Vermeer, the model, and the painting where she named the protagonist as Griet. Through the character analysis of Griet, the readers are given an insight into the prevalent social conditions, patriarchy, gender roles and conventions of 17th century Dutch. The novel grants a number of ways to evaluate the factors that directly or indirectly point out Delft, Holland.

> The novel presents seventeenth-century Delft as a time and place when girls and women did not own their bodies, but were the possessions first of their parents, then of their employers, and finally of their husbands. As the novel progresses, Griet becomes increasingly aware that she is "for sale"; she is an object of financial exchange (Fletcher).

Adithya V.

As Fletcher points out, Griet towards the end of the novel, realizes herself as someone who doesn't have any power over her own body and matters but decided either by the parents or the society. She was left with no choice other than to work at Vermeer's household, and later to assist him personally. Thus, the character Griet not merely stands as the muse in Vermeer's painting but as a universal representation of Kitchen maids which were then a popular genre and was later subjected to marginalization.

Tracey Chevalier presents an exact idea about the conditions of women, especially the Kitchen maids by delving deep into the problems they faced during the 17th century. Through the first-person narrative, Griet directly addresses her wishes, desires, sufferings and worries which become the background of the story. "Hearing his voice made me feel as if I were walking along the edge of a canal and unsure of my steps" (Chevalier 47). These desires and worries would provide an insight to analyse the psyche of the character and thereby to understand the cultural dynamics of the century. Also, this suggests that the condition of women must have changed over centuries but their sufferings haven't yet been totally eradicated. Griet, though she represents Kitchen maids of 17th Century Dutch society, she still is a reflection of marginalised women, especially those belonging to the lower strata of the society. The novel, *Girl with a Pearl Earring* exposes the hypocrisy of the society, such that by analysing Griet, her dialogues and psyche confirms how much women are afraid of the society which turns out to be a constant monitor, but not when it comes to men. This panoptic surveillance of the society on women is a characteristic feature of not just Dutch but every society in general, hence women are kept quiet and unknowingly suffer under the patriarchy. "When there's a talk about someone at the market, there's usually a reason for it, even if it's not what's actually being said" (Chevalier 174).

Kitchen maids are generally placed at the lower strata of the society where they are considered voiceless and are treated by those in power in whichever way they want. The Dutch society portrayed by Chevalier has a stereotypical notion on Kitchen maids such that their job, manners, intentions and actions are judged deceptive.

> She was suspicious of me, in part because she did not like me, but also because she was influenced by the stories we had all heard of maids stealing silver spoons from their mistresses. Stealing and tempting the master of the house – that was what mistresses were always looking for in maids (Chevalier 158).

This stereotypical notion put forth the thought of an 'ideal woman' that existed in that society where a set of roles are imposed upon them but maids are a clear deviation from this 'ideal woman' concept.

> The stereotyping will be based on class, but it leads to the stereotype of character and role of mistress as the upper class member and maid as the lower class member. Thus, it can be known how the member of a lower class should act and do their role in front of the upper class and how it can cause a conflict (Zumroton 5).

The novel narrated in Griet's point of view reveals the possibilities to analyse the unconscious and preconscious of Griet which suggest her internal conflicts, worries, and her deepest desires. In Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams,* the primary condition of the human being is claimed as frailty, vulnerability, helplessness in its beginnings. Here, the young Griet who suddenly turned to be a maid is seen as emotionally vulnerable to the new environment while longing for her home. Her monologues often direct the readers to understand how she found comfort in Vermeer's studio. "Nor could I tell them about the few good things – the colours I made, the night when I sat alone in the studio, the moments when he and I worked side by side and I was warmed by his presence" (Chevalier 129). At the beginning, Griet's wishes and desires can be studied as an admiration towards a great artist rather than any romantic or sexual interest but sooner or later it turned out to be a lot more passionate. "I looked at him – his eyes were with me now. He was looking at me. As we gazed at each other a ripple of heat passed through my body" (Chevalier 201). But all her darkest desires seem to be repressed owing to the position she was placed in. A Kitchen maid cannot wish for her Master due to the different power structure and existing cultural dynamics. "Repression protects us from the dangerous wishes of the unconscious in the context of our daily lives and the demands of our social and cultural reality" (Slade 12).

"Chevalier is especially adept at character studies: imperious burghers, butchers, biddies and crones" (Sheppard). From the beginning, *Girl with a Pearl Earring* introduces major and minor characters to glance at the religious and socio-political conditions of the then Dutch society. The population being divided into upper, middle and lower class are represented by the chief characters Van Ruijven, Vermeer and Griet respectively. While Griet's brother, Frans has a trivial yet significant part in this novel as he represents the life of factory or tile workers of that time. "Easy for you to say what my life should be like when all I can see are endless tiles and long days" (Chevalier 186). Also, Griet's father and his blindness persist as a constant reminder of the hardships faced by the factory workers. Another is the depiction of plague which suggests that mostly the people at the lower end of the social spectrum suffer the effect and aftermath of such outbreaks. This tension between the social classes runs throughout the novel and is delineated through the context of education, religion, employment, wealth and status. Griet is identified as an illiterate young woman which implies that lower class women were denied education, or they were not encouraged in any of the academic matters. "I opened it at random and studied a page. I did not recognise any of the words" (Chevalier 199). The monologues of Griet and her interactions with butchers and tradesmen help to gain a better understanding of the 17th-century Dutch economy while constantly reinforcing the limited opportunities for social mobility. The lower strata remain low and dependent on the upper class without any progress. "When I looked in her eyes and saw there the hunger for meat that a butcher's son could provide, I understood why she had

set aside her pride" (Chevalier 105). The reason why Griet's mother insists her to marry Pieter the son was for uninterrupted income and daily bread. Likewise, the religious tension between the Protestant majority and the Catholics minority states another division in the society. Though these elements are not at the centre of the text, they mark the social and religious conflicts. "I did not want to remain at the house, though – whatever Catholics did on Sundays, I did not want to be among them" (Chevalier 72). Griet belonging to the Protestant majority and her religious dilemma proposes to the general thought process which existed then. These elements which are less visible throughout the novel proclaim their efficiency in showcasing the Dutch cultural dynamics.

Sigmund Freud says in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, "the social structures render happiness nearly impossible for human beings to attain. Everywhere we are required to renounce the actions and objects that would satisfy our desires" (Slade 27). Here, Griet forsakes her affection for Vermeer by considering him being married to Catharina, and also fearing other social ties that would ruin their reputation. Though the conduct of Vermeer towards Griet causes confusion, her fondness for her Master is obvious throughout the novel. Her monologues confirm that she wishes for Vermeer desperately but those thoughts are repressed and remained as wishes, such that Griet's consciousness warns her that she is a maid who cannot or should not dream of a life with her Master. More than that, she is constantly reminded by her consciousness that they will never end up together. Thus, they are repressed for "dreams and fantasies, symptoms and daydreams, get us what we cannot have in daily life" (Slade 12).

> And as difficult as Catherina could be, I had often seen him look at her, touch her shoulder, speak to her in a low voice laced with honey.
>
> I did not like to think of him in that way, with his wife and children. I preferred to think of him alone in his studio. Or not alone, but with only me (Chevalier 86).

But these dreams and fantasies of Griet are analysed as her intense desire to be around Vermeer. It might have started as an admiration towards a great artist who helped to foster her artistic thoughts and flairs. When she personally assisted him to grind and mix colours, made suggestions and changes to the paintings he painted, Griet was unknowingly getting confident of her aesthetic sense which was moulded by the skilled Painter. "I did know. I had not looked at the painting long – it was too strange seeing myself – but I had known immediately that it needed the pearl earring" (Chevalier 218). Ultimately when she became the model of his painting, knowingly or unknowingly, she must have felt victorious for overpowering Catharina. Moreover, Vermeer has already told Catharina that "'You and the children are not a part of this world. You are not meant to be'" (Chevalier 240). Also, she was very well conscious of the privilege she enjoyed from Vermeer at his studio, where Catharina, his wife was denied entry. Yet, Griet repressed her conscious wishes, dreams and fantasies since "repression is a process by which our minds protect us from satisfying wishes and desires that would get us punished either in reality or, having internalised the threat of punishment, imagining the punishment" (Slade 12). Everyone who knew about the painting was sure of

the end; Griet was aware of the punishment she will receive, though she was voiceless in the setting she was placed in.

"Chevalier's version is sexier: an exquisitely controlled exercise that illustrates how temptation is restrained for the sake of art" (Sheppard). Towards the end of *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, the sexual tension between Vermeer and Griet becomes acute but is reduced to be unemotional for the creation of art. The relation between the art and the artist is vividly portrayed through this novel since what matters at the end is only the painting. When Van Leeuwenhoek warns Griet to be herself, he briefly points out how Vermeer would discern Griet, the servant and the muse. "His eyes are worth a room full of gold. But sometimes, he sees the world only as he wants it to be, not as it is. He does not understand the consequences for others of his point of view. He thinks only of himself and his work, not of you" (Chevalier 208). Thus, it can be considered as an "artist romance", (Eder) where Vermeer must have been in love with the girl in the painting but may not be in love with the servant Griet. The point where an artist separates the same entity into a muse who inspired him to paint and a servant who personally assisted him in his paintings. Towards the end, he touched Griet for the first time while she modelled for his painting, radiating the sexual tension between the two, which highlights that Vermeer adores only the artistic qualities in Griet but not her as a maid.

> He did not remove his hand. His fingers brushed against my neck and along my jaw. He traced the side of my face up to my cheek, then blotted the tears that spilled from my eyes with his thumb. He ran his thumb over my lower lip. I licked it and tasted salt (Chevalier 233).

Unconsciously, Johannes Vermeer must have been passionately in love with the girl in the Painting who is quite different from the servant Griet in Vermeer's household - the reason why he wanted to see the painting again during his last days but not the servant Griet herself. "Now that the painting was finished he no longer wanted me" (Chevalier 234). Vermeer's unconditional love for his painting might have created the mental constraints where he failed to identify the reality and to communicate his thoughts.

> For Freud, unconscious wishes are always present and always looking for a means of discharge and fulfilment. They are 'ready at any time to find their way to expression when an opportunity arises for allying themselves with an impulse from the conscious and for transferring their own great intensity on to the latter's lesser one' (Slade 48).

Here, Griet finds Pieter the son as a source to vent out her emotions, passions and frustrations which she cannot express and get fulfilled from Vermeer. Her conscious is aware of the impossible sexual desires, dreams and fantasies towards Vermeer which intentionally or unintentionally is directed at Pieter. From the beginning *Girl with a Pearl Earring* asserts that Griet is passionately in love with Vermeer and longs for his presence. Meanwhile, Griet becomes a refugee under Pieter wishing to earn all those she will not receive from Vermeer. It shows no evidence if Griet ever has true feelings for Pieter other than satisfying her parents' wishes and to feed her family by marrying him. This can also be regarded as the

helplessness of lower middle-class society and their hardship to earn the daily bread. "Confused as I felt about him, he was my escape, my reminder that there was another world I could join. Perhaps I was not so different from my parents, who looked on him to save them, to put meat on their table" (Chevalier 160). Pieter the son is treated as a secondary source to express her unfulfilled desires and frustration. Being grown in a society that constantly monitor women, Griet was conscious of her reputation and thus restrained all her passionate affection towards Vermeer, and to keep Pieter the son as an escape from the reality. Also, Griet found her hair as something precious in her femininity and never wanted to reveal it before anyone. But when it was revealed before Vermeer, she went to Pieter to vent out her sexual frustration. "There I pulled up my skirt and let him do as he liked" (Chevalier 219). Thus, Pieter always is a means of fulfilment to her unfulfilled desires rather than to describe him as a lover or husband. Her consciousness always urged to be with Vermeer so much that it remains as an intense unconscious wish too - even when she had sex with Pieter, she was reminded of Vermeer. "He gave me pain, but when I remembered my hair loose around my shoulders in the studio, I felt something like pleasure too" (Chevalier 219).

The celebrated gaze in the *Girl with a Pearl Earring* is direct and engaging, where Chevalier has brought a huge canvas to reflect upon the logic for her gaze. The novel discloses the piercing gaze by introducing the possible fictional account of Griet, the girl in the painting. Chevalier might have introduced Griet as a servant in Vermeer's household since all other paintings of Vermeer dealt with household themes. As Tracy Chevalier herself explained "that gaze is specific. She is looking at us as if she knows us" (Chevalier xii). The gaze as seen in the painting provided abundant scope for study by analysing what might have caused Griet to look at the Painter/ audience like that. In the novel, as Chevalier pointed out Griet was passionately in love with her Master and couldn't contain the happiness and victory when he painted her. "It was the part of the week I liked best, with his eyes on only me for those hours" (Chevalier 212). The gaze might have many stories to tell but Chevalier sensibly arranged the novel giving out layers of meaning and clarity to it. As a hopeless lover, Griet is possibly looking only at Vermeer thinking of the uncertainty ahead. "The background was black, making me appear very much alone, although I was clearly looking at someone. I seemed to be waiting for something I did not think would ever happen" (Chevalier 214). The clarity brought on gaze to us by Chevalier through the novel is justified and cannot be unread now - she passionately looks at Vermeer, pondering over the unfulfilled desires and dreams, and yet a hidden victorious smile for he has painted no one else like this but only Griet.

Conclusion

Chevalier's novel can rightly be called a historical romance where Griet's love for Vermeer has been repressed for the sake of art and society. This paper is an attempt to unravel the mystery and to understand the deeper meaning associated with the classical masterpiece of the Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer, *Girl with a Pearl Earring*. Maybe the curiosity surrounding the painting or the enigmatic aura that it holds might have inspired the American-British novelist Tracey Chevalier to write a novel to explore beyond the veil of aesthetics.

And in fact, she provides the details needed to truly understand Dutch society in the 17th century.

This research paper has navigated the psyche of the characters in the novel, especially of Griet's and thus provided an idea about the socio-political, cultural and religious aspects of 17th Century Dutch society. The power dynamics that existed in the society often pushed the women to the corners and they're expected to fit into the preconceived roles. It's not just the women but also the crowd, who are labelled as lower class in the social stratum. Then, the attempt is also to unravel the complexities surrounding the portrayal of kitchen maids and realising Griet as the collective representation of social ethos. Vermeer is widely recognised for his paintings of everyday scenes or activities which often have deep symbolic meanings.

The novel provides plenty of subject matter to understand the mystery associated with the gaze of the lady in the portrait. And with the reference to Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, the cultural and gender dynamics of 17th Century Delft can be understood. The fictional account by Chevalier is advantageous in reflecting on the cultural and social realities of the time as she has pointed out, "as long as the mystery remains – and it always will, I think – we will be enchanted by the painting and everything associated with it" (Chevalier xv).

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The World of Translation: Fakir Mohan Senapati's *Rebati* in English

NIRJHARINI TRIPATHY

Abstract

This paper will discuss *Rebati*'s world of translation, where the translators Leelawati Mohapatra, Paul St. Pierre and K.K. Mohapatra have used various elements, strategies and tools of translation to give a convincing, relevant, meaningful shape and sense to the text *Rebati* in English; thereby enabling its readability across the globe. Fakir Mohan Senapati's short story *Rebati* written in Odia language and published in the year 1898 is a story rooted in age-old culture, traditions, customs, rituals, beliefs and practices of a rural village in the Cuttack district of Odisha, where the leading character, the ten-year-old girl named Rebati, her family and the village represent the epitome of the inherent religious and cultural values of the people of Odisha.The world of translation involved in translating *Rebati*i's the confluence of the translator, text, language and culture. Leelawati Mohapatra, Paul St. Pierre and K.K. Mohapatra, attempted to translate maintaining the essence and ethos of the original writing and not simply producing a verbal equivalence of the original text. In this process, culture plays a vital role in perceiving the essence or nature of translation to give the final form to the target text. The translators' propriumis apprehended relatively with the context of creation, communication, and reception. Thus, in translating *Rebati,* a thorough study and understanding of the source text, language, translator, culture and the influence of the culture on the translator were felt very important.The critical analysis in the article is based on the experiences of the researcher as a reader of the text *Rebati* in its source language Odia and its target language English.

Keywords: culture, domestication, ethos, foreignization, language, negotiation, rebati, world of translation

Introduction

An inclusive factor of translation is a primary mechanism in producing and providing a proper shape to the text of the translator; because, it may be a regional translator translating for the national readers, or it may be a transnational translator in a foreign environment and culture translating for the foreign readers. In the entire phenomenon of translation, the agencies and the trajectories such as the text and the context, culture and language, translator and nationality, are the primary elements that shape and transform the source text to its translated target text.

Translation has been categorized as the literary translation and the non-literary translations. Literary translation is an art comprising of cultural essence and thereby proposes the 'Translator

Studies',which emphasizes that the translator is primary and the text is secondary. The emphasis on translator raises certain probes about the translator, like the background of the translator which includes the social, cultural, economic and political as well. They claim that all these factors obviously build up the ideology of the translator which affects the translation process. Another curiosity is regarding the original language of the translator; whether the translator speaks the source language or the target language, because that puts a doubt on the translator's understanding of the culture and native language, in case the translator is not a native language speaker or is a target language speaker. In other words, their focus is to know whether the translator is national or transnational.

> …… the 'translator' and the 'process of translation' have both been implicated, we may ask if they are necessarily related to each other or if they are only the sufficient aspects of a translatorial manifestation of a particular text. To some extent, every translator is a product of his or her own times – the age and the times, the social and the ideological forces often determine the thought processes of the translator. And that also determine often the process of translation. In this sense, the 'translator' and the 'process of translation' are intertwined and deeply related to each other. (Mishra p.40)

Another concern in this regard is about the collaboration of the translator in this translation process. For example, in this present text *Rebati* under study, the work is a collaboration of three people, and Odia, the source language, is not the native language of all of them. Thus, we can say that the Translator Studies deals with the overall aspects of the translator, such as the social, cultural and personal. The interface of the text and the context is important in the translation, not the translator.Language is the main element of translation. In this way, the focus is mainly on the translator's command over the target language. The sole purpose is to satisfy the target readers. Translation attempts to do justice to the philosophy and values of the native language and culture and to please the requirements of the target audience; thereby to bring a balance. In this attempt, it uses the various mechanisms of foreignization, domestication and equivalence of language. In this way, the translated text becomes an unchallenging and contented reading for the target reader while imparting the cultural information also of the source text.

The analysis of Translation Studies has become intricate, as it encompassesall theaspects of human subsistence where even a minute elementcontributes to the shaping of a translated text. It starts from the decision of picking and choosing a text for translation to the outcoming product that is the translated text. In this web, lies the role of the context, the translator, the approach and method of the translator, the role of the source and target language, the culture study of both the source and target society, and finally the contribution of the publisher as the middleman between the translator and the readers. However, among these influencing factors, the translator is the chief and dominant factor in the whole process of translation.

> Community narratives have ascertained and acclaimed an inter-textual articulation of social life facilitating the simultaneous inter-weaving of history and fiction. Societal history exemplified through the individual lives has perpetually refurbished the ethnographic memory

> of both dead and living pasts. The translated version of the narrative endeavors to preserve the communal spirit through retaining the collective names. (Divya p.132)

This paper is a critical analysis of a literary translation and thereby studies those relevant concepts used in literary translations such as the nature and cultural ethos. The original text *Rebati* in Odia is an inherent kind of writing which the translator,as a native reader, has to read and understand initially with underlying emotions and feelings. Then the native reader acts as the translator and implements all the tools and mechanisms to transform the text into a new language with its heart, nature and culture intact. This text *Rebati* is culture-specific to the core. The story is set in the rural background of a village in Cuttack. Also,certain lines and words in Odia in the text are not endowed with suitable and similar substitutes or equivalences in the target language, that is English. The prime issue in this case was 'allegiance'. The challenge for the translators was whether to adhere to the source author's language and cultural ethos or the target language and culture. These are the challenges that the translator encountered in the paradigm shift, transforming the text *Rebati* from Odia to *Rebati* in English.The translators involved in the translation of *Rebati* made sure to have expertise in their respective source and target languages and cultures.

The process involved three translators, one side comprises of the translators native to the geographical location, language and culture of the chosen text. Another side comprises the translator native to the target language and culture.With such combinations of credibility and knowledge of their respective languages, they could face and resolve the challenge by equipping cultural equivalence in target language for the expressions in the source language. In this shift, they adopted a foreign language but tried to maintain the emotions, feelings and context of the source text. The target language English in this case was used in a judicious manner keeping in mind its readability, which includes non-Odia English readers from Odisha, India and outside India as well.

Literary translation, though a desirable activity, is risky. It is obviously supposed to be an authentic representation of the source text. The demands of the two sides of the process need to be fulfilled; the quality and originality of the source text on the one hand and the requirement of the target language.But this demand cannot be satisfied wholly because translation is not a mechanical process. An exact replica of the content of the source text with original spirit in a foreign medium is implausible.To maintain a proper balance between the original and the translated text, the translator needs some freedom or autonomy for negotiation. However, the translator is conscious enough in dealing with the life and soul of the original text and the writer.It will never be a disgrace to the original by mangling the content and spirit.A successful translator and a sensible translation always attempt to translate the essence and ethos of the original writing; not simply a verbal equivalenceof the original text.

In the matter of religious and cultural faith, beliefs, practices, rhymes and rhythms, the culture-specific instances of the original text or the source-language could be kept intact in the target language text if the target readers are the non-Odia Indians. But for the international target readers of another cultural or religious faith and practices, the strategy needs to be

changed. For such cases, the substitution of the religious and cultural faith, beliefs, practices, rhymes and rhythms could be justified bya translator with the same values but not the same words. However, the sense of the cultural ethos is sometimes compromised to suit the target text, language, culture and readers. Thus, the translators use the mechanisms of domestication, foreignization and equivalence.

This part of the paper encounters the linguistic distinctiveness and nuances of Odia language such as rhyme, rhythm, proverbs, idioms, expressions, phrases, word coining, etc. that has been used by Fakir Mohan in *Rebati*. These are certain examples from the source text *Rebati* by Fakir Mohan Senapati and the target language English translated text of *Rebati* by Leelawati Mohapatra, Paul St. Pierre and K.K. Mohapatra.

Example 1

SL: "ଲୋରେବତୀ, ଲୋରେବି, ଲୋନିଆଁ, ଲୋଚୁଲି"

TL: Rebati! Rebi! You fire that turns all to ashes.

a. ଲୋ is a gendered expression in Odia generally used for females as idioms in casual talks. This expression does not have an exact replica in English. There is no such gendered expression for females in English. In this case, the translator has negotiated by skipping this very expression in the target language.

b. The words, (ନିଆଁ and ଚୁଲି from Odia literally means 'fire' and 'earthen clay stove' in English. The female character Rebati in this story has been referred to as fire and earthen clay stove, a person who is evil, destructive as fire, that burned and destroyed everything to ashes. So, the exact literal translation of the words and expressions in this phrase comes out to be: "Rebati, Rebi, you fire, you earthen clay stove". This sentence doesn't make any sense for an English reader. Thus, the translator tactfully carries out an explanatory cultural translation of the meaning of the phrase from Odia and represents the phrase as: "You fire that turns all to ashes" for better understanding of the target readers.

Example 2

SL: କୃପାସିନ୍ଧୁବଦନ

TL: Krupasindhu badan (same as the source language)

In this case, the translator maintained the candor of the cultural ethos and retained the same word of the source language in English translation because there is no substitute available in English translation for these words. And Krupasindhu Badana is a prayer found in Odia culture only.

Example 3

SL:

'କା'ଆଗେକରିବିଗୁହାରି?
ତୁମ୍ଭେନଚାହିଁଲେନାଥଗରିବଯିବସରି I
କରବାନକରତ୍ରାଣ, ପଦେସମର୍ପିଛିପ୍ରାଣ
ହୃଦେଅଛିତବନାମଧରି I
ତୁମ୍ଭବିନାତ୍ରିଜଗତଶୁନ୍ୟହେହରି I
ଶୀତଳକରଜୀବନପ୍ରେମାମୃତଦାନକରି I

TL: Whither shall I take my prayers, lord,
If Thou turnest a blind eye?
Surely shall I be finished.
Be it salvation or damnation,
To Thee this life a dedication,
To Thee, this soul laden.
Empty, empty, all the three worlds
When I am without Thee.
True refreshment, when I thirst,
Only Thy love can be.

The translation of this verse in English could not meet the demands of maintaining the rhythm and rhymes as used in Odia in the original text, lines ending with the vowel sound 'ee': ଗୁହାରି....ସରି....ଧରି.....ହରି....କରି.. Thus, the translator translated the verse in Odia into verse in English without sticking to the rhymes and rhythms of the original. However, maintained the exact meaning and significance of the verse in the target language.

Example 4

SL: "ବାପାବାସୁ!ସଞ୍ଜବେଳେଟିକିଏଆମଘରକୁଯିବ, ତୁମମାଉସୀଡାକିଛନ୍ତି I"

TL: "Son, come to our place this evening; your aunt has invited you."

a. The word 'ବାପା' in Odia means 'Father' in English. But, in the above lines,the protagonist Shyambandhu Mohanty, an elderly person, calls Basu,another protagonist who is a young boy, as 'ବାପା'(father in English) in the SL, who is actually supposed to be referred as 'Son'. The word 'ବାପା' (father in English) has been used affectionately, because in Odia culture, elderly people usually use this word affectionately for young boys rather than calling them 'son'. The translator however, has used the

word ‘son’ in the target language while addressing Basu, instead of writing father which is the exact translation of the word ‘ବାପା’ in Odia.The translator in this case, being an original speaker of Odia language and knowledgeable in Odia culture easily understood the reference and relationship, thereby correctly used the appropriate word ‘son’ for it instead of ‘father’ in the TL.

b. SL: “…….ତୁମମାଉସୀ….”

TL: “……. Your aunt….”

In the above lines, Mohanty has referred to his wife as his (Basu’s aunt) which is the exact translation of the sentence from the source language Odia from the text. Here, the translator retains to the original reference of relationship as per the Odia culture and uses the reference ତୁମମାଉସୀ for the wife of Mohanty. But in English, Mohanty would have referred to his wife as ‘my wife’ rather than ‘your aunt’ because ‘your aunt’ in English refers to the own aunt of Basu and not the wife of Mohanty.

Example 5

SL: “ଉନ୍ଧାବତ୍ତାଶିଖ, ପିଠାପଣାକରିଶିଖ, ଝୋଟିଦିଆଶିଖ, ଦହିମୁହାଁଶିଖ, ପାଠକଣ?”

TL: Make patterns on walls using rice paste.

In this case, the exact word for ‘ଝୋଟିଦିଆ’ is not available in English. ଝୋଟିଦିଆ is a tradition, an art of making patterns on the walls and floors in houses in Odisha, usually done by females of the house during certain religious occasions. This tradition, art, and the exact word for it is not found in English. So, the translator in this case, successfully tried to explain the phenomenon of the art in a sentence without sacrificing the essence of the native tradition.

Example 6

SL: “…….ଭାଗବତ……. ବୈଦେହୀଶବିଳାସ……. I”

TL: “……Bhagavata and Baidehisa Bilas…….”

In this instance even, the translator does not compromise or sacrifice the religious texts, beliefs and practices; thereby retains the same word ଭାଗବତ……. ବୈଦେହୀଶବିଳାସ as Bhagavata and Baidehisa Bilas in the target language and text.

Example 7

SL: ରେବୀତାକୁ ‘ଦୂରଦୂର’, ଗାଳିଦେଇଫେରିଆସିଲା I

TL: Silly you

The female protagonist Rebati in the above instance from the text is disgusted with her grandmother’s irritating behavior and reacts to her annoyingly. The expression used in Odia for this annoyance is ‘ଦୂରଦୂର’. Now, this expressiondoesn’t have any English translation,

thus the translator skipped these expressions and simply wrote, 'silly you' to express the mood and behavior of Rebati towards her grandmother.

Example 8

SL: ଆଜିଦିନଟିଭଲ – ଶ୍ରୀପଞ୍ଚମୀ I

TL: The auspicious day of Sri Sripanchami dawned.

The word 'Sripanchami' has been retained by the translator from the SL since the day 'Sripanchami' mentioned in this case is as per the Hindu Calendar of Odisha. Even in this case, the religious and spiritual sentiments of the native culture have been respected without any manipulation.

Example 9

SL: "ଧନଦଉଲତନାହିଁବିଚାର,
ଜାତିକଥାଟାଆଗେପଚାର I"

TL: "Caste counts more than wealth."

The lines of the verse in the original text are the localisms or sayings of the local villagers. It ends with the rhyme of the vowel sound 'a'. 'ବିଚାର' 'ପଚାର'. The translator unable to suggest sayings or verse in English with the same rhyme, fits in an appropriate substitute,a suitable phrase in English, with the same meaning.

Example 10

SL: "ବାଁ - ସୁଏଁ - ବଁଆଁ - ଗି – ଲା I"

TL: 'Take care of my family, I leave them to you.'

The above letters in the source language are the initials of the words uttered by the protagonist ShyambandhuMohanty who is dying. The similar phonetic use of the alphabets in English cannot convey the exact meaning or message of the dying person. The translator being a native speaker of Odia, could understand the initials and make out the whole sentence out of these alphabets. So, the message of the dying person was well expressed in complete sentences by the translator for the smooth understanding of the non-Odia and international readers.

Summation

This paper aimed to analyze whether the English translation of *Rebati* fulfils the criteria of the principles of translation or not. The style of the SL text should be retained. To achieve the above three criteria in a translation process, the translator needs to be perfect in the SL and a thorough understanding and knowledge of its subject matter as well. The findings of this research paper are that, this English translation of *Rebati* proves to be in agreement with the original. The translators being well versed with both the SL and TL and also the culture as well made the translated text authentic and natural. Though the text and the characters

find themselves in a wonderland with a foreign language and alien culture, the translator played a brilliant role in bringing a balance between the original and new by adopting the methods of foreignization, domestication and negotiation. Similar to the translation of *Rebati*, any translator is trapped with the dilemma of being intact and honest to the language and ethos of the original text and give a new voice to the different readers or maintain the candor of the source text. The English translation of *Rebati* by the translators is a remarkable achievement since it fulfils both the ends of the process of translation. It appropriates the requirements of the target text and readers and the cultural ethos of the original source text.

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Tradition and Technology: A Critique of the Institution of Marriage and New Age Love in Girish Karnad's *Wedding Album*

AWANISH RAI & MADHUKAR RAI

Awanish Rai

Abstract

This paper attempts to examine Girish Karnad's play *Wedding Album* (2009) offering a nuanced understanding of how in the wake of globalization and technology driven changes, our traditional notions of marriage, relationships and love too are changing. Through the story of Vidula Nadkarni's impending marriage with an expatriate groom of Indian origin, Karnad very ingeniously presents the characteristic dualities in middle class families and the unsavoury expressions of hidden resentments that come to the fore during wedding preparations, often revealing underlying strains in familial relationships making the ceremony a stage for intriguing domestic politics and tensions.

The paper seeks to emphasize how in his play Karnad raises potentially relevant questions regarding the sustainability of traditional practices like arranged marriages in a rapidly modernizing world portraying a society where the pursuit of money threatens to erode the cohesive fabric of family and community life**.**

Keywords: technology, marriage, love, generation gap, globalization, materialism, cultural practices.

In the canon of modern Indian drama one name that emerges as a colossal figure is that of Girish Karnad. Belonging to the first generation of playwrights who came of age when India became independent, Karnad was gifted with an unusual theatrical sense and dramatic acumen that led to his invincible presence on the Indian theatrical horizon for nearly six decades beginning in the early 1960s and continuing till 2019 when he breathed his last. His plays beginning with *Yayati* in 1961 to *Crossing to Talikota* in 2019 stand testimony to the marvellous experimentations that he did with Indian mythology, folklore, history and the contemporary world order. To communicate the multifaceted experiences of life with all its complexities and perennial challenges, Karnad gives expression to a deeper and perceptive exploration of the inherent contradictions that we all as human beings are subject to and tries to lay bare the compulsions and psychological dilemmas that form an intrinsic part of our lives. However, to only judge Karnad's dramatic corpus as one replete with mythological and historical parables is to be ignore the innovative patterns of creative evolution that one can very clearly locate as he straddles past with time.

After a long preoccupation with myth, history and legends as is evident in the plays like *Yayati*, *Tughlaq*, *Hayavadana*, *Naga Mandala*, *The Fire and the Rain* and so on, Karnad wrote a series of 'plays for today' such as *Wedding Album*, *Boiled Beans on Toast* etc. that very clinically capture the changing cultural dialectics of modern life overtly expressing his personal reactions to social and economic changes happening in the country. Unlike his earlier plays which have a big canvas and psychological appeal to audiences across the board, Karnad's newer plays are realistic explorations of mankind's incessant confrontations with the changes that have come about in the wake of technology-driven globalization and modernity.

Madhukar Rai

In his newer plays Karnad moves from 'arcane myths and native lores' to discuss issues such as the modern Indian marriage with all its social and cultural paraphernalia, the invasive encroachment of technology and internet in our lives, escalating problems like population explosion and urbanization and most importantly the fragmented lives and existential conundrums, grappling the modern society trying to ascertain a sense of moral anchorage caught in the tangential delusions of material life. *Wedding Album* marks this thematic shift in his dramatic tapestry where he presents some vignettes from a typical Indian arranged marriage with a view to exposing the strained relations which come to the fore on the occasion of a wedding when even the distant relatives come together to take part in the festivities. Through this play, which was initially written in Konkani, Karnad registers his entry into the modern realistic domestic drama delving into the nuances of traditional Indian weddings within an urban setting as observed by Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker in her introduction to *Collected Plays* Vol. 3:

> *Wedding Album* is Karnad's full scale entry into the mode of urban proscenium realism and its quintessential setting, the middle class family home which have together defined an important and prominent strain in post-independence theatre. (xix, Vol. 3)

In an interview with *Chronicle*, Karnad had stated: "I've been thinking about writing *Wedding Album* for over forty years now. I first thought about it when my sister got married in 1963" (May 30, 2008). The statement does not only show his attachment to the subject but is also proof of how observant he has been of these ceremonies and the issues that make them a spectacle.

In his 1985 essay *'In Search of a New Theatre'*, Girish Karnad had commented on the efforts by a group of Indian playwrights in the 1930s and 40s to deal seriously with domestic and social issues through the resources of realism, noting that they could succeed only partially because of the differences between Western and Indian conceptions of home, family, and the individual. Western realism is defined by its concern for the individual 'as an entity valuable in itself' whereas Indians define themselves in terms of their relationships to the other members of their family, caste, or class. They are defined by the role they have to play. Karnad also emphasized the miscalculations of Indian realists about the geography of the Indian home as is evident from the following passage:

> From Ibsen to Albee, the living room has symbolized all that is valuable to the Western bourgeoisie. It is one's refuge from the sociopolitical forces raging in the world outside, as well as the battleground where values essential to one's individuality are fought out and defended. But nothing of consequence ever happens or is supposed to happen in an Indian living room! It is the no-man's land, the empty, almost defensive front the family presents to the world outside.... [I]t is in the interior of the house, in the kitchen, in the room where the gods are kept, or in the backyard [that] family problems are tackled, or allowed to fester, and where the women can have a say. Thus the living room as the location of dramatic action made nonsense of the very social problems the playwright set out to analyze, by distorting the caste dimensions as well as the position of women in the family. (Quot. in *Collected Plays* Vol. 3)

It is fascinating to place these comments from a 1985 article by the dramatist alongside the stage directions added in the beginning of Act I, Scene ii of *Wedding Album* (2009):

> The living room of a house obviously modelled on the traveller's bungalows of the colonial period. Sprawling, dusty. On one side, there is a huge cupboard with glass doors, packed with books, mostly recent paperbacks which seem ill-at-ease on the old- fashioned shelves, wedged in between some heavy leather-bound volumes. A grandfather clock hangs on the wall, and next to it, a portrait of the Swamiji, and the spiritual monastic head of the Saraswat Brahmins.... Mother and Vidula are examining silk saris piled on the sofa.... Vidula picks up a sari. (Act I, Scene ii)

Not only is this conventionally appointed living room now the space where things of consequence happen, family problems are discussed, and women have their say–as the settings for Scenes *iii*, *iv*, *vii*, and *ix* also, but it is in fact the only part of the house we are allowed to see, and women dominate the conversations that take place there (the kitchen and an adjoining room are referred to, but never shown). The old-but-new face of home complements the other modernized urban spaces in the play–a software production office in Scenes i and v, an Internet café in Scene *vi* and a restaurant in Scene *viii* where individuals pursue professional lives, exercise their freedom, and negotiate relationships. The absence of the bedroom from the scenes is a deliberate choice by Karnad, focusing instead on the living room where the family's pre-wedding activities and conversations unfold. In a move that seems especially appropriate in the medium of English, Karnad has also given an unusually prominent role to the transnational dimension of contemporary life, with Australia and the United States appearing constantly as the diasporic locations where Hema and Vidula would finally settle. (Dharwadker, Vol. 3)

The institution of marriage is considered very sacred in the Indian context. Unlike the West where marriages are primarily decided on the choices of two consenting individuals, in India marriages are a grand social spectacle involving not just one's blood relations but also all the close and distant relatives and friends who actively take great interest, play their designated roles and contribute in their respective capacities. While this institution is common to all the societies around the world what sets the Indian marriages apart is the active

participation of relatives and friends directly affecting its sustainability. The act of marriage is more than a mere union of two individuals, instead it is a union of two families, a lifelong commitment enriched with love, understanding, care and dependence. These elements are not just supplementary but integral to the holy bond solemnized by seven unbreakable promises made by the bride and the groom to each other in front of the sacred fire and the relatives around.

With growing awareness and educational exposure Indian society too has evolved with love marriages gaining acceptance shedding their former image as rebellious or morally transgressive. With parents now valuing the happiness of their children over the fear of social censure there has been a widespread acceptance of love marriages in India as well. However the preference for arranged marriages driven by a deep seated trust in parental discretion still persists. Many young and educated individuals especially girls still rely on their parent's wisdom and life experiences when it comes to choosing a partner because they believe that their parents' insights are invaluable and they will always try to find for them a partner who is socially, professionally and financially affluent.

Wedding Album is a play about a Saraswat Brahmin Nadkarni family and the impending arranged marriage of their twenty-two-year-old daughter Vidula Nadkarni to an expatriate Indian residing in America. What is striking is that Vidula has never met this boy Ashwin Panje in person whom her parents have chosen to be her groom but has only interacted with him through e-mails and video calls. Apart from Vidula there are four other members in her family–her father, a retired government doctor, her mother, a homemaker who is always worried about her marriage, her elder sister Hema who is married to a businessman named Chandrakant based in Australia, Rohit, her brother, a media professional and scriptwriter for tele-plays in the software production house of Pratibha Khan and Radhabai- their loyal family cook who can be seen always quarreling with the mother over petty household works. All these characters embody within themselves a host of complaints against each other that Karnad very skillfully lays bare in the course of the play. He presents the characteristic dualities in middle class families and the unsavory expressions of suppressed feelings that make the ceremony an occasion for intriguing domestic politics and family tensions.

The play begins with a video shooting of Vidula by her brother Rohit which is to be sent to Ashwin as a sort of introduction about her and her personal credentials but Vidula doesn't seem keen in giving her best shot:

> **Vidula**: I am Vidula, Vidula Nadkarni. I am twenty- two and a half, actually. I have done my BA in Geography and passed my exams last year. I am not doing anything at the moment. Worked for a travel agency for six months. (Stops. Looks at Rohit) I got bored. If I come to the US, will I need to work? I am really not very good at it.
>
> **Rohit:** (off screen). Why don't you smile a bit? Look cheerful.
>
> **Vidula**: Am I looking depressed?

Rohit: (off-screen). But don't go out of your way to make yourself unattractive." (*Wedding Album*, Act I, Sc.i p.5)

Vidula is the protagonist of the play. She is twenty-two years old and has recently completed her graduation in Geography. Through the above lines we get a peek into the deep rooted apprehensions of Vidula who wants to present a realistic portrait in front of her fiancé instead of concealing or exaggerating it in order to evade any sort of marital discord later in her life. She refuses to reshoot the family video and opts to present a transparent view of her family's life underscoring her commitment to honesty. She asserts "I just want him to understand the real me" and she candidly informs Ashwin "I am not glamorous, as you can see. I am not exceptional in any way. I don't want you to be disappointed later". (Act I, Sc i p. 6)

This reveals a contradiction in Vidula's character; she seems unassuming yet occasionally exhibits a glamorous side, a trait that becomes evident later in the play when we see her at the cafe.

The Nadkarni family with Vidula's father being a retired government doctor and her mother a homemaker is emblematic of the modern middle class Indian household. Vidula's insistence on transparency challenges the often unspoken norms of arranged marriages in India where truth can be a casualty in the pursuit of a sought after match. This narrative thread highlights the implicit tension between appearance and reality – a theme that resonates deeply in the play. Pratibha Khan who is also there when Vidula is shooting the video expresses her admiration for Vidula because she finds her courage and integrity to be in stark contrast to the lies and dissimulation that often permeate the institution of marriage as the following conversation with Rohit confirms:

Pratibha: I must say I like your sister very much. But I don't think…

Rohit: Don't think what?

Pratibha: That anyone will swallow it today. (Act I, Sc i p.8)

However being aware that Vidula's story would not attract viewers because of its non-melodramatic appeal she priorities to telecast the painful narrative of Radhabai- their family cook and daughter Yamuna left destitute after being jilted by a rich person who had kept her as a concubine. Pratibha herself is depicted as a progressive woman having married Irfan, a Muslim in utter defiance of societal norms.

In the play, Karnad brings out the duplicities inherent in the character of each family member. The father, an old patriarch wants to get Vidula married to a suitable boy and to relieve himself of his social and moral obligations. The mother is quite happy at Vidula's marriage but remains in tension throughout the play about issues pertaining to clothing and jewellery, marriage documents to shopping expenses and is, therefore, all the time complaining against Ashwin's late arrival from the U.S. As a typical Indian mother she wants to celebrate the marriage ceremony of her youngest daughter with all pomp and glitter but is irked to the core at both Vidula's and Ashwin's insistence on 'keeping things simple' in the form of a

registered marriage. The financial extravagance and the pressing cultural expectations surrounding Indian weddings are also brought to the fore in the play. The mother's statement 'A wedding means expenses – there is no getting away from that' reflects the inevitability of high costs associated with traditional Indian marriages. The family planning to take loans to cover the expenses highlights the societal pressure to conform to elaborate customs. The father's reluctance to indulge in these expenses stems from his humble upbringing and current financial constraints, contrasting with the mother's desire for a grand celebration. The mother's intent to settle scores with relatives through the wedding preparations adds a layer of humor to the narrative. Karnad explores the intricate mother-daughter relationship through the characters' interactions, particularly highlighting the tension between Hema and her mother over *sari* selections and wedding customs. The play reflects the complex emotions and conflicts that arise within Indian families during wedding preparations, often leading to chaotic situations revealing the underlying strains in familial relationships.

Hema, who has arrived from Australia seems disinterested throughout the play as she is constantly anxious about her children and husband back home continuously checking her mobile phone in anticipation of a call. She is actually an individual without her own place and if at all, she has one, it is a place she hardly accepts as her own as she exists on the periphery with her husband and children occupying the center stage in her life. As a subtext to the main plot, Karnad very skillfully portrays the story of Vivan, a child prodigy who lives in the same locality as the Nadkarnis and often visits their house at the pretext of returning borrowed books from their house. He is academically sound and technologically adept, yet has matured too quickly due to his exposure to adult literature like *Madame Bovary* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Vivan develops a sensual affection for Hema, which he expresses in letters hidden within the books he returns to her. A mix-up leads to Vidula reading one of these letters. While Hema dreads the potential scandal the letters could cause, her husband finds the situation amusing and cuts a sarcastic joke on her receiving such letters even after fifteen years of marriage. Vivan boldly declares his love saying he fell for Hema at first sight and wishes for a passionate end in her embrace. Karnad captures this sentiment in Vivan's words when Hema threatens to inform his mother about his behavior:

> Go ahead. I'll also tell her I love you. The moment I saw you the other day, I fell desperately in love. I want to die kissing you. I want to die with my hand inside your blouse.
> (Act I, Sc. iv p. 45)

Vivan is perceived as a problematic youth, seeking an inappropriate relationship with a woman much older than him. This behavior is seen as indicative of a broader moral decline among today's youth, who are often influenced by the online contents they come across too early in their lives. The narrative stresses the importance of parental vigilance in monitoring their children's use of technology to prevent them from engaging in detrimental activities.

Rohit, the youngest sibling is in love with a Christian girl named Isabel Pinto but due to socio-familial pressures, he is forced to marry Tapasya, Gopal Sirur's daughter who lives in Hyderabad and belongs to their community. She too is keen for this alliance. Rohit's resistance

to the arranged marriage with Tapasya, due to his commitment to Isabel, further emphasizes individual choice over demands of the tradition. The arrival of relatives like Gopal, Vatsala, Mohan, and Mira introduces a nostalgic element, as they reminisce the past highlighting the social aspects of Indian weddings as a site for family reunions and an occasion to revisit the innumerable shared memories. The father's sense of pride for his future son-in-law, Ashwin Panje, for rejecting the dowry system, is a significant commentary on changing socio-cultural values. Through these interwoven stories, Karnad presents a microcosm of contemporary Indian society grappling with the tensions between tradition and modernity, personal desires and societal obligations, all set against the backdrop of a family wedding.

Ashwin Panje, Vidula's fiancé after having led an unrestrained life of material and worldly comforts in the U.S feels disillusioned due to the lack of spiritual values there and expects to find an ideal match in Vidula as a means to connect with his roots and culture**.** He embodies the values of the Saraswat Brahmin community living in the United States. Amrit Srinivasan, a noted academic and literary critic comments on the societal pressures that men like Ashwin have to face especially with regard to marriage that make them more duty-bound and ever-willing to sacrifice their personal desires in favor of the larger cultural demands. The eighth scene of the play emphasizes how deeply ingrained the sectarian views of marriage are, even among young individuals like Ashwin. In India, marriages are often arranged based on virtues, good deeds, and the compatibility of the families involved. In the play this is illustrated by Vidula's experience, where matrimonial alliances are confined within the age-old caste boundaries even though facilitated through the use of up-to-date technological paraphernalia like online chats and video introductions etc. Despite occasional deviations, the social structure endures due to its inherent adaptability as is evident in the character of Ashwin who, despite living in America, yearns for a virtuous Hindu Indian wife who epitomizes the roles of a wife, mother, and daughter. He expresses his disillusionment with American culture, which he finds lacking in substantive family values as he confesses:

> What am I anguished about then? I have experienced life in the US to its fullest. Girlfriends, affairs, mistresses, one-night stands, along with public acclaim, success, and social connections. I have encountered them all. Yet, I have reached the conclusion that this entire culture is now devoid of values, stripped of any genuine significance. (Act I, Sc. viii p.80)

He criticizes American culture for its artificiality and materialism and feeling disenchanted with that life, turns to India, hoping to find solace in its rich cultural heritage. He believes that Indians must reconnect with their ancient wisdom to guide the world. He seeks a partner like Vidula, who can bring the noble spiritual traditions of India to the West, thereby alleviating it from its cultural and spiritual desiccation. Srinivasan in his foreword to the play discusses how marriage within one's caste is not only socially sanctioned but also serves to regulate and temper female sexuality post-marriage. The wife's commitment to purity is seen as having a sanctifying influence on her husband and, by extension, on Hinduism itself, especially when it is a silent and involuntary devotion. (Foreword, *Wedding Album*) Karnad captures

this complex interplay of personal beliefs and societal norms through his characters' experiences and dialogues.

Cook Radhabai has been working in the Nadkarni family for quite some time and in the play we get to see her involved in repeated scuffles with the mother. Their never ending domestic altercations are for the possession of the kitchen–a site of domestic power play in middle class Indian households where the authority of the women in the house is uncontested. Radhabai had been given shelter in the Nadkarni household as a cook as her husband was poor and had left her a widow. Her daughter has become mentally deranged due to social stigma being abandoned by the family of that deceased rich businessman who had once made her his concubine. The play portrays a society grappling with the consequences of excessive materialism and individualism set against the backdrop of enduring cultural norms and practices. Karnad envisions this dilemma through the story of Radhabai who deliberately chooses to ignore the screams of her forsaken daughter when she comes in front of the house and calls her. Radhabai's cold indifference to her painful cries is reflective of how societal pressures and financial security make her oblivious of all other considerations of love and maternal affection. Her story further intensifies this dichotomy. As a widow and a cook, she faces a harrowing choice between her job and her daughter. The tragic turn of events that leads her daughter to madness and destitution reflects the harsh realities of a society increasingly driven by monetary gains over familial bonds and compassion.

In the play, Karnad takes a stringent jibe at the institution of marriage and how even in the wake of globalization and technological advancements, it still remains essentially premised upon the codified banalities of role playing. In a world that is increasingly embracing feminist values and women are aware of their gender rights, they still continue to be treated as commodities. It indeed baffles Karnad that instead of recognizing its innately discriminatory nature and patriarchal rigidities and instead of questioning its validity in an increasingly globalized liberal world, we are still trying to correct its foundational wrongs. The playwright hints at the fact that marriages still remain a legitimate cultural apparatus of gender control and coercion and it is only through 'marriage' that young girls are made to ascertain their true purpose in life irrespective of their social and educational status. He interrogates how in the name of preserving culture and traditional family conventions, girls like Hema and Vidula are married off to rich expatriates that would ensure them a smooth and secure life. But who will take care of their aspirations in life? Even after her marriage with Chandrakant, Hema leads an internally disturbed life filled with a sense of emotional privation because all that she has been reduced to is to be a caretaker to her husband and a doting mother to her children. Her own choices and aspirations in life have been strangled by the overarching pressures of motherhood and duties of a spouse. That is why she secretly enjoys reading Vivan's amorous letters addressed to her though she does not encourage his advances openly. It is through Vivan's passionate references that she begins to explore the finer aspects of her suppressed sexuality that has remained probably untainted till now. Karnad questions the very notion of marriage being a pre-requisite for mutual affection and love between two people. Despite

being wedded to a rich person like Chandrakant, Hema lives an unfulfilled life bereft of true love and hence constantly voices her anguish at Vidula for following the same path of marrying an expatriate groom without even knowing him fully. It is her personal observation after having experienced the vagaries of a married life that comes out in the form of her repeated rants about how their husbands might have it all in life - success, prosperity, social prestige and professional fame but their lives are no better than Maa. To Vidula too, marriage is nothing more than a means to achieve easy social and financial prosperity. Deep down her mind she is quite aware of the fact that marriage is not going to change her life altogether, it is just that she would be relieved of the worries of worldly life hinging upon survival and a false sense of stability. She too is unsure whether she will have a life full of love and lifelong commitment with Ashwin or not.

In the play, Karnad presents the lives of his female characters as typically sacrificing and submissive beings who fail to cut across the gendered conventions of middle class morality that views marriage as an institution based on a fine balance between financial stability and societal norms leading to comfort and convenience. If they are lucky to find love and mutual understanding in their married lives, it becomes a tale of 'married happily ever after' but even if they fail to find the desired warmth, care and concern in their conjugal lives, they are left with no option but to rue their fate and express their angst the way Hema does. They will have to continue behaving as conforming and dutiful wives and mothers playing their assigned gender roles without an iota of sadness or disappointment because marriage as an institution does not offer any chances of rectification. Through the play, thus, Karnad identifies the blind spots within marital relationships and demonstrates how even if marriage fails to work in favor of the women they are left with no choice but to willfully keep carrying the burdens of the sacred vows that they have been traditionally tied to.

The play not only captures the anticipation and underlying tensions of arranging a marriage with a suitable groom but also comments on the broader issues of modernity, impact of technology on both older and younger generations, paradigmatic shifts in aims and aspirations and the issues of personal liberties. In the play, the pervasive influence of the virtual world on modern life is acknowledged, with the younger generation often criticized for misusing it. Vidula, like many others, is depicted as being swept away in this digital tide, not fully harnessing the potential of internet for education and the betterment of the family. A pivotal aspect of the play is her assuming the online persona of Radhabai's estranged daughter, Yamuna—known as Kuchla in the virtual realm only to ultimately confront her own abandonment. In her visits to the cafe, she enjoys having conversations with several unknown male voices feigning a virtual identity of her own just like those random advertisements we come across in newspapers which promise us to purge off our boredom if we call on a given number and enjoy their exclusive amorous chats. She further has conversations in the dark room:

Voice: Ananga the bodiless. And that's my darling, Kuchla….

Vidula (Laughing): ….the Jezebel. You should wait till I give

my password.

Voice: No need, love. I know the voice of my Indian pea-hen. I dream of you. I pine for you. Where have you been all these days? Why have you made me wait? Do not do that again.

Vidula: Sorry my darling, pining peacock. But there may be no 'again'. I have to come to say bye. . .

Voice: First I will strip you. Then I will rape you.

Vidula: I can't wait. I can't. . . Go ahead. I am yours. All yours.

Voice: Good. Take off your Shawl. Now unbutton your Blouse.

Vidula: Not Blouse. It's called the Kameez.

Voice: I don't care. Just take it off. Now the bra.

Vidula: Okay. Hold on.

Voice: Hurry up, slut. Hurry up. I am all.

Vidula: Done. Done.

Voice: You are bare-bobbed baby?

Vidula: Yes.

Voice: Caress them for me. The left one first. It is smaller than the right one. It should not develop an inferiority complex.

Vidula: Yes. . . . (Act I, Sc.vi pp. 64-66)

The play also touches upon the issue of gender centric harassment, adding complexity to Vidula's character as she navigates through moral dilemma. Her secret indulgence in video games at the internet café, under the guise of learning sermons, adds a layer of complexity to her character as she sails through the pressures of impending matrimony. Her café conversations, filled with these fabricated tales and personal admissions, showcases her ability to assume various roles. Initially composed, her confrontational side surfaces in the café, culminating in an embarrassing moment when she is discovered viewing adult content online by a group of fundamentalist Hindu boys masquerading as champions of religious piety who threaten her of dire consequences. In a defensive stance, Vidula charges the young men of sinister intentions, declaring, 'You have come to rape me, haven't you? You want to attack me. (Screaming) Fucking rapists… She fiercely confronts them and challenges their authority saying, 'I have paid for the computer time. I have paid to be left alone in this room. To work here without being disturbed. I'll do what I like here. Who the hell are you to question me?' (Act I, Sc.vi)

Her tension dissipates when she is informed by the café worker that they had visited merely for routine collection. Vidula's assertive temper surfaces as she stands up for her

personal rights, showcasing a strong and independent will when it is an issue of her basic rights as an individual.

Wedding Album thus unveils the uncomfortable realities of conservative Indian society, where families fiercely guard their unmarried daughters from male interaction, yet these young women may secretly pursue erotic adventures, whether through cyber pornography or through their pre-marital escapades. The play serves as a critical commentary on the growing fundamentalism within Hindu middle-class families, a topic often overlooked in social science research on India, as noted by Amrit Srinivasan in the foreword to the play. It also encapsulates the multifaceted nature of Indian weddings, where tradition, personal desires, and modern realities intertwine. The play also provides a lot of space to various other associated ideas commonly referred to as cultural studies in contemporary critical discourses. As emphasised by M. H. Abrams in his *A Glossary of Literary Terms* cultural studies as an interdisciplinary field examines the factors influencing the creation, interpretation, and relevance of various socio-cultural productions including literature as one of many culturally 'signifying practices'. (Abrams, 72) In this context, *Wedding Album* is a portrayal of a conventional Indian wedding within a cosmopolitan, technologically adept society. The play operates on multiple levels, contrasting the traditional expectations of marriage within the Saraswat Brahmin community with the realities of a rapidly changing world.

Unlike Karnad's previous works, which often draw from mythology and folklore, *Wedding Album* is rooted in the present, reflecting the intricacies and lures of today's life. It serves as a mirror to our society, portraying the values held by its characters who at first glance seem to epitomize a content, ordinary family, yet upon closer inspection, reveal a myriad of underlying truths. Karnad captures the essence of young urban women's lives, their concerns, and their engagement with the digital world in a manner that resonates with realism. The play gives voice to women's experiences that are often unspoken or unseen in public discourse. The play serves as a poignant commentary on the ongoing quest for self-identity among women, despite societal perceptions of freedom and independence.

The play encapsulates the diverse experiences of Indian life, traversing class, gender, and time. It invites varied interpretations, with critics like Amrit Srinivasan recognizing it as a significant contribution to India's global narrative. Srinivasan highlights the nuanced portrayal of women's emotional resilience and the often-overlooked sacrifices they make, which the play brings to the fore revealing the complex realities faced by women in the context of transnational marriages. Sunayana Panda in her article '*Wedding Album: Insights into the Psyche of the New India*' critiques the play's portrayal of the complexities within modern Indian society, particularly in relation to the 'younger generation's adaptation to a technology-driven lifestyle'. Panda observes that while the play presents these intricacies, it leaves the audience pondering over unanswered questions about the future of traditional practices like arranged marriages and the close-knit Indian family structure in an increasingly individualistic world.

Karnad further explores the theme of familial tensions and societal changes. He suggests that technological advancements and global influences are igniting anxieties and are also altering aspirations, especially among the youth who are drawn to notions of prosperity and personal freedom. These changes challenge the older generation's sense of purpose and the traditional values they hold dear. The play cleverly integrates technology as a near-tangible presence in the South Indian household, symbolizing the global connections that shape their lives. This is particularly evident in the relationship between Ashwin and Vidula, where technology facilitates their marital arrangements despite physical and geographical distances.

Vidula's brother Rohit embodies the evolving attitudes towards marriage and relationships. His disregard for the sanctity of marriage, once considered a lifelong commitment, signifies a shift towards viewing it as a mere contract. Rohit's desire to marry Isabel, a Christian, ignoring his Brahmin heritage, highlights the generational divide and the influence of what is unavoidably ushering into the family life in India, something that is more particularly affecting the thought process of the Indian youth. But through his role in the play, Karnad also explores the issue of opportunism as despite his love for Isabel, he is swayed by the Sirur family's offer of wealth and status in exchange of marrying their daughter, Tapasya. His character is torn between his love for Isabel and the temptation of wealth offered through marriage to Tapasya. This conflict is emblematic of the broader social challenge to choose between basic human values and the materialistic gains whose insatiable ever-increasing upward graph too is, no doubt, essentially a by-product of globalization.

Wedding Album ultimately questions the sustainability of traditional practices like arranged marriages in a rapidly changing world. It asks whether the tight-knit Indian family as a self-sufficient unit can withstand the pressures of modernity and excessive individualism and clearly suggests that the very fabric of these relationships may be at risk. The play reflects the tensions of generational divides, with the older members feeling alienated by rapid technological changes, while the youth being completely consumed up by aspirations for quick prosperity and individual freedom. Through this incisive and thought-provoking work, Karnad presents a humorous yet unsettling examination of contemporary Indian society. He doesn't shy away from addressing modern dilemmas. For instance, when Pratibha, a Hindu woman married to a Muslim man, dismisses any knowledge of harassment, or when Vidula's clandestine existence as a cyber-persona is revealed and swiftly silenced by the conservative Saraswat community, the playwright confronts the emerging challenges of the digital age, including the issue of cyber pornography among the youth. In a dialogue from the play, Hema questions Vidula about her activities in an internet café, to which Vidula replies that it's 'a respite from wedding preparations'. The internet cafe emerges as a sanctuary from patriarchal scrutiny, a place where one can embrace values that clash with traditional female upbringing.

Karnad highlights that matrimonial decisions are highly personal decisions. Family institutions and customs should not infringe upon an individual's liberty. He critiques the practice of arranged marriages, portraying them as a means to subjugate women. Families often use false claims to entice women into these unions. Karnad challenges the imposition of collective

identity on individuals by ideological forces. Despite the mantra of women's empowerment, there remains organized denial when it comes to allowing women to freely choose their life partners.

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Deciphering the Intricate Rhythms of Aqua: Acts of Resistance in James Cameron's *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022)

ARUN PRASAD R. & DEEPA PRASAD L.

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Abstract

James Cameron's *"Avatar: The Way of Water"* (2022), is an intricately laid out visual treatise which captures the exotic hues and events set in the aquatic spheres of an imaginary and new found planet named, Pandora. Although the initial movie entitled, *Avatar* (2009), gives a picturesque glimpse into the world of the Na' vi forest dwelling clan, whose otherwise peaceful and bonded to nature existence was questioned by the invading, heavily armed human beings, who were ultimately put to defeat by the natives and their untiring resistance. The human beings, variously referred to in the movie as the sky people, flee back with a sole purpose of revitalising themselves with a return seeped in an agenda of colonisation and monopolisation of the vast and plentiful resources of Pandora. The present movie taken for study, portrays the return of the sky people who pose a carnage at the face of the forest dwelling clan. Having established a thriving city after having decimated a patch of greens in the new planet, human beings venture into the deep, on a mission to locate the clan and efface them off. Jake Sully, the clan's leader of the forest dwellers is presented in the initial movie as a human made to transform into a lab grown Na' vi body, who was later assigned the duty of convincing the forest people to relocate, so as to let the humans colonise and extract the rare mineral wealth of Pandora. However, he later perceives the lustful encroachments of the human beings and joins hands to shield the Na' vi's from destruction. *Avatar: The Way of Water*, presents him leaving his sanctuary for the safety offered by the clans residing by the fringes of the ocean. This provides the viewers to relish on the scenic vistas of an aquatic scape filled with fantasy. As the tale unfolds, the intruders follow him only to inflict threatening blows, from which he rescues the clan and the myriad life forms of Pandora. The present paper attempts to delineate the fantastic portrayal of Pandora's aquascapes, which presents a life of coexistence of the shore residing clans of the Na' vi. Secondly, It is an attempt to introspect into the ecological resistance and resilience, offered by the Na vi in the rich and scenic backdrop of aquascapes, and subsequently, highlights the contributory undercurrents offered to it, in the light of thoughts, such as the dark green religion and water consciousness, both of which are integral philosophical entities which punctuate the deep essence and connect shared by the various life forms.

Keywords: Aqua, resistance, colonisation, monopolisation

Avatar: The Way of Water (2022) is a sequel to the earlier movie, *Avatar*, which appeared on the screens in the year 2009. Both the movies are laid out in a unique labyrinth of visual effects, largely contributed to by the technical prowess offered by Computer generated Imagery (CGI). Directed by James Francis Cameron, both the movies exhort an elaborate presentation of the exoplanet, Pandora, which is far off from the earth. The depiction of Pandora is at once appealing, intuitive and eye opening, for it lets the viewers ponder over the intricate and holistic connect which underlies the web of life in the new found planet. Being earmarked in the fantasy enriched niche of Sci-fi and futurism, the movie lets the audience perceive on the human voyages to the outer space and the captivating, yet, hypothetical life forms it holds. Cameron, in depicting so, portrays the greed stacked thoughts which underlines the human psyche and the current race of human expeditions into the outer space, as a phenomenon which not only serves to quench the horizons of human imagination about the universe, but also points to the colonial greed and prospects of human expansion into newer frontiers.

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The movie is an apt parallel to its sequel, for it presents the juxtaposed deeds of Na' vi, with their deep ecological consciousness at the one end, and the human beings who are focused on monopolization and control of resources, at the other end. It is a depiction on how the marauding efforts of intrusive human beings equipped with machinery and heavy warfare is thwarted to mere decay, as the Na' vi who relies on the elemental forces of Pandora, and especially on its aquatic vitality, manages to overpower the vicious strength of the earthlings. Although, one can clearly discern the element of persisting ecological resistance created by the Na' vi at the face of the intruders, a closer introspection into the entrails of resistance brings to light a whole lot of thoughts rooted in perceptions such as 'dark green religions' and especially, on the concept of water consciousness; both of which serve to strengthen the notions of ecological resistance as portrayed by the Na' vi. Dark green religions refer to a revival of interests in ancient religious cults which perceive nature as intimate and sacred. It relies deeply on the elemental forces, of which water is an integral element, as highlighted in this movie. Water consciousness is a notion which traces its origins from the ancient world and holds a deep reverence to the waters and its intricate powers. The present paper is an attempt in highlighting the dyads of opposing forces, of which the first is the portrayal of the Na' vi, whose life is seeped in the rhythmic patterns of Pandora and thus exhibits a resistance smeared in the spiritual essence as reflected in the concepts of dark green religions and water consciousness; the second, is that of the intruding sky people or the homo sapiens, who are seeped in anthropocentric thoughts and aims at slaying the Na' vi, so as to extract the mineral wealth of Pandora. The subsequent paragraphs serve to highlight the concepts mentioned above; and analyse how it substantiates the pillars of ecological resistance of the Na' vi as portrayed in the movie.

After the 1960's in the west, there was a remarkable shift in perceiving spiritual experiences from merely confining within the walls of the Bible, to a more holistic and universal approach. This was largely quickened by the impact of media and especially the world cinema, which portrayed religious experiences relied on an inner-directed quest for freedom and self-realization. In a way this new spiritual shift was akin to a move away from the formal and organized way of religion and into a spiritual realm which was more personal and nontheistic. This marked shift in the perception of religions came to be termed as 'new religions', which was remarked by Christopher Patridge in his book, '*New Religions, A Guide: New Religious Movements, Sects, and Alternate Spiritualities.'* "There is …a move away from traditional forms of belief, which have developed within religious institutions, towards forms of belief that focus on the self, on nature…" (17). The new religions were intimate with the forms and especially the elements of nature, as referenced in the ancient Indian belief of 'Panchamahabhootas', which stands for the five major elements, which include water, sky, air, fire and the earth. They represent the fundamental structural basis of all living beings, and the new religious cult tried to align the human perceptions with the core of nature. Thus, the intimacy and the holistic connect underlying the spiritual awakening of the human psyche led to a revival of interest with forms and elements of nature, leading to a holistic perception of the enigma of life. This intensive and unified approach to nature and the perception of sharing a connect with the forces of nature led to the creation of a larger umbrella term known as 'dark green religion'. The term appeared in Bron Taylor's book, *'Dark Green Religion: Nature, Spirituality and the Planetary Future,'* wherein, he links the religion to that of the forms of environmentalism. Dark green religion according to Bron Taylor, 'is the absolute commitment to nature.' (13) Having discussed the dark green religions and its intricate awareness and connect to the rhythms of nature, one must shift the attention to the concept of water consciousness. It encapsulates within itself a deep reverential attitude towards water and its life forms. Realizing this deeper reverence, Theodor Schwenk, in his book, *'Water: The Element of Life'*, notes that "water is like a giant extended over the entire earth, and yet it embraces all wisdom in each tiniest drop." (25) Although the notions of water consciousness trace its origins in the ancient myths and religious discourses, humanity grew oblivious of this underlying connect shared by mankind as we progressed into the age of the Anthropocene. This technical era, witnessed mankind's greed for progress which resulted in a dissociation of the principles of water consciousness. However, with the ushering in of the deep ecology and the thoughts on dark green religions, mankind has revitalized their deeper connect to water and its innate powers. Water consciousness is a driving tributary in the vast plethora of the umbrella term of dark green religion, which in turn lets the human search for meaning gain a fruition through the holistic connect it creates between the human beings and nature. One must perceive that the ideology of resistance, which involves the acts of preservation of this pristine earth, gained a further impetus through the riverine contributions offered by the above-mentioned thoughts. Thus, the new found interests in concepts and frameworks as water consciousness and dark green religion, have a significant role in instilling the ecological resistance, as portrayed by the Na' vi in the movie.

Avatar: The Way of Water, presents the family of Jake Sully, the chieftain of Omitikaya clan, the Na' vi people of the forests. They are tall and blue skinned figures who present extreme agility and prowess in leading a life in the rough terrains of the forest. The first movie, presents Jake's earlier life in which he is represented as a former US marine who had retired himself, battling with a disability incurred on his leg. The movie also presents him undergoing hibernation in an artificial pod transforming himself into a blue skinned Na' vi. In fact, he was employed by the RDA or the Resource Development Administration, who is driven by lust in confiscating the rich mineral wealth of Pandora. Jake had integrated into the Na' vi culture and is married to Neytiri for over a decade. Neytiri is the spiritual leader in training and had shown her prowess as a fierce warrior, especially in combating with the forces of RDA. The movie presents Jake engaged in teaching his children in essential life skills for the life in the forests, until one night when he and Neytiri chances upon a bright star in the skies, which proves to be a spaceship on a reclaiming mission upon Pandora and its valuable resources. The spaceship brought back with it Colonel Miles Quaritch, who was formerly murdered by Neytiri in a combat which resulted in the withdrawal of the human forces from Pandora. Quaritch too had undergone artificially induced mutation and is now in the tall and slender, blue figure of a Na' vi. This, the RDA believes would help him combat the Na' vi and exterminate them, so that the humans could extend their mining activities. One can clearly discern Cameron's motive of juxtaposing the Na' vi with the RDA, for they are poles apart in their perception and beliefs towards nature, for the former connotes with that of a pious and reverential integration with the soul of the forces of nature; while, the second refers to that of tyranny, torture and exploitation of the sacred forces of life. *Avatar: The way of Water,* highlights this combat, set in the backdrop of the waterscapes of Pandora, to which Jake and family escape to avoid a possible combat. However, their movement is traced and humans ensure their destructive tendencies at the otherwise peaceful existence of the Na' vi who live by the fringes of the sea sides of Pandora. The movie recounts how Jake and family, supported by the sea side clan of Pandora, the Metkayina, succeeds in overpowering the intrusive colonialists. Water in the movie achieves an ever-pervading presence, for it is the space into which Jake and his family take refuge from the invading sky people or the earthlings, whose landing on Pandora had ravaged the pristine forest to ashes. The integration of the water dwelling clan is nowhere better represented than in the scenes depicting the annual migration of the whale like creatures or the Tulkun. The Na' vi flock to meet them, for they regard them as their spiritual siblings. This deep interlinkage of the clan with the waters and its living forms indicates the reverence towards nature we had conveniently forgotten. The elaborately designed depictions of the tree of souls and as well as the bondage with sea creatures, aptly reflect the intricate elements of a dark green religion which is seeped in the ideology of water consciousness. Through the intimate connects shared by the Na' vi with the tree of souls, water life and especially with that of the treatment of Tulkun's as a representation of spiritual self, the Na' vi cultural practices reflect the underlying essence of dark green religion and the water consciousness, which enables an inner-directed quest for freedom and leads to a life of self fulfilment. These in turn become crucial factors which

enable the Na' vi in collating the powers of the nature in resisting, and finally, overpowering the colonialists. The RDA is relentless and traces the family of Jake, only to start a carnage of migrating Tulkun, who comes to be harpooned and mercilessly slaughtered. The clans' members are especially pained at the carnage and weeps at their plight for they share a deep connect. The plight of the sacred mammals of the waters and the fact that the humans held jake's children as hostage led the clan to team up with the waters and its life in a unified spirit, overpowering the huge technologically advanced water vessels. It is the deep and holistic connect bound by the roots of water consciousness and dark green religious principles as exemplified in the tree of souls, which enables the final rescue of Jake's family who were trapped under the sinking war vessels.

Avatar: The Way of Water (2022), depicts the dyads of contrast, serving to highlight the Na' vi of Pandora and the greed infested, anthropocentric human mission. Cameron's depiction of the fascinating aquascapes of Pandora and its inmates sharing a virtuous bondage of affairs, serves to critique the contemporary rate at which human beings had denigrated the surroundings. In depicting the human beings as brute colonizers, Cameron hints with mockery at the contemporary human race to space; although, it may appear to be idealistic and creative, it hides within it the colonial motive of salvaging the mineral riches of the outer space. The viewers are constantly reminded of the serene perspective of Na' vi in dealing with their surroundings, and at once relates to the ecological resistance they pose, which in turn draws its fiery desires from the deep philosophy ingrained in dark green religions and water consciousness, both of which serve to tie the knots of deep connect with nature.

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The Unwanted truth

PRASANNA KUMARI

On Sunday
Truth entered the church
The priest absorbed it
and transferred it to the worshippers
The believers could not contain the
NAKED truth
They left it there and
went home

On Monday
Truth went out to the market in the rain
and sunshine
It did not get an umbrella from the
market
It did not get cloth from the shop
Nobody was willing to own him and
protect him
It wandered there

On Tuesday
Truth went to the school gate
The students were taught everything
Did not teach them to speak the truth
It left feeling sorry

On Wednesday
It entered the court
where truth is given the crown
Court is meant to reveal and prove the
truth
But the proof was torn and scattered
there
It left....

On Thursday
It went to the temple
It could not find itself among the chanting
of mantras
and the scent of incense sticks
Not being able to stand the neglect
It left....

On Friday
It was on the beach
People were there to bury their sorrow
or to rejoice with their loved ones
The breeze brushing past their cheeks did
not need truth or lies
It left.....

Monday or Thursday
It is the same
with the lightness of being revealed
and the heaviness of being hurt
and more heaviness when hidden...

On Saturday
Truth jumped on rose and lavender
Put a bindi on the forehead
With Jasmine flavoured hair
It waits on the side of the street
waiting for Humanity

(neelanilav)

A walk in the woods

To the hilltop

led by the sound of sunlight drawing
pictures
urged by time
erasing and re-shaping again and again

at every curve
old things emerge and re-emerge
perhaps, like the hatred
which I left some time back

nature brimming with a furtive smile
and
winking with singing colors

Me, an intruder
inhaling wrinkled happiness

the hills and valleys seek
the harmony of mist
to hide solidified sobs and sighs
the topless trees telling stories to the rain
of moments of seduction and gloom present
the darkened pond escapes to the corner
heavy with a destitute's biography
veiled sorrow stumbling on
the remnants of concocted complexities
babbling brooks trying to evade
shamelessly woven dreams of the meadows
the cascade rhyming love-laden hours
with glory,grandeur and grace

I stand here,naked
with a haunting melody inside….

The third truth

Trying to paint the third truth
which defines life
with drunken words dancing on
my muse of hues and views
with nature's melody throbbing inside
with the sun I swallowed
and the moon I drank

I lie awake
trying to paint the third truth on a
larger canvas
with staggering vowels and
consonants
with syllables fluttering to shape the
language of love,

dreams,thoughts ,reality and illusion

I lie awake
straining to form words of light and
dark colors
translating moments of sight and
insight

I lie awake
struggling to evolve the third truth
which defines and redefines life
and
listening to the crumbling of shadows
when light fades into foolish lies"

Translation as Cultural Exchange and Political Representation

PRABHA VARMA

Meena T. Pillai. *Translating Kerala: The Cultural Turn in Translation Studies.* Orient Blackswan, Hyderabad, 2024.

Kerala has an unmatched legacy in translation - to and from Malayalam - and often a translated literary work surpasses the original text in popularity. So, why are translators still not given their due?

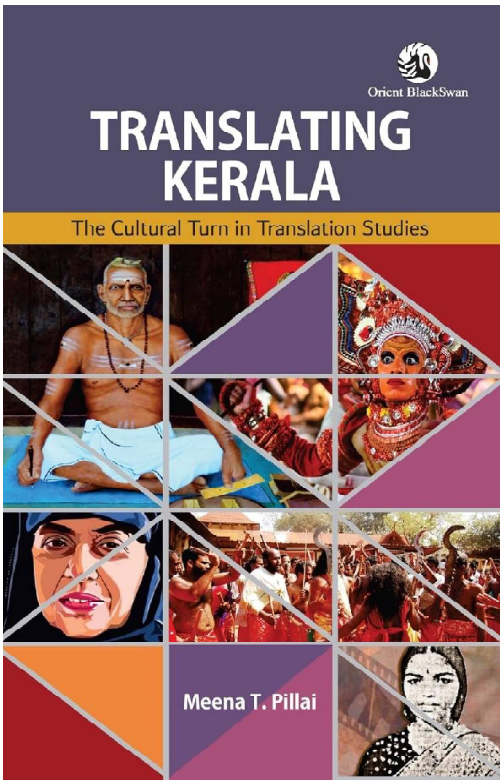
While reflecting on translation, one is often confronted with questions that leave one puzzled about the status of translators. Are you an original writer or merely a translator? Why do you squander your time and energy translating others' works when you possess the creativity to produce original works? Unfortunately, notions that relegate translators' roles within the literary and academic spheres are prevalent, and it is only by knocking down these popular misconceptions that we can usher in an era that values and recognises translators as creative writers. Though Robert Frost remarked that "poetry is what gets lost in translation", there is a comforting counterpoint: "what survives translation is poetry". Despite inherent academic and literary limitations, we still prefer to have translated works, as no one can master all the world's languages. Also, while admitting that specific nuances may be lost, we continue to relish translations, as they serve as primary means of understanding the ways in which people worldwide lead their lives.

What sparked these thoughts in my mind is Dr Meena T. Pillai's latest book, Translating Kerala: *The Cultural Turn in Translation Studies*, published by Orient BlackSwan. The interdisciplinary work that carefully links the field of translation studies with cultural studies fosters critical discussions on topics ranging from translating marginal and gendered experiences to the politics of representation and the implications of translation as a political process. Pillai, in this volume, analyses the art and craft of translation by examining canonical literary texts as well as popular narratives. These include narratives by socio-political and literary figures like Nalini Jameela, C.K. Janu, Kamala Das, Ramu Kariat, M.T. Vasudevan Nair and Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai. She extends her analysis by critically engaging with the Malayalam translations of the literary works of Garcia Marquez and Victor Hugo, contextualising them, and commenting on the socio-cultura1 contexts of their publication.

Ours is a land of diversity, and the sustenance of this diversity is crucial to our unity. But of late, efforts to impose homogeneity under the slogan 'one language, one culture and one people' are increasingly threatening this unity. While, on the surface, they may seem innocuous, a deeper examination will expose their potential for inciting political fragmentation. In other

words, imposing a monolithic culture and attributing superior status to a particular language corrode the unparalleled cultural diversity that India exemplifies. Against the backdrop of such disruptive attempts, the act of translation undertakes a crucial political purpose by ensuring cultural exchanges. It celebrates the plurality and diversity of our nation, which is integral for upholding constitutional values and serves as a vital bridge, connecting different parts of the world, linking one culture to another, and contributing to creating a global village.

The significance of Meena Pillai's latest book lies in her attempt at recognising the politics of translation. By framing acts of translation as inherently political a perception that liberates the practice and study of translation from the traditional framework of language and literature, she productively decontextualises it within the socio-cultural realities. For instance, in the chapter titled 'Gender and Translation,' Pillai problematises the absence of Malayalam translations of feminist literature. She takes it as a point or departure to hint at the publics 'covert fear' of feminist subversions and interrogates the hegemonic epistemological structures that eschew translating feminist critiques of patriarchal biases. In 'Translating the Subaltern', she delves into the politics of translating marginalised experiences, examining various mediations that shape the 'speaking subaltern subject.' In 'English and Postcolonial Translation', she further critiques the commodification of subaltern experiences and the increasing tendency of intellectuals to capitalise on them. Another chapter, 'Autobiography as Translation' analyses how cultural oscillation and re-centering of the self happens when one writes autobiographically across languages.



To return to the initial point, though translation is an essential means of cultural exchange and communication, translators often do not receive the recognition they deserve. Despite the emergence of translation studies as an academic discipline in many universities, translators still need to be considered for their creative capacities. This disparity clearly stems from the perception that translation is inferior to original writing. However, it is important to note that translators surpass original writers in certain aspects. While the original writer is a master of one language, a translator is proficient in at least two. This bilingual competence is

complemented by a deeper understanding of the cultures reflected in the source and target languages. Since each language bas its own linguistic and literary norms, which often differ in structure and style, translators frequently face syntactical and semantic challenges in replicating them in another language. In such cases, the quality of the translation largely hinges on the translator's passion, curiosity and clarity. If translated efficiently, a translated literary work can even surpass the original text in popularity.

Meena Pillai's critical engagement with distinct acts of translation, revealing the politics mediating them, and her exploration of how translations cater to or question the needs of the target audience are significant in underscoring the role of translators in facilitating the journey of texts across languages and cultures. Her attempt at destabilizing the conventional hierarchy of the original text and its translation by delving into the ways in which translation helps broaden readerly sensibilities makes the volume an intellectually compelling read.

Contrary to common belief, Malayalam was the first Indian language to which Bhagavad Gita was translated from Sanskrit. Madhava Panicker, a member of the Niranam group of poets, accomplished this feat in the 14th century, predating the emergence of Ezhuthachan, who is regarded as the father of the Malayalam language. This significant literary feat was achieved even before Jnaneswar's Marathi translation of the Bhagavad Gita.

Now, the question is, is there any language in the world that does not have Shakespeare's works translated? Even in Malayalam, all the 37 plays of Shakespeare have been translated, thanks to Dr K. Ayyappa Panicker. Following his lead K. Satchidanandan recently translated Shakespeare's sonnets into Malayalam. Our language would have remained impoverished without the translated works of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Can we imagine modern Malayali sensibility without the contributions of Albert Camus, Sartre, Pablo Neruda, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez?

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Shades and Shadows: a Bunch of Extra ordinary poems

PRABHANJAN K. MISHRA

N. Sreekala. *Shades and Shadows.* Prabhath Book House, Thiruvanthapuram, 2024.

Dr. N Sreekala's anthology of poems, *Shades and Shadows* comprises a collection of forty-three delightful poems. She has chosen her words carefully and like stars in the sky shine in geodesic discipline in meaningful constellations, symbolic of her poetic history and creative urge. Her simple wordplay keeps the readers riveted to the pages pouring out literary *Rasa* (aesthetic flavour) and *Bhava* (emotions expressed in style) in the form of lovely lines.

The gorgeous and confident poem "My Poems, an Attestation" opens the portal to this collection that unravels the poet's world of shades and shadows; the shades giving her work the distinctive hue, and shadows, the imprint of her creative understanding. She has no regret that though she appreciates the poets Gluck or Neruda, she writes in her own style, with every poem bearing her finger-prints and signature.

The poem, "We are in the Dark. . . " is a poignant one, with pensive footwork of words; and it says all about a misunderstood people, like the tribals of the North-Eastern part of our country, who want to live their lives the way they like to live, but still want to be an integral part of India's mainstream. They want to be a part of India with their originality untouched. They resent to be treated like Bharat Mata's step-children. The stark and bold poem is rightly crafted in reporting style.

A philosophic stand in "It's Now or Never," takes a position midway; neither can one totally delink from one's past while building future, nor can one live in the past entirely to redeem its undone works. One should learn from the past experience to build a better future, not to repeat old mistakes. And the process must start now. Procrastination is an evil and should be avoided at all costs.

In "Cyber Slaves" the poet is eloquent on electronic and AI facilities of modern man by using internet media and computers, opening doors to vast pools of information, long distance communication, and use of memory banks to store information. But these facilities enslave the mind to these masters that make men absolutely dependent on them. They are like addictions to drug or alcohol. The cyber devils that make life easier can also make men thoughtless sleepwalkers. They feel like infants lost in a *Maha Kumbha* fair if they have no mobile phones, laptops or tablets. The message conveyed is: "Addictions of any kind devastating / Be your own master, slave to none."

"Waiting for Godot," another bright star of her constellations, transports the reader to a different land of poetry, that of the animal world. A dog, whose senses perhaps stay at the level of a three-year old human child, as say the vets, does not understand its master's death but waits for him like little Casabianca on the burning deck waiting for his father who is perhaps dead in the fire. The 'Godot' image has been the poet's apt metaphor for the waiting dog's unending hope for its dead master to return, a tear jerker. As in Samuel Beckett's drama, Godot never comes on stage, though awaited all along.

"When Blooms do not Blossom" is her last dish in her culinary chart that has a different taste. Every good thing is dying, that kills the desire of the poet to live. The reflections are quite akin to those of the late poet Louise Gluck who highlighted delusion in her poems. Here, the poet seems to have given up hope, raises her hands and doubts if she can still sing to nature, an apocalyptic dark prognosis. But the second poem in the anthology, titled "What Nature Taught Me" promises hope and regeneration as reflected in the concluding lines: "This earth, a beautiful place to live / Birth after birth, birth after birth!" These two poems reflect two contrasting perspectives of the poetic persona. Nature is definitely an integral part of her poetry.

The book spreads a veritable feast of poetry tasting sweet, sour, pungent and bitter, to be relished and rejoiced. They however seem to break steps with modern diction and cadence by using a few inversions of nouns and their qualifying adjectives. Some inversions bring a musical quality, no doubt, like the inversion – "thoughts deep and dense" (p 12) which sounds more lyrical than the straight construct "deep and dense thoughts." But an overdose of inversions may make the construct jarring in terms of poetic diction, and a poem may lose the sonorous quality.

To conclude, Sreekala is a poet of her own class and style. She is neither a Neruda, nor a Gluck, but Sreekala, the poet who looks around with keen eyes and sings of the common and ordinary things in her unique and extraordinary way.

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2. *Women are Awareness in the writings of Mahasweta Devi, Mahesh Dattani and Manju Kapur*.
3. *The Myriad Facets of Women: A study of the novels of Manju Kapur*.

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