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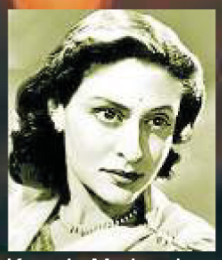
Katherine Mansfield



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CONTENTS

ARTICLES

POEMS

In and Around 1922, Towards Situating World Literature: A Reconceptualization of Katherine Mansfield's 'The Fly'

Jasmeet Gill

Abstract

The phenomenon of World Literature gets contextually enriched when placed with respect to literary modernism, especially as manifested by the epochal year of 1922. The idea of World Literature itself could substantiate the area of high literary modernism as it is perceived today. This paper contends to observe the literary moment of 1922 in terms of its past and future. The reconceptualization of the idea of World literature could be traced as a comprehensive movement from the early nineteenth century where the conception of 'Weltliteratur' and the emerging possibility of its practice would eventually lead to achieve an international Modernism a century later. The purpose here is to find relevant contexts and see Modernism in literature as an essential and defining stage for the development of the idea of World literature. In this context, I would like to explore Katherine Mansfield's story, 'The Fly' with a particular emphasis on its ending. Instead of embarking on a textual-thematic analysis of the story, my focus would be to revisit a single moment that is the ending of the story—the boss's failure to remember a detail about his life which he claims to be most concerned with. The proposed reconceptualization of Mansfield's story from the point of view of the boss's vulnerable silence at the end requires a sort of going beyond its own thematic universe in an intertextual and, as Amy J. Devitt proposes, an 'inter-genre-al' manner. This intensely existential moment entails the capacity to relate aptly with the thematic strands of our current global literature.

Keywords: 1922, reconceptualization, World Literarture, Modernism, existential, inter-genre-al

In order that the phenomenon of World Literature becomes more contextually adaptable, literary modernism, especially as manifested by the epochal year of 1922, could shed useful light on the concept, particularly as propounded by Goethe almost a hundred years ago. The

idea of World Literature itself, in turn, could help to understand the area of high literary modernism as a pivotal link in the chain of World literature specifically as it is perceived today. The arena of World Literature is an immense cultural moment whose roots are significant to be traced. This means that the moment is more of a product of a collective thinking that had been developing over time mainly in Europe and, by extension, in the rest of the world.

Katherine Mansfield

The constituting of 1922 in this sense would have to consider a few strands of thought the primary of which would be correlated with the words of Goethe noted by Johann Peter Eckermann: "National literature is now a rather unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach." (qtd. in D'haen 5). These words, uttered almost a century before, when echoed in the year 1922, raise a question as to whether the decade of 1920s testifies them and, in a similar way, how does 2022, the approaching year of the centenary respond. The argument of this paper contends to observe and study this moment of inspiration of 1922 in terms of its past and future, its building and blooming; times that we as readers could revisit and correlate with. By briefly considering 1922 in the light of Goethe's thoughts about literature, it could be argued that the era turned out to be a more democratic literary form shared by and for everyone.

In and Around 1922

It could be argued that it was the bold experimentation in literary style of the 1920s which led to, among others, the emergence of literary genres like 'magical realism' and a fuller development of historical fiction throughout the twentieth century. However, so much is owed to the decade that is represented by the 1922 moment which was a watershed across the continents, and gave truly a platform for World literature to start taking larger strides forward until it comes to the forefront of forums of world literary culture towards the final half of the century.

In the aftermath of 1922, the traditional historical fiction often melds with magical realism – two seemingly opposite genres, namely history and fantasy come together in a modern historical fiction with the likes of countless authors from the last few decades. Historical fiction of authors such as José Saramago in books like 'The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis', for instance, is not exclusively about history as it is about the atmospherics of a story and its potential existence in history. This is something that could be understood to have been resulted from the Modernist tendencies of the 1920s.

If we look at the current times – times that are often qualified as 'tumultuous', whether represented by popular genres today such as the sci-fi dystopian fiction or the eco-critical literature of the recent decades, or as recently the literature with a thrust on the theme of pandemics; either way, it's a way to write about a dystopian future or about the past in which fantastical elements were sought after. In all these tendencies we could find the presence of the essence of a modernist innovation of thought. In other words, the 'post' modern years and decades following 1922, in their various literary expressions could as well be considered as reconceptualizations of the highly original and innovative thematic currents of the early twentieth century. These reconceptualizations of the idea of World literature could be traced as a comprehensive movement from the early nineteenth century where Romantic ideals allowed freedom of imagination for the conception of 'Weltliteratur' and the possibility of its practice would eventually lead to achieve, in a sense, an international Modernism roughly a century later, which rendered itself into practice with 1922 playing a crucial and catalytic role as we advance in literary history.

Thus, 1922 represents an important chapter which impacted forever the idea of World literature. In other words, the progression of World Literature could not be seen separately from a moment in time that articulated some of the finest literary expressions which achieved the status of world's literature, for it reached in every corner of the world of literature. Here the specific time recorded as 1922, by extension, means or represents the years in the making of 1922 and the new openings due, to come forth later in various forms. A period like the late 1960s, for instance, witnesses another reconceptualization with the beginning of the rise of modern literary theory and criticism, which eventually contributed in taking up the project again in a more academic manner this time, towards the end of the century, seeing a boom in discussions leading up to the continuation of signifying World literature in the manner that we observe today.

Ultimately, however, World literature proposes and promotes the human will to endeavour into familiarization of literatures beyond national boundaries. Writing in his journal, 'Kunst und Altertum' (Art and Antiquity), Goethe maintains: "Left to itself every literature will exhaust its vitality, if it is not refreshed by the interest and contributions of a foreign one." (qtd. in Damrosch 7).

This argument could be extended into the proposition that what Goethe had anticipated as an appeal to others to 'strive' towards a world literature received tremendous impetus in the form of modernist voices of Europe, Americas, Asia, and by and large elsewhere too. What is distinct about this period is that despite the rise of individual writers, as if responding to the call, 'Make it new'[1], it was about generating an atmosphere of innovation and expression in a more interconnected manner where one major work influenced many others and also gets stimulated in return. Once these interconnections are underlined, the idea of a world literary culture is pronounced essentially as intentioned by Goethe who in a letter to Sulpiz Boisserée, writes: "In this connection it might be added that what I call world literature develops in the

first place when the differences that prevail within one nation are resolved through the understanding and judgment of the rest" (qtd. in Strich 349). In the wake of this, in and around 1922, we see not only the flowering of production of high quality literature individually, but one voice and a set of ideas clearly influencing many others. In order to provide context to this argument we could take a few cases.

The need to 'refresh' interest in a national literature by a foreign one that Goethe talks about could be perceived as a single moment of inspiration that opens up the possibility of a dialogue beyond borders. This could be illustrated through numerous instances, one of which could be citing the 'Lost Generation' writers comprising mostly the American expatriates in Paris in the 1920s. Another could be poets like Ezra Pound deeply influenced by the Eastern literary voices, especially for Pound's love for Chinese culture, for he translated and published a vast range of Chinese classical poems, initiating the Chinese traditional poetry into western modern culture, in turn, promoting the development of American New Verse Movement (Zhao 463).

However, it is not only the Western world or the global north moving beyond the physical borders. It is from the Eastern half of the world that the young Japanese author, Natsume Sōseki, moves to London in 1901, and albeit his stay doesn't last very long, his expression is deeply influenced by English literature of what can be called as early modernist literature. As far as the global south is concerned, despite the inner contradictions of the May Fourth Movement[2]—which was an anti-imperialist, cultural, and political movement which grew out of student protests in Beijing on 4 May 1919—of a fast developing China, amid the demands of a more democratic and 'natural' expression in literature, and a deliberate move away from the 'formal and moral traditions of the past', the Chinese writer, Zheng Zhenduo's criterion of literature "consisted of a completely spontaneous or natural process of expression and response" (Feng 179-80).

Among these references of writers, whose works can be seen as efforts to reclaim interconnectedness among cultures and shared human values beyond a national consciousness, the name of the Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore could be well counted. As the years before 1922 begin to build up for a decade of tremendously innovative modernist writing, Tagore, after having won the Nobel Prize, many of his works such as 'Hundred Poems of Kabir', 'The Crescent Moon' were being translated already. However, it was the poet Juan Ramón Jiménez who was influenced and is credited to bring Tagore to the Spanish-speaking world.

Later, many prominent writers like Gabriela Mistral, Pablo Neruda, Victoria Ocampo, Gilberto Freyre received Tagore as an unmistakable voice with whom they felt a clear need of a dialogue beyond cultures in order to have a more secular understanding of differences. What Tagore promoted and advocated in the name of India's political and cultural independence emerges, for instance in his 1907 essay, 'World Literature' in the form of the idea of a "humanist education over a "blind revolution" to reunite India to the world." (Damrosch 47).

It could be argued thus that World Literature, which had already begun to take substantial shape as more translations and literary exchanges would be appreciated at this point of the century, in a way, emerged eventually on a global stage in the first half of the twentieth century. In terms of forms, styles, and even themes, post 1922 time and space witnesses an explosion of literary content, which would have an indelible impact on the century.

If World literature as a concept had its identity being built cautiously in the world of literary modernism internationally, it was now that the 'world' blooms itself in terms of literary expression; with the postcolonial reality at the horizon, and which would be achieved eventually. Is the argument saying that the conditions were conducive at their best for finally breaking away from forms and themes of an institutionalized or canonical mindset, with the likes of Samuel Beckett and others who would choose to go beyond linguistic boundaries and prefer their books to belong to a wider world of readers? And this we observe all around the world, by and large. If you turn towards the Latin American circles, the emergence of 'magical realism' couldn't really be a just a chance event.

From literature's point of view, the American Dream begins to be seen in a much nuanced perspective with the publication of 'The Great Gatsby' or John Dos Passos's 'U.S.A. Trilogy', among other voices. The European literature attempts to expand and finds this sort of intercontinental modernist impetus in the poetry of Neruda, the stories of Kafka, the East-West dialogue of Hesse, etc.

The purpose of this paper is to find relevant contexts about how our current world benefits in taking a good look back at the year 1922, and see Modernism in literature as an essential stage for the development of the idea of World literature. The context in question elaborates how some of the best titles from the period manifest the universal quality of belonging to the human condition in general rather than presenting self-consciously nationalist themes and characters.

In lieu of the context of the aforementioned argument, I would like to explore Katherine Mansfield's 1922 published story, 'The Fly'. Instead of embarking on a textual-thematic analysis of the story, my focus would be to revisit a single moment, that is the ending of the story and attempt to perceive the times from that particular lens. It is in order to render the conceptual significance of a recurrent image of the times, the character in utter loneliness, and substantiate Mansfield's thematic universe as a unifying idea, that the final paragraphs of the narrative discourse are referred to. My attempt is to find thematic strands across the texts and underline the gravity of a universally existential instant that capacitates to visualize the century gone by and its present conditions in terms of a phenomenon relevant to the signification of World literature.

The Fly and the Boss: An Existential Bond

Mansfield herself could be seen as an inadvertent proponent of World literature, not only for she wrote the story in February 1922 at the Victoria Palace Hotel in Montparnasse, Paris,

but because her stories, much like her poetry, are rooted in themes that are more universal than based on any fixed national identity. On reading her poetry, particularly, a strong eco-critical or even an ecosophical consciousness reflects in many of her rhyming expressions; themes which are existential, ecological in nature.

The anonymity of the central character in the story and, even as a contradiction, the insistence of being the boss of the place, is starkly situated in the last signifying image of the text. The singular moment is about many contradictions come together. The "grinding feeling of wretchedness" (Mansfield, *The Fly* 121)[3] of the situation, the stance that the boss takes at the end, after his encounter with an equally anonymous creature but far more wretched than the 'other', as it is struggling with a life-death moment, the failure to remember what he was thinking prior to the fly episode, or even to remember what he remembers selectively, these complicated emotions uncannily go with the conflict of being the boss and being anonymous at the same time, for other characters do have a name.

When one reads through the particular moment in question in today's circumstances, one wonders about issues that have always ravaged human psyche and across the world on equal terms. But what is this situation about? Is it a reference to the fight between Man and Nature? And isn't this very reference to war an indication of something universal? Where does the world stand on witnessing this '1922' moment when, at the time of writing this paper, a pandemic has made man confront the struggle for survival a hundred years later? What is being tried here is to look at where we are today, in terms of the final image of the story; to look back at our past, today and the turbulent times anticipated ahead. Revisiting the space where the character is at the end, let us observe some important peculiarities resulting from the fly episode.

The signifying image chosen to put under scrutiny here relates to the detail precisely when the fly has died. It is dead, and is not seeking to escape its existential predicament. At the time of adversity, this dead fly could be anyone—it could be creatures of Nature, it could be the environment that struggles to co-exist for the callousness of the 'other', it could be anyone simply wanting to exist, and it could even be the boss whose own existential struggle manifests a level of insensitivity or even apathy at times.

At the same time, the death of the fly triggers within the boss, a "grinding feeling of wretchedness" (121) the reason for which he is unaware. In a way, the moment of his marking the effort of the fly to escape from the drops of ink that he drops upon the creature as if to examine how much more could it endure, is coupled with the boss's inability to comprehend the loss of its life. Furthermore, there is the man's failure to remember what was the issue at hand and the selective remembrance of his eagerness to see or rather test the fly's actions. These contradictions in the human world are also captured in the fact that the boss likes to stay in control, sitting on his throne, and yet the character bears a lack of identity and hence the absence of his name.

The moment in question as well generates interest of the (world) reader regarding whether the boss's failure to remember a detail about his life which he claims to be more concerned about than any other is deliberate or inadvertent. The sense of composure which he exudes at the beginning as in being aware and proud of every detail about his office, from the 'green-leather armchair' to the 'electric heating', juxtaposes with the hard-hitting feeling of 'wretchedness'. His sense of time and space gets utterly confused due to observing the fly's constant Sisyphean struggle to exist, while being oblivious of the notion that the struggle itself provides meaningful existence.

Mansfield ends the story without reducing the boss's actions as inconsequential for it ends with him deeply bothered by the human inability to either make sense or provide perspective to anything. There would remain something unsaid or unintended that defines human condition in terms of a lack, and yet lends one with an absence to wonder about, however wretched it makes oneself. This signifying image manifests a human being to be as vulnerable as it had been in the past or remains today. Moreover, since no one can exist in isolation, the other with whom one is related shall have to be considered in the understanding of one's nature.

Looking back at the dead fly and the boss's apathetic stance towards it exposes the character and his dismissing the crucial moment of the creature's struggle to life reminds once again about the fragility of human relationships, or who they relate to. The final sentence of the story says, "[f]or the life of him he could not remember" (121). Here is a pitiful predicament as much as a modern man finds himself as any 'boss' of today's post-truth world. In this light, the reader should perceive the boss in terms of and in relation to the ones he claims to love or not bother about.

The predicament of human condition as depicted by Mansfield in the story could correspond to a character even more from today than someone being written about during the first half of the previous century—a character who is incapable of remembering. This incapacity to remember what one otherwise claims to cherish the most, essentially leads to the problematic of, what can be called, a crisis of nostalgia. Strangely, Mansfield's 'boss' portrays a character who is not nostalgic about something or someone but one who is merely nostalgic about having nostalgia or insisting about nostalgia. In this case and moment, the human subject is incapable of missing something or someone.

If apathy defines this 'modern' human condition in any way, nostalgia here would be a marker of being a human who reflects sensitivity towards the proclivity of remembrance, which is a trait that eventually takes the subject closer and connects with the signifying other; except that in case of the boss, "[f]or the life of him he could not remember" (121). Perhaps a century later, from when the story was written, one can relate to the boss in a more significant way. Seen largely as a trait in the modern Sisyphean figures, this apathy then would desensitize oneself beyond limit, so much so that far beyond the fragility of human relationships, the boss or anyone for that matter could not remember what matters—people,

fellow humans, friends, and the environment we live in, that is the natural world at large would inevitably pay for this mindlessness is exploited and used against the natural world for the interests of the exploitative few.

Reconceptualizing 'The Fly': Signifying an Open-ended Discourse

Revisiting 'The Fly' today for its succinct final moment of the boss's miserable yet poignant failure to recall or realize what he was most concerned about, is what reflects in that moment a universally relevant human condition. The one instance where a father could not remember something that he had been reminded about by his poor old friend, Woodifield, can be reconstituted as a thematic strand of modernist writing. On the other hand, the signifying image could be reconceptualized with respect to World Literature's phenomenon as it proposed today. 1922 could speak in our times first of all by correlating itself with the context of a global literature than a national one. It is understood, by underlining the context of the ending of the story above, that literature like Mansfield's has the potential to humanise and universalize the various situations—like the one that involves the boss's forgetting or selective remembering—thus, being able to express its thematic value despite the uneasy silence we find the protagonist in. Certainly, the moment belongs to the signifying arc of World Literature for it is able to establish a complex literary dialogue with readers across the time of the last one hundred years, as well as form its own 'world' of conceptual constructs that go beyond borders or national identities.

However, the proposed reconceptualization of Mansfield's story, especially in context of its open ending, requires going beyond the space she writes in, for looking for the boss's vulnerable silence at the end requires a sort of going beyond its own thematic universe, in a supplementary way. The vulnerability and fragility of relationships in 'The Fly', presented in the reading of the ending in light of her anticipation to tend to this fragility, reflects in an equally open-minded readership of the world. Hence, when we look back at the boss who, tries as hard he may, is unable to weep for the loss of his son, it could be suggested that he direly needs to be imagined ahead, into a future of hope which makes him plod on; much like a Sisyphus who is happy.

The going beyond the genre is contextually and thematically relevant to 'The Fly' with respect to an intertextual approach which helps to signify the conceptual construct of the text. Taking one step further, I would like to claim that the context referred to by the final sentence of the story, "For the life of him he could not remember" (121), entails or even necessitates interaction of Mansfield's philosophy of literary value represented by the modern human subject, accessible in her expression across the genres she writes in. The final utterance around the character of the boss, most of all, provokes a response to the situation which could be suitably found in her poetic expression.

The above mentioned response—purported as an extended interaction between genres—could be understood in terms of what Amy J. Devitt describes as a way when genres interact

with other genres: "Just as all texts are intertextual, so too are all genres inter-genre-al. For the study of genre forms, that fact means that genres take up forms from the genres with which they inter-act." (44). Examining the form and the context of the concerned statement beyond the genres that Mansfield delves into, could present in a Bakhtinian sense that Devitt relates to "their dialogic and expressive nature, including the individual as well as the shared forms. (43). In light of this literary reflection, Katherine Mansfiled's poetry offers words which not only co-relate with instances that project the predicament revealed by the boss's situation, but is also able to humanize the theme of loneliness into a 'world' problematic.

The death of the fly is an inadvertent moment the boss is stuck with; it is an inescapable condition. However, it is problematic to call out the boss for escapism and vanity alone. The missing fly, the dead fly, a seemingly insignificant entity, nonetheless stands for the absence of the son whom the father could no longer patronize. Contrary to what he would like to claim, sitting helplessly alone at the end, the boss becomes as anonymous as the poor fly (who tried its best but couldn't survive), as the office messenger, Macey, (who the boss sees more like a dog), as his friend Woodifield (who the boss treats as a 'poor old chap', receiving boss's pity) and the dutiful son (who the boss would have him be the same as himself).

However, to judge the father, the friend, or the boss, only in terms of the moment of wretchedness or helplessness would be rendering human condition limited to any further initiation towards learning to be more than one seems to be. Hence, reconceptualizing further from where the boss is found out all by himself, in the way of an 'inter-genre-al' idea, enables the reader to engage in an interaction of one genre with a different yet more signifying and poetic expression. This engagement is what the reader could help the figure of the boss with, envisioning him to participate in a flowing movement rather than reduced to any absolute mood or state of mind, however rigid or fragile it may seem.

It is utterly important for the boss to 'try' and navigate through the pain of the "grinding feeling of wretchedness" (Mansfield, *The Fly* 121). The 'tiny moment' that boss is unable to recover in his life, is the same moment which nurses him with a healing 'silence' in order to cease the struggle to recall what one could not, but try to prepare oneself to revisit it at another and more conducive and humble moment.

In 'Constellation of Genius', Kevin Jackson charts the order of exceptional literary events of 1922 as he builds the argument that everything changed in the year to show how it marked the beginning of a new era by creating and thrusting forward a thorough burst of innovation; and yet, it is highlighted that one could more openly register the time not as a 'miracle year' but at the same time as a 'chaos of simultaneity' (Levenson). Perceived as a more wholesome juncture in the history of literary culture, 1922 could as well be seen as a moment correlated inter-genre-ally that allows us a hundred years later to visualize something in and above its narrative and poetic manifestations.

In conclusion, 1922 represents not just a singular watershed moment in the world of literature, but stands for an era of the authenticity of belief in the human condition. The finality or solidity of the 1922-moment could be best understood as a literary arc in the making that undertook as many years for preparation of innovation in expression. Thus, 1922, despite being a moment in the world of literature, appears as an epoch that redefines the development of World literature itself; what Goethe had imagined the power of literature beyond (boundaries) could do. It becomes almost mandatory to visualize the final moment of the story beyond its syntagmatic reach, but as a signifying ensemble that, for the fact of being an open-ended (moment), allows readers across the world and its various genres to take the necessary next step and believe in hope. That hope incidentally appears in the verse of Mansfield, as it could well appear in potentially other moments of the century since then, among genres that global literature writes in.

Modernist literature, presented here by Mansfield's short story, 'The Fly', enriches World literature by recording its extraordinary final moment as a global human concern. The ultimate instance where we find the boss confronting the situation triggered by the fly episode, could be considered as the modernist literature in miniature whose temporal and spatial coordinates are situated in the year 1922. At the same time, this intensely existential moment entails the capacity to go beyond and relate aptly with the thematic strands of our current global literature.

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Footnotes

[1] Read Gregory Wolfe's essay, 'Making it New', to find a perspective on the modernist slogan by the poet, Ezra Pound.

[2] For a more detailed account regarding the changes that the Chinese writing would undergo during the period, refer to Liping Feng's article, 'Democracy and Elitism: The May Fourth Ideal of Literature'.

[3] Subsequent quotes from 'The Fly' are cited with respect to the page number of the text.

A. Vasanthi

Alien Cultural Invasion And Social Turbulence – Kamala Markandaya's Concerns

A. Vasanthi and M. Noushath

Abstract

Kamala Markandaya has made an indelible impression in the annals of Indian English Literature with her socio cultural observations of the metamorphosing Indian society from the standpoint of a woman. This transformation is caused by the colonizer, the British. From a vantage position, they impose their Western religion, culture, tradition and values on native Indians who symbolize the Eastern culture. This causes cultural conflicts at multiple levels. Society becomes a cauldron of emotions with antagonistic dogmas. There is, therefore, no doubt that the commonwealth writers' compositions are flooded with the duality in value systems – native consciousness and the acquaintance with the Western civilization. In modern times, this duality becomes expansive to incorporate multiculturalism. (Dr. Vineeta Sharma and Dr. Nalini Jain, 148) Kamala Markandaya does not fall behind and meticulously records social life of the times which her novels chronicle. As a matter of fact, cultural diffusion is one of her chief concerns. Steiner is sharp: "…the modernist movement can be seen as a strategy of permanent exile." (Steiner George, 26) The strain is identifiable in almost all works of commonwealth writers as V.S. Naipaul puts it: "…living in a borrowed culture of the West, Indians more than most need writers to tell him who he is and where he stands." (V.S. Naipaul, 73) Kamala Markandaya is a prototypical Indian writer because she is "concerned with human action and motivation behind human behaviour." (Meenakshi Mukherjee, 64) She dovetails fact with fiction so dexterously that her novels fathom the consciousness of men and women violently traumatized by convoluted cultural beliefs.

The Indian English novelists exhibit three diverse tendencies in the representation of the complex cultural conglomeration in the Indian society of their times. In the first model, the novelists do not show signs of tension either in emotions or in expression. The second class do expose flashes of the intercultural skirmishes and just stop with that without any serious

bias. The third type of faction has sectarian writers who project the cultural conflicts in multifarious manners. Kamala Markandaya, whose orientation is identified with the last of the three, achieves success on three fronts: "…her contingent condition, her personal predicament and the constant shaping spirit of her expression." (Dr. Vineeta Sharma and Dr. Nalini Jain, 156) She adopts a tripartite strategy in the communication of cultural diffusion: acculturation, deculturation and ambivalence or transculturation. *Two Virgins* records acculturation through cultural polarity. *The Nowhere Man* is the epitome of deculturation. *A Silence of Desire* identifies transculturation in Indian society.

M. Noushath

The transformed status of the British from a trader to the ruler vests them with sweeping dictatorial powers. They introduce radical transformations with malicious motives to subjugate the native population. They leave no stone unturned in crushing the ages-old traditions of native Eastern cultural values. Their primary motive is to dislodge the traditional faith with Christianity. The spiritual faith of Indians unites him with Nature and puts his faith above the materialism of the West. On the other hand, Westerners deem India as unaesthetic and boring. The rustic setting, idyllic and green, enchants and allows the inhabitants to lead a life of peace and pleasure despite their impoverished conditions.

Once the British poke their nose, their agony multiplies and woes swell to submerge them. The creed and style of living change aggravating their misery. *Nectar in a Sieve*, a classic novel in every aspect, is picture-perfect in depicting the annihilation of the village tradition and culture with the advent of modernization. This is the ultimate blow on the villagers who are already reeling under the vagaries of nature. For instance, Nathan and Rukmani are already struggling to make both ends meet and the setting of the tannery, as a process of modernization, deprives them even this livelihood. In addition, the serene village becomes a polluted harsh environment. Pollution of every sort engulfs them causing every kind of mayhem: "It is all noise and crowds everywhere and rude young hooligans idling in the street and dirty bazaars and uncouth behaviour and no man thinks of another but scheme only for his money." (*Nectar in a Sieve*, 46) But there are people who welcome the new arrival: "…the tannery…a boon to us." They are excited: "Are you not glad that our village is no longer a clump of huts but a small town? Soon there will be shops and tea stalls, even a bioscope?" (29) But Rukmani is not enticed: ""…they may live in our midst but I can never accept them, for they lay their hands upon us and we are turned from tilling to barter and hoard our silver since we cannot spend it, and see our children go without the goods, that their children gorge and it is only in the hope that one day things will be as they were that we have done these things." (28) Rukmani's stoicism springs from her strong roots in traditional Indian philosophy: "What profit to bewail that which has always been cannot change?... To give in to want and protest would make men pitiable creatures … for is not a man's spirit given to him to rise above his misfortunes?" (113-115) Perhaps, it may be true that Rukmani

undergoes unlimited catastrophes in life, she retains the hope till the end "on the positive note of quiet strength and resolution. (Shalika Sharma and Pankaj Arora, 370).

Some Inner Fury is bipolar in drifts. The revolt is driven by two biases – political and social. The repressive shackles put by the colonizers, the British and the egotism and the frenzies of the Western culture. The framework is naturally the freedom struggle. In both spheres, the codes are humiliation and absolutism. Mirabai, the Indian woman, is unconventional. Though hailing from an orthodox family, "the powerful and seemingly impregnable citadel of convention," (*Some Inner Fury*, 38) and the mother of whom thinks "It is not right for a young woman to go among young men," (38) she falls in love with an Englishman, Richard Marlowe. But this liaison meets a premature end when her revolutionary thoughts on political struggles take precedence with the concept "your people and my people." (144) As a matter of fact, the novelist seems to suggest that their parting ways is indicative of the Indian society releasing itself from the clutches of the Western culture. Roshan Merchant is an improved version of Mirabai representative of the class of "…youngmen in Western clothes and English accents…flaunted their unorthodoxy and a few girls with shingled hair and advanced views aired them." (101) Kitsmay and Premala stand in the extremities. Kit embraces the Western code in India: "…its brazen ways, its painted women and its easy morality." (51) His wife, Premala, yearns for the Eastern ways of living. Despite his return to India, Kit still remains a slave to the Western tradition. Premala's impasse is unexceptional - dominant foreign culture on one side and the powerlessness to breakout from its domineering sways.

A Silence of Desire is a microcosmic breakdown of the confrontation between the two classes of values. A middle class family is stirred with conflicting emotions truly representative of the clash between the East and the West. Sarojini's manoeuvre to get the spiritual cure for her unwanted growth triggers a chain of emotions and actions befitting a suspense thriller. Dandekar is potentially an average individual content with his unperturbed family life and uneventful routine in the office. Neither pokes his or her nose into the other's belief or habitual action till the sudden turn of events catapults into emotional commotion. Here lies the ingenuity of the novelist in fashioning the characters as archetypes. Sarojini is out and out tradition bound fully immersed in her religious routine and no power in the world can shake her out of her conscientious orthodox custom: "He had been at pains to bring up children with a correct understanding of these matters and to educate his wife. Not that she did not understand; her religious tutelage had been rather more earnest than his own and she often had answers to the conundrums which his less-amiable, non-Hindu friends set him – not, of course, that she would supply them, until he had indicated that perhaps, she might." (*A Silence of Desire*, 114) He does not also understand that Sarojini, who has so much faith in customary practices and strict adherence to socio cultural beliefs, would repose her faith in a Swami to get the cure for her serious ailment. He is stunned to find even the cousin of Sarojini, Rajam, is also imprudent to seek the cure from the Swami. He explodes: "…what makes you so gullible …as to believe these hearsay stories, these cures that have happened

always to someone else." (114) Dandekar's rationalism is just wobbly. His principles of pragmatism hinges on his colleagues' jingoism. The fellows are just fake counsellors. For instance, Joseph follows free love. Dandekar's senior colleague is hypnotized by the Western culture. Therefore he could condemn the Swami as worthless with his survival hanging on deviant means. Dandekar's troubles are confounded by the truancy of Sarojini since he is an untypical Indian husband: "…never cooked a meal, never fried a chilly or potato. Men never did, unless they were cooks and even cooks wouldn't cook in their own homes." (139)

When Dandekar expresses his disinclination for a cure by the Swami, Sarojini pours out her emotions: "I do not expect you to understand – you with your Western notions, your superior talk of ignorance and superstition when all it means is that you don't know what lies beyond reason and you prefer not to find out." (230) Although Dandekar succeeds in persuading Sarojini to consent to his proposal, Dandekar fails in real sense. All along, his relationship with his wife is only physical and this conflict along with his personal meeting with the Swami in the Ashram brings in a revelation and his conjugal life becomes complete with his spiritual union with his wife. This is the triumph of the spirit over matter, the East offering the spiritual solution to the pragmatism of the West.

Possession strongly affirms through metaphor that the compulsions unleashed on the native talent disentangle when the inborn spiritual strength wakes up. Valmiki's native talent is under the vicious grip of Lady Caroline Bell. Lady Caroline Bell is an embodiment of Western domineering spirit in all forms – body, mind and spirit. A wealthy divorcee, she possesses all vices unbecoming of a lady. On one of her visits, she is enticed by Valmiki's paintings and her ravenousness and acquisitiveness force her to take control of him. She succeeds since Valmiki is an "outcaste" in the real sense of the term. The Swami in the village, who wields a binding influence on him, persuades Valmiki to accept the offer since that would facilitate the improvement of his status financially. But the reality is otherwise. Once he settles down in the foreign land and immerses in the riches, his creativity wanes. Multiple reasons can be attributed to this condition. His indulgence in sensual pleasures, curtailment of his freedom, the choice of subjects to draw and alienation from the native soil are a few of them. More than these, the prime causes could be attributed to his still clinging to the native virtues, the occasional rousing of his conscience strongly biased towards Eastern spiritual values and the claustrophobic and hostile Western household environment slowly becoming unexciting, even disgusting. In the end, Valmiki escapes from the clutches of the Lady Caroline Bell. The novelist records that the incongruities work "quite impartially whether by making a monkey out of Caroline with her gloves and her art enthusiasms in the artless backwoods of a tropical country or by laying the same bizarre wand on Valmiki, hatted and suited, on his way to the Savoy or listening with me to the Bach." (*Possession*, 85-86) This has a metaphorical association in India's freedom struggle. India is a land with a rich tapestry of wealth and talents which remain untapped. When the British land on this subcontinent with their simple intention of establishing trade centres, they could gauge the vast potential of resources and talents remaining untouched and slowly, the British change their roles from the

traders to the rulers by offering tempting offers, a mere pittance and in the bargain, loot the wealth of this land. Their unrelenting attempts are carried out in the most arrogant manner without any remission on any account. In the process, they resort to all sorts of aggressive shoving ventures, prime among them being the Western value systems, religion and philosophies. This attitude paves way for the cultural relativist tendencies since the British's intentions are covert – not just introduce the Western values in a country which is resplendent with Eastern culture, tradition and values but wipe out the latter without even a trace from the land. Their actions misfire and they are forced out but the embers remain even today. Their vain attempts to subjugate the natives with force and coercion result in clashes in all fronts – microcosmic as well as macrocosmic, with the prime picture projected in cultural conflicts. The analogy involving Valmiki and Lady Caroline Bell on the one hand and that comprising the colonizer and the colonized are widespread and multidimensional.

In *The Coffer Dams*, the remnants of the interface of cultures of the colonial times still remain. The British keep the distance: "We like keeping ourselves to ourselves." (11) They plan their living quarters pedantically: "They are fastidious in the design of their dwellings which are nothing but little Englands in India…in the orderly scene…the trim square plots of emerging garden, the gravelled paths, the white washed boulders that demarcate and uphold private property rights." (11) While the British entertain the notion that their bond with the natives does not lead to any fruitful results, the Indians do not cherish any gracious notion about their rulers once since their atrocities remain still green in their memories. Clinton, an Englishman and the head of the operations, is an embodiment of arrogance. He never takes kindly of their mistakes. The cultured Indians exhibit an analogous attitude towards the tribals. But Helen, wife of Clinton and the product of the alien culture, is an allowance. Her compassion towards the tribals is beyond measure. The Englishmen exhibit their vanity in every detail – possession of technical knowledge, opulence, arrogance and dress code. The novelist segregates the two cultures through their hostility. The Eastern culture gets projected through its customs whereas the Western culture is portrayed through the stand taken by the Englishmen.

The agonies become their routine. Vasantha is unable to come out of her lingering thoughts about their system of living in India and hence persists with same habits, rituals, religion and philosophy. Her belief goes in vain that their sons would continue the tradition and culture when the younger one is killed in war and the elder parts ways by marrying an English woman. Her agony is complete when she dies but Srinivas survives to face the remaining ordeal. He could not detach himself from a few Indian manners or customs compulsively clinging to him: "personal cleanliness, those uncompromising habits he had carried with him from India and clung to despite the different equipment in England." (*The Nowhere Man*, 61) The tantrums and the tortures of the racist population plague him and his death in the bonfire set by the chauvinistic neighbour redeems him from the cultural mismatch.

Kamala Markandaya's perspective in the delineation of cultural diffusion which leads to social upheaval remains authentic and verifiable from historical perspective. Her success lies on three factors - contingent condition, personal predicament and spirit of expression. Her dexterity lies in her clever blend of fact and fiction without resorting to any fantasy. Each one of her works has a dimension in unfolding the crisis and the denouement is not unexpected. She projects the aftermath of cultural diffusion at two levels – the catastrophic predicament of the traditional native culture and the emergence of a new revolutionary class of youth who raise their voice against the stringent and authoritarian tentacles of traditional culture. From the micro level to the macroscopic projection, the treatment of this aspect is done in a meticulous fashion. When her novels are examined from this perspective, there is not an iota of doubt that cultural diffusion harmfully impacts the society causing undesirable damage through dismembering the society through deviant values and morals.

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An Animal Studies Perspective on Selected Poems of Keki N. Daruwalla

Manashi Bora

Abstract

Indian English poetry, since its beginnings in the 19th century, has dealt with a variety of themes related to the Indian context. Aspects of the history and culture of India together with the Indian landscape and its flora and fauna figure prominently in Indian English poetry. Especially interesting is the representation of animals, birds, and aquatic beings found in India in the poetry of poets like Keki N.Daruwalla. Daruwalla can be termed as the Indian counterpart of the English poet Ted Hughes who is known for his fascination with animals. While Daruwalla's descriptions turn our attention to the natural world undercutting the importance normally accorded to the human world, they are also significant commentaries and critiques on the encounter between the humans and the non-humans and speak of the cruelty inflicted by man on animals for their own benefit. This paper will take up for investigation the representation of the non-human world in Keki Daruwalla's poetry, the relationship between man and other beings with emphasis on the themes of violence and domination. Insights from the discipline of animal studies will be appropriated to study the nature of the poet's engagement with animals and birds in the Indian context.

Keywords: anthropocentrism, violence, animality, representation, anthropomorphism, empathy

Among the Indian poets writing in English, Keki Daruwalla has written copiously about animals and birds seen in the Indian environment. Daruwalla shares the English poet Ted Hughes' fascination with the non-human world and has written on wolves, birds, fishes, hawks, jackals, lambs, and whales. This paper aims at examining the representation of animals and birds in the poetry of Daruwalla in the light of insights from the emerging field of animal studies.

Animals and human beings have co -existed on this planet since times immemorial. Animals have been of use to human beings in a myriad ways. They have catered to our most basic needs- food and clothing, and have worked for humans in various ways –serving as companions, pulling carts and carriages, lifting heavy objects, assisting in pursuits like hunting, pursuing the trail of offenders etc. Animals have also been used in a big way in research. For a long time, anthropocentrism and the idea that animals existed for the benefit of human beings persisted. Human lives were thought to be of greater value than the lives of animals who were supposed to serve human interests. However, with the passage of time, it was realized that animals and birds were being exploited mercilessly for the satisfaction of human needs and organized movements and societies came to be formed as early as the nineteenth century to champion their rights like the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) which was formed in 1866. The middle and the late twentieth centuries mark the modern era in animal activism. Vegan societies came to be formed and books documenting and criticizing the brutalities of factory farming and the use of animals in experimentation came to be written. Mention may be made here of books like Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1976) and Tom Regan's *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983). Animal lawyers now defend laws inscribing animal rights. Journals devoted to studying animals have come to be published and masters and doctoral courses on animal studies are now offered in universities. Animal activism is now very pronounced and there is a growing view that the pain and suffering inflicted on animals by human beings in various ways need to be alleviated. It may be mentioned here that one of the contested domains in animal studies is the human/animal binary. Mario Ortiz Robles remarks in *Literature and Animal Studies*: 'The invention of the animal has thus been instrumental in the development of human culture by creating the conditions of possibility of our own invention as civilized beings".(4) The animal is invented so that the human can define itself in a favorable way in opposition to the animal, but the opposition does not always hold. Animal studies is now allied to the study of marginalized groups like women and ethnic and other minority communities.

Keki N. Daruwalla

So far as literature is concerned, animals have figured in a big way in various genres since times immemorial. Fables, the epics, the Bible, legends, folklore, and children's literature are replete with a variety of animals which are used to drive home moral lessons and to testify to the intimate connection between humans and non-humans in terms of qualities and behavior. The purpose of satire is found to be better served by the use of animals rather than human beings which reduces the sting of the satire. Animals are also of great symbolic value and writers irrespective of time and place have used animals with symbolic significance.

Animals in literature are inventions rather than real animals. Human beings are actually removed from the real lives of animals, especially the ones which are wild and live in the forest. The Introduction to *The Palgrave Handbook of Animals and Literature* talks about the tension between the "animals' lived experience and their literary representation, between their lives and what their lives are made to signify" (6) In literature, animals are seen talking and behaving like human beings. In fact litterateurs anthropomorphize animals; they are seen in human terms and endowed with human qualities. With the progress of the animal rights movement, the study of the non-human world in art and literature came to veer round questions of animality, the human/animal binary, the issue of 'real' vs. literary animals, and the investigation of the representation of the developments in thinking in the emerging field of animal studies. This paper will examine the non-human world in the poetry of Keki Daruwalla in the light of the above-mentioned areas.

Daruwalla is an important figure in Indian English poetry. After completing his education, he joined the Indian Police Service in 1958.He published his first collection of poetry *Under Orion* in 1970.He went on to publish eight more volumes of poetry including *The Keeper of the Dead,* and *Landscapes*. He deals with a variety of themes in his poetry from the physical and cultural landscape of India, episodes from history, myth and religion, the realities of life and death, as well as characters and places from other cultures. He has won the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for Asia. Daruwalla's poetry has been reviewed by critics like Lakshmi Kannan, Sumanyu Satpathy, Arsia Sattar, and others mostly in *Indian Literature*, the journal of the Sahitya Akademi. Rabindra K. Swain, Madhusudan Prasad, and S.C. Narula have written on Daruwalla's art of drawing characters, his social criticism, and his images. John Oliver Perry has also written about Daruwalla's poetry in *World Literature Today.* There are entries on Daruwalla's work in histories and critical works on Indian English poetry. My paper focuses on the animals and birds in Daruwalla's poetry from an animal studies perspective. This aspect has not been dealt with adequately by reviewers and critics. I divide my paper into two sections. In the first section, I take a look at the non-human world represented in Daruwalla's poetry, the literariness in the descriptions with the animals and birds speaking in the first person and serving the purpose of symbolism and metaphor and the creation of atmosphere. The emphasis on violence and domination of the weak by the powerful will be dealt with. In the second section, the relationship between the human and the non-human world will be examined and the cruelty and violence inherent in

the relationship will be focused as animals and birds are made to serve human interests. The conclusion will summarize the findings.

(I)

Daruwalla turns our attention to the animals and birds around us with his keen powers of observation. He describes fishes, birds, jackals, hawks, and wolves. In the poem "Fish", he describes the fish in terms of a woman. The fish is a "she" with tin coloured barnacles and "rose moles" on her body. Different parts of the body of the fish are described-her curved snout, her translucent eyes, her body wrapped in seaweed. The fish has been washed ashore by the tide and left on the sand- her final resting place, giving a free rein to the human imagination to visualize her as a woman:

> The sea came in with her and her curved snout
> And her tin coloured barnacles
> And long threaded rose moles
> Patterned on her body.
> The sea brought her and her curved snout
> And her rose moles and her eyes all translucent
> As if half aware and half unaware
> Of the state of her body. (27)

Coleridge in chapter xiv of his *Biographia Literaria* has stated how poetry lifts the veil of familiarity and lends "the charm of novelty to things of every day" (191). In this poem we see the tendency to humanize non-humans, to see them with a sense of wonder, and also realize the vulnerability of animals to natural forces like the tide which washes the fish ashore to perish on the sands.

Wolves are a familiar sight in the countryside. The two poems "Wolf" and "The Last Howl" provide descriptions of wolves. In "Wolf" the wolf is half- real and half- myth; it has a black snout and bright eyes; it can sniff the wind and has keen senses, able to sense a shadow move across a bridge:

> Black snout on sulphur body
> He nudged his way
> into my consciousness.
> Prowler, wind-sniffer, throat-catcher,
> His cries drew a ring
> Around my night;
>
> …
>
> My mother said
> His ears stand up
> At the fall of dew

He can sense a shadow
Move across a hedge
On a dark night;
he can sniff out your approaching dreams
there is nothing that won't be lit up
by the dark torch of his eyes.(196)

In "The Last Howl" there is mention of all the stories that exist about wolves from "steppe and tartary" (197).The ferocity of wolves is testified by the death of the Cossack serf who threw himself at them at the risk of his life to save his master's family. In 'wolf country' people were so afraid of them that they resorted to sorcery and exorcism to frighten them away. In areas apart from the wolf country they are much smaller "less than a hip high and grey of flank" (197), but very ferocious as they strategically hunt in the villages in pairs and sometimes carry away a child:

They hunted in pairs, one caused a diversion,
Circled the village, bared his fangs, snarled.
The other raced down the street
And carried away a child. (197)

The ferocity of wolves and their preying on villages, killing livestock and sometimes human beings is one of the reasons behind the merciless wolf-hunting by humans and their consequent reduction in number. The fear of wolves is recorded in many other poems like "Death of a Bird".

When jackals howled, sniffing my ribs
Trembling she asked if they were wolves? (118)

With their reduced population, wolves have moved into the realms of imagination, dream, allegory and myth.

They sniffed the wind and moved into myth,
Into childhood dreams, allegory, fiction;(198)

Animals in the poetry of Daruwalla also have symbolic significance. The wolf in Daruwalla's poem "Wolf" stands for the speaker's past; it brings back many memories of life in a village on the forest edge and his childhood fear of wolves fuelled in part by his mother's stories about wolves.

Fire-lit
Half silhouette and half myth
The wolf circles my past
treading the leaves into a bed
till he sleeps,…..(196)

In "The Last Howl" the wolves symbolize hunger, ferocity and wildness, qualities which need to be tamed with the march of civilization and so humans have hunted and slaughtered wolves and driven them away from human society to exist in the world of dreams, allegory and myth as the 'other' of the humans.

> All the hungers of the world were caged in their bellies
> And hungers for the wild. (197)

In "The Night of the Jackals" the jackals serve to create the eerie atmosphere of the night though the poem does not describe the jackal in any detail and the poem is actually about the lovemaking of a couple at night after the children have gone to sleep:

> The jackals sink their fangs
> Into the veins of the night.
>
> Their cries herald
> the death of the wilderness
> the passing of ghosts
>
> I look for hairline
> fractures on the glass panes
> as the wail of the jackals,
> riding the wind
> crackles against the windows.(170)

n the poem, the jackals also serve the purpose of metaphor. The woman's cough which is perhaps due to the dust of the pollens of the *semul* tree are said to gather round her like a pack of jackals :

> For an hour now the cough
> Has shrilled and rasped around her
> Like a jackal-pack. (171)

Section II

The poems of Daruwala also talk about the cruelty of humans on the non-human world. In "Death of a Bird" the mindless killing of a bird, a monal who was mating is unabashedly described:

> Under an overhang of crags
> fierce bird-love:
> the monals mated, clawed and screamed;
> the female brown and nondescript
> the male was king, a fire-dream.
> My barrel spoke one word of lead:
> The bird came down, the king was dead, (117)

The half-dying bird, with eyes glazed, still pulsing and breast still -throbbing, is put into a rucksack as the female cried in terror. The infringement of humans into the natural world and the animality inherent in humans is hinted at here. Though there is talk of "bird-blood in our hands"(117), there is no remorse at the mindlessness of the action. The hunters are only "depressed a bit"(118), but in the night "the wind moaned aloud like a witch in the flue"(119), the pony screams and the queen monal's wings can be heard fluttering about. (119).The gun of the speaker is referred to as a "terror-gun"(118) which fells the queen monal too. The gun shots and the death of the king monal fill the queen monal with fear and it dies too as its eyes "flared terror"(119).

Monal is a beautiful bird found in the Himalayan region. It is valued for its flesh and its muticoloured feathers which are used in decorations and also worn. As in the case of other animals and birds, while the flesh is relished and the feathers are appreciated, the individual bird or animal who suffered and died to cater to human needs becomes what Carol Adams calls "an absent referent"(Calarco,2). It is significant that Daruwalla was a police officer in a postcolonial milieu with a history of colonial and other kinds of domination. The book *Creatural Fictions: Human-Animal Relationships in Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Literature* edited by David Herman talks about

"how the portrayal of animals in postcolonial settings links up with histories of domination"(2) and how "literary animals interconnect with complicated histories of colonization and imperialism, participate in conflations of ideas of race and species, and encapsulate the trauma of postcolonial subjects"(10)

The poem "Hawk" also has evidences of man's cruelty to non-humans. Hawk is a bird of the wild which is used by humans in hunting because of its sharp eyesight and its physical prowess. But before it can be of use to humans, it has to be brought out of the wild and tamed in human society which involves some cruelty towards the bird. While the hawk is a bird of prey and hunts smaller animals, it gets overpowered and tamed by humans who have turned hawking into a "ritual, the predator's passion honed to an art". (152) The second stanza of the poem describes the cruelty of humans towards the hawk as it is ensnared in the woods and brought to human society in a hooded state.

> When snared in the woods
> his eyelids are sewn with silk
> as he is broken to the hood.
> He is momentarily blinded, starved,
> Till his hood is perforated.(151)

The hood is to ensure that the bird is not disturbed by the sight of humans as it is a creature of the wild. For the same reason, the eyes of the bird are sewn with silk thread to deprive it of eyesight and sight is restored to the bird in stages; it is allowed to figure out its new abode through the perforations in its hood. The bird is under the control of its human trainer who ensures that it learns to hunt and does not escape into the forest. In the fourth

stanza of the poem, the bird speaks in the first person and there is a clear sense of the pain of the bird in being separated from its home in the wild.

> I wouldn't know when I was stolen from the eyrie
> I can't remember when I was ensnared.
> I only know the leather disc
> Which blots out the world
> And the eyelids which burn with thwarted vision. (152)

Human interference in the natural world which causes pain and suffering to the creatures which are most comfortable in their natural habitat is expressed here.

In the poems "Wolf" and "The Last Howl" not only are wolves described with their various attributes, but also their hunting by humans for sport, for their skins, and to protect livestock, resulting in a significant decrease in their population is mentioned:

> The wolves have been slaughtered now.
> A hedge of smoking gun-barrels
> rings my daughter's dreams.(196)

The wolves have been killed and driven away and occupy the spaces of dreams, myth, and allegory.

"Fish are Speared by Night" describes a fishing scene in a village where fishes are netted by day and speared at night. The poem speaks of the violence committed on the sea- "Flashlights stab the sea" (199) and on the fish –"from shoulder-height javelins descend, / splintering the light as the fish is skewered/and forced down the spear-head."(199). Just as animals are on a lower position in the hierarchy of human-animal and so are treated as existing for the satisfaction of human needs, there are marginalized categories like women who are supposed to exist to satisfy male sexual needs. Just as fishes are netted and speared, so also are women violated to satisfy male lust:

> ……..the wicker lamps are snuffed out,
> they spread their fishing nets on the ground
> and spread their women over them
> splay-legged.(200)

Feminists have talked about the connection between the abuse of animals and the abuse of women. DeMello in his *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies* writes:

> Animals are treated as objects, killed, dismembered, and consumed as meat, while women are objectified, and, through pornography, dismembered into body parts (breasts, lips, butt, vagina) and then "consumed" through porn or sexual violence. When women say that they "felt like a piece of meat," they are referring to degrading and dehumanizing treatment that is reserved for women and animals, but never men".(DeMello, 269)

In "The Last Whale" Daruwalla draws attention to the whaling industry. Whales have been killed in the most inhuman manner in various parts of the world for their flesh and oil. There is reference in the poem to the killing of whales in Japan for research. There is also reference to the sea water turning red on account of the blood oozing out of the harpooned whale:

> For as the last whale is pulled in
> From blood-darkened seas, speared
> by a harpoon stuffed with explosive,
> he will sliced up with power-saws
> and the deck will be slick with blood and blubber.
> Murdering them by the shoal
> (nine hundred) for 'research'
> Is big business in Japan. (244)

The description, the choice of words is indicative of the speaker's implicit condemnation of the mass slaughter of whales for human needs.

Conclusion

Daruwalla's poetry testifies to his interest in the non-human world of fishes, birds, and animals and marks an anti-anthropocentric move in Indian English poetry. The themes of violence and domination represented in the relationship between human beings and the non-human world and in the relationship between beings in the non-human world itself where one is constrained to kill for food and other purposes, can be traced in part to the poet's career in the police service and the nation's experience of colonial and other kinds of state violence. While the poems turn our attention to the non-human world, they are characterized by a literariness, an imaginative fervor with the animals and birds getting human dimensions and serving as symbol and metaphor. Birds and animals are given human voices and speak about their experiences in the first person, a feature which is found in the poetry of other writers writing on animals and points to the fact that there are many areas of the lives of our fellow beings on the planet which we do not understand at all and we articulate their experiences through imaginative empathy. While human violence towards animals and birds is seen in poems like "Hawk", "Wolf", "Fishes are Speared by Night", and "The Death of a Bird" which destabilizes the human/animal binary, criticism is largely implicit rather than explicit, but the mere fact that violence towards animals and birds is brought within the ambit of literature by Daruwalla, is an achievement for Indian English poetry.

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Transnational Feminist Praxis: Beyond Intersectionality: Advancing Feminist Epistemologies through a Comparative Analysis of Dina Nayeri's *The Ungrateful Refugee* and Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man*

Karthika S.B.

Abstract

This research paper examines the intersection of transnational feminism, cultural hegemony, and women's experiences in the context of migration. It critically analyzes the perpetuation of cultural superiority within contemporary neo-colonial contexts and explores the discord between Western and Third World feminisms. The paper traces the development of transnational feminism as a theoretical framework and emphasizes the need for nuanced and contextually responsive approaches in feminist theory and activism. Drawing on key publications and scholars' contributions, the research highlights the relevance of understanding gender constructs and the categorizations of developing and developed worlds. It further explores the experiences of refugees and immigrant women through the lens of literature, analyzing works such as Dina Nayeri's *The Ungrateful Refugee*: *What Immigrants Never Tell You* (2020) and Etaf Rum's *A Woman Is No Man* (2019). These narratives challenge prevailing discourses, expose intersecting oppressions, and advocate inclusive understandings of marginalized women's agency and resilience. The paper underscores the importance of transnational feminist perspectives in analyzing the dynamics of cultural hegemony, migration, and women's experiences. It urges scholars and activists to critically engage with these concepts, fostering equitable understandings of cultural identities, migration patterns, and the lives of displaced individuals. By centering marginalized voices, the paper aims to contribute to a transformative discourse surrounding migration, feminism, and cultural dynamics.

Keywords: Feminist epistemologies, transnational feminist praxis, intersectionality.

The emergence of discussions about cultural hegemony and social identity witnessed an early and notable manifestation in Edward Said's influential work titled *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). This period also witnessed significant contributions from scholars such

as Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak and Tzvetan Todorov. Todorov, in particular, prophesied a pivotal shift in academic pursuits during the subsequent century, wherein the focus would transition from race to culture. This shift entailed a heightened emphasis on the glorification of cultural distinctions, resulting in the classification of certain cultures as superior or inferior. Concurrently, the rise of interdisciplinary studies and the widespread dissemination of postmodern theories facilitated the establishment of Migration Studies as an independent academic discipline, characterized by diverse scholarly trajectories. While acknowledging that global migrations cannot be solely attributed to colonialism and its ramifications, research in the field of Migration Studies has discerned the perpetuation of cultural superiority and its celebration within contemporary neo-colonial contexts. It is worth noting that these underlying notions have also permeated feminist discourse since the 1970s, underscoring their broad-ranging implications across multiple academic domains.

Dina Nayeri

After establishing International Women's Day, the United Nations orchestrated conferences to commemorate the UN Decade for Women (1976-1986), thus elevating feminism to a global discourse. The ensuing decade unveiled a discernible schism between Western feminists and their counterparts from the Third World, predominantly stemming from the limitations inherent in linear Western-centric feminist frameworks that perpetuated oppressive paradigms while neglecting the intricate nuances of distinctive cultural contexts. The manifestation of disparities in capital and power distribution accentuated the need for feminist thinkers to challenge the inadequacies of universal feminist models. Notably, Robin Morgan's conception of 'global sisterhood' proved inadequate in effectively addressing the multifaceted dynamics shaped by intersecting systems of oppression and the heterogeneous realities of diverse cultural backgrounds. The discord between Western and Third World feminisms underscores the imperative of adopting more nuanced and contextually responsive approaches within feminist theory and activism. Recognizing and embracing the diversity of experiences and perspectives is fundamental to engendering a more inclusive and efficacious feminist discourse that transcends the confines of Western-centric homogenization.

The theoretical landscape of transnational feminism was inaugurated by the influential publication of Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan's *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices* (1994). This seminal work rejected a universal framework and placed a notable emphasis on the significance of cultural identities. The

1990s witnessed the consolidation of transnational feminism through the contributions of scholars such as Chandra Mohanty and Jacqui Alexander, who critically examined and questioned the heteronormative constructs of gender and the binary categorizations of the developing and developed worlds. A defining moment in the academic development of transnational feminism was the establishment of the journal *Meridians*, which asserted the legitimacy and importance of transnational feminism as an academic discipline within feminist discourse. The first decade of the 21st century witnessed the emergence of influential transnational feminist thinkers like Laura Briggs, whose seminal book *Reproducing Empire* (2002) advocated for the construction of new analytical frameworks to explore the intricate racial and gender dynamics of the Third World.

Etaf Rum

Transnational feminists adopt an interdisciplinary approach, integrating various disciplines, to comprehensively examine the multifaceted issues surrounding women's experiences in a world characterized by increasingly intertwined and complex identities. The works analyzed within this theoretical framework provide insights into the social and psychological factors that influence women during the transitional phase of acculturation. *What Immigrants Never Tell You* (2020) illuminates a profound exploration of the manifold experiences and narratives inherent in the lives of displaced individuals. With her history as an immigrant and refugee, Nayeri brings a unique vantage point to bear, deftly intermingling personal introspections with astute socio-political observations. Engaging a transnational feminist lens, the book defies prevailing discourses surrounding refugees and immigration, unfurling a tapestry of nuanced and multifaceted examinations of those who seek sanctuary.

The Ungrateful Refugee deftly counters simplistic and dehumanizing portrayals of refugees, delving deep into the intricate entanglements and contradictions intrinsic to the refugee experience. By drawing upon the precepts of transnational feminism, the work foregrounds the intersecting oppressions encountered by refugee women, meticulously elucidating how their lived realities are entwined with matters of gender, race, class, and various other societal dimensions. This incisive analysis challenges the inclination to flatten and homogenize the heterogeneous refugee populace, prompting a recognition of the agency and resilience that refugee women embody as they navigate and resist the labyrinthine systems of power.

Central to Nayeri's magnum opus is a profound interrogation of the notion of gratitude. *The Ungrateful Refugee* dares to question the expectation that refugees should manifest profound gratitude for the assistance and opportunities they encounter, revealing the intricate

power dynamics embedded within the humanitarian aid apparatus. Through poignant personal narratives and introspections, Nayeri underscores the vital necessity of recognizing the humanity of refugees, eschewing narratives that diminish their agency or perpetuate reductive stereotypes. The opus incisively scrutinizes the role played by nation-states and their policies in shaping the lives of refugees. Nayeri delves into the structural forces that irrevocably influence displaced individuals, encompassing immigration laws, border controls, and assimilationist policies. By laying bare how these mechanisms can perpetuate inequalities and curtail opportunities for refugees, the tome demands a critical re-evaluation of the systems that govern migration and displacement.

Nayeri's *The Ungrateful Refugee* offers an eloquent and captivating transnational feminist analysis of the refugee experience. It deftly dismantles stereotypes, deconstructs prevailing narratives, and shines a searing light upon the complexities and agency inherent in the lives of those displaced. By centering the voices of refugees and critically examining the structural forces that shape their existence, the opus invites a deeper, more empathetic understanding of the refugee crisis while ardently championing a more equitable and inclusive approach to migration and displacement.

Etaf Rum's literary work *A Woman Is No Man* (2019) reveals a profound exploration of women's complexities and multi-layered experiences within patriarchal societies. Drawing from her cultural background and personal encounters, Rum deftly weaves together narratives that expose the nuanced dynamics of gender, power, and cultural expectations. Through a transnational feminist lens, the book challenges prevailing discourses and sheds light on the intersectional oppressions faced by women within traditional communities. *A Woman Is No Man* serves as a powerful counter-narrative to the silencing and marginalization of women's voices. Rum delves deep into the intricacies of the Arab-American immigrant experience, examining the constraints imposed by traditional gender roles and societal expectations. By applying transnational feminist principles, the work illuminates the intersecting forms of oppression faced by women, including those related to culture, family, religion, and generational clashes. It dismantles the monolithic and homogenizing representations of Arab women, recognizing their agency and resilience in navigating oppressive systems.

The book critically interrogates the concept of "honor" within patriarchal societies and the impact it has on women's lives. Rum exposes the detrimental consequences of the pervasive belief that a woman's worth is tied to her obedience and adherence to cultural norms. Through the voices of her characters, she challenges the idea that a woman's role is solely confined to domesticity and denies her the opportunity for self-actualization.

A Woman Is No Man delves into the power dynamics within familial structures, particularly the tension between tradition and individual aspirations. The transnational feminist analysis highlights the struggles faced by women who aspire for independence and self-expression, often at odds with the expectations placed upon them by their families and communities. Rum delves into the emotional complexities of these women, offering a nuanced portrayal of

their desires, fears, and dreams. The work also underscores the significance of intergenerational dialogue and the potential for change within these communities. Rum explores how women find solidarity and support through connections with other women, challenging the isolation and silencing that perpetuates gendered oppression. By portraying the journeys of her characters, she invites readers to empathize with their experiences and recognize the universal desire for autonomy and self-determination.

Through its transnational feminist lens, *A Woman Is No Man* advocates for a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of the experiences of Arab women. It prompts critical reflections on cultural norms, patriarchal structures, and the agency of women within these contexts. The book invites readers to engage with the complexities of gender, power, and tradition, fostering empathy and compassion while challenging dominant narratives and stereotypes.

Etaf Rum's *A Woman Is No Man* presents a compelling transnational feminist analysis of women's experiences within patriarchal societies. It dissects cultural expectations, intergenerational conflicts, and the internal struggles faced by women striving for selfhood and liberation. By amplifying the voices of silenced women, the work highlights the importance of intersectionality and solidarity in dismantling oppressive systems and fostering meaningful change.

In both *The Ungrateful Refugee* by Dina Nayeri and *A Woman Is No Man* by Etaf Rum, the acculturation theory assumes a prominent role in comprehending the characters' experiences as they navigate novel cultural milieus. Within *The Ungrateful Refugee*, Nayeri ventures into the intricate challenges and complexities confronted by refugees as they engage with unfamiliar cultural landscapes. The theory of acculturation, which examines the psychological and sociocultural transformations individuals undergo when confronted with a new cultural context, becomes highly germane within the realm of the refugee experience. The book adeptly investigates the struggles endured by refugees as they endeavor to reconcile their cultural heritage and traditions with the expectations and exigencies imposed by their host societies. It deftly explores the process of acculturation through the prism of identity formation, thereby elucidating the tensions, conflicts, and negotiations that arise when individuals find themselves situated betwixt their original cultural identity and the necessity of acclimating to their novel surroundings.

Similarly, in *A Woman Is No Man*, Rum delves into the experiences of Arab women ensconced within the cultural backdrop of traditional patriarchal societies and their encounters with Western culture within the United States. The theory of acculturation assumes a salient position in apprehending the multifaceted challenges faced by these women as they navigate the delicate balance between their cultural heritage and the pressures to conform to Western ideals and expectations. The characters within the novel grapple with issues of cultural identity, gender roles, and the confluence between preserving their cultural heritage and embracing newfound liberties. The theory of acculturation enables an examination of the psychological and social processes entwined in their adaptation to a novel cultural milieu while addressing

the intergenerational conflicts that ensue from discrepant levels of acculturation within familial contexts.

Both works proffer nuanced portrayals of the acculturation experiences of their characters, thus shedding light upon the intricacies, conflicts, and metamorphoses that arise when individuals confront unprecedented cultural environments. They probe the psychological stress, identity negotiations, and intercultural frictions that transpire amidst the acculturation process. By immersing themselves in these themes, the works engender insights into the manners in which individuals and communities grapple with cultural metamorphosis, thereby illuminating the personal and societal ramifications of acculturation within the ambit of displacement, migration, and cultural transition.

The novels *The Ungrateful Refugee*" and *A Woman Is No Man* extensively explore the immigration experience of women within distinct cultural and societal contexts. The narratives meticulously examine the multifaceted challenges, conflicts, and transformative processes that women encounter as they navigate the intricacies of migration and assimilation. *The Ungrateful Refugee* focuses on the experiences of female refugees, shedding light on the complex psychological and emotional ramifications of displacement. The novel delves into the trauma, loss, and disorientation that accompany the immigration journey, particularly emphasizing the unique vulnerabilities and adversities faced by refugee women. Through the portrayal of female characters, Nayeri illuminates their resilience, agency, and determination in rebuilding their lives and seeking a sense of belonging in unfamiliar environments.

Similarly, *A Woman Is No Man* centers on Arab women's immigration experiences in the United States. The novel intricately explores the intricacies of cultural transition, intergenerational conflicts, and the intersection between traditional patriarchal expectations and individual aspirations. Rum delves into the duality of identities that immigrant women navigate, encompassing the preservation of their cultural heritage alongside the yearning for personal fulfillment and autonomy. The novel deftly depicts the struggles encountered as these women negotiate the tensions between their cultural backgrounds and the pressures to conform to Western society, thereby illuminating the interplay of familial dynamics, societal expectations, and the quest for self-discovery within the immigrant experience.

Both literary works offer nuanced and thought-provoking portrayals of the immigration experience of women, intricately examining the intersectionality of gender, culture, and identity. They provide deep insights into the complex processes of assimilation, belonging, and the negotiation of multiple identities. Through the portrayal of female characters, these novels meticulously elucidate the resilience, agency, and personal growth that emerge as women navigate the challenges of immigration and endeavor to carve their paths in new and unfamiliar territories.

The present study underscores the imperative for the global academic fraternity to challenge the hegemonic West-centric perspective that peremptorily dismisses the multicultural coexistence of societies. By interrogating the experiences of immigrant women and their

nuanced struggle with a multicultural identity, this research endeavors to unearth transformations in gender roles and unravel the intricate dynamics of acculturation. It seeks to critically evaluate the existing theoretical discourses surrounding the immigrant experience and the acculturation of the feminine gender. The cultural portrayal of immigrants, particularly from the Middle East, after 2010, has been profoundly influenced by the rhetoric of nationalistic conservative politics perpetuated by the right-leaning corporate media. This confluence of fundamentalist and corporate interests exercises hegemonic control over narrative construction, stifling alternative perspectives and restricting the plurality of voices.

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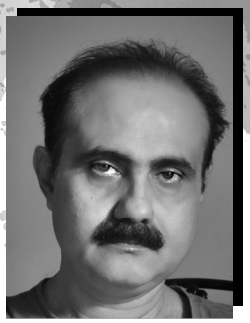
A Pedagogy of Museums

Prathap Kamath



Museums of art and archaeology pale,
museums of abuse loom large in pedagogy.
Skulls the cudgels of oppression dented

should meet the eyes of children
before the colourful contours of form
and substance lull their living spirit.

Bullets grow tongues on the walls of Jallianwalah,
the well there is a vitrine holding blood
singeing living eyes, melting deathly pride.

Nangeli's* breast be embalmed and displayed –
when she bled to death, that flesh bomb burst
the breast tax much before the West burnt bras.

Build the future on relics of deprivations,
show the children gas chambers and instruments
of torture that civilization hides in its raiment;

may them appraise the appeal of slave chains
before they appreciate the ornaments dug out
from Harappa or the Pharaoh's tomb.

Let them first set their eyes on the monster
they encase in themselves,
before they learn to draw lessons from fossils.

*A 19th century legend in Kerala, according to which Nangeli, a backward caste farm labourer, cut her breast with her sickle to protest against the draconian breast tax, a tax which lower caste women had to pay for covering their breasts.

Correspondences

Is it true that you are not what you see in the mirror
but an intractable compendium of spirit that

runs over and spreads onto the mercurial plane
of minds and eyes watching you unawares?

Isn't there a *ghazal* that begins ruefully saying
"I am the fantasy of someone else"?

Are you a nodal point in the web of cerebral nerves
that carry the current of happenings and happenstances?

When my father's body was laid between wicks
burning in the two halves of a coconut, a dog

showed up out of nowhere. No one dared shove him away, his gaze upon dad was that intense.

Then there was this neighbour who, in September,
beholding a three-eyed gorilla, raced in fury

down the city's bylanes, dodging impending discovery,
never turning around, eyes screwed to a point in the sky

where clouds sketched a canvas of falling towers.
Close by a goat cried plaintively from the abattoir.

Cries

We no more say that they come when we least expect.
For long those of our ilk have learnt that
They hover unseen over us
Our unholy spirit.

They are all of the same countenance
But of various ends - some want our land
Where we and our ancestors have slept.
Others come for our sons to offer them at the altar
Of a God who has become our oppressor
Hating us for the food we eat,
The attire we don,
The prayers we utter, or yet, in the
Name of the carcasses we skin and bury.

Our bodies are the testing grounds of their weapons
And while their ideological hatred bulldoze our minds
They are sowing mines beneath what they crush
That tomorrow shall burst on their faces.

The day after he left

Yesterday night half our bed
hollowed out
in my embrace;
Each hour the clock struck
I surveyed
the space he quit
Oaring my arm over
his still present
torso in the mind
Bearing the absent
pressure of
his nicotine kiss.
The window at the sleepless
dawn was
the mouth of a
cavern,
The cawing of the regular crow
came from
its farthest shores.

Outside world sneaked in
strumming the leaves
of the tamarind
Below which he used to
sit in reveries
of past machismo
–
Conquests of sexy women,
brawny thugs and
trapped innocents
Twisting the white ends
of his handlebar
moustache.
Inside, inhaling the dying
echoes of his
last commands
My boat sailed calm
through the voids
beginning to fill.

Faith by the roadside on a rainy night

Mahoganies rain after the rain,
each leaf sheds a pearl at night.

Streetlights are yellow moons
dripping wet in intense stillness.

The road glistens like a gecko
wriggled out of a pool of water.

Across the road the Latin Cross
planted on a concrete pedestal

is a fallopian tube with an embryo
stuck somewhere in its arms.

Orthodox Syrian Church (Estd. 1890)
has its burnished doors closed

poising the angels engraved on them
in an act of mutual supplication.

Through the speckled windshield
I see a young woman stop by;

her eyes see through the doors
as she makes a sign of the cross

while the rain beading her face
never troubles her eyes to wink.

Cotton

Rajashree Warrier

Like a joy frozen on a high, disallowed to fade away
born into its own zenith amid volatility
light flurry elegant snowy furls
flew free from the crown, forever abandoning green holds of belonging

Cleaving a breeze through its marvelous path
spluttering into bouncing air
o'er fields in hopeful green
above restive aspirations of soil merchants
fearless stainless wingless weightless
upon rising vocals of tiny imaginations 'granny's hair, grandpa's beard'
settling on bent elbows plaited hair ribboned curves
flitting around the wilderness of wonder eyes
enroute to clueless wind-ways

now flew one, past my window sill of kitchen
I blew my lungs out, in case the cotton beings enter the door of illusions
when another breeze took them afar, my cage of promises
how I wished to live full in womb
breathe a life of semblance !
a rescued hope at the seams of my sight, seems whispering to it's cottony flight

Peace

night's skies unfurled a rectangular red
a gentler amber rested on her lips
ether delayed braided sighs of crimson
wynds, the usher

Kitchen sink spatulas floor brush dim
corner of the hall flowering pods book
marks felt airy at once

she could gather all her souls
to not to rest in pieces

Wetlands

Evening sky masked its turmeric glow in
dark haste, for fear of semblance
in dhotis ,in stainless whites the men
prisoners of rut ,in a row against
a village and its women dragging their
cracked soles upon drained earth
,brought in
to sing a song of crotch

wet lands, washed by tears

Further away ,foams of dissonance
floated until burst loud into a salty life
in opaque lakes

Women in pools of their own fluids
moaned for souls
flying heavy of unbroken
water

5 Ws & 1 H

wet
whirl
whets
woman
woos a drifting
hurt

Meanwhile

dossiers
uniforms
shared walls

bounds of realm flew its pigeons of love

disowned guns

random aims
chosen names

bounds of faith flaunts a bright scarlet,
unbidden
on its papery innards in a kingdom of
democracy, the bougainville limns a war

From Innocence to Malevolence: Decoding the Uncanny Child Archetype in J-Horrors *Ringu* and *Ju-on: The Curse*

Aswathy Chandra Bhanu

The human psyche possesses an enduring fascination with the enigmatic and the unfamiliar, often veering toward the macabre and terrifying. It is widely acknowledged that fear, among the spectrum of human emotions, holds a paramount and age-old position. While rationality may affirm the nonexistence of monsters and spectres, the belief in their nocturnal existence persists when darkness envelops our surroundings. Across diverse cultures, there exists an irresistible allure to narratives meticulously crafted to evoke dread. Renowned literary luminaries such as Edgar Allan Poe, H.P. Lovecraft, Stephen King, and Clive Barker continue to cast their haunting shadows upon the collective consciousness. The realm of horror cinema, a prominent facet of popular entertainment, occupies an intriguing niche within the mainstream. These cinematic spectacles frequently unveil a tableau of gruesome disfigurement, terror-stricken protagonists, astounding visual effects, formidable antagonists, and hours saturated with fear, repulsion, dread, and moral descent. In Freud's essay on "The Uncanny," he associates the uncanny "to what is frightening - to what arouses dread and horror... what excites fear in general" (219). The narrative acquires an intensified sense of dread when wickedness is personified in the guise of a child. The concept of the 'uncanny child' has permeated the collective consciousness, assuming significant roles within popular cinema, televised productions, and literary works. Within the realm of reality, children typically evoke endearing qualities. However, when placed within the confines of a horror film, an uncanny child can undergo a disconcerting transformation, becoming the most unsettling presence on the screen. This paper aims to explore the representation of the uncanny child archetype in the context of Japanese horror cinema, specifically focusing on the films *Ringu* and *Ju-on: The Curse*. It seeks to elucidate how these uncanny children serve as potent symbols, encapsulating both societal unease and the collective national trauma.

In a primer featured on *Green Cine Daily* in 2006, Todd Wardrope's statement, "An Exquisite Nightmare: New Asian Horror Sprays the Screen," shines a spotlight on the evolution of New Asian horror cinema into a well-recognized and firmly established field of study

within the realm of cinema. Over the past two decades, New Asian horror has not only grown into a genre deemed worthy of academic scrutiny but has also emerged as one of the most captivating and commercially viable aspects of international cinema. Japanese horror cinema, often referred to as 'J-horror', occupies a prominent and remarkably successful position within the realm of New Asian horror cinema. Its impact and popularity have transcended geographical boundaries, securing a distinguished status on the global cinematic stage.

Horror stories, deeply ingrained in Japanese popular culture, provide filmmakers with a creative canvas to employ visual and narrative techniques in engaging with the rapidly changing social and cultural landscapes of their era. According to Colette Balmain, in Japanese culture, the realms of the living and the deceased share a close connection. When an individual passes away, their spirit transitions from the world of the living, known as *kono-yo* (this world or here), to the world of the deceased, referred to as *ano-yo* (the world over yonder or there). Consequently, these two worlds coexist within the same space and time, with fluid and porous boundaries separating them (48). The fluid boundary between the realms of the living (*kono-yo*) and the deceased (*ano-yo*) holds a significant connection between the social and political dimensions in Japan. Fear serves as a fundamental and structuring element that shapes how Japanese society engages with and portrays ghosts. Japanese cinema, particularly the horror genre, serves as a prominent artistic avenue for the expression of socio-political concerns, often manifested through depictions of ghosts. The persistent fear and anxieties associated with departed spirits continue to wield substantial influence over modern Japanese society. In "From Scrolls to Prints to Moving Pictures: Iconographic Ghost Imagery from Pre-Modern Japan to The Contemporary Horror Film," Sara L. Sumpter states, "the Japanese fear of death and the dead is itself far from laid to rest… fear of the dead continues to extend to everyday life, as can be seen in the ongoing reverence for and consideration paid to family ancestors" (16). These influences extend beyond shaping the structure of Japan's political and social spheres, impacting how individuals navigate their roles within society.

Since the late 1990s, the realm of Japanese horror cinema has occupied a prominent position within the domains of film and cultural studies. This prominence can be attributed to the resounding success of two seminal works: Hideo Nakata's *Ringu* (1998) and Takashi Shimizu's *Ju-on: The Curse* (2000). These cinematic endeavours not only achieved remarkable commercial success but also ignited extensive scholarly discourse and served as wellsprings of inspiration for numerous remakes and emulations. In the case of *Ringu*, the original Japanese film paved the way for several sequels, including *Rasen* (1998), *Ringu 2* (1999), *Ring 0: Birthday* (2000), *Sadako* (2019), *Sadako 3D* (2012), *Sadako 3D 2* (2013), and even a crossover film titled *Sadako vs. Kayako* (2016), featuring Sadako from *Ringu* and Kayako from *Ju-on.* Additionally, there were American adaptations like *The Ring* (2002) and *The Ring Two* (2005). On the other hand, the *Ju-on* series, also known as *The Grudge* in its American adaptations, began with *Ju-on: The Curse* (2000) and was followed by *Ju-on: The Curse 2* (2000), *Ju-on: The Grudge* (2002), *Ju-on: The Grudge 2* (2003), and then transitioned

to the American adaptations with *The Grudge* (2004) and *The Grudge 2* (2006). The series continued with *The Grudge 3* (2009), and there were also Japanese releases like *Ju-on: White Ghost* and *Ju-on: Black Ghost* in 2009. A Japanese reboot, *Ju-on: The Beginning of the End,* arrived in 2014, followed by *Ju-on: The Final Curse* in 2015. Recently, there was a reboot of the American *Grudge* series in 2020. These two iconic horror franchises, *Ringu* and *Ju-on*, have left an indelible mark on the genre with their numerous sequels, adaptations, and spin-offs, both in Japan and internationally.

In the context of *Ringu* (1998), the central plot revolves around a mysterious and evil videotape that holds a terrifying curse. This tape contains disturbing and surreal images that deeply unsettle those who watch it. Anyone who dares to view its contents receives a dreadful phone call predicting their death exactly seven days later. The curse is believed to originate from a vengeful ghostly presence, known as Sadako Yamamura in the Japanese version and Samara Morgan in the American adaptation. Sadako, a quintessential embodiment of the uncanny child archetype within this film, appears to be an innocent child, but her actions and powers reveal a deep malevolence. She is portrayed as a juvenile possessing supernatural abilities and an ominous presence. The disconcerting contrast between her ostensibly innocent appearance and her malefic disposition imparts a palpable sense of disquietude and trepidation upon the audience. Her backstory is filled with a troubled childhood marked by mistreatment, which eventually leads to her tragic death. This tragic path transforms her into a vengeful spirit forever tied to the cursed videotape. The suffering of the evil child in her story often involves a significant loss of innocence, brought about by neglect and abandonment by adults. This serves as a metaphorical exploration of how society can corrupt innocence.

The *Ju-on* film series, a renowned Japanese horror franchise, has earned acclaim for its eerie and chilling portrayal of a vengeful spirit haunting a malevolently cursed house. Notably, the original Japanese film *Ju-on: The Curse* diverges from *Ringu* in its spectral representation, as it features a malevolent ghost boy, Toshio Saeki, in contrast to the ghost girl archetype found in the latter. The central focus of *Ju-on: The Curse* is a house steeped in an inescapable atmosphere of terror, located in Tokyo, Japan, where a gruesome and horrifying murder occurred in the past. This malevolent event has bequeathed a lingering curse that inexorably afflicts anyone who ventures into the house or inadvertently crosses its path. Consequently, this curse begets an ensemble of vengeful spirits, which includes the spectral apparitions of the mother, Kayako Saeki, and her son, Toshio Saeki, alongside other tormented souls. These spirits, known for their harrowing and unsettling visages, manifest in diverse and terrifying forms, contributing to the overarching atmosphere of dread and fear that permeates the series. Toshio's appearance defies immediate suspicion, as he assumes the likeness of an ostensibly innocent young boy. However, this façade of innocence veils a sinister nature, characterized by actions that defy conventional notions of childish innocence. His frequent and disconcerting appearances in unexpected and eerie locales infuse the narrative with a profound sense of unease, evoking an atmosphere that is mysterious and profoundly disquieting. He suffered from abuse and neglect during his brief and tormented existence

prior to his untimely demise, and it is this suffering endured during his earthly existence that arguably precipitates his malevolent presence. What distinguishes *Ju-on*, beyond its spectral manifestations, is its narrative structure, characterized by fragmentation and non-linearity. Multiple interwoven storylines unfold across varying temporal epochs, fostering a pervasive sense of disorientation and trepidation amongst its viewers. Within this complex narrative tapestry, the malevolent entity Toshio Saeki, the embodiment of the evil child, stands as a central and formidable figure of terror.

It is important to note that while the curses they represent have different origins - *Ringu* involves a cursed videotape, while *Ju-on* is connected to a haunted residence - there are also significant visual differences between these two malefic entities. The iconic image of Sadako, characterized by her long, obscuring veil of dark hair in *Ringu*, stands in stark juxtaposition to Toshio's pallid and spectral countenance in *Ju-on: The Curse*. These visual distinctions contribute to the distinct atmospheres and styles of horror within each respective cinematic series. However, both Sadako and Toshio radiate an eerie and unsettling presence that evokes strong feelings of fear and trepidation. They exist in a space that blurs the line between being victims and perpetrators of terror, representing Japan's lingering societal traumas that continue to haunt the collective consciousness. Karen Lury traces the role of children as symbolic figures during a period of social crisis in Japan that occurred in the 1990s.

> In the period of social crisis following the collapse of the bubble economy and the consequent recession in Japan in the 1990s, the child emerged as a figure that could embody victimhood and simultaneously act as a threat. Real children were suffering and real children could – and would – act in ways that threatened the accepted model of childhood and its promise of a seamless trajectory that led to becoming a responsible adult citizen and effective worker/consumer (28).

These spectral children metaphorically reflect the enduring ramifications of past transgressions and injustices, serving as poignant reminders of society's unresolved demons.

The influence of J-horror, particularly the evil child characters it prominently features, goes well beyond the realm of cinema. These characters have effortlessly integrated themselves into mainstream culture in Japan, highlighting the extensive cultural influence exerted by these eerie child figures within Japanese society. The horrors they embody extend beyond the confines of fictional narratives, infiltrating real-life spaces such as theme parks, city streets, and even sporting events, blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality. Consequently, the symbolic importance of the child figure played a pivotal role in upholding Japan's national identity. However, as the late 1990s approached, Japan's changing circumstances made it increasingly plausible that children could undergo disconcerting transformations. Stefan Tanaka in "Childhood: Naturalization of Development in a Japanese Space" states that in pre-modern and early Japan, children were not viewed as carrying the aspirations and objectives of a nation-state into the future. Instead, they were perceived primarily as local inhabitants, coexisting with other citizens and holding no distinct societal

responsibility. However, during the Meiji Restoration period, children became the canvas upon which the nation's progress was inscribed. This transformation is echoed by Brian Platt:

> Japanese leaders during the early decades of the Meiji period (1868– 1912) believed that the source of Western power and the key to Japan's national survival in the face of Western imperialism lay in the nation- state's capacity for mobilizing human resources. When they set about creating institutions to accomplish this goal, they recognized the particular importance of the school, which extended the project of mobilization to Japanese children. In turn, they opened up the child to public inquiry, generating within an emerging mass society a newawareness of childhood…. the modern concept of childhood was "created" in the context of Japan's encounter with modernity (965–66).

In the later decades of the 20th century, Japan's rapid economic and cultural resurgence came to define its postwar identity. This period witnessed an intensification of pressure on children, both as a conceptual framework and in their lived experiences. Japan's educational system became increasingly intertwined with the nation's economic advancement, creating a seamless transition from schooling to future employment. This integration of education and the economy placed tremendous stress on children, and their development became intricately linked to the nation's capitalist progress. Consequently, these pressures created challenging conditions for children during the 1980s and early 1990s.

Two significant moral panics emerged in Japan, which seemed contradictory but interconnected, as Japan underwent societal changes during and after the Lost Decade. The first panic was regarding the child abuse in Japan, which had previously been believed to be absent in the country. However, changes in the definition of child abuse and the introduction of international conventions in the 1990s led to a realization that child abuse was indeed present. This discovery raised concerns that Japanese family and community structures were eroding. The second moral panic was related to perceptions of childhood undergoing a dramatic transformation, driven by a series of violent juvenile crimes from the 1990s into the early 2000s. These crimes led to a perception that children were becoming incomprehensible and unpredictable. Shocking cases, like a 14-year-old boy beheading an 11-year-old boy and killing a 10-year-old girl, raised questions about what had gone wrong. The age of criminal responsibility was lowered in response to these crimes. Similar acts of violence continued to occur, even after the age of criminal responsibility was lowered. These incidents generated considerable media attention and global coverage, undermining the previous pride associated with Japan's child-centred national project. Children, once celebrated as symbols of national progress, were now seen as changing in ways that were difficult to understand. The emergence of horror films centred around children provided a platform for Japanese audiences to confront and grapple with intricate cultural traumas tied to shifts in society. These traumas encompassed adult culpability and the recognition of evolving child-related dynamics within Japan's changing socio-cultural and political context.

Susan Napier's concept of the "internal alien," explored in her book *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, can be associated with the idea of the uncanny child as depicted in these films. This notion of the internal alien symbolically represents an inner psychological discord and distress that does not originate from external sources but arises from unsettling inner conflicts. This internal alien occupies a complex role, straddling the boundaries between self and other, as well as existing within the collective consciousness, while also spanning the past, present, and future. Napier describes this 'internal alien' as having a dual nature, both menacing and vulnerable. Sadako and Toshio are deliberate representations of this internal alien concept, challenging the conventional victimization narrative. For instance, while the film initially portrays Sadako as a victim, this perception is subverted when she emerges from a television screen to harm people indiscriminately, regardless of their attempts to honour her memory or humanize her. The vengeful spirit returns to exact revenge on those who have harmed her and society as a whole. She emerges from Ryuji's television screen to take his life, signifying that Sadako's relentless quest for vengeance will persist until her curse engulfs all of Japan. Indeed, this concept of the 'internal alien' also contributed to post-Restoration Japan's development of a Westernized identity. This in turn, appeared to symbolize the idea that children were engaging in a form of violent retribution against a society that had marginalized them in the relentless pursuit of Westernized capitalist advancement. For instance, in the context of *Ringu*, it is evident that the depiction of Japan reflects a strong American influence, as seen through elements like baseball games, Western-style living standards, and the pervasive presence of technology in daily life. Reiko, the central character, represents the image of a career-focused modern woman shaped by American-style values, pursuing a career in the media industry.

After the harrowing atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, those who survived faced unimaginable suffering. Julie Rauer notes that Japan was "tragically splintered by defeat, subjugation, humiliation, and inconceivable horrors - unable to command a return to a unified monolithic persona, the ordered cerebral imperative and societal dignity of pre-nuclear innocence… World War II left indelible stains on the Japanese psyche" (qtd. in Berns, 44). This not only challenged the idealized concept of nationhood but also prompted a closer examination of individual identities in the midst of collective grief and loss. Any form of artistic expression emerging from such a culturally traumatized context, whether in visual arts or other media, would be deeply intertwined with and influenced by the collective trauma. Following World War II, Japan was profoundly impacted by haunting images of women and children carrying the weight of physical and emotional wounds. These poignant visuals evolved into powerful symbols, emphasizing Japan's experience of victimization and the enduring trauma throughout and in the aftermath of the war.

In the context of the aftermath of the atomic bombings during World War II, the image of suffering children, particularly orphaned amidst the devastation of decimated cities, holds a profound and poignant significance. This representation of afflicted children finds a prominent place in the Hiroshima Peace Park and Museum, vividly exemplified by sculptures such as

the "Statue of Mother and Children During the Storm" and "The Children's Peace Monument." The latter, in particular, pays homage to Sadako Sasaki, a young girl who tragically succumbed to radiation-induced leukemia. Sadako's poignant story, renowned for her determined effort to fold a thousand paper cranes as a symbol of peace, has become a legend in Japan and has been retold through various media forms. In this poignant context, the Japanese term *hibakusha* takes on a profound meaning, as it is used to denote survivors of the atomic bomb attacks who endured the harrowing effects of radiation exposure or suffered severe burns from the fires that erupted in the immediate aftermath of the bombings. Regrettably, many *hibakusha* faced discrimination within society, fueled by baseless beliefs that radiation exposure could be contagious.

The surrender of Japan to the Allied powers and the subsequent occupation from 1945 to 1952 brought about significant socio-political and cultural transformations within the country. This era marked a new phase of modernization characterized by democratic reforms and the dismantling of state Shintoism. In this evolving landscape, the role of families gained prominence as crucial socio-political institutions closely tied to the nation's future. With Japan facing a declining birth rate, families became subjects of intense national scrutiny. Uncanny child narratives often expose familial breakdowns as the underlying cause of a child's vulnerability, despite the family initially appearing as helpless victims of supernatural forces. Japanese horror films frequently revolve around vengeful child spirits, with an emphasis on those from single or divorced families. These narratives commonly explore fractured family dynamics, incorporating themes of parental neglect, abuse, and divorce. The vengeful children in these films are often depicted as monstrous entities. As Kirsten Thompson argues, within the realm of horror cinema, "the principal site of threat was the family and the home" (14). In *Ringu*, Sadako's transformation into a vengeful spirit stems from her father throwing her into a well. Similarly, *Ju-on: The Curse* portrays Toshio and his mother, Kayako, meeting a tragic end at the hands of his father, Takeo Saeki. These narratives underscore the representation of Japanese masculinity in the aftermath of the economic bubble's collapse through characters like Takeo Saeki and Dr. Heihachiro Ikuma, reflecting broader societal anxieties and shifts. These deceased mothers and children occupy a realm beyond conventional classification, blurring the lines between ghosts and monsters. They personify liminal, hybrid entities that capture the very essence of a changing Japanese culture. Moreover, by using children as conduits of malevolence, these narratives injected terror directly into the heart of the family unit. This thematic context allowed these films to explore the intricacies of family life, with a particular focus on familial breakdowns as the underlying cause of the child's susceptibility to malevolent influence.

When the child is perceived as being in danger, this peril extends to both the future and the past, particularly challenging an idealized and unchanging perception of children and the family as steadfast symbols of traditional Japanese values. Lindsay Nelson, in his article "Ghosts of the Past, Ghosts of the Future: Monsters, Children, and Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema," highlights that the presence of the monstrous child not only directs our

thoughts to a future world under threat but also draws us back into a mythical realm characterized by unchanging identities and values (8). As Nelson observes, the vengeful spirit narratives in *Ringu* and *Ju-on* take on a fresh layer of significance when these spirits happen to be children rather than adults. The inexorable fury displayed by Sadako and Toshio suggests an irrepressible antagonism towards an antiquated official culture, particularly targeting the entrenched norms and values of patriarchy. As Barbara Creed astutely observes, the monstrous body in horror cinema displays "a temporary liberation from prevailing values and norms of behaviour" and "celebrates the complete destruction of all values and accepted practices through the symbolic destruction of the body, the symbolic counterpart of the social body" (146).

Childhood, a realm typically associated with innocence and purity, undergoes a profound re-evaluation in cinematic works such as *Ringu* and *Ju-on: The Curse*. These narratives, by stripping away the veneer of idealized childhood attributes, expose a shadowed realm where children transform into disconcerting and monstrous beings. Consequently, these films challenge traditional Western notions of the romanticized child, blurring the once-distinct boundaries between innocence and the emergence of malevolence, fueled by ignorance and irrationality. While the child has long held a central place in the realm of horror cinema, these supernatural creations subvert the deeply ingrained symbolic roles ascribed to children, diverging from previous cinematic paradigms. Sadako and Toshio, the enigmatic children who materialized on our screens, signify a shifting understanding of children's roles within the narratives woven by adults concerning themselves and their nations. The child's capacity to traverse temporal and perceptual boundaries profoundly influences viewers' perceptions. Consequently, these films foreshadow a burgeoning awareness of the child's multifaceted function within narratives of identity and temporal continuity. They signal a departure from the once-idealized Western perception of the child, hinting at a future where this ideal can no longer maintain its former role. In this exploration, the child emerges as a disquieting embodiment of the "other," unveiling a complex tapestry of national trauma and familial dynamics that can potentially give rise to malevolent entities. As such, they provide a window into a reimagining of the child's place in the complex narratives that shape our understanding of identity and time.

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Greta Gerwig's *Barbie*: Examining the Impact of Toys on Gender Identity, Self Esteem and Body Image

Manjari Johri

Abstract

***"Our home has been nothing but a playroom. I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I was papa's doll-child, and here the children have been my dolls."* (*Nora in Ibsen's A Doll's House*)**

Dolls have often been used as a metaphor for the passivity and objectification of women. The famous Barbie doll has been a subject of controversy since it was first created by Ruth Handler's company Mattel in 1961. Greta Gerwig's film *Barbie* released in July 2023 brought to the cinephiles the iconic symbol of American culture. It delves into themes of gender identity, beauty standards, objectification, patriarchy, and self-esteem in women. Gerwig's treatment of the subject has triggered renewed debates about gender stereotyping, consumerism, and unequal relationships between the two sexes. This paper examines whether toys have an adverse impact on the formation of gender identity, self-worth, and psychological well-being of children. It also explores how the cognitive and imaginative abilities of children are influenced by toys such as Barbie and Ken.

Keywords: Gender identity; self-esteem; cognitive abilities; body stereotypes; beauty myth

I. Introduction

National Barbie Day celebrated on the 9th of March in the United States of America marks the premiere of the iconic toy in 1959. Being controversial and famous at the same time, the doll has been a global phenomenon for the past sixty-four years. Its creator Ruth Handler was an enterprising Jewish who named the doll after her daughter Barbra. Greta Gerwig admitted that she wanted to make her film *Barbie* as something "anarchic, and wild, and funny and cathartic" (Buchanan). The film has indeed been all this, and much more. It

has become a landmark phenomenon in the post-COVID-19 entertainment world. In the era of OTT, it took extraordinary films like *Oppenheimer* and *Barbie* to draw people into the multiplexes to witness the drama and magic on the big screen. Collectively both blockbusters are being cited as 'Barbenheimer', an internet phenomenon that began on social media prior to the release of the two films in July 2023. While Nolan's masterpiece is a biographical thriller, Gerwig's *Barbie* is a fantasy comedy, which grossed 1.2 billion dollars in the first four weeks, making it the second highest-grossing movie of the year. In an article, 'Barbie Movie Box Office: Every Record Broken So Far', Thompson writes that 65% of *Barbie's* audience was female, and 81% of the audience was younger than thirty-five years. The younger audience indicates that many of the young girls who had played with the toy contributed to its phenomenal success (Thompson).

Greta Gerwig's film probes into an existential quest faced by women through the Barbie doll, which has been simultaneously perceived as a feminist icon as well as a sex object. A recent article encapsulates its theme- "The film *Barbie* reflects Mattel's attempt to make the doll more like the girls who play with her: it is about the struggle to be authentically oneself in a world of conflicting and often highly gendered expectations" (Marris). It attempts to celebrate, satirize, and deconstruct the toy that children have played with for over six decades (Kermode). The film is an audacious interrogation of whether Barbie is empowering or demeaning (Bradshaw). Through the story of a stereotypical Barbie, Gerwig weaves a fascinating narrative about the evolution of Ken and Barbie. It is a good-natured but self-conscious movie, that is interesting and amiable, but also has an ironic punch. It is a celebratory nostalgia for a toy that exists even now (Bradshar).

The popularity of Barbie can be assessed through the sales of Mattel's doll, which generated gross sales of 1.68 and 1.49 billion US Dollars in 2021 and 2022 (Tighe). According to the sales figures in 2021, globally164 dolls are sold every minute (Bose). It has been the chosen toy for little girls ever since it was first launched. It was subjected to criticism in the wake of the second wave of feminism and was perceived as an embodiment of stereotypical beauty standards and as a symbol of objectification of women.

In recent times as well there has been a backlash against the toy for its representation of an unrealistic thin body shape. "Barbie is a literally objectified woman, not a superhero or an action figure but a plastic lady notable because she's pretty" (Filipovoc). However, the doll has evolved over the decades because of the change in trends that value women's empowerment and diversity. Beauty fixation is no longer encouraged. Greta Gerwig accomplished a marvellous feat by daring to weave a story out of the Barbie doll, which unlike other superhero films does not have a pre-existing narrative through comics or any other source. Through her film, Gerwig posits significant questions about the toy, notions of identity, gender, diversity, sexuality, and inclusiveness.

The impact of the film had become visible much before its release through its promotion on social media and the launch of fashion trends by celebrities, leading to the 'Barbiecore'

movement. It is a homage to the "stylish doll whose identity is undeniably feminine and very, very pink" (Lang). Lang writes, "With Barbie, Handler created a doll that could give little girls the chance to embody their future dreams—whether that was becoming an astronaut, a doctor, or a fashion model. And she had the clothes to match". Barbie was intended by Ruth Handler to give girls the option to play not only as potential mothers or caregivers but also to imagine a world of confident young women with agency and power, who would have a house of their own and have multiple professions to choose from. Much like the feminists of her age, Handler attempted to build a sense of pride and empowerment in women, and she tried to do that with girls from a very young age.

II. Psychological impact of toys on children

Toys facilitate child development through the engagement of caregivers in play-based interactions. This involves the use of language, impersonation, problem-solving, reciprocity, cooperation, and creativity. Pretending through their toys, children use words and stories that imitate real-life situations. "Such imaginative play ultimately facilitates language development, self-regulation, symbolic thinking, and social-emotional development." (Healey et al.1) Problem-solving through blocks and puzzles improves motor skills and cognitive development and "predicts both spatial and early mathematics skills" (ibid). Playing alone also fosters independent creativity and assimilation skills. Toys help to develop warm and supportive relationships with peers and caregivers. These help to build their social, emotional, and cognitive skills, and lead to problem-solving through exploration. Care must be taken that toys do not reinforce gender and race stereotypes, aggression, and violence.

Often boys use toys like Spiderman, and Batman to imagine themselves performing extraordinary acts. They play with toy cars to compete with one another in racing to derive the pleasure of winning and excelling. Likewise, girls often play with toys like the Barbie doll, the Barbie house, Barbie's friend Ken, and her sisters Skipper, Stacey, and Chelsea. The Barbie doll has become a global phenomenon, it is loved by girls who dream of having a collection of the doll in all its avatars. The representation of the doll as a grown-up, young, beautiful, empowered woman in diverse roles, is often modelled after renowned celebrities. In 2022, Mattel launched a series of "role-model" dolls such as the Pulitzer-winning civil rights activist, Ida B. Wells, Samantha Cristoforetti, the first Italian female European Space Agency astronaut, and Tennis star Naomi Osaka has also been modelled as a doll. Barbie's Maya Angelou doll which holds a miniature version of her memoir, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* became very popular as the first hijab-wearing Barbie doll inspired by US Olympic fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad. Apart from these, a series of COVID-19 frontline workers were also launched by Mattel (Lakritz). Barbie dolls are multicultural and diverse and are now also available in different sizes. Its outreach is global, and the message clearly is to provide positive reinforcement to the girl child about empowerment and self-reliance. It is not merely a doll to play with but is invested in coded messages.

Children imitate their role models and relive their imagination of themselves as adults through toys. It is imperative for parents to expose children to an environment through which they can develop self-esteem, imagination, and self-concept to grow into self-assured adults who seek self-actualization and not merely seek validation from others to determine their self-worth.

Toys are also highly gendered, and it is important to know their impact on boys and girls (Blakemore & Centers 619). It is commonly seen that boys play with vehicles, magnets, shape sorting toys, kites, and marbles, whereas girls like dolls, domestic items, doll houses, or soft toys. The authors mentioned above conducted two studies on undergraduate students to determine gender preference for toys, through which they concluded that girls' toys were associated more with physical attractiveness, nurturance, and domesticity whereas toys preferred by boys were more violent, competitive, and exciting. Educational toys were rated as neutral or moderately masculine. They concluded that:

> strongly stereotyped toys appear to be less than desirable on many fronts...In the contemporary world, children's development is probably best served by exposure to moderately stereotyped toys (especially moderately masculine toys, but to some extent moderately feminine toys also) and gender-neutral toys, rather than to strongly gender-stereotyped toys…Children of both genders would benefit from play with toys that develop educational, scientific, physical, artistic, and musical skills. (632)

Toys play a very crucial role in the socialization of children, in the formation of self-concept, and in the selection of attributes linked with their sex. It has been suggested through the study that children of both sexes should be exposed to diverse toys that enhance their personal, cognitive, and imaginative abilities.

III. Gender Schema Theory: Formation of Gender Identity and Self Concept in Children

Sandra L. Bem (1983) propounded the Gender Schema theory which states that girls and boys become "feminine" and "masculine" respectively very early in life under the influence of the cultural codes to which they are exposed. Bem defines schema as, "A schema is a cognitive structure, a network of associations that organizes and guides an individual's perception. A schema functions as an anticipatory structure… to assimilate incoming information in schema-relevant terms" (603). The theory proposes that sex typing results because of the "assimilation of the self-concept itself to the gender schema." (Bem 604). Acquisition of "sex-appropriate preferences, skills, personality attributes, behaviors, and self-concepts is typically referred to within psychology as the process of sex typing" (ibid.598). Hilary M. Lips points out the impact of Bem's work, which has been "to bring invisible but pervasive processes of gender categorization into focus, and then to use that new visibility to drive social change" (627). The illustrates, "how individuals process information related to gender" (David &Wilson1) The authors elaborate further:

> A gender schema serves essentially as a cognitive filter of perception through which one categorizes personal characteristics and phenomena into masculine and feminine categories. Moreover, sex-typed individuals are described as having a tendency to decide on the basis of gender, which personal attributes are going to be associated with their self-concept and which attributes will not. During this sorting process, individuals become acutely sensitive to the stereotyped or hegemonic cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity. (1)

Sex typing is a consequence of sex-differentiated practices of the specific socializing community. "Children become sex-typed because sex happens to be the basis of differential socialization in their culture" (Bem 600). She further explains:

> Sex typing derives in large measure from gender-schematic processing, from a generalized readiness on the part of the child to encode and to organize information - including information about the self- according to the culture's definition of maleness and femaleness…. gender-schematic processing is itself derived from sex-differentiated practices of the social community…sex typing is a learned phenomenon and, hence, that it is neither inevitable nor unmodifiable (603).

Self-concepts are formed out of sex-typing. A child "learns to evaluate his or her adequacy as a person according to gender schema, to match his or her preferences, attitudes, behaviors, and personal attributes against the prototypes stored within it" (ibid. 605). Sex-typed individuals process information and regulate their behavior according to the prescribed notions of femininity and masculinity. Gender identity, the conceptualization of the self, and socialization are all influenced by the external environment and children's toys contribute significantly towards its construction.

IV. Barbie: Self-Esteem and Body Image

Multiple studies have been made on the impact of gendered socialization through toys. Early exposure to sexualized images may have unintended consequences in the form of perceived limitations on future selves. (Sherman and Zurbriggen). Boys are fascinated with technology and action, while girls prefer toys that are about care and feminine interests (Francis). Toys are not merely playthings, but also cultural artifacts which children use as a form of their voice (Mertala). "Parental toy selection and responses to toy play are important factors in children's gender socialization. Reinforcing play with same-gender-typed toys guides children's activities and limits their action repertoires in accordance with gender stereotypes" (Kollmayer et al.29). Similarly, Aleeya et al. make a succinct observation:

> Play is essential to optimal child development because it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth. It also offers an ideal and significant opportunity for parents and other caregivers to engage fully with children using toys as an instrument of play and interaction. The evolution of societal perceptions of toys from children's playthings to critical facilitators of early brain and child development has challenged caregivers in deciding which toys are most appropriate for their children. (1)

Barbie has a negative impact on body image (Rice et al.). Playing with the unrealistically thin doll brings about thin body internalization and body dissatisfaction. In their article, Rice et al., cite studies to show that women value thin bodies more than men do. But emulation of the body proportions of a Barbie doll is positively unattainable in real life. The authors in their study predicted that the higher the thin body internalization in young girls the higher their body dissatisfaction with themselves. They concluded that, "Continued exposure to Barbie in early childhood may lead girls to not only adopt a thin ideal but also, in combination with a variety of other thin-ideal transmitters, may prime them to more readily accept future thin ideal promoting messages" (ibid.148). This in turn would affect their self-esteem and lead to body shame and even eating disorders.

In response to the growing criticism of the unrealistic body proportions of the Barbie doll, in 2016 Matel launched its range of dolls in diverse shapes, sizes, and colors. Its sales had started plummeting and other brands like Lego were taking over because parents had begun to make well-informed decisions about the risk of exposing their daughters to the dangers of eating disorders, and negative body image. Barbie has been criticized for its hypersexuality, despite being projected as a feminist through marketing. The doll's famous figure overshadowed any such claims. Renee Engel (2016) writes that body image develops from six to eleven years, and the process can be negatively influenced by media as well as toys. Body image struggles are common in pre-adolescents and can lead to eating disorders or depression due to a feeling of inadequacy. In a study in 2019, Harriger et al. concluded that young girls in the age group of three to ten showed a "preference for thin bodies and aversion towards larger bodies among young girls… simple availability of body-diverse dolls may not be a powerful enough intervention to overcome harmful weight attitudes" (107). They highlighted the "importance of continued efforts to encourage exposure to and acceptance of diverse body shapes and sizes in young children"(107). Through their study, Webb et al. concluded that "even brief exposure to online media images of contemporary Barbie dolls negatively impacts state-positive body image in young adult women relative to a non-Barbie control"(207). The doll is not a mere plaything, it has been found to have a definite impact on the development of young girls, however, longitudinal studies are still required to identify its long-term effect on young women who have outgrown Barbie with advancement in years.

V. Greta Gerwig's Barbie

Gerwig's *Barbie*, a comedy and a fantasy is a riot of colors 'Barbie pink' is its chief backdrop from the outset. Barbies along with Kens are shown to inhabit 'Barbie land', a world of endless parties, dance, and music. The fantastical world of eternal merriment witnesses an existential moment when one of the stereotypical Barbies fails to step into her arched heels as her feet become flat. The self-conscious humor is evident throughout as she is also haunted by the idea of death. The ultimate blow is dealt to her plastic flawless beauty with the appearance of cellulite on her smooth thighs. Her treatment for the 'malfunction' in her programming makes her travel to the real world. Margot Robbie delivers a spectacular

performance in this satirical, feminist script that undertakes a tightrope walk as it negotiates between the make-believe Barbie world with that of the real world.

Margot's character accompanied by the parodied male disempowered Ken from 'Barbie Land' witnesses the real world and its patriarchal structure which is the reverse of the fantasy world to which they belong. The real-world teenager, Sasha, disillusioned with the unrealistic Barbies for their punitive beauty standards, gives the heroine an understanding of how hated the doll is by the rebellious teenagers who hold the doll responsible for instilling feelings of self-disgust and inadequacy in them. Gloria, the teenager's mother, adored the dolls in her childhood and is determined to rescue Barbie from her moment of angst.

The film is a comment on patriarchy. Despite being feminist in its stance, it also salvages the reputation of the iconic toy produced by Mattel by tracing its history. In a surreal setting, the inventor of the doll walks into the film. Ruth Handler, whose ghost resides in the corporate office of Mattel, reveals to the malfunctioning doll the need to reclaim its essential self. She informs that the dolls were made to symbolize empowerment and inclusivity through sisterhood. She proclaims how the visionary mission of the company led them to reinvent the toy in diverse shapes and forms. The heroine is asked to claim ownership over her body and herself with self-assurance and pride. This eventually leads her to come back to the real world in flat shoes, and casual jeans. The film ends with the doll seeking an appointment with her gynecologist, thus claiming her sexuality as well.

The film has a special message about the life of women and the double standards that women face every day. In her article, Emily Burack quotes the monologue of Gloria, Sasha's mother in which she highlights the ironies of womanhood. Gloria in the film delivers a monologue with impeccable skill. It has been quoted below:

> It is literally impossible to be a woman. You are so beautiful, and so smart, and it kills me that you don't think you're good enough. Like, we have to always be extraordinary, but somehow we're always doing it wrong.
>
> You have to be thin, but not too thin... You have to be a boss, but you can't be mean. You have to lead, but you can't squash other people's ideas. ..
>
> You have to answer for men's bad behavior, which is insane, but if you point that out, you're accused of complaining. You're supposed to stay pretty for men, but not so pretty that you tempt them too much …
>
> You have to never get old, never be rude, never show off, never be selfish, never fall down, never fail, never show fear, never get out of line. ….
>
> I'm just so tired of watching myself and every single other woman tie herself into knots so that people will like us. …(from *Barbie*)

The film *Barbie* delivers a very important message about women and womanliness. Through its light-hearted jokes, it not only talks about breaking the glass ceiling but also about the need to be kind to oneself, and to embrace oneself unconditionally. It also suggests that humans could make the world more beautiful if both men and women would not attempt to subjugate the other.

VI. Conclusion

Studies have established that toys contribute to children's psychological and emotional growth apart from developing their motor skills, language acquisition, and self-concept. Several researchers and psychologists have studied the impact of playing with Barbie dolls on the body image, self-concept, and gender identity of little girls. The physical representation of Barbie and its range of associated household toys contribute to the gendered idea of femininity that is constructed through 'performativity'. Barbie is an extension of social codes and media images that reinforce the idea of a certain type of beauty in women. Blakemore and Centers in their study concluded that "gender-typed toys appear to be less supportive of optimal development than neutral or moderately gender-typed toys" (619).

In response to such academic discourses, Matell reinvented itself and is still evolving. This is evident from its diverse range of dolls available in varied skin color tones and curved sizes in a variety of professional roles. However, in the absence of longitudinal studies to prove a definite long-term impact of Barbies, it may be concluded that it is not just Barbie that leads to the formation of the self in girls. The toy is a small extension of socialization to which children are exposed through their parents, caregivers, media, and peers. Parents have a very strong role to play in developing the same. In the 2013 study by Kalmanovich, the role of the caregivers is emphasized as "benefits of inter-generational exchange and cultural communication are offered by the traditional games" which involve the active participation of the adults. A clinical report by Healey & Mendelsohn emphasized the role of parents. The doctors asserted that "electronic media have been associated with displacement of play-based caregiver-child interactions and reductions in cognitive and/or language and gross motor activities, with implications for child developmentand health outcomes (e.g., obesity)" (1).

In her pathbreaking book, *Perfect Women,* Colette Dowling explores, "how self-esteem, or healthy narcissism, builds as the child develops, and how in girls it often gets derailed through an important relationship with someone whose own narcissism has been impaired: mother" (15). She further adds how negative attitudes towards females are often expressed not just by media but by "people who are powerful in little girl's lives" (Dowling 55). She emphasizes the role of the mother in building self-esteem in little girls, which leads to valuing the 'self' without aiming to be 'perfect'. A self-assured person does not make constant efforts to seek validation, such a person is free and happy to be 'average'. Dowling maintains that the feeling of warmth and of being loved comes "from deep within, from having a core solid enough that through it we are able to maintain a steady flow of self-esteem" (ibid. 249). Being able to accept imperfections allows the "possibility of deeper and more satisfying

relationships with others" (ibid. 252). Quality time with the caregivers and role models in the family who do not encourage gender stereotyping is far more significant in the psychological growth and development of children. To conclude, it is appropriate to quote Dowling that "there is something spectacularly freeing about acknowledging that one has both resources and limitations and that both of these give shape to one's life" (249). Feelings of self-worth and self-esteem can be inculcated in children- for which the role of parents is far more crucial, and it can be provided through exposing children to a nonpartisan environment.

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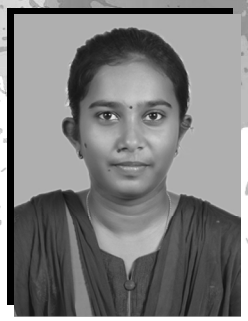
Towards Self-Actualization: A Study of Sudha Murty's *Gently Falls the Bakula*



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Abstract

As a major theory in humanistic psychology, Maslow's hierarchy of needs is universally recognized. Maslow arranges the basic human needs in a hierarchy that can help humankind to lead a content life. Based on his clinical experience, Maslow proposed this theory based on his understanding of the inner psyche of the human being. Literature, through years, has always been a medium of communication that showcases the emotions of people. In both psychology and literature, the inner psyche of the individual is revealed. Sudha Murty, one of the famous women writers of the modern era, delves deep into the minds of middle-class people as she brings out a realistic picture of society. This paper brings out the correlation between the theory of the hierarchy of needs and Sudha Murty's literary work *Gently Falls the Bakula*. It speaks about the unfilled needs of love and esteem that lead to the character's self-actualization.

Keywords: needs, gratification, relationship, materialism

Human beings are incessantly driven by needs and motives. The motivation behind every person is preceded by a need as everyone has a list of basic needs that are to be met. The word "need" can be defined as "a physiological or psychological requirement for the well-being of an organism" (Merriam- Webster.com). The need may be love, care, money, fame, etc. The need of a person can be fulfilled only when they attain it. Few needs like money and material can be gratified by themself, whereas love and care needs can be gratified by friends and family. The human drive for money and materials makes an individual lose value and ethics in life. Prioritizing money over family and relationships makes their life abstract.

Humanistic and existential psychologists provide more importance to intimate relationships, service to society and self-expression as the major factors contributing to psychological

health. Abraham Maslow, a humanist psychologist, proposed motivational theory in 1954, which describes needs and gratification. Abraham Maslow is regarded as one of the founders of humanistic psychology, human needs, and motivation. As a psychologist, he preferred a pragmatic way of proposing a theory on motivation and behavior rather than concentrating on psychological illness and other pessimistic concepts. Abraham Maslow assesses the needs of an individual that can assist them to lead a happy life. Human needs are organized in a hierarchy, which can be deduced from satisfaction and unhappiness. Maslow's theory succeeds in bringing hope and solving the problems of human society.

Maslow's paper, *A Theory of Human Motivation* (1943), provides a hierarchy of needs based on human-centeredness. This theory is taken from the direct clinical experience of the psychologist Maslow, along with the ideas from various great psychologists like Adler and Freud. Sigmund Freud's motivation theory explains how an individual's unconscious desires and psychological forces motivate and shape their behavior. At the same time, Maslow proposed this motivation theory that centers on fulfilling basic needs. Maslow's motivation theory emphasizes the basic needs of human beings. According to the proposed theory, one particular need depends on the other need's satisfaction,

> At once other (and "higher") needs emerge and these, rather than physiological hungers, dominate the organism. And when these in turn are satisfied, again new (and still "higher") needs emerge and so on. This is what we mean by saying that the basic human needs are organized into a hierarchy of relative prepotency. (Maslow 1943)

Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs has five sets: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Physiological needs form the base of the hierarchy, and self-actualization is its pinnacle. It is also seen that these basic needs contribute to the behavior of a person. For a hungry man, physiological needs such as food can gratify him, and it is shaped by the need of the individual, which Maslow elucidates as "the specific form that these needs will take will of course vary greatly from person to person. In one individual it may take the form of the desire to be an ideal mother, in another it may be expressed athletically, and in still another it may be expressed in painting pictures or in inventions" (Maslow 382, 383). Similarly gratifications of other needs are equally important because the hierarchy is arranged based on "relative prepotency" (Maslow 375). But there are a few cases where one need is skipped to reach the other need.

Literature is always considered to be a mirror and reflection of human life, while psychology is about reading human minds. The idea of psychology being incorporated into literature helps to go deep into the minds of fictional characters, thereby helping to understand various shades of a person. The behavior of an individual can be analyzed through psychology, where literature gives enough evidence through fictional characters. Analyzing literature through psychology aims at studying the influence of societal pressure on the emotion, behavior and thoughts of the characters in the fictional works. Humanistic psychologist Maslow points out the typical characters in literature, where the protagonists seem to be good, which is unreal.

However, Maslow's hierarchy of needs helps in understanding literature, when the characters portrayed in literary works are realistic in nature.

Writers like Anita Desai, Anita Nair, Kamala Markandaya, Arundhati Roy, and Sudha Murty, provide a realistic picture of the characters, by providing their success and flaws. Writers like Sudha Murty do not focus on hero-worshiping, instead focuses on the imperfections in their characters. Sudha Murty was born in the year 1950 in a well-educated family. She is a writer, engineer, teacher, and philanthropist. She is a postgraduate in engineering and the first female engineer in TELCO. Her husband, Narayan Murty is the founder of Infosys, who established it with the help of Sudha Murty. She established Infosys Foundation in 1996 to help the underprivileged population of the nation. She is honored with Padma Shri (2006) and Padma Bhushan (2023) Awards by the Indian government for her philanthropic work.

Sudha Murty has written novels, short stories, memoirs, essays, travelogues, and technical books. She wrote her books in English and Kannada, which were later translated into fifteen languages. Sudha Murty's non-fictional works are inspired by her real-life experiences. Her fictional works include books for children and adults that are rich in moral values. She received R.K. Narayan Award for Literature. Her work mainly focuses on middle-class families and their lifestyles, emphasizing education, women empowerment, psychological aspects, and morals. Even though she has written fictional works, it is highly realistic, which brings us an accurate picture of every Indian household. She clearly travels through the mind of the middle-class population and traces their success in the professional field and failure in their personal life. She brings the other side of wealth which pushes a person in a materialistic path.

Materialism is the primary area of discussion in Sudha Murty's novels. According to the dictionary, Materialism can be defined as "preoccupation with or emphasis on material objects, comforts, and considerations, with a disinterest in or rejection of spiritual, intellectual, or cultural values" (dictionary.com). Materialism disrupts the phase of life and stands as a threat to the culture and tradition of society. They create psychological, cultural, and sociological problems. The foremost reason for materialism is the psychological mindset of most people, as they judge a family through their material wealth. The major reason for materialism is the constant wants and desire for a higher standard and fame in life. In this process, they fail to understand the need to lead a happy life. Materialists are always concerned about society's view of them, which pushes them into high-paying and highly stressful lifestyles. Sudha Murty's works clearly differentiate between the needs and wants of the protagonists, which can be better understood by the hierarchy of basic needs proposed by Abraham Maslow.

The novel *Gently Falls the Bakula* by Sudha Murty presents the story of Shrimati Deshpande and Shrikant Deshpande, who are from middle-class families in Hubli, Karnataka. They are neighbors with hostility between their families since their ancestral period. Shrikant and Shrimati get married and start a life in a simple manner. Shrikant and Shrimati move to

Bombay, and Shrimati takes up a job to support Shrikant. They begin to live a happy life regardless of their financial barriers. Shrimati gives up her dream of pursuing a doctorate in history to support her husband. He soon climbs the ladder of success and fails to care for Shrimati. He buys many material assets for Shrimati, but the lack of love from Shrikant drives her into depression. She moves out from her marital life and goes to the US to pursue her Doctorate in history.

According to Maslow's hierarchy, physiological needs start as the most basic need. Maslow proposes that eating, breathing, sleeping, and accommodation are the basic physiological needs, which he writes as "Physiological needs are the most pre-potent of all needs" (*A Theory of Human Motivation* 11). It is considered the most basic of the needs because it defines a person's lifestyle. A person who is deficient in this can never lead a healthy life. Shrimati and Shrikant's families were once wealthy landlords and aristocrats who later lost their lands due to land reforms which drastically reduced their income, making them lower-middle-class families. They just had their ancestral houses and very few pieces of land. Despite their economic shortcomings, they were able to gratify their physiological needs.

After the physiological needs are fulfilled, next in the hierarchy comes the safety needs, which are "security; stability; dependency; protection; freedom from fear, from anxiety and chaos; need for structure, order, law, limits; strength in the protector; and so on"(*THM* 16). Safety needs can be fulfilled by the family and society. Financial status, social welfare, medical care, and other control in their lives come under safety needs. The emergence of safety needs can be seen from the childhood of the individual. Trauma-free life keeps them secure and safe. When the safety of a person is distorted, all the other needs become less important, including physiological needs. Maslow further elucidates safety needs as,

> The healthy and fortunate adult in our culture is largely satisfied with his safety needs. The peaceful, smoothly running, stable, good society ordinarily makes its members feel safe enough from wild animals, extremes of temperature, criminal assault, murder, chaos, tyranny, and so on. Therefore, in a very real sense, lic no longer has any safety needs as active motivators. Just as a sated man no longer feels hungry, a safe man no longer feels endangered. (*THM* 20)

Shrikant and Shrimati, who belong to a village in Karnataka, always felt safe. Their environment was peaceful despite the ugly disputes between their respective families. They lived in a protected environment and they had enough material wealth to move their life forward. They studied hard to fulfill their dreams and needs, though love blossomed between them they were never distracted from their goals since their school days. More than society and family, their education gave them all the safety needs they wanted. They both took up jobs to settle the financial needs of their family. Being a determined person in the IT field, Shrikant climbed the corporate ladder and Shrimati's constant support enables him to achieve greater heights in his profession in a short period of time. Financial safety and a peaceful society help them gratify their safety needs.

The love and belongingness need comes after the physiological need and safety need. It includes the bond developed from their family, friends, and romantic relationship. It is all about giving and receiving love. For the psychological well-being of a person love needs are considered to be the primary source, as it keeps them away from alienation, anxiety, and depression. Shrikant and Shrimati have always been loved by their parents. Shrimati's mother, Kamala is the only breadwinner of the family, while her father wastes his time playing cards. Though in many occasions he fails as a son and husband, he loves Shrimati and cares for her. Similarly, Shrimati's mother and grandmother love her and show her immense care. Shrikant, who lost his father at a very young age, lives under the care of his mother, who pampers him. Shrikant is the apple of her eye, and she spends her time fulfilling the liking of her son. Shrikant and Shrimati have a group of friends, keeping them cheerful and content. They never feel lonely in the company of their friends.

Shrikant and Shrimati get into a romantic relationship and feel like they are in a fairyland. They get married and start their life in a simple and peaceful manner. Shrimati longs for love from her in-laws, while they always wish to put her in trouble. Lack of love from her in-laws keeps them under pressure, yet Shrikant showers his love on her. Shrikant gets promoted in his job and stays busy. Shrimati starts to feel emptiness in her life due to the lack of love from her husband. Shrikant reaches glorious heights and improves his material well-being, but Shrimati lives in loneliness. She asks him to take leave for a few days and spend time with her, but he remains busy with his business trips. She also did not receive love from her in-laws, and what she needed at that moment of her life was, "a few kind words from Gangakka or a few words of appreciation from her husband, to quench her thirst" (*Gently Falls the Bakula* 133). Maslow clearly elucidates this situation as,

> Now the person will feel keenly, as never before, the absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife, or children. He will hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in his group or family, and he will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal. He will want to attain such a place more than anything else in the world and may even forget that once when he was hungry, he sneered at love as unreal or unnecessary, or unimportant. Now he will feel sharply the pangs of loneliness, of ostracism, of rejection, of friendlessness, of rootlessness. (*THM* 23)

Shrimati meets her friend Vandana and feels bad for being childless. Shrimati suggests Shrikant adopt a child, but he refuses and says, "Let us work hard, and start a charitable trust that can help many needy children" (*GFB* 198). During Shrikant's absence, Shrimati falls sick and gets admitted to the hospital. Even though her mother-in-law is aware of her illness, she fails to take care of Shrimati, and a private nurse is arranged to take care of her. Shrikant's absence and lack of love from her husband and family drives her into depression and affects her psychological well-being. Tim Kasser writes "strongly materialistic people often devalue close, intimate relationships and community involvement" (64), which is true in the case of Shrikant. His failure to show love towards Shrimati leaves a negative impact on her and creates a vacuum in her life, thus keeping her love unfulfilled.

According to the hierarchy, esteem needs to emerge after physiological, safety, and love needs. Esteem needs are solely based on the behavior of the person. The opinion of others about an individual contributes to the respect given to that person. Esteems are classified into two subtypes. The first type shows the desire for strength, adequacy, and feeling of self-confidence, the willpower to face the world, for freedom and independence, which is seen as a quality of the individual. In contrast, the second subtype deals with fame, glory, attention, recognition, dignity, appreciation, and status, which can be received only from society. Those who have gratified their esteem needs are productive and accustomed. On the other hand, "thwarting of self-esteem needs can produce psychopathology, especially insecurity, helplessness, and inferiority complexes. People who are frustrated in their esteem needs may cope with these difficult experiences by withdrawing and becoming discouraged" (Maslow 25). The protagonist Shrimati faces the same in the novel.

At an event, Shrimati meets Shrikant's business clients, his client Dolly praises American history and criticizes Indian culture. For the first time in her life, Shrimati feels a sense of insult, as her esteem is questioned, as her passion, dignity, and glory lie in Indian history. Shrimati, who is always proud of Indian Culture, gets irritated and replies, "Your history is neither ancient nor splendid. The success of America is the result of technical progress and the implementation of innovative ideas that were born in some other country. Your country's history is the youngest in the world" (*GFB* 122). Further Shrikant ignites her patience by saying,

> Enough of your lecture, Shrimati. Don't worry about your worthless subject. The world of business is so different from yours. History cannot feed you. Don't behave like a historian at such parties. You should remember that you represent our company and Shrimati is deeply hurt by his comments about her favorite subject history. (*GFB* 123)

Shrimati gets shattered by Shrikant's response. She argues with Shrikant for demeaning the history of India. She bursts out in anger and lectures him about the great history of our country and its pride. She criticizes him for talking about life in a profit-and-loss manner. Shrikant feels, "It was probably the first time in the ten years of their marriage that Shrimati had shown her unhappiness and disagreement with Shrikant's way of thinking. In that instant Shrikant felt that they were two strangers living under the same roof" (*GFB* 129). Shrimati feels that her self-esteem and self-respect are demeaned by her husband Shrikant. For the first time in her life, she feels hatred in her mind towards Shrimati, as a result of demeaning her favorite subject, history. For a person like Shrimati, who is always proud of Indian history and culture, belittling her passion stirs her emotions.

Shrimati, who was once the epitome of confidence, gradually begins to feel helpless and insecure in her mind. Her husband and his family fail to notice her sacrifice, but on the other hand, her friends show a high symbol of respect to Shrimati. Shrikant's junior colleague Harish feels sad for Shrimati and thinks she is an exceptional woman, "She cared so much for her husband and respected his work that she never created any problem that would affect

his career. ... she was like the lady who carries a torch and removes all the obstacles on the road to success for her husband. Shrikant had taken her for granted" (*GFB* 107, 108). The respect he has for Shrimati is well explained when he calls Shrimati a rare diamond in Shrikant's life.

Shrikant's school friend Ravi Patil writes a letter to Shrikant, "When I think of Shrimati, I continue to be amazed by her clear thinking and her wise decisions … She knew what she liked and she did exactly that. Shrikant, you are very lucky to get such a companion" (*GFB* 168), but Shrikant fails to understand her. Although Shrimati's friends greatly respected her, Shrikant's mother Gangakka, and sister Rama leave her unsatisfied with her esteem needs. Shrimati realizes she made her husband's ambition come true, and as a result of this process, she has not only lost her identity but also her self-esteem. It was Shrimati's desire to live a life of simplicity with love and respect, but at this point in her life, neither her love needs nor her esteem needs are met.

The hierarchy reaches the pinnacle with the need for self-actualization. The term "self-actualization" was coined by Kurt Goldstein (1939), and was later used by Maslow in his paper. Maslow refers to self-actualization as, "the desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (*THM* 26). Self-actualization varies from person to person depending on their other needs and their lifestyle. Self-actualization is presented at the peak of the hierarchy of needs because it is the stage where the individual attains their full potential. It is not about being perfect or achieving all their needs, instead, it is about realizing the purpose of their life. Maslow argued that the same characteristics of self-actualization are found in successful men like Abraham Lincoln, Albert Einstein, and Thomas Jefferson.

After ten years of her marriage with Shrikant and various disappointments, she realizes that she should live a life of her own, which could give her happiness and fulfillment. An array of thoughts flashes in her mind, bringing out the memories of being ignored by her husband and in-laws, which makes her feel that her life is worthless. Despite her passion for history, she prefers to support her husband, Shrikant, by giving up her dream. But she understands that her sacrifice made her life abstract and meaningless. She analyzes her life and feels that she loves Shrikant and history. When Shrikant becomes obsessed with money and fame, she realizes that their love is no longer strong, forcing her to leave and pursue her passion for history. Keeping away her emotions and feelings, Shrimati finds a path that can lead her to satisfaction and happiness. She gets a scholarship to pursue her Ph.D. in history from the U.S. Abraham Maslow defines this phase of life as self-actualization and says,

> A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write if he is to be at peace with himself. What a man can be, he must be. This is the need we may call self-actualization . . . it refers to man's desires for fulfillment, namely the tendency for him to actually become what he is potentially: to become everything that one is capable of becoming. (*THM* 26)

For Shrimati love and belongingness are the most important of all the other needs. She never wanted to live a sophisticated life, instead wished to live a simple life filled with love and care. She longed for love from her husband Shrikant. The core of love needs is represented by the meaning of life and the connection with other human beings, and many other relationships namely, parents, siblings, partners, friends, colleagues, and in-laws. Self-actualization in Shrimati takes place after her unfulfilled love and belonging needs and self-esteem. She understands the purpose of her life when her self-esteem is degraded.

There are certain characteristics of self-actualizing individuals that can be seen in the character Shrimati. Self-actualizing people are realistic in nature. They approach their life in the most positive way. Shrimati is the wall of strength behind her husband Shrikant. During the initial days of her marriage with Shrikant, she tactically manages life and gets to know the reality of life. She is witty in taking decisions, which at last makes her realize the value of life. Those who are self-actualizing can be seen as more motivated by their own growth than the satisfaction of others. Shrimati, who feels proud of her knowledge of history, wishes to grow on her own, by doing a doctorate in history. Those who are self-actualizing like Shrimati are very rare in our society.

Unlike most women, Shrimati suggests her husband stop working so that they can lead a simple and content life. She is satisfied with the money they earned so far and wishes to live a simple yet love-filled life. Self-actualizing people have deep relationships with very few people, but they are humanists by nature. Shrikant shows no empathy towards his servants, "He believed that a distance should be maintained between him and the driver. However, Shrimati did not believe in barriers like this and would chat with drivers and maids" (*GFB* 138). In her work *Gently Falls the Bakula*, Sudha Murty highlights that, humanists like Shrimati treat everyone with quality and care, despite their status.

According to Maslow, physiological needs are dependent on the individual, while safety needs are grounded in external factors such as family and friends. Safety needs are also based on partnership, friendship, and other social needs. Love needs include affection, belongingness, care, and love. It is based more on the emotional need of a person than the physiological need. Maslow proposed that once the physiological, safety, love, and esteem needs are fairly fulfilled the person will reach self-actualization. But in the novel *Gently Falls the Bakula*, Shrimati reaches the pinnacle despite the lack of love and esteem leads. It is shown that lack of love and esteem needs shows a psychological dilemma in her character, and as a result, she prefers to come out of her tangled relationship. A character like Shrikant fails to understand his actual needs and instead tries to use all the opportunities to gain wealth and fame. Money alone cannot buy happiness is true in the case of Shrikant, who forgets his actual needs.

When money is considered as a need on the priority list for an individual, this shows a lack of value Lack of ethics and values in life makes a person forget their basic needs, which in turn has an emotional impact on their life partners and family members. It is not possible

for everyone to reach the pinnacle of the hierarchy, but they might be gratified with the fewer basic needs they have. Maslow's *Hierarchy of needs* enables the understanding of one's inner psyche and behavior through the view of gratification and deprivation of their needs. Through Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it is understood that those who are not materialistic are happy in life with better interpersonal relationships, sound health, and contributions to the community. Objectifying money should be replaced by values, humanity, and empathy. Focusing on nurturing relationships, personal values, and helping others can make an individual lead a content life and build a healthy society.

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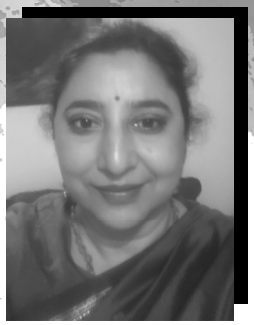
Free Women: Teaching in the Times of 'Glow Up'

Namita Sethi



Abstract

This essay begins by locating advertising as a discursive mode and explores its impact on women's self-image. It takes up the case of fairness creams as a particular example of branding as well as gender construction and the evolution of these productions through the years. It raises questions of the impact of feminist enquiry and global trends in gender studies on the advertising industry itself and the scope of future interventions.

Keywords: Hyperreal, Advertising, Branding, Gender identity, UNICEF, glow up, colourism, new woman, science of skincare

Advertising and the Identity Construction

Teaching in a contemporary classroom, involves constant encounters not only with ICT usage but also with social media that is ubiquitous in both the teachers' and students' lives. A 'glow up' is social media slang for positive transformation, usually in looks, style and appearance but also in the personality overall, and is often (though not always) used for young people coming into their own. In undergraduate colleges, the students learn not only within the space of the classroom through lectures and discussions, but also through peer interaction and use of media such as search engines, you tube, Instagram, OTT, films and advertisements in print and visual media, to name just a few. Advertising as a discursive media often comes up for analysis in the classroom. In any study of gender and popular culture, the representation and objectification of women in advertisements can provide ample material for rumination and sometimes, even humour. Advertising's thrust on appearing attractive, successful, good looking, well-groomed and powerful is now directed towards all and never ever has the discourse of beauty been as coercive as it is today in the times of selfies and influencers. Can advertisers' promise of a glow up for all consumers be studied as a text? Mired and embedded as a student/teacher/scholar might be in the larger culture of

consumerism, new strategies need to be evolved to counter the aspirational power of advertising, when it comes to selling products as well as dreams.

Advertising and the idea of the real

Advertising is aimed at selling products and in the process, it sells dreams and ideas. While advertisers claim to simply replicate and represent the actual world around them, the impact of advertising on the consumers' world view is undeniable. This is particularly true of the way advertisements construct gender identities.

Jean Baudrillard argued that a cause and effect logic could not be applied to advertisements because they work through floating signifiers, where the subject of representation does not bear any direct relationship to the product being sold, as the commodity being advertised is not the same as the one that the consumer takes home: "a simulation of communication is communicated which is more real than reality" (Baudrillard, pp 147-148). This hyper real is the way contemporary culture mobilizes subjects. He concludes that "it is reality itself today that is hyper realist." (Baudrillard, p.148). Experience in a "hyperreal" world (held in the grip of simulacra and where nothing is unmediated) is one in which media and medium are not self- enclosed, but dispersed around us, in all forms of experience, but nevertheless distancing us from the original object/artefact/text/phenomenon. One way of approaching the 'reality' of advertisements can be to borrow Devin Sandoz's interpretation of simulacra:

> The terms simulation and simulacrum are important to media study, as the simulation is total mediation without meaning. The content is shifted to a surface level, into the realm of experience rather than communication of truth, and the way that the medium affects us becomes our main interpretive focus. (Sandoz 2003)

One way then, of approaching advertising as a medium is to explore how it impacts the larger culture. An entry point could be the images of women: are they seen as producers of knowledge and resources or as typecast in limited roles? What are the ways in which we consume and internalize the hyper real world constructed by brand imaging?

Stereotypes: Old wine in new bottles?

Not only is it difficult to assess the seriousness or directness of representation in advertisements, there is also a proliferation of stereotypes in them. There are many theories about why stereotypes of masculinity and femininity abound in advertising. Instant recognition and reassurance are the reasons offered, most of the time, in websites devoted to advertising. A short advertisement, where every second costs money in the electronic media, must arrest attention and convey a recognizable message. The same goes for print media and bill boards. Simultaneously, most advertisers wish to reassure the consumer that they are not challenging the dominant social order in any disruptive way. Tradition, heritage and a continuity with history are examples of such loaded signifiers in advertising. This can be seen in the recent Fevicol (adhesive) advertisement where sofas are symbolically linked to the patriarchal identities that women taken on after marriage, where the furniture is both a marital gift/dowry and a

way of perpetuating a certain ideal of domesticity and domestic space. (Fevicol Ads- Sofa 60 years | Fevicol New Ad | Classic Ad | Indian Ads Company - YouTube). This ad seems to subtly normalize dowry and caste system under the cloak of humour and an appeal to classic Indian culture. The consumer is reassured that the more things seem to change, the more they remain the same and unthreatening, despite the nod to love marriages across caste/ regional identity.

Mark Poster has suggested that the hyper real aspect of advertisements cannot be dismissed as an ideological misconstruction, as Marxists seem to have done. He proposed that the viewer of the ad must move beyond "restraints of fixed identities" and develop a strategy to explore the processes behind "the subordination of the individual to manipulative communication practices" (Poster, p. 132). How is the viewer of an advertisement constituted? Most language and literature students (and teachers are language learners too) are not naïve. They do understand the use of irony and self- reflexive humour as distancing devices in narrative. How likely and willing are readers and consumers to be conned or co-opted?

I first worked on a paper on gender and advertisements as part of a language, literature, and culture workshop held by CPDHE in 2004. It is sad to notice that not much has changed in the last two decades, especially in the areas of body imaging. Women's bodies are still shown through a dismembering and disembodying lens. Advertising still propagates a terror of old age, wrinkles and being over- sized, targeting women, as an especially vulnerable group. Gender differences in ads are internalized by children as young as four years old, as pointed out by researchers.

Some recent statistics from a UNICEF study

More visual presence of women in advertisements, and more speaking roles than before, has not resulted in less stereotyping, according to a recent (2023) report by UNICEF, that can be found here: https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/13816/file/Full%20Report%20-%20Gender%20Bias%20&%20Inclusion%20in%20Advertising

While the screentime given to women is now 59.7% and speaking time 56.3%, they are still mostly depicted as dependents. They are nine times more likely than men to be presented as attractive compared to the number for (attractive) male figures, six times more likely to be shown in revealing attire and five times more likely to be sexually objectified. While about 8.8 percent of men are shown as married, 11% of all women portrayals are of women in their marital roles. Women characters are much smaller in size than men and most plus sized figures in advertisements are male.

The report concluded that:

> According to the findings, women are less likely to be shown in public spaces, in paid employment, as leaders or making decisions about their futures. These representations bolster traditional gender norms that girls and women belong in the domestic sphere as parents and caretakers, and boys and men get to dream about and plan their futures and

> reinforce sexist notions that women are less intelligent and humorous than men. Increased representation of women working, making decisions and as successful leaders can inspire girls to stay in school and help demonstrate different templates of women working both inside and outside their homes. (pg 4 of the report)

In addition, two-thirds of all women depicted in the ads were light skinned or light medium skin tones. Those depicted as attractive also convey the impression of being from the upper or upper middle classes, thus reflecting a colourist bias on the part of the advertisement industry.

In most of the advertisements, women are more likely to be shown either as a carefree young woman promoting a beauty product or jewellery or a sexually attractive and luring woman selling anything from tobacco products to men's innerwear. On the other hand, a home-maker is shown taking care of parents, in-laws, husband or children, quietly supporting their progress with a milk supplement, or supplying endless cups of tea or whipping food out of thin air: one advertisement shows the woman with multiple hands like the Goddess Annapurna, ready to deliver everyone's choice meals. The Everest spice advertisement has conveyed the slogan: "*Taste mein best, Mummy aur Everest*" (Mother and Everest produce the best tasting food) since decades, naturalizing the function of the Indian mother/wife to cook for the family. In the few advertisements where the husband and son are shown making a cup of coffee or helping with laundry, it is depicted as a progressive ad, deviating from the norm. If a man is seen in a bathroom cleaner ad, he is usually dressed as a doctor or sanitation inspector and called an expert, a professional consulted for advice when the harried housewife cannot scrub stubborn stains away from toilet bowls/wcs or sinks. The "expert" is usually a professional man, and occasionally a celebrity woman, dressed in western clothes, carefully distinguished from the "housewife" in Indian clothes.

While women are seen as cooking, cleaning and nurturing, men usually appear as makers of major decisions when it comes to spending money or promoting expensive articles like automobiles, insurance, houses or buying jewellery for women. The professional woman also makes an appearance, usually as a sort of superwoman who balances work and home responsibilities, or the upper middle class woman who can make decisions about small scale purchases for families: household items like cleaning products, hair dyes, toiletries, cosmetics etc.

The New Woman

However, some advertisements display a degree of self -reflexivity, especially when one views their sales campaigns and advertising strategies across years. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan has written about the construction of the "New Indian woman," as a subject position that reconciles in her subjectivity, the conflicts between tradition and modernity while also simultaneously erasing the "actual conflict that women essentially register as an aspect of their lives." (Sunder Rajan 129). This entails endowing this woman with a pan-Indian identity, that would appeal to the consumer across regional, communal, and linguistic specificities.

The new Tanishq advertisement does foreground the dilemmas of an urban professional woman trying to balance all her (self-perceived) roles and responsibilities. The Ghadi detergent advertisement that once showed a contradictory image of a woman in formal professional wear sinking her impeccable clothes elbow deep into a sink full of dishes (2004), in the role of an expert washer of dishes, now shows an advert with a mother trying to sensitize her callous son into appreciating the labour and dignity of a domestic help. The "emotional" appeals of these campaigns cut across gender and class stereotypes to an extent but such representations are still quite few, and work to question the system from within, without overtly challenging the overarching gender roles.

More disturbing is the appropriation of the subject position of the new woman and discourses of feminism by the sign system used as a code by advertisements. This new woman, usually depicted as attractive, urban, hygiene conscious and cosmopolitan is seemingly engaging with feminist issues: gender equality, sexual harassment, marriage rituals but also seen as negotiating a joint family and endless housework energetically and joyously, with no shadow of any conflict. However, the sub-texts sneak in, especially when the advertisement is aimed at selling a product that cashes in on women's insecurities. This constant peddling of presumed images of perfection drive teenagers and women to self -loathing: to fit standards of beauty applied to body parts, hair, skin, heels of the feet (anything actually). These standards are set by celebrities who often admit that their image and brand value is manufactured through the use of an army of stylists, nutritionists, trainers, influencers, camera and phone filters and sometimes through surgery and in clinic cosmetic procedures, even when the advertisements claim that it is "natural" and effortless (*bade aaraam se*). Endless videos on you tube, Instagram and television advertisements school women (including both teachers and students of universities) to look at themselves with concern and in need of immediate corrective measures, usually citing a celebrity to endorse a programme or product. The fact that beauty pageant contestants are "groomed" by experts till they unlearn their (normal/usual) eating habits and bleach and exfoliate their skin endlessly to compete with international fairer skinned contestants, even as the winners of the pageants have gotten darker in the last fifty years. Foucault's notion of the docile body: a body regulated by norms of cultural life comes to mind. The body becomes the locus of social control and the consumer is schooled into soliciting such control. We are constantly invited to examine our bodies and image in the distorting mirror provided by a camera, a phone or visual media, and the language of lack, leading to an endless desire to correct, providing an unending market for the consumer goods endorsed as a cure.

Lightening, Whitening, Brightening, *nikhaar* and Glow: the politics of skincare

From Afghan Snow, bleaches and fairness creams, the skin lightening industry has come a long way in a journey where the product manufacturer first diversified into lotions, potions and *glowtions*; and now face washes, body washes, serums and essences that promise overnight dark spot reduction on using the entire 'line', thus encouraging the consumer to spend on a greater range of products.

According to researchandmarkets.com, the fairness cream market is estimated at having achieved rupees 5000 crore revenue or more in 2023. The website proudly claims that the reasons for these large sales are:

Rising influence of media and entertainment, pressure of society to look well -groomed all the time, inferiority from colleagues at workplace, desire to try new products launched in the country, escalating number of young populations, etc are some of the factors which drove the market of women's fairness cream market in last some years and still driving.

Additionally, there are many beauty pageants shows organized in India which has aspired women to win the crown for the country, for example Miss World, Miss Universe, Miss India, etc. This has created a hunger in Indian women to look beautiful and fair to compete with other women of different countries. (The "India Fairness Cream & Bleach Market Overview, 2018-, accessed at India Fairness Cream & Bleach Market Overview 2018-2023 - ResearchAndMarkets.com | Business Wire)

Let us look at the role played by branding and advertisements in the evolution of Fair and Lovely, a brand that still occupies 70-80% share of the market (depending on whether face wash and other recent launches are included). Right from its inception all Fair and Lovely advertisements proclaimed fairness as a precondition for success: in both career and marriage. An early 2000s advertisement shows that a dark complexioned girl is perceived as double burden by her father, for being a girl/not boy and for being dusky. The company constantly maintained that a bias against dark skin is rooted in the Indian psyche. By lightening her skin and getting the job of an air hostess/model/sports commentator/ dancer (in various versions of the ad campaign) the girl could be a bread winner like a son, and hence empowered by cosmetics in her life. Over the last decade, the advertisements replaced the word fair with *nikhaar*, a hindi word that means glow or improving condition/looks, or revealing hidden beauty: the meaning varying across contexts. Though the product name retained the word Fair, *nikhaar* became its usp.

The brand then had to change its name to Glow and Lovely, in 2020. This was brought about by the decision of Johnson & Johnson, an American multi -national company that pulled out its clear skin products, perhaps as a business decision based on profits or perhaps in a bid to take on a black life matters stance and corporate responsibility. While Nandita Das, an Indian actor has questioned the skin lightening enterprise choosing instead to celebrate Indian complexion, there are voices of dissent Some branding and marketing experts think the campaign against fairness creams is a case of misplaced anger. "If, as a dark-skinned south Indian woman, I want to lighten my skin tone, how is it anybody's business?", asks marketing strategy consultant Rama Bijapurkar, author of *We Are Like That Only: Understanding The Logic Of Consumer India* (Penguin, 2007) and *A Never-Before World: Tracking The Evolution Of Consumer India* (Penguin, 2013). "Cosmetic ads tell me I won't be attractive unless I paint my face, gyms and slimming products tell me I need to be thin otherwise I am lazy, so why target fairness products alone? "she says. (quoted in The dark politics of fairness products in India | Mint (livemint.com), by Shrabonti Bagchi, 25 June

2020). The expert found a problem with "communication" (advertising), not the product or its demand.

In the mean time they also came up with the Fair and Handsome range directed at men. The promotion strategies were different. Instead of spouting the words "crystal shine", "laser shine" or "natural glow" as women celebrities and models do for women's glow creams, the male celebrity is associated with manliness and the action hero image plays a role in brand recall for the male consumers. The actor, known as "Bhai" popularly, promotes a concept of "*handsome giri*": a coined term that recalls the hindi word *dada giri*, evoking a dominant male, an alpha who throws his weight around. The simultaneous act of throwing away a woman's fair and lovely product in this ad, establishes the brand identity as exclusively associated with masculinity. The ingredients may not be very different of course but then the consumer needs reassurance about projecting a masculine image though using a conventionally feminine cosmetic.

A Fem hair remover ad, featured in magazines and print media in 2004, inspired disgust with hairy legs in women, by depicting a cockroach's hairy legs instead of a model's. The consumer was first warned about "disgusting glances" and educated how she could become the focus of admiring glances by using the product. The techniques of fragmenting and dismembering the female body, followed by a message of intense self- hatred, here directed at hair, were used to scare the consumer into buying the product instantly.

Fem seems to have changed its branding strategy in the last five years, by adopting more positive reinforcement. They are using advertising that seems at first glance very progressive and accepting of a homo erotic social order. The ad for fem crème gold bleach(Fem Ad on Karwa Chauth | Dabur Fem Controversial Ad | Viral Video - YouTube)features a lesbian couple observing *Karvachauth* fast (usually maligned as regressive) while their mother in law calls them a "*chaand ka tukda*"(a piece of moonshine, a term of praise for a fair woman's moon like beauty, and also, simultaneously, a colourist phrase excluding darker complexioned faces). The ad has both aroused controversy and praise. Another ad warns that not using the product will make the face dull: "*batti gul*": as if the lights have gone out drowning the faces in darkness. Another ad in the same series celebrates a single mother getting married, another progressive representation, but the model persists in clinging to the old fem product for marriage day is synonymous for the bride with a fair glow and lightening of skin. These are just a few examples where a change of vocabulary, a move forward from heteronormativity and other gestures remain just that: empty gestures that are literally just skin deep and reflect a rejection of one's natural skin tone. The bias against dark skin remains intact in language and visual representation. There is probably also a hidden overture here made towards transmen using makeup, hair removal and skin lightening, as more gender fluid norms enter the beauty industry. However, a trans person promoting cosmetics is usually more visible on youtube videos than Indian ads.

The vocabulary has evolved too. There are advertisements of fairness creams that feature a woman dressed in a lab coat conducting a dubious blue light test. A few years ago, Garnier

showed a famous actress comparing the dark spots on the face to those on a dalmatian puppy Garnier Light Spotfree ad with Priyanka Chopra - YouTube).The actor has now expressed regret at promoting a skin lightening (called spot free) product. Women are shown as examining their skin with a magnifying lens, trying to find imperfections to clear. One ad uses a shade card that the models hold against their face to mark their 'progress" on their fairness journey. Along with presenting images of 'doctors', 'laser treatments and skin scientists, 'tradition' is evoked under the garb of ayurveda, promoting a saffron or rose glow, turmeric ayurvedic (questionable claim) bleaches, "herbal" and "natural radiance" are words used often to mask the chemical components. Ayurvedic and herbal products follow a different tax regime, hence cosmetics may sometimes be branded as 'proprietary ayurvedic medicine,"in both packaging and advertising.

The lockdown induced by the pandemic, skyrocketed an interest in skincare promoted by you tube influencers and Instagram feeds. Korean beauty industry, with its glass skin trends and an equivalent obsession with skin lightening and 'clarity' has played a role too. Not manyare immune to the lure of these marketing sirens. Even European and American brands that sell self- tanning kits in their countries, "develop" lightening "technologies" for Asian markets, even if they now avoid using words like "fairness" and prefer to focus on skin "concerns" like melasma and hyperpigmentation, that Asians are more prone to.

Conclusion:

The challenge for academics lies in claiming access to feminist tools that lie outside the dominant discourse. To some extent, the advertising and beauty industries are also an important source of social mobility and empowerment for Indian women. The opportunity too, lies in evolving a discourse that examines how contemporary women and men negotiate self- imaging and gendered spaces. Buying cosmetics and skin care involves buying dreams and fears that advertising sells us. To speak from a position of complicity and yet exercise intelligence and agency while patting a glowtion: ay, there's the rub.

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A Generation Adrift : Qurratulain Hyder's *Fireflies in the Mist*

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Abstract

In the following paper I propose to critically examine Qurratulain Hyder's novel *Fireflies in the Mist* that describes the life and struggle of some young freedom fighters, India's Independence and overtime, Bangladesh's creation. It shows the greying of the greenhorns, their struggles, some remaining steadfast to the Marxist path, others going the bourgeoisie way, the resultant tension and disappointment. Like her other works *Fireflies* underlines that nations and nation states can undergo changes, but civilisations remain undisturbed by periodic upheavals for centuries.

Keywords: Partition, nation, gender, identity, civilization

Qurratulain Hyder was a remarkable story teller who could hold the attention of readers in her narratives with a large canvas, stretching across times and climes. She did the translation of most of her fiction herself as she did not trust other people with her work. The only exceptions are two novellas, *Sita Haran (Sita Betrayed)* and *Housing Society.* Her translations into English from Urdu are "transcreations" and mostly freshly written versions of the original, their plots frequently changed, the organisation of the books re-ordered, sometimes even characters changed. Naturally, no writer will trust anyone to "translate" her work in this fashion except herself.

Aamer Hussain in the *TLS* compared her to Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Despite being a popular writer in the subcontinent, she could not reach international recognition like some other Indian authors. Translation serves as a bridge between cultures and reading her in any language gives us an insight into her cosmopolitan, syncretic views about civilisations.

The moment India declared its independence at the unearthly midnight hour was etched in public memory as the country's "tryst with destiny". However, as a people India had come to that point only after a long, arduous journey, full of heartaches and heartbreaks, a journey

during which liberals turned revolutionaries and revolutionaries turned liberals. From that point on life took a qualitatively different tenor amid outbreak of massive communal violence, fratricidal rage and Partition of India. There was so much evil all around, but there was also a light flickering at the end of the dark tunnel.

Qurratulain Hyder's rather mysteriously titled novel, *Fireflies in the Mist,* catches that moment with all its poignancy. The novel begins with a group of college going revolutionaries in united Bengal living dangerously, planning bomb attacks on white rulers. Most of them are of some kind of Marxist orientation.

On the morning of Independence (Subah-e- Azadi), Faiz wrote: "Yeh daagh,daagh ujala, ye shabgazidah sehar/ Woh intezar tha jiska/ yeh wo sahar to nahin…." (This pock-marked light/This night stung morn/ This is not the morning/That we had been waiting for).

Placed in that larger context, the angst and disorientation of some of the revolutionaries begin to make sense. However, the sincere and committed comrades cannot grasp why their party is asking them to suspend the fight against the British just because Soviet Union has joined the Allied Powers (that include Britain and the US) against Hitler's Germany. Solidarity with Soviet Union has too high a cost for the nationalist left in India. A hierarchy of international Communist solidarity behind Soviet Union versus an Indian national struggle against British rule presents itself as a cause of great dilemma. The better educated argue for international solidarity as the straight-thinking cadre is not convinced why at all the struggle against the British should cease. There is tension and distrust in the air. The disarray (particularity of those with well-off backgrounds) is gradual, reminiscent of the West's Lost Generation).

The revolutionaries come from different socio-economic and religio-cultural backgrounds, all united in a close-knit group with shared dreams. There is the charismatic, LSE-educated communist, Comrade Rehan Ahmad, a fugitive from law, chased by British police officers and their *desi* subordinates. A master of disguise and playacting, Ahmad always remains a step ahead of his pursuers. However, he is accessible to, and constantly in touch with, his comrades.

Then there is Deepali Sarkar, an undergraduate student at the beginning of the story. She comes from a family of East Bengali zamindars. The family's fortunes take a turn for the worse when her grandfather, a lawyer in a small town of what is Bangladesh today, decides to move to Dacca and live in the lavish style of the local Nawab, Qamrul Zaman Chowdhry. The lavish living bankrupts him ultimately.

Deepali's father, Dr Binoy Chandra Sarkar, is a physician who could have earned a lot of money by treating the rich, but he prefers to treat the poor and live in poverty. Her uncle, Dr Sarkar's younger brother Dinesh Chandra Sarkar, is a revolutionary, and is hanged by the British.

Deepali's mother died early, and she lives with her father and his widowed sister Bhavtarni Debi, a simple-minded, religious woman who is given to strict discipline. With a gentle father,

who is liberal and non-interfering, a watchful aunt and two brothers, Deepali grows up to be a "rebel", working for the communist underground.

Deepali's friend Jehan Ara, the daughter of the nawab, is a gentle, caring young woman. Another of her friends is Rosie Bannerjee, the daughter of the local priest, Reverend Paul Mathew Bannerjee.

These are some of the main characters, who go through life as Indians fighting for freedom from foreign rule and the establishment of a just order. All of them make sacrifices for the cause. Rehan, a nephew of the nawab, refuses to marry Jehan Ara and inherit the nawab's huge estate which, besides extensive land holdings, includes profit-making jute mills, simply because he wants to live like a commoner among the poor. He is prepared to marry her on the condition that as his wife she would live and work with him among the poor. The nawab angrily rejects the idea. Jehan Ara and Rehan, who are cousins, love each other, but she is ultimately married by her parents to an older nawab who is a widower and an idler, but filthy rich nonetheless. A docile woman, she accepts the marriage to protect the family's honour.

On the other hand, Rehan finds a soul mate in Deepali and intends to have a civil marriage with her. In many ways, they are like each other: enlightened, leftist, ready to sacrifice for the cause.

When the Party needs money, Deepali steals her late mother's costly Balucher sari kept for her wedding by her parents. When the Party needs intelligence gathering right in the residence of the white district collector, she goes in to serve as the replacement of a maid who had been tricked into visiting her village. At great risk to herself she puts on a Muslim identity and works as a maid for some time.

Rosie Bannerjee runs with violent revolutionaries and is jailed when she and her colleagues are caught after a bomb attack. For their political beliefs, Rehan, Rosie and Deepali always end up causing great unhappiness to their parents and their loved ones. Rehan is the beloved nephew of the nawab, who had always cherished the dream of marrying him to his daughter. Till the end he tries desperately to avoid marrying his daughter to the other nawab and get her married to Rehan instead. He frantically searches for Rehan who is untraceable, out on a mission for the sake of the Party, which, after Russia's entry in World War II on the Allied side, backs the British war effort.

As the British leave in course of time, the country is divided into two parts, India and a new nation state, Pakistan. This is the second division of Bengal, the first one in 1905, which was annulled by the British following protests by mainly Hindu Bengalis. This one, however, seems to be more enduring as it is part of larger divisions. Now East Bengal is East Pakistan, the western part being a thousand miles across India.

This is a disturbing development, accompanied as it is by wide-spread violence, dislocation and expulsion of religious minorities–Muslims from India, Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan. Somehow, not really related to the Partition in any imagined or actual sense, the lives, dreams

and aspirations of a free, secular, socialist India begin to disintegrate inside the major characters' hearts and minds.

Events turn out in ways that shatter lives and ideological commitments. Rosie, who was fiercely committed to the Revolution, abruptly opts out as she is rescued from jail by a prosperous lawyer, who wants her to marry his rich, lawyer nephew, Basant Sanyal. She does not just drop the Revolution, but her ageing parents as well, for the sake of worldly comforts.

People feel strongly about the Partition even before it comes. Nawab Qamrul Zaman Chowdhry of Arjumand Manzil Dacca thinks it is the right thing for Muslims to have a country of their own as they are treated disdainfully by Hindus, especially the Bengali Hindu-zamindar class that had risen as a result of the rout of Sirajud Daula and the new land settlements by the British. Deepali, a friend of the Nawab of Dacca's daughter, Jehan Ara, thinks Partition would not be morally correct. The nawab, who takes his daughter's friend as his own child, patiently replies to Deepali's arguments, saying that the Hindu upper classes had become so spiteful of Muslims that it was no longer possible for them to live as one nation.

The nawab tells Deepali to read *Anand Math*,1 the bible for India's freedom-fighters, particularly Hindu Bengalis, to know how full of anti-Muslim venom and vendetta the book is. If such a book is the inspiration for freedom fighters across India, it is clear how disadvantageous it would be for Muslims to live as a minority in a country ruled by people fed on such poison for years.

In any case, the Muslim nawabs and zamindars are for Muslim League and Pakistan, and the Hindu zamindars and rich classes for Congress. But even some of the comrades (Hindu, Muslim, Christian) seem to have lost their way. There is an argument in the book that if the Muslim rajas, nawabs and zamindars were in favour of Partition, many Hindu zamindars and persons from other upper classes too were hobnobbing with the Hindu Mahasabha and British officials and were being driven by anti-Muslim prejudice. There is a secondary argument that the Hindu-Muslim mutual suspicions were not there before the advent of the British who, with the help of the upper classes, were spreading the mutual division and hatred. The creation of a novel like *Anand Math* by the first Hindu deputy collector was part of the divide and rule power agenda of the British rulers. This is seen as an act of betrayal and sowing division between Hindus and Muslims, at the cost largely of Muslims. However, the fact remains that the nawab is not the first or only Muslim to complain about Hindu majoritarian high-handedness.

Deepali is more amused than angry at her "Uncle's" line of thinking, nor is the nawab's affection and goodwill for Deepali and her family reduced a bit by the difference of perspectives on the situation prevailing in Bengal around Independence and Partition. Ironies like the nawab's son humming a Tagore tune while preparing for a Muslim League meeting only underline the complexities of life.

Deepali and Rehan would have made the happiest married couple, but events move so quickly that they are thrown apart (fortunately, religion is not the reason). As time passes, Deepali is cut adrift, has lost touch with the Revolution (some of the comrades are hanged, others drifted away from the Party, which has still got faithful followers, many of them unknown to her).

Around the time of Partition, Rehan is in India working for the Party, that to some of his former comrades of a deeper red colour, has become revisionist and reactionary. The Party Establishment feels that the revolutionary movement cannot be sustained without the support of the powerful Soviet Union, which has joined the Allies in the war against Germany, Japan and Italy. This means the Indian communists, allies and protégés of the Soviet Union, would have to cease the drive against the British rulers, who have become allies of the Soviet Union. This line of argument is satisfactory for Rehan, a high functionary, but not to the lower cadre, the field operatives. They take it as betrayal of the cause. Some of the best of them die fighting the British, ignoring the new Party line. Rehan and Deepali can understand the frustration of their friends, but are too mature to ignore Party discipline.

As years pass, Jehan Ara's son Akmal becomes an officer of the Pakistan Air Force and Rosie's son joins the Indian Air Force. When the two were toddlers (with similar sounding Hindu and Muslim names, but with opposing meaning in Sanskrit), Jehan Ara's father had jokingly predicted that they would be fighting each other on behalf of Pakistan and India respectively. This is some kind of a foreshadowing of twin nations born in conflict and condemned to live in conflict. Such an eventuality does come to pass and this only son of Jehan Ara is killed in India-Pakistan war. Within the next quarter century comes the civil war in Pakistan and Indo-Pak war leading to another partition of the Subcontinent and the division of Pakistan into Pakistan and Bangladesh. With this, history seems to have come full circle, at least for a while.

These events are accompanied by monumental violence, dislocation and misery of millions of people. Unlike most other novels and short stories on the Partition of India and the partition of Pakistan this work does not talk about mass murder and mass expulsion from settled life into an unsettled, uncertain future as refugees. This is about enduring human relationships within nations and across international borders, about politics, art and history, about the deep political faultlines that move the tectonic plates sundering apart settled communities and countries. Despite the divisions, an all-encompassing Indian civilisation still holds together the fragments.

Changing Contours of Nation States, National Identities

In her major novels the idea of indivisibility of civilisation seems to be in constant struggle with division of nation states and creation of new ones. There is a palpable tension between nation and civilisation with the former's fragility and the latter's endurance being evident to the discerning.

Historically, new identity formations, aided and abetted by the British, had begun soon after 1857 and the idea of separateness had spread to the United Provinces (today's Uttar Pradesh) with shrill demands of replacing Urdu with Hindi as the language of courts and other official transactions. Like in Bengal, this movement, too, was led by literary figures, Bhartendu Harishchandra being the most prominent, in Varanasi. The movement involved caricaturing of "Urdu Begum" and what Muslims construed as belittling of the composite culture (Ganga-Jamuni tehzib) of India that Muslims had built with Hindus.

Rajmohan Gandhi in Understanding the Muslim Mind writes about the state of Sir Syed's mind at this point in his life when he was posted at Varanasi. "He is hurt, even bitter, and his old friend Shakespeare (an ICS officer), also posted in Benares, finds that 'for the first time' Sayyid Ahmed is speaking about 'the welfare of Muslims alone'. … Shakespeare says, 'You were always keen about the welfare of your countrymen in general'." To that Sir Syed replies:

> Now I am convinced that both these communities (Hindus and Muslims) will not join wholeheartedly in anything.… On account of the so-called educated people, hostility between the two communities will increase immensely in the future. He who lives will see. (27)

Late 18th century-19th century India seems to be undergoing a steady identity formation in which the role of religious affiliation was emphasised. Sharpening of religious identities beyond a point in a multi-religious society is, quite obviously, inimical to national cohesion and the consciousness of a national identity. Regrettably, the role of "the so-called educated people," as Sir Syed calls them in the above quote, promoted separatism and religio-cultural supremacist views over commonly-held beliefs and common cultural values shared over the centuries. Qurratulain Hyder often stresses the point that separatist, mutually exclusive and contending cultural values in Hindus and Muslims were non-existent before the British came to India. These conflicts were subtly created and sustained by the British. Rehan informs Deepali: "…you would not find a single Hindu-Muslim riot mentioned by any historian. There were battles between rulers. No riots, till we come to the last century" (118). On another occasion he tells Deepali:

> All our monuments, our superlative handicraft, our music and dance and literature…all this belongs to better times. Our communal tensions and our poverty are the direct result of British colonialism. The badly exploited agricultural land and a growing population are bound to cause group conflicts (132-133).

The curdling of relations built over centuries of shared experience of living together into competing and mutually hostile collective identities was a product of British historiography, British administrative strategies and the overall survival and wellbeing of Empire. The following, rather long quote is from Barbara Metcalf:

> The first, and more complete, has been to recognise, in India as everywhere, the extent to which the writing of history since the nineteenth century has been tied to the project of the

> nation state…. (t)he British, imagined themselves: as foreign rulers, as imperial rulers, who arrived as successful conquerors. Muslims served as a foil against which the British defined themselves: by saying that Muslims were oppressive, incompetent, lascivious, and given to self-indulgence, the colonial British could define precisely what they imagined themselves to be, namely, enlightened, competent, disciplined and judicious. At the same time they imputed to Muslims certain qualities they admired like qualities of masculinity and vigour, in contrast to the allegedly effeminate Hindus. (Islamic Contestations 195)

Whether it is the movement against "Urdu Begum" run from Varanasi by the first, most well-known advocate of Hindi, Bhartendu Harishchandra, in the 19th century, or his contemporary Sir Syed's remark that Hindus and Muslims would never henceforward come together fully, or the earlier Anand Math—all of them feed directly into the British historiographical narrative referred to above: "…India was already a bounded entity inhabited by two religiously defined communities." (195) From "two communities" to two nations was not too far to travel.

By the time two mutually antagonistic "nationalisms" had taken shape—the first, Indian nationalism, which because of its involvement with "anti-Muslim Arya Samaj of Punjab and the Hindu militancy of Maharashtra and Bengal", made it look like Hindu, rather than Indian, nationalism; and the second, "Muslim nationalism." Religion and communal consciousness did not always seem to militate against Hindu-Muslim goodwill in society or Congress Party, even though the latter was constituted of among others, Arya Samajis, Hindu Mahasabhais, Bengali and Maratha "militants" and, between 1919 and 1921, supporters of the Turkish caliphate. Muslim League regularly shared the stage with Congress Party in the freedom struggle for years without the acrimony and conflict that grew as India's freedom drew closer.

Civilisational Memories and Composite Identities

Questions of national and religious identity are not always easy to handle. What do we say when the Nawab of Dacca's son plays a Tagore tune while preparing a hall for a coming meeting of Muslim League, which would pave the way for India's Partition, an act which would have made Tagore recoil in horror? That the young man is not just a Muslim, but a Bengali as well. That the creation of Pakistan addressed only part of the issues, which were finally addressed 24 years later with the creation of Bangladesh. Nationalism is not always easy to define or its contours easy to be delineated. Any number of Partitions would not possibly solve the problems, any number of new nation states would not wholly undo the subcontinent's civilisation, which is not Turkic, Arab or Persian, but subcontinental, a result of centuries of commingling of different peoples.

Hyder's belief in unity in diversity is reflected in Rehan's words:

> Always remember, there are two or more aspects of India … Hindu and Muslim. Just as you have two or more aspects of your deities. At several points these aspects merge into each other. But we must not ignore their identities and must analyse them specifically. They can co-exist peacefully (110).

Hyder underlines the unique position of India in assimilating parallel, sometimes contradictory beliefs. Talking of Qamrul Zaman's antecedents, she writes:

> They were also very different from the Khans and Aghas and Pashas of the West, because they were Indian. This inner duality had been no problem in earlier times. The modern concepts of Pan- Islamism and nationalism had turned it into a political dilemma (126).

Rehan, acting as Hyder's mouthpiece, again educates Deepali about the role of mendicants in fighting the British. Religion did not matter to them because they took the British to be outsiders and culprits: "In Bengal the Hindu sanyasis and the Madari fakirs had fought together against the company forces in 1770." Deepali learns that Tagore's poetry and music were inspired by Bengali Sufis like Sheikh Madan Baul, Shatolan Shah, Hasan Reza, Lalan Shah etc. (136-137)

The "two religiously-defined communities" inhabiting India were part of a larger trope. From the Empire's perspective India was neither a country, nor a nation in the sense European countries and nations were. Ramchandra Guha in India After Gandhi copies from a series of lectures of Sir John Strachey at Cambridge in 1888 in which "India was merely a label of convenience." In Strachey's words, India (is) "a name which we give to a great region including a multitude of different countries" (xiii).

The differences between the countries of Europe were much smaller than the "countries" of India: "Scotland is more like Spain than Bengal is like the Punjab." From Strachey's point of view, "countries" of India were not nations as they did not have any political or social identity:

> [This] is the first and most essential thing to learn about India–that there is not and never was an India, or even any country of India possessing, according to any European ideas, any sort of unity, physical, political, social or religious. (Guha xiii)

Indians brought up on such narrow ideas of country and nation were acting naturally when they were thinking of their own national and ethnic group as the "nation" to the exclusion of all other groups:

Hyder does not talk about the monumental violence, rapine and pillage of the Partition in her novels, but about the enduring human values and relationships salvaged out of the dying embers of the ferocious blood, thunder and fire of the catastrophe.

She also does not dwell upon the politics of Partition which, even without being mentioned as such, is a male project. She eschews a cause-and-effect narrative – what caused all that murder and mayhem. However, in this novel Nawab Qamrul Zaman provides a rationale for why the Muslim League was demanding Partition. At best this is only the Muslim side of the story, which seems to be short on moral clarity.

Creation of a new nation state always entails violence. In this novel, two more nations are created out of India at great cost to human life and limb, livelihood and dignity. Mushirul

Hasan in India Partitioned (vol.ii) includes the reminiscences of some well-known men who were suddenly forced to choose between the two countries. Professor Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi recounts how he had to hurriedly leave the Delhi University campus amidst mayhem and murder. His rare manuscripts and a typescript amongst other valuables were looted (181-192). Masud Hasan Shahaab Dehlvi, an Urdu litterateur fled to Pakistan after witnessing a murder in his locality. His area was fast becoming unsafe. He left thinking he would return once the situation became normal. He had to trick his father into leaving India. Otherwise, he would have preferred to stay back (193-205). Josh Malihabadi was enticed by the Pakistan government to settle over there. But, he came back. After discussing the matter over with Jawaharlal Nehru, it was decided that Josh's family would settle in Pakistan while he himself would be a citizen of India. He could visit his family for four months in Pakistan, Nehru suggested (206-217). Asif Farrukhi's father had gone to see off a friend to Karachi. He got caught in the rush and sailed off with him. Asif's grandfather wrote him angry letters that he could go anywhere but he should have informed. Their ancestral home in Fatehgarh was taken over by the custodian. The old man had no choice but to go to Pakistan. He was so ashamed to migrate to the new country that he told his neighbours he was going to Lucknow. ("Living in the City" 303)

Hyder went to Pakistan, then moved on to London before returning to India to finally settle here. Such people, disappointed by diverse kinds of nationalism–Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, British, Hindu, Muslim, had to find solace in the enduring values of human civilisation.

Gender

Be it India or the West, women have been taught to conform to certain ideals. Men like status-quo, for it suits their purpose of always remaining in control of their property and women. Jehan Ara is aware of her pessimism. She wonders if it is is "pre-destination" or her "sheltered upbringing" because of which she could not accept Rehan's proposal to elope. Once she is married she attends on her husband like a subordinate despite having countless servants. She sheds copious tears at his death. Rosie calls her a "singularly luckless girl" (290). Earlier she had pitied her: "She is imprisoned within the fortress of her religious-feudal- cultural pressures. She has nobody to help her" (101).

In *Fireflies in the Mist*, the female characters form a broad range of gender stereotypes. Uma Roy is an aggressive LSE-educated, communist college teacher from a family of rich lawyers in Dacca. Uma gradually changes from a fierce communist revolutionary to a disinterested, temple-going spinster. The other major female characters, too, gradually move away from revolution to settled lives—Deepali in Port of Spain and Rosie in Delhi. These are more animated characters.

By contrast, Jehan Ara, the nawab's daughter, is docile, brought up in a milieu where conformity with entrenched gender stereotypes rules: obedience to father and husband, appropriate etiquette and manners, personal sacrifice for family honour.

Yasmin Majid is on the other end of the spectrum. A junior member of this group of women, this younger woman comes from a traditional, working class family of East Bengal. She learns to be a dancer, and over the years grows to excel in it. This is as rebellious as rebellious could be, for dance is frowned upon in traditional Muslim families. She is a free-spirited woman who sticks to the pursuit of the art form she has chosen.

Jehan Ara and Yasmin Majid Belmont represent two poles of the Muslim woman's identity in *Fireflies in the Mist*. There are several others who fall in-between. There is Begum Qamrul Zaman, mother of Jehan Ara, neurotic and manipulative like many other feudal ladies of her times. There is Shamsa, her trusted maid, conspiratorial enough to eavesdrop on people and report it to the Begum with elaborate adornment.

The evils of child marriage and the treatment of widows is shown through Bhavtarni Debi and Giribala (Esther) Bannerjee.

After the Partition, East Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslims talk less of their religious identity and more of the Bengali civilisational heritage. The East Pakistani (later Bangladeshi) Yasmin Majid Belmont writes in a letter to "Deepali Didi" (she is junior to her): "We could not call ourselves Indian dancers although the Manipuri, Kathak and folk dances of both India and Pakistan are the same" (281). She also faced tough competition from classical dancers from South India who were apparently more "authentic." The post-Partition narrative is replete with such references to a common subcontinental civilisational heritage.

Her case reminds one of the famous singer Firoza Begum of Bengal. After Partition, her motherland was renamed East Pakistan. Though a Muslim, her art suffered because she was Bengali singer who was forced to adopt Urdu in Dhaka (Kabir, *Partition's Post-Amnesia*, 12-13). Ananya Jahanara Kabir begins her book Partition's Post-Amnesia by recounting Firoza Begum's trauma:

> The partition of these two countries dealt an irreparable blow to my singing. I became completely detached from everybody. The Gramophone Company [of India in Calcutta] kept asking me to record with them as a guest artiste, but how could that happen? Where would I live? Who would stay with me? These thoughts preoccupied me so much that I became mentally ill. I came to Dhaka, but I didn't like it one bit. (Introduction 1)

In Dhaka, she had to give up Bengali music for Urdu: "there was only *Kalam-e-Iqbal* here then; only *Kalam-e-Iqbal*" she rues (13). This turn in attitudes is worthy of further examination.

This novel has been rated as one of her best. Originally written in Urdu, its title was Aakhir-e-Shab Ke Hamsafar (Fellow Travellers of Night's End). The Urdu title was taken from a quartet of Faiz:

Aakhir-e-shab ke hamsafar
Faiz na Jaane kya huway
Rah gayee kis jagah saba

Subha kidher nikal gayee
(Fellow travelers of night's end
Faiz, what became of them?
Where did we leave the morning breeze?
Where did the morning go?)

Qurratulain Hyder scholarship is a work in progress. Her international recognition is growing as reflected in JMG Clezio's dedication of his Nobel Prize in Literature 2008 to some of the most prominent writers, including Hyder. This paper is a miniscule contribution to this blossoming Hyder scholarship.

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Footnotes

[1] The two translations I have read of Anandmath are vastly different. Basant Koomar Roy's is a sanitised version where all references to the Sanyasi Rebellion of 1770, Mother India as goddess and Muslims as enemy have been done away with. Lipner's translation, which came out in 2005, uses a lot of notes and lengthy introduction that places the novel in context.

'Understanding the masses': Gandhi's 'people' and Indian cinema

Anushka Nagpal

Abstract

This paper investigates a seldom discussed relationship between the most prominent leader of the Indian nationalist movement, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, and the newly emerging cinematic medium at the height of the nationalist movement, from the 1920s till the country's independence. Despite Gandhi's staunch opposition to the use of this medium in his mass-communication initiatives, the cinema industry made an early effort to identify itself with the nationalist movement, and particularly Gandhi, by embracing various thematic, stylistic, and ideological components of the movement. Filmmakers frequently portrayed Gandhian political culture by making 'bio-pics' on mediaeval *sant* leaders whom Gandhi admired for their contributions in tackling societal problems and issues such as untouchability. In line with the Gandhian project, contemporary filmic media echoed swadeshi ideals, which were thought to be useful in maintaining the capital intensive, industrial enterprise, on the one hand, and gaining a wider popular response, on the other. The Gandhian model of 'people of India' thus met with a market-oriented definition of mass or 'public' (as employed in film jargon to represent audiences to this day). The present article explores the relationship between political culture and cinema when, for the first time, 'people's' engagement was critical to the success of both political movements and the newly emerging filmic medium in India.

Keywords: Gandhi, nationalism, cinema, *sant* films, masses.

During nationalist struggle, the advent of Gandhian phase added new dimension to the Indian cinema (talkies). Gandhi's endeavour towards mass mobilisation to attain a uniform pan-Indian resistance against colonial power brought the apt use symbols (*Ahimsa, Dharma, Satyagraha* etc.) and icons (*Charkha and Khadi*) to the fore. Such political and social currents were well read by the Indian film makers. They were struggling to attract masses to cinema

halls during silent era. Cinema still couldn't receive social approbation as watching cinema was considered a taboo. The lower-class performers/actors in the movies created a social barrier for elites to accept the cinema in its early phase. The theme of nationalism, however, worked in film makers' favour in one crucial way, as Urmila Mukhopadhyay asserts

> "Despite these elitist reservations, the importance of the masses in political movements since the 1920s initiated a new phase in the nationalist political culture where the elite and the non-elite were not always viewed as binaries, but were often seen as two parts within a broad framework of the nationalist political culture". (Mukhopadhyay 422)

The political unification of elite and non-elite despite clear class division brought about a favourable change for both the nationalist leaders and also for the film-makers. The leaders could conveniently mobilise the masses and the film makers could use to it to their end. In this regard, the thrust focus was on attracting the conglomeration of elites and non-elites by linking nationalism with religion. The movie like *Raja Harishchandra* by Dada Saheb Phalke was made to attract masses (elites in particular) emphasizing on their Indian-ness or the national character through religion and myths. Therefore, elements of myth and magic were rampant in the early cinema. The movies like *Lanka Dahan* (1917) and *Shri Krishna Janam* (1918) were the products of similar thought process. There were also movies like Phalke's *Shivajichi Agrahun Sutaka* (1923) which emphasized on militant dimension of revolution. Such movies were inspired by historical events/personalities and folk tales surrounding them. Urvi Mukhopadhyay observes in the case of Shivaji cult:

> Targeted to exploit the regional market of Maharashtra, these films followed the narratives of contemporary historical plays and folk *powadas* or heroic legends which were already popular since 1896 when Tilak invoked the nationalist image of Shivaji to start a mass-based mobilization during the *Shivaji Utsav* (421)."

This pre-Gandhian phase of nationalist fervour drew inspiration from figures like Shivaji and the movies were re-fashioned after western movies like *Robin Hood* (1922). But this militant approach to nationalist struggle took the back seat on the arrival of Gandhi into the scenario and whole struggle got re-defined. Gandhi brought a unique idea which was based on non-violence, righteousness (*dharma*) and fasting. Some have opined that Gandhi had brought about the ethos of Bhakti period which conferred a saintly image on him which helped to mobilise the common people/masses against the colonisers. This image, however, became a matter of great concern in post-colonial discourse, particularly, in the subaltern reading of the history or historical events. Shahid Amin, for instance, in his seminal essay "Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921-22" discusses the enduring popularity of Mahatma among the masses. For instance, on 8th February, 1921 Gandhi visited the district of Gorakhpur in eastern Uttar Pradesh to address a meeting where he was given a huge welcome in the district. Although Gandhi did not stay in Gorakhpur to lead or influence a movement, yet 'Mahatma' as an 'idea' was thought out and reworked in the

popular imagination. D.G Tendulkar discusses of Mahatma's in 'tour of mass conversions to the new creed' in 1921 as:

> Remarkable scenes were witnessed. In a Bihar village when Gandhi and his party were stranded in the train, an old woman came seeking out Gandhi. 'Sire, I am now one hundred and four', she said, 'and my sight has grown dim. I have visited the various holy places. In my own home I have dedicated two temples. Just as we had Rama and Krishna as avatars, so also Mahatma Gandhi has appeared as an avatar', I hear. Until I have seen him death will not appear'. This simple faith moved India's millions who greeted him everywhere with the cry, Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jai. From Aligarh to Dibrugarh and then as far as Tinnevelly he went from village to village, from town to town, sometimes speaking in temples and mosques. Wherever he went he had to endure the tyranny of love (Subaltern Studies 3).

Gandhi's image, as Shahid Amin has pointed out, was 'not as he really was, but as they [the people] had thought him up', and it allowed for myths to circulate around him (Amin 2). Moreover, Gandhi's darshan motif in the nationalist discourse indicates a particular attitude towards the subalterns-the ordinary class, for whom the sole role assigned was to behold the Mahatma in person and become his devotees, while the upper-class and party activists helped convert this popular feeling into organised movements (3).

At the height of the of the nationalist struggle the Congress party also went on to spread the myth of the *Mahatma* at the height of the Gandhian movement. In those days of international politics, political figures like Hitler and Stalin were held up as the most representative examples of their respective philosophies. Gandhi's public image was a combination of two trends: the modern influence of the personality cults and a traditional image of the leader-emancipator of the soul as described in religious literature. This political culture also contributed to the popularity of biographical genre.

Early Indian Films – Nationalist Inclinations

During the silent and the early years of the sound era, mythological genre was the most popular form among filmmakers. The mythologicals, particularly Hindu mythologicals, continued to portray religious myths and emphasised on the deity's miraculous feats. The early depiction of the medieval *Bhakti* saints was styled in the mythological mode, where the protagonists were at best miracle-makers with power derived from unconditional devotion to their respective deities. However, these early images fell short of the contemporaneous Gandhian invocations of the Bhakti saints, in which the saints' social duties against caste exploitations and their sacrifices to seek the truth took centre stage. There was also an emphasis on "traditional Indian values." Yet, whenever a small reference to Gandhian imagery or ideology appeared on the screen, it was quickly suppressed by the colonial authorities. *Bhakta Vidur* (1921), a mythological film was produced by Kohinoor films, adapted from the epic *Mahabharat*. The protagonist in the film appeared 'as Mr Gandhi, clad in Gandhi cap and Khaddar shirt' was seen as a sign of agitation, for portraying 'a thinly veiled resume of political events in India', the film being banned in Karachi and Madras (Rajadhyaksha

226). The film was accompanied by a live musical score in most exhibition theatres in celebration of the Charkha, another Gandhian symbol, and the viewing was promptly banned. The film's director, Kanjibhai Rathod, was heavily influenced by Gandhi during the Rowlatt Satyagraha and collaborated with the owner of Kohinoor pictures, Dwarkadas Sampat, who was likewise known for his Gandhian sympathies (*Ibid*).

Regardless of the filmmaker's effort to connect themselves with the broader nationalistic styles cinematic renderings of the nationalistic themes received less attention until the 1920s. As evident from the *Report of the Indian Cinematograph Enquiry Committee* of 1927-1928, the educated elite saw films as a debased culture that had a detrimental influence on the younger generations. The effort to capture the attention of the huge and mainly urban underclasses through songs and dances was frowned upon, and films, particularly Indian films, maintained a subculture, despite the indigenous industry making substantial progress in the years following up to the advent of sound and technology and being identified with a vibrant domain of popular culture. *Filmindia*, the most popular film magazine in English of the 1930s circulated among the educated elite Jatindra Nath Mitra hesitated to describe the filmic medium as a vehicle to transmit educational themes such as history because of its historical association with 'mass' entertainment (Mitra 30). Despite these elitist reservations, the importance of masses in political movements since the 1920s ushered a shift in the nationalist political culture where the elite and the non-elite were not always viewed as binaries, but were often viewed as distinct units within a broader framework of the nationalist popular culture.

The Talkie Revolution

The introduction of sound to cinema in the early 1930s made the cinematic text more comprehensible to audiences as it could communicate through spoken words and songs: the devise that extended the limits of the filmic beyond the established visual signifiers. However, the talkie era also brought with it a new set of worries for business. First, the language barrier that emerged in India after the end of the silent film era was largely due to the fact that films made in different regions of the country had different cultural contexts around their distribution and display. Films like *Devdas* (1935) and *Sinhagad* (1933) were able to successfully adapt regional culture and literary materials for the screen because of the focus on language. Two of the best studios of their day, New Theatres and Prabhat, made these films. To succeed commercially, however, these studios relied on a more "all-Indian" nationalist political culture, which, like Gandhi's idea of an emerging "pan-Indianness," was seeking to build up regional aspects in an attractive way.

Unlike his predecessors, such as Tilak, Gandhi preferred to invoke multiple nationalist idols rather than a single one in order to appeal to the country's different class, communitarian, regional, and cultural compositions. He used a variety of icons, including Khadi and Charka as defining images of traditional values, Indianness, and self-sufficiency; Ram Rajya as the utopian idea of good governance; and mediaeval Bhakti saints like as Narsinh Bhakt and

Eknath as emblematic characters in transcending caste lines. Historically, some of these saints were essential in the formation of regional vernacular languages, in addition to their role as social unifiers. Tukaram, a known figure as Marathi *sant* poet, while Chandidas a similar figure with respect to Vaishnavite Bengali literature. It encouraged absorption into the mainstream nationalist movement, which complemented the region-specific identities invoked by these medieval cults.

Sant films effectively incorporated the key issue of 'untouchability' that was a central issue addressed in Gandhian politics, particularly following after the Communal Award of August 1932. Filmmakers of the times readily incorporated medieval *sant* figures as Tukaram and Eknath, producing commentaries against social divisions through interesting filmic narrative. Geeta Kapur, a modern art historian, has regarded *sant* films as a subgenre of historical significance. She situates these films inside a unique historical regime ruled by Mahatma Gandhi's spiritual hegemony. Despite Gandhi's disdain for cinema, Kapur observes enthusiasm among film-makers in choosing this medium as they attempted to touch the masses by developing cinematic storylines that, they presumably convinced themselves, were their contributions to the formation of a "national popular culture" (Kapur 19-46).

The origins of the *sant* films genre may be traced all the way back to the 1920s, as mentioned earlier. However, earlier films placed a greater emphasis on Hindu mythology, with a particular focus on the depiction of miraculous events. In this era of silent film, the profound message of love, equality, and nonviolence that was conveyed through the Bhakti tradition of mediaeval times was left "unspoken" on the celluloid. Therefore, the advent of sound led to an easier dissemination of the messages of the *sants* through songs and dialogues, but it also permitted film-makers to place political statements that were fundamental to the ideology of Gandhi. For reference, New Theatres' one of the popular studios of the time its director Debaki Bose came up with the film, *Chandidas* (1932). The film thematically infused the caste/untouchability dimension in the love affair of the protagonist Chandidas with the widow washer woman Rami. The story of Chandidas revolves around a religious enthusiast Chandidas, who is a disciple of the temple's priest and next-in-line successor after the temple's priest. Chandidas, being an upper caste commits a sin of loving a lower caste girl, Rami. She is the sister of washer-man, Baiju and cleans the compound of temple. A typical zamindar, Gopinath, with his vicious scheme tries to trap Rami but she seems to be aware of the upper caste's ploy to exploit lower caste women and counters him. Gopinath, frustrated, plans to hurt both Rami as well as Chandidas by exposing their affair which would cost Chandidas, his priesthood. But the idea that religion could be toyed with at the hands of upper castes without much ado disturbs Chandidas. Placing non-discriminating love and humanity over religion and priesthood, he decides to shun the ways of the society and leaves the village with lower caste family. Nitin Bose's *Chandidas* (1934), was a remake of Bengali film with the same name *Chandidas* directed by Debaki Bose in 1932, which was also a big hit. After the success of *Chandidas*, Debaki Bose made some more devotional films namely *Meerabai* (1931), *Puran Bhagat* (1933) followed by *Vidyapati* (1937). Also, Bose was an editor for a

local publication sympathetic to the nationalist cause and an activist who had taken part in the Non-Cooperation movement.

Bombay based Sagar Film Company's Gujarati film *Narsinh Mehta* (1932) was based on the life of saint poet Narsinh Mehta. The film took inspiration from Gandhi's teachings. Writer Anandashankar Dhruv claims that the movie "adhered to the Gandhian interpretation of Narsinh Mehta's work on Harijan" (Rajadhyaksha 238). Filmmaker Nanubhai Vakil, a big fan of Gandhi, chose to make a movie about Narsinh Mehta, from whom Gandhi adopted the term "Harijan" to describe the caste of people he considered inferior. Gandhi made Prabhatiyans, or morning prayers, like Vaishnava Jana To, famous by praying to them every day at Sabarmati Ashram.

Sant Tukaram (1936) by Prabhat Studios is perhaps the most widely acknowledged film in the *sant* genre. After losing his first wife and child in a famine, Tukaram dedicates his life to God. He neglects his second wife and their two children. Salomalo, a Brahmin who presents himself as a scholar prefers to stay in the company of a courtesan. However, Salomalo is jealous of Tukaram's intellect and decides to steal Tukaram's poems. Since, Tukaram is a shudra by caste, Salomalo criticises him of interpreting the Vedas. Salomalo then invites Pandit Rameshwar Shastri who orders Tukaram to throw away his poems into the river and never to discuss religion again in public. After throwing his poems in the river, Tukaram sits by the river for thirteen days with his family, fasting, until God returned his poem. During this time Shastri falls ill and feels that this punishment is a result of injustice towards Tukaram. He, thus becomes Tukaram's follower. Further, Tukaram protects Shivaji who was attacked by the Mughals. Both Shastri and Shivaji become Tukaram's disciple. In the end, Tukaram invokes God as he is. ready to leave the world. His wife rejects his appeal of renouncing the world together and decides to look after her family. So, Tukaram alone renounces the world.

This filmic story also emphasises Tukaram's rejection to lead his people, even when approached by Marathi leader Shivaji. By invoking the image of Shivaji, the narrative not just places Tukaram in the 'glorious' period of Maratha history, but also validates Tukaram's cult's influence on the resurgence of Maratha heritage since Tilak. This representation of Tukaram's picture also claimed a triumph of Gandhian doctrine over Marathi militarism in modern political life, with Tukaram rising above even Shivaji for his inclusive philosophy. Tukaram's sanyasi self is also gratified when he is portrayed moving up to the sky amid a large multitude of people. This crowd scene also draws an interesting parallel with Gandhi's meetings, with masses depicted as though in a trance while witnessing Mahatma Gandhi's *darshan*.

In the year 1939, K.M Munshi, Congress leader and then home minister of Bombay Provincial Government, praised the film for its message which 'allied with national tendencies. The film gained notoriety for being the first to depict what is now referred to as the "real India" on screen because of its focus on depicting the ordinariness of life in a rural village.

According to the well-known film critic B.D. Garga, this portrayal could have offered an alternative to the then-emerging 'left-wing demand' for social realism (B.D. Garga 17). It was widely acknowledged that the existence of village communities as portrayed in *sant* films provided an authentic portrayal of the realities of India and touched on the morality of regular people.

The remarkable success of these films was soon followed up by a number of *Sant* films namely *Meerabai* (1933), *Dharmatma* (1935), *Sant Tulsidas* (1939), and *Sant Dnyaneshwar* (1940). Among these, the film *Dharmatma* (1935) celebrated the life and myths surrounding the saintly figure of Eknath. The film directly focussed on the issue of untouchability, especially in a scene where Brahmin Eknath visits a family of untouchables and dines with them. Before its release, the film *Dharmatma* was scrutinised for its prior title *Mahatma*, and the censor board demanded the studio change its title. V.Shantaram, the film's director, therefore changed the title to *Dharmatma*. The film *Sant Dnyaneshwar* produced by Prabhat studios with a similar directorial team as *Tukaram* was much appreciated. The film's aesthetic, however, deviated slightly from that of *Sant Tukaram* in its profound depiction of miracle scenes, which produced in a more awestruck audience's response. Despite the emphasis on miracles, socialist reviewer K.A. Abbas praised the film's realistic representation of rural India, in which a human viewpoint, rather than the supernatural, dominated the story. In his open praise for *Sant* films, he categorically stated that, despite the crowd-pleasing tendency to show miracles, this *Sant* genre "could preach equality of mankind in defiance of the mighty orthodoxy, only Gandhi can give message of peace and non-violence to the world torn by war and fratricide" (Abbas 33-35). Indeed, Gandhi's ideology was not only related to the tradition of the mediaeval saints, but his vision of an Indian country and his public persona were remade in premodern times to capitalise on a ready national market.

Conclusion

The *sant* films of the 1930s and 40s not only recreated the magic of seeing images of gods and goddesses or hearing stories from the Puranas on the big screen; they also portrayed the *sants* sermons as a masquerade on Gandhi's project, making the two seem morally and politically inseparable. In conclusion, it may be asserted that Gandhian political culture fostered an environment in which the reception of films and the cinema was dependent on the "reading competence" of the masses(Burch,2). The political trajectory of the country was something Gandhi helped influence. In spite of his support for disciplined mass movements, which he could then command as a leader, he was able to educate the masses to improve their 'reading competency' by imputing new meanings to ancient signifiers like *Charka*, *Khadi*, and the *sant* tradition. The mainstream media, especially the domestic film business, went in headfirst and used these resources to create its own audience.

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The Poetic Voice of Dissent: Exploring Social Criticism in Jayanta Mahapatra's Selected Poems

Arabati Pradeep Kumar

Abstract

This research article explores the role of a poet as a social critic through an in-depth analysis of the selected poems of Jayanta Mahapatra, one of the most renowned Indian English poets. The poet's works are characterised by his shrewd observation of social issues, political turmoil, and cultural contradictions prevalent in India. Drawing inspiration from his own life experiences, Mahapatra raises vital questions and highlights the nuances of society through his introspective and thought-provoking poetry. This article analyses Mahapatra's poems to unravel his role as a social critic, shedding light on the impact of his works on contemporary Indian society. It examines how Mahapatra, as a poet and social critic, challenges societal norms, conveys ethical concerns, and advocates change through his literary expressions. This study aims to uncover the underlying social and philosophical themes that permeate his poetry. The purpose of the study is to highlight the underlying social dilemmas, recurring motifs, and the poet's unique artistic vision.

Keywords: Social Critic, Poetry, Culture, Dilemma, Ethical Concern, Contemporary, Indian Society, Qualitative Research Method, Philosophical, Motif

Introduction

Literature often acts as a mirror of society, encapsulating the thoughts, emotions, and experiences of individuals within a particular cultural context. Jayanta Mahapatra is one of the most celebrated of Indian English poets. Known for his evocative and powerful poetry, Mahapatra's works often embody a sense of socio-political consciousness. He delves into various societal issues, including gender inequality, caste discrimination, political corruption, poverty, and environmental degradation. Through his vision of society, he emphasizes the importance of individual voices and the need to address collective injustices. This research article analyses Mahapatra's poems to unravel his role as a social critic, shedding light on the

impact of his works on contemporary Indian society. Today, his is indubitably a powerful poetical voice influencing a huge number of readers both in India and across the globe. In an interview conducted by Nandini Sahu, published in *Boloji.com*, he replied to the question asked by Sahu: "Jayanta-da, could you please tell me, why is poetry important to you?" (*In Conversation with Jayanta Mahapatra, n.d.*)

> Poetry has been a cathartic means for me to purge myself of the various imperfections of life. This has been more so in the beginning stages of my creative career, I Suppose. Poetry's cleansing effect was important for me; the sort of relief I experienced when I finished a poem filled my whole being. Gradually, however, the sharpness of this feeling disappeared as I went from poem to poem. And poetry became crucial for me. It became a need. It's strange how certain things come into your life and never let you go. Like a trap. And so, poetry held me, like a mysterious disease, or an illness. (*In Conversation with Jayanta Mahapatra, n.d.*)

His amazing poems have a distinctive feature of being deeply rooted in the Odisha's soil. It is to be noted that Mahapatra lived most of his life in Cuttack. So, his long-lasting attachment with Cuttack in particular and the cultural heritage of the state of Odisha have contributed immensely to the shaping of his poetic prowess and sensibility. M.K. Naik states that

> Mahapatra's poetry is redolent of the Orissa scene and the Jagannatha temple at Puri figures quite often in it. His most characteristic note is one of quiet but often ironic reflection mostly concerning love, sex and sensuality in the earlier poetry and the social and political scene in some of the later poems. (Naik 207)

Mahapatra's poems vividly portray the harsh social realities of Orissa like poverty, hunger, prostitution, etc. His poetry always reflects what he observes the everyday happenings of his society. K. R. S. Iyengar remarks: "Jayanta is a close observer of men and things" (Iyengar 713).

His ability to describe in his poems the events taking place in his surroundings with wonderful imagination and satirical tone is laudable. Besides, Mahapatra makes the readers derive their pleasure from his aesthetic poetry and also make them understand the angst created by certain issues affecting the society. All his poetic characters include the poor and general fabric of the society like slum- dwellers, cobblers, starving street kids, prostitutes, concubines, orphans, etc. He thematically writes in his poems about the varied cultures and traditions of Odisha. His uniqueness lies in his exploratory way of writing poetry with the striking rhythmic pattern. Sachidananda Mohanty says that "Jayanta Mahapatra's poems create layers of meaning through irony and empathy; they carry a rich repertoire of memories, myths and metaphors from many lands and cultures, especially his own State, Odisha; they capture the lived experience in revelatory terms, creating the poetic artefacts that Walter Benjamin spoke of" (Mohanty).

Research Methodology

This research article uses a qualitative research method to analyse the selected poems from Mahapatra's collections. Through close reading and thematic analysis, this research study aims to reveal the underlying social dilemmas, recurring motifs, and the poet's unique artistic vision. The analysis is supported by references to relevant secondary literature, critical essays, and interviews with the poet himself. This multidimensional approach enables a comprehensive understanding of Mahapatra's role as a poet and social critic.

Discussion

Mahapatra employs wonderful imagery in his poems. Albeit he draws his images from his reminiscences and contemplates on philosophical matters like birth, death, time, etc., he is certainly not blind to the contemporary societal problems. Although he sometimes he takes his readers of his poems into the mythical and historical past of Odisha, telling them how his descendants were butchered on the river banks of the Daya by the Ashoka's army. He also draws the attention of his readers to the unimaginable plight of the artisans with whose never-ending labour the Sun temple was built at Konark under a dictatorial king. The poet is sensitive to the present situation of Odisha that clearly reflected in his poems. Therefore, the poet emerges as a thorough social critic, using effective images portraying the evils of the society.

> It is true I held up my face to the world
> hoping it would pull me through
> the crowds preying the old worn paths,
> my morals like a scarf pulled over my head,
> but each time I found the empty seat beside me
> dripping with worms and excrement; each time
> the demands of a war, a flood, a murder or rape
> startled me with the salt taste of my blood. (*The False Start* 62)

A writer endowed with social consciousness is always aware of the contemporary political and social situation surrounding him or her. The poems of Mahapatra depict the naked realities of his society. As mentioned earlier, Mahapatra's poems speak of beggars, poverty, prostitutes, starvation, of "Leper's mutilated limb" (*Life Signs* 8), of people who "grow like tough coarse grass from cracked pavements" (*A Father's Hours* 38), "Fisherman's broken shacks", "Of nameless slums" (*Burden of Waves and Fruit* 17) and distinctive scenes of India like that of "a six-month-old child's crawling across the dung-washed floor" (*Life Signs* 2). Penury is "huddled in there / If that's what one is looking for" (*Waiting* 3).

In "*Svayamvara and other poems*", Mahapatra describes ordinary and deplorable people who are seen on the streets. He depicts the predicament of a singer in the train, who becomes the chief character in the poem namely "A blind singer in the train". The singer sings different songs begging for money to make his livelihood. The poet sympathises thus:

Between successive halts of the guzzling
train, this bamboo-stabled man, rooted
this night, flutters stone wings as he faces
the clash of silver, the prim dawn-light
rushing past his pox-hollowed eyes.
The academic ones walk to his calculated
steps across the packed box, hear the faded
stick's tap of hope in the daily functions of
spider- flesh. Together they induce a spirit (*Svayamvara* 5)

Mahapatra portrays truthful and miserable pictures like:

A man begs for alms, sitting under an old tree
Holding his paralyzed boy with damp, awkward arms. (*A Rain of Rites* 55)

As realistically depicted by Mahapatra, the children are not at all the happy ones, living in the illusory world being unaware of the sufferings of their surroundings. The fact remains that they are rather the "diseased hollow-cheeked children" (*Life Signs* 9). They are conspicuously denoted by sheer negligence and abject penury. The poet also describes the "naked children, with 'virus of pox" (*A Rain of Rites* 43) picturesquely. In the temple street of Puri:

Children, brown as earth, continue to laugh
at cripples and mating mongrels.
Nobody ever bothers about them. (*A Rain of Rites* 16)

Another notable image of social problem that the poet mentions is hunger. Several children and others face the perpetual problem of hunger. This problem is omnipresent in the entire nation. Rain that falls the entire day incessantly makes millions of bellies suffer.

Its rain again. Going on all day.
Like hunger, you would think this country
Has nothing but seven hundred million bellies.

(*Burden of Waves and Fruit* 29)

Besides the children, the poet depicts the inexplicable and ignominious plight of the Indian women as well. He says that these women are silent sufferers. The circumstances force them to keep their eyes closed to several things in their lives, making the "poise of a flower" (*A Rain of Rites* 6). He highlights a woman's ignominy, hunger, and starvation, and sardonically a woman's welfare.

... drying herself with her only wet sari after her bath,
and her nameless solitude. (*Life Signs* 25)

In fact, these women are living-dead people. Thus, the poet aptly asserts that these women "find the secret of dying / without realizing that they are dying". (*Life Signs* 25). In the

poem: *Death of A Nameless Girl In Bhopal, December1984*, the poet remarks sympathetically that many people died due to the leakage of deadly toxic gas (Methyl Isocyanate) at the Union Carbide India Limited, a pesticide plant in Bhopal, on 2 and 3 December 1984. This kind of tragedy has turned out be a new feature despite the fact we are well-acquainted with death caused by hunger, starvation, etc.: "there has always been starvation here, man / yes, we are used to it" (*A Whiteness of Bones* 45). The lines mentioned above epitomise the agony of a girl whose life is conditioned by the typical Indian social issues. Further, the poet describes the unhygienic and pathetic living conditions of the Indian slum-dwellers. He thinks that a slum-dweller's life in India is absolutely neglected and meaningless.

> The worn out of India
> Holds the weak eyes of dumb, solitary poets
> Who die alone,
> Silences by the shapelessness of life alive. (*Shadow Space* 26)

One of the poet's most important poems from the perspective his social criticism is *Hunger*. This poem thematically portrays the social evils like poverty and sexuality, which are intertwined in this context. This poem depicts the life of a hungry fisherman and hungry daughter. As both of them are poor, hungry, and penniless, the daughter has to become a prostitute to serve their basic needs of their life. A customer wishing to satisfy his sexual desires visits her. Surprisingly, the fisherman even goes to the extent of openly telling lies that her daughter has just attained the age of fifteen years:

> I heard him say: My daughter, she's just turned fifteen...
> Feel her. I'll be back soon; your bus leaves at nine.
> The sky fell on me, and a father's exhausted wile.
> Long and lean, her years were cold as rubber.
> She opened her wormy legs wide. I felt the hunger there,
> the other one, the fish slithering, turning inside. (Hunger 24).

Mahapatra is not only empathetic towards the poor people, he also expresses deep humanitarian concern to the prostitutes who are recurrently read about in his poems. The poet's role is not only to serve the aesthetic purpose but also to bring about social awareness in the society. His empathy shown to the disadvantaged and underprivileged can serve as a testimony to his special concern shown by championing the cause of social issues. He says that the women inevitably take the profession of prostitution only out of hunger and abject penury. It is certainly humiliating and pitiable profession by means of which they make their both ends meet. In the poem, *In Village Evening*, while Ahalya is about to retire to bed, the reader finds

> A guilty look on her face
> Her promise to feed her son
> Morning milk-curds another faraway dream. (*Shadow Space* 31)

In the contemporary world, there is a noticeable absence of the sensitivity of love:

> Now a man knows only two ways
> For dealing with a stray woman
> He rapes her
> And he kills her. (*Dispossessed Nests* 33)

The poet's effective use of imagery of city, full of dust, chaos, gloom, and darkness is noteworthy.

> the sad voice of the earth is crouched in the city's chaos
> the fluttering flag doesn't remember anything further than that
> a light ventured out into the world and was lost
> and the last hours of memory hold only darkness. (Bare Face 20)

The poet expresses his annoyance with the big speeches and discussions on socialism because nobody practises it. In India, we have many socialists who are only preachers, but not practitioners. At the same time, communist thinking does not attract him either.

> At times in the dark the mongrel of socialism
> Wails into dreams of sleeping millions,
> Smoke of useless burning tastes sickly on the tongue
> And children struggle with their last summers
> Like young communists bent with the weight of India
> A startled sun on the cold embers of their eyes.
>
> (*Burden of Waves and Fruit* 22)

The poet feels that political corruption is not the only issue causing misery in the society. But it is to be noted that there lies intrinsic cruelty in the very human nature. Mahatma Gandhi who practised the doctrine of non-violence was at last assassinated, and since his assassination, our country has been suffering from his unfulfilled dreams.

> The photograph of Gandhi in the new airport lounge
> is more than forty years old.
> Every time I look into the old man's eyes,
> He calmly hands my promise back to me. (*A Whiteness of Bone* 50).

In the poem, *Dispossessed Nests*, the poet asserts that India has lost its values and integrity due to terrorism. In this poem, a sensitive man is portrayed as being tortured by the world devastated by all kinds of violence. It also describes a world where all the empathy of human mind and heart has completely withered. The poet uses wonderful imagery to vividly illustrate the pandemonium the nation has submerged into. The key events portrayed in the poem are the unrest in the Punjab that massacred countless innocent people in a fanatical effort to establish a separate land of the Sikh people, with the "Kapurs shouting Long Live Khalistan / along with the terrorists", and the leakage of toxic gas in the Union Carbide factory located

in Bhopal that killed countless innocent people. The poet expresses his hope for positivity, but devastation made by death still continues:

> There is probably something good
> on television tonight.
> Another death. (*Dispossessed Nests* 17)

Conclusion

Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry acts as a crucial medium for critiquing and reflecting upon social issues. His works unveil the hidden contradictions, dilemmas, and injustices in Indian society, urging readers to engage with their surroundings critically. By capturing the socio-political nuances and expressing ethical concerns in his poems, Mahapatra stands out as a powerful voice and a beacon of social consciousness. His writings incite change, challenging readers to question long-established societal norms and envision a more just and equitable future.

Jayanta Mahapatra's poems serve as powerful tools of social criticism, providing deep insight into the complexities and challenges of postcolonial Indian society. Through his meticulous examination of social injustices, gender discrimination, and environmental concerns, Mahapatra prompts readers to reflect, question, and engage in a dialogue aimed at fostering positive societal transformation. Ultimately, his poetry challenges the status quo and inspires individuals to act for a more just, equitable, and sustainable future.

Jayanta Mahapatra's poems provide a rich tapestry of social and philosophical perspectives. Through his exploration of social issues, he highlights the need for change and advocates a more equitable society. Simultaneously, he invites readers to ponder deep philosophical questions, encouraging introspection and a search for meaning. Mahapatra's work is a testament to the power of literature in fostering societal and personal transformation.

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Prachi Behrani

Colour-Line and Recognition: An Analysis of Langston Hughes' Poetry in the Light of W.E.B Du Bois' Double Consciousness

Prachi Behrani, Vinaya Kumari & Beulah Victor

Abstract

Langston Hughes' poetry composed during the Harlem Renaissance discusses the problem of Colour- Line and its impact on the mixed- race progeny, the tragic Mulatto. Living in America with African roots. The Mulatto finds himself in the quagmire of being both Black and White. Langston Hughes poems "I Too" and "Mulatto" showcase the despondent state of the African-Americans, where the former demonstrates the "darker brother's" longing to be recognised as an American citizen and the latter discusses the plight of the Mulatto rejected by their White counterparts. This paper examines the African- American people's self- image and their quest for identity and recognition using the concept of W.E.B Du Bois' theory of "double- consciousness". It seeks to explain the Mulatto's perplexity and the longing for acknowledgement due to the White American's disregard and degradation. Through the analysis of the woes of both, the darker American and the Coloured Mulatto, it explores the impact of "double – consciousness" on individuals belonging to varied racial identity groups.

Keywords: Double Consciousness, identity, mulatto, racial, alienation.

Introduction

Langston Hughes has been rightly described as "most active, most published, and most beloved poets of the Harlem Renaissance" by Lois Brown (253). In addition to his poetry, Hughes' literary oeuvre covers short fiction, novels, essays, plays and much more. Being "one of America's most intriguing socially conscious individuals" the works of Hughes discuss the social issues prevalent during the Harlem Renaissance, with a clear focus on the problem of colour-line and the theme of the tragic Mulatto (253).

Post the 1863 emancipation of Slaves, the reconstruction era brought with itself a promise of hope for the African American population. However, even during the Harlem Renaissance,

that is almost five decades later, the Blacks found themselves on the crossroads of legal rights, but lack of implementation a bare social privilege (Bullock 79). Discriminatory practices such as the Jim Crow laws enforcing segregation and hate organisations such as the Ku Klux Klan prevailed to form an obstacle against social, racial and legal equality in America. Despite being emancipated from slavery, the African Americans did not achieve liberty from the shackles of discriminatory practices and racism in the society. This condition of being in the middle ground between freedom and captivity has been described as a state of being "quasi-free", or partially free (Hornsby 105). The union of the two races led to an offspring which was further divided by the question of identity, the Coloured American, or the Mulatto.

The Mulatto has been described as "a Negro with a very obvious admixture of white blood" (Bullock 78). Interestingly, instead of terming the Coloured- American as an equal amalgamation of both, the Americans and Africans, her definition limits the Mulatto to a majorly Black inheritance. Bullock additionally clarifies with the sociologists' elucidation of the word, to whom Mulatto is a "as a cultural hybrid, as a stranded personality living in the margin fixed status" (78). This definition provides a standard identity to the mixed- race people along with highlighting their alienation in the society. Thus, the Mulatto's existence is a "normal biological occurrence" but a "sociological problem in the United States" simultaneously.

W.E.B. Du Bois delineates the concept of "Double Consciousness" in his The Souls of Black Folk (1903) as an understanding of the self through an outsider's glance (8). This theory assists in the understanding of the Black American's assertion of identity, the formation of selfhood and the quest for acknowledgement in Hughes' poetry. The selected poems, "I Too" (1926) and "Mulatto" (1927) describe the struggles of the African- American population to seek recognition in the highly stratified society. While the former focuses on the dark American's strife for acceptance as an equal American citizen, the latter explicates the woes of the mixed- race, Coloured American, both dark- and light- skinned.

"I Too"

First published in Hughes' collection *The Weary Blues* (1926), this poem serves as a form of protest and assertion that the African Americans are as much a citizen of the country as their White counterparts. Harris points out that the poem "laments the difficulties African Americans have had in being regarded as Americans" (450). Alluding to Walt Whitman's *I Hear America Singing* (1860), this poem begins with the response that the Black Americans "too" speak for, and in favour of their country, America. The poet claims to be the "darker brother" who is sent into the "kitchen" when "company comes" (Lewis et al. 257). By referring to himself as a "brother" of the White Americans, the Black poet claims fraternity between the two races. However, by juxtaposing it with discriminatory behaviour, the poet symbolises segregation in America. Though the "darker brother" had received legal space in America in the early twentieth century, they were still subjected to alienation and estrangement. This knowledge of the poet of being African in America is reflected in the Duboisian ideals of

Double Consciousness which state, "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois 8). The poet understands the abomination of the White, yet wishes to associate with them. Through this Hughes expresses his disregard of the prevalent social and legal conditions as Hernton points out, "Hughes was forever critical of the so-called "American Democracy" and the shibboleth of the American Dream, particularly when it came to the masses of black people and to poor people" (5).

However, the next stanza depicts the hope of the poet with regard to the eventual equality and equity to prevail in America. "Tomorrow" suggests the anticipation of an unbiased future, and the phrase "nobody'll dare" highlights the strength the poet aspires to, for his people (Lewis et al 258). It can also be referred to as, a "refrain or rallying cry in his denunciation of racial discrimination and his affirmation of African-descended peoples' participation in world affairs and human endeavors" (Prescott 42). This is suggestive of the "second sight" pointed out by DuBois, where the Coloured American can either accept atrocities or seek a shift in their social identity (Itzigsohn and Brown 235). While the former response of the poet is of yielding to racism, the latter is of yearning and hope.

The poem serves as a metaphorical example for the country's state of despondency where the African American entity was surrounded by a "twoness" of identity (Du Bois 8). It explicates the effort of the individuals to seek a unified existence, equal in privilege and treatment.

"Mulatto"

This poem serves to describe the mixed-race American as the epitome of life on the colour line. Surrounded by a duality, not only of being African- American, but carrying the blood of both the races in their veins, the Mulatto experiences a selfhood divided by "twoness" (Du Bois 8). The poem begins with the Coloured child's claim of being the White Man's "son" (Lewis et al 263). Instead of referring to himself as an equal or a "brother", the reference to a child highlights the biracial existence of the Mulatto, usually of a White influential father and a Black mother instate of despondency. It also showcases the rejection of the White father to whom having a Coloured son as equivalent to "hell" (263). The class between the father and son is symbolic of the clash between the White and the Coloured American (Davis 197).

In addition to rejecting the child, the father also rejects his existence, his mother's dignity and the familial bond between the two by calling him a "little bastard boy". The White father disregards the Black women, including the child's mother by referring to her body as a "toy" and referring to other women as "juicy bodies of nigger wenches" (Lewis et al 263). In addition to this, the child's half- siblings also reject any relation to their Mulatto sibling b stating "niggers ain't my brother" (263). This highlights the conditioning of the White children from early childhood to disassociate themselves from the darker race. Davis further points

out, "Hughes intensifies the denial of kinship by making into a two-generation refusal: both half-brother and father rebuff the mulatto" (198).

Hughes employs "ironic contrast" to refer to the Mulatto's birth (Davis 198). Where on one hand he discusses the purity and the piety associated with the "scent of pine wood", on the other he distorts it with the reference to the coitus of "nigger wenches"; also, where he juxtaposes the radiance of the "yellow stars" to the despondency of the "yellow bastards". (Lewis et al 263). The use of colour "yellow" highlights the woeful state of the boy as the term is often used by Hughes to express "degradation and unhappiness" of the Mulatto. (Davis 202). The poem further points out to the insults hurled against the "Negro", and heighten the sense of estrangement, in other words, "All of these things serve not only to highlight the rejection the mulatto but in effect to furnish a rationale for it" (198).

Despite the contempt of the Whites, the child asserts, "I am your son, white man! A little yellow Bastard boy" (Lewis et al. 263). His claim highlights the duality of his opinion, where on one hand he claims to be the offspring of a White man, and on other a "bastard boy". Du Bois explains this "twoness" of being, "an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (p.8). It is pointed out that this twoness is a result of a biracial child, with two individuals being involved in the copulation to produce an offspring. However, Hughes places the guilt and castigates only the White section of the Mulatto's creation. Davis withdraws the blame from the "inter-racial love-making" and asserts that the greater inexcusable evil is the "rejection of parenthood on the part of the father" (199). The suffering due to their double consciousness sprouts from a source of an "unresolved angst" due to rejection, lack of recognition and racism in the society which is the resulted in the "psychic distress in the souls of black folk" (Allen 28). Thus, pointing out that the quest of identity, serves as the Mulatto's "second sight" due to his inherent "twoness" and the obligation to survive under the "veil" (Du Bois 8-9). In other words, for the Mulattos the duality of identity resided within their veins which carried the blood of both Africa and America.

Conclusion

The research article explicates two different forms of "double consciousness" depicted in the poetry of Langston Hughes. The first section, "I Too" discusses the twoness of the African American citizens who may be emancipated legally but were shackled metaphorically. In other words, they were "not Chattel, not Free" (Hornsby105). In the poem, a Black man in America seeks recognition and entitlement as an equal American citizen and not as an inferior being. The second section "Mulatto" describes the quest for identity and acceptance of the mixed- race progeny of an African mother and a White father in America. While the former experiences the DuBoisian polarities of identity due to his African roots and American nationality, the latter carries both the worlds within his soul. What remains common, however, is the angst of the Black and the Coloured American due to the "misrecognition, or disrespect encountered on a daily basis - that is, in the general refusal on the part of whites to acknowledge

the humanity of blacks" (Allen 28). W.E.B. Du Bois' aforementioned theory assists in analysing their conflicted identity due to the life on the colour- line, and depicts the rationale behind their longing for recognition. This article further seeks to extend the concept of "double-consciousness" to the various individuals subjected to it, and the different impact it has on their selfhood and ambitions depending upon their existing identities.

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Cultural and Social Constraints on Women's Physical Appearance: An Affinity for Aesthetics in the Novel *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith

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Abstract

Women's outer appearance is significantly influenced by culture and society, although men are not held to the same standards. Eventually, women are driven to follow beauty standards in order to redefine who they are and progress towards being accepted. The pressure to maintain a specific degree of physical appearance is one of the numerous symptoms of exploitation women experience in society. Sometimes, women are negatively portrayed by celebrities, models, and people in prominent positions. Women can handle a variety of tasks once they are confident in their talents. She is thus compelled to climb the high slopes of a society that views such women who do not fit into the standards of beauty as insignificant and invisible, which undermines her self-confidence. Early infancy is where the emphasis on appearances in society starts, and it continues through all phases.

Keywords: Black women, Beauty, Body image, Identity loss, Search for reflection, Self-esteem, and Self-identity

In contemporary society, a woman's identity is mostly determined by her appearance. Zadie Smith delves thoroughly into the sexuality, marriage, and body image of her female protagonists in her novel *White Teeth*. It investigates how women's perceptions of their physical appearance and beauty standards affect them psychologically. Clara and Irie Jones, the novel's main protagonists, are under pressure from society's standards of beauty, their quest for identity in the society as well as their own families. The three primary female characters, Clara Jones, Irie, and Ambrosia, are the primary focus. They struggle to fit into the criteria of the new community they enter since they are of Jamaican heritage, and as women, they commonly compare themselves to women from western countries, whose social norms they do not satisfy owing to their physical appearance.

Contemporary British novelist Zadie Smith weaves together racial foundations that are directly related to her own experiences with many facets of urban life. She was born in Northern London, the daughter of an English father and a Jamaican mother and spent the majority of her youth trying to assimilate into western society. Additionally, Smith set the family featured in the novel in Northern London, where she spent most of her formative years. In her novel, Smith focuses on the female characters and how they depend on their male counterparts. She also shows how society objectifies women and how this leads to their servitude. Different people from various racial and cultural backgrounds are discussed in Zadie Smith's book, *The White Teeth*. The first book that catapulted her to the top of the list of British literary luminaries was *The White teeth*. The novel depicts the tale of several families, their respective cultures, and origins, with a focus on the female characters, who are immigrants, and their struggle for identification in Western society.

Nowadays, establishing one's identity in society is based on adhering to beauty norms. A woman is expected to be blemish-free and to have a specific body type in order for her husband to consider her appropriate for marriage. Even after marriage, a woman is still expected to have ideal teeth, hair, skin, and body. If a woman is accused of putting on weight after giving birth, her husband will end up divorcing her, and she will be shunned by society because of her weight. As a result, she would suffer a serious mental breakdown, resulting in depression, a loss of self-confidence, and a lack of respect for herself. She would also lose her sense of self and seek a reflection of herself in someone else who do not suit her idealised notion of beauty. Most women conceal their actual identity by wearing a cosmetic mask to placate society, as a result of rejection from both society and her family, which propels her obsession in preserving the stereotypical body image. Women cringe at their self-identity and pretend to be someone else in an effort to appease society. Regardless of food and activity, the majority of individuals are unable to alter their genetically set bodies to conform to these extreme ideals. Physical dissatisfaction happens when a person puts out a lot of effort to modify a body that they feel is insufficient but still is unable to attain the level of appearance that society defines as desirable. The attribute of being visually pleasant, especially to the eye, or of someone or something that makes you feel extremely good is referred to as beauty. Additionally, over time, beauty standards have changed. Variations in cultural values have influenced the development of beauty. The perception of one's body is one of the most important criteria. The idea of beauty has influenced female identities throughout history. because it affects how they view and value beauty. In addition, women are misled into believing that their identities and social status are mostly determined by how attractive they are and other physical characteristics (Baquer, 2021).

In this novel, Zadie Smith discusses three generations of strong female protagonists and the gender identities they maintain within their own societies. Clara Bowden, a black Jamaican woman, married Archie, an Englishman who was twice her age, for security and financial assistance. Clara foresees and declares that her unborn daughter will inherit her husband's blue eyes, even before baby Irie was born. This is the point at which Clara begins to reject

her own heritage and starts to aspire to British ideals of Beauty. Though Irie was born with blue eyes, "one day brown eyes staring up at her like the transitioned between a closed bud and an open (WT 268). Irie's mother sought to uphold western norms and anticipated the same behaviour from her daughter during Irie's adolescent years, which contributed significantly to her insecurity.

When Clara was nineteen, she married Archie, who had previously served in the British Army. Clara is reportedly six feet tall, ebony, and stunning. She made every effort to conform to western standards as an adolescent and adhere to social norms in order to fit in and get the approval of her peers. Hortense, Clara's mother, supported the Jehovah's Witnesses and was a devout and stern woman. She brought up Clara to be a Jehovah's Witness as well, but Clara lost focus on her religious life and rebelled against her mother's desire for her to be a liberal adolescent of the era. While riding a motorcycle with her boyfriend Topps, Clara was involved in an accident and lost her front teeth. Ryan Topps recognised that it was a message from Jehovah about leading a worldly lifestyle, so he decided to become a Jehovah's witness. However, Clara married Archie, who was much older than her,

Archie, a classic patriarchal figure, saw Clara as a helpless trophy to be gained. He desired that his wife remain gorgeous and dependent on him for the rest of her life. Archie objectified Clara out of self-interest as a cherished item belonging to him and his family. Clara, the gullible victim, chose to marry Archie despite her dislike for him since she needed Archie's social security and someone to pay for her studies. Clara provides for herself all that society expects of a beautiful woman. Despite her Jamaican heritage, she exemplifies the western ideal of beauty since she is slim and has found a means to hide her missing teeth. She was so buck- toothed that she could traverse an apple multiple times before it touched her tongue, so she was willing to have her fallen tooth replaced with a new one that is straight and white to conform to the British standards of beauty, though she is said to be as "black as yer boot "(WT 29)

Clara Bowden's physical appearance can be seen in the lines. "Clara Bowden was beautiful in all senses except maybe, by virtue of being Black, the classical. She was said to be magnificently tall and as black as ebony and crushed Sable with hair plaited in a horseshoe" (WT 23). Because of her slender physique, she didn't require bracing. She was deemed to be sufficiently attractive while assuming the aforementioned identity, but before that she was deemed to be unattractive when she was being her true self.

Irie Clara's Daughter was reared by English-Jamaican parents, just like writer Zadie Smith. Irie has consistently been self-conscious about her appearance and constantly draws similarities to her mother and the other female students in her class. She was usually disregarded and neglected because of her size variable than her mother. "The European proportions of Clara's figure had skipped a generation, and she landed in instead with Hortense's substantial Jamaican frame, loaded with pineapples, mangos and guaves" (WT 265).

When she was thirteen, she was fat, with an enormous bust, a big posterior, massive whalebone hips, big thighs, and big teeth She was made fun of by her classmates and felt self-conscious about her appearance. Irie's conversation with her English instructor about the Dark Lady in Shakespeare's sonnet illustrates how much she wants to see herself reflected rather than feeling invisible. Irie was shocked to discover that William Shakespeare had made reference to a black woman in one of his sonnets. Irie made an effort to identify herself with Shakespeare's Dark Lady because she felt a connection towards her. but Irie's classmates burlesqued her for comparing herself to Shakespeare's dark woman when she made the comment about the Dark Lady in class. one of her classmates handed her a note that read, "ODE TO LETITA AND ALL MY KINKYHAIRED, BIG-ASS BITCHEZ" (WT 272). As a result of this note and its ramifications, her body is completely subjugated. Irie is reminded that being black, obese, and a woman is socially unacceptable. Furthermore, this mentality is articulated in a Shakespearean fashion, as a silent visible white male, which further reduces women to the desired stereotype of being white, thin, and, most significantly, silent. As a result, Irie's gender performativity increases societal injustice and hatred. (Howland, 2009)

Smith says, Women "need to feel that they are the subjects and the person who is doing the writing and not the thing who is being looked at or judged or observed by other people" (O'Grady, 2002). When Irie attempted to demonstrate her personal resemblance to Shakespeare's Dark Lady, she was mocked by both her teacher and the entire class; additionally, they attempted to destroy her self-esteem by claiming that Shakespeare's Dark Lady must have been a slave and that "there weren't any…Afro-Carri-bee-yans in England at that time…And the reflection that Irie had glimpsed slunk back into the familiar darkness"(WT 272).

Irie was taught that there was something wrong with her appearance and that she was ugly. "this belief in her ugliness, in her *wrongness*, had subdued her; she kept her smart-ass comments to herself these days, she kept her right hand on her stomach. She was all wrong." (WT 268). This was made evident when her mother Clara and father Archie wished for Irie to be born with blue eyes. But, unlike her slender mother, she had been endowed with a massive Jamaican physique during her puberty. Irie had "Mountainous curves, buck teeth and thick metal retainer, impossible Afro hair and to top it off mole-ish eyesight which in turn she required bottle-top spectacles in a light shade of pink even those blue eyes- the eyes Archie had been so exited about-lasted two weeks only."(WT 268) Irie was unwilling to accept her genetic fate for her body image; instead, she yearned "for a transformation from Jamaican hourglass heavy with sands that gather round Dunn River falls, English Rose- oh, you know her – she's a slender, delicate thing not made for the hot sun, a surfboard rippled by the wave:"(WT 266) Irie sees perfection and beauty in the English people's physical appearance. Irie, a young girl, learns about English gender and racial standards through her interactions with other female characters in *White Teeth.*

Being slender, even though dieting, strong but obedient, and ready to uphold patriarchal ideals are all examples of gender standards. White teeth, straight hair, a meek demeanour without any physical prowess, and white skin are all considered to be characteristics of the white race. Gender is something that happens to a person, rather than something they do to themselves. As a result, performance is gendered. Gender only becomes performative when someone violates ingrained gender conventions and takes over this performance.

When Irie contrasts herself to her mother, Clara, who is seen as more ideal by society than her daughter, performance in the book becomes clear. But with a humorous twist, Clara wears dentures. Irie had already made a connection after learning her mother's secret, according to the author (Howland, 2009). The voice at midnight. And the "The perfect midday straightness and whiteness," (WT 31). Irie feels estranged from her mother now that she is aware of the truth about her missing teeth and realises that she was also attempting to seem attractive in other people's eyes rather than for her own.

In the Novel, one of Irie's most notable acts of desperation happens when she straightens her hair in an attempt to grab Millat's attention. This doesn't work since he continues to ignore her despite the fact that she expects him to be smitten by her straight hair. She aimed to modify her hair, and her intention towards fighting her genes was a head scarf, concealing a bird's nest of her hair, and she was always conscious of her stomach protruding out a little, and thus she frequently placed her palm on her stomach to ensure no one saw them. Irie had to go through a lot of pain throughout the straightening operation simply to acquire the straight hair she wanted. She was trying all she could to get rid of her frizzy, afro-coiled hair. Irie requested, "Straight straight long black sleek flickable tossable shakeable touchable finger-through-able wind-blowable hair. With fringe." (WT 273) Ammonia, hot combs, clamps, pins, and plain old fire were all used to whip her unruly hair into submission. She tried her hardest to bear the burn, but she eventually passed out after bleeding from her scalp. Unfortunately, the ammonia damaged her scalp, but beauty comes at a price. As a result, her hair fell out in clumps, leaving her with no hair in the end. She eventually had to get extensions implanted, which made her happy for a while. but this could not change her identity, she was not able to connect her appearance with anyone around her and her search for identity was constant.

She met her real self in her grandmother's appearance and saw that she has not changed for the sake of the society and her appearance resembled her personality and she did not have the need to copy or find a reflection to look for her identity. Irie's only reflection was her grandmother who looked. A lot like herself and no one seemed to care how she looked except Irie saw her grandmother through the spectacles of the western standard. It took time for Irie to realise that no matter how much she tried she cannot shrink her broad frame and the genetics of her hair and her buck tooth all which she considered to be imperfect according to cultural norms she belong to, culture plays a major role shaping the personality and self-esteem of a person especially women who are forced to follow the social standards of

appearance in order to fit into the social circle. Ambrosia is Irie's great grandmother who had been objectified into a mere body, and she was not seen as a woman with feelings by Captain Durham who happens to be Irie's Great grandfather Ambrosia is said to be "a bony Beautiful thing, with huge almond eyes" (WT 399). She was violated body and soul by the cruelty of patriarchy, Ambrosia was on the verge of being violated bodily as she was about to go into labour. That's how women of different era are being objectified and framed by the patriarchal society.

In conclusion, every part of the world has the same issues faced by women when it comes to personal appearance, and this issue is more prevalent in modern civilization than in rural areas. Even before being projected into society, we are being shaped by our family. Parents play an important role in shaping our personalities because they show us how to be ourselves rather than imitating someone else who is famous on social media. We should be aware of our own personality and uniqueness and embrace our femininity.

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The Ableism Paradox: Deciphering Disability through a Scholarly Lens

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Abstract

This research paper delves into the intricate and multifaceted concept of ableism in the context of disability. Ableism refers to the systematic discrimination, prejudice, and exclusion experienced by individuals with disabilities, stemming from deeply ingrained societal norms and beliefs surrounding ability and disability. This paper aims to critically analyse the historical foundations and social construction of ableism, elucidating its impact on individuals with disabilities across various domains of life. Drawing on an interdisciplinary approach, this study synthesizes theoretical frameworks, empirical evidence, and lived experiences to unravel the complexities surrounding ableism. By exploring the manifestations of ableism in educational, employment, and healthcare settings, this research seeks to shed light on the structural and attitudinal barriers that perpetuate ableism, ultimately advocating for inclusive practices and challenging the dominant ableist paradigm. Through a comprehensive examination of literature and case studies, this paper endeavours to foster a deeper understanding of ableism and its implications, promoting social change and empowering individuals with disabilities.

Keywords: Ableism, ability, disability, nor mate, eugenics, discrimination

Ableism in disability retains its contemporary relevance as societies continue to grapple with the persistence of discriminatory attitudes and practices towards individuals with disabilities. Despite advances in awareness and legal protections, ableism persists in subtle and overt ways, underscoring the urgent need for ongoing scholarly examination. In contemporary discourse, the intersections of ableism with other forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and classism, further compound the challenges faced by disabled individuals. The COVID-19 pandemic has also laid bare the disparities and ableist biases within healthcare systems, as disabled individuals are disproportionately affected and face barriers in accessing vital resources and support. Moreover, the emergence of new technologies and debates surrounding assisted

reproduction and genetic engineering introduce additional complexities to the understanding of ableism. Thus, this scholarly exploration of ableism in disability not only provides a historical and theoretical foundation but also critically engages with the contemporary context, highlighting the imperative for transformative change to address the persistent and evolving challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in the present day.

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The primary objective of this research is to comprehensively examine the concept of ableism within the context of disability, shedding light on its intricate manifestations and consequences. By delving into related concepts such as nor mate eugenics, the study aims to unveil the interconnections and broader implications of ableism. Additionally, this research seeks to illustrate these theoretical constructs through a compelling literary case study, providing a vivid narrative that embodies the experiences of individuals facing ableism in their daily lives. Through a careful analysis of the case study, this research endeavours to deepen our understanding of the lived realities of ableism and its profound impact on individuals with disabilities, thereby contributing to broader discussions on social justice, inclusion, and the imperative for change.

Disability often poses challenges in representing the body, as society typically defines ability based on an idealized body, while labelling those who deviate from this standard as "defective" or "deviant," thereby categorizing them as disabled. Consequently, the disabled body offers valuable insights into the socially constructed nature of all bodies. In their article "Models of disability: A brief overview," Marno Retief and Rantoa Letsosa cite Carlson, who asserts that disability is viewed as inherently negative, a pitiable condition that is perceived as "a personal tragedy for both the individual and her family, something to be prevented and, if possible, cured" (3). Consequently, social attitudes towards disability and the representation of the body significantly influence an individual's identity in society, as the notion of "normalcy" carries negative connotations for those with disabilities.

The concept of eugenics plays a pivotal role in determining one's abilities, and Sir Francis Galton established a modern system that involved identifying individuals based on their fingerprints. Mackenzie, in Statistics in Britain, suggests that one of the motivations for investigating personal identification is to identify independent features suitable for hereditary studies, leading to the idea that every person may possess visible and undeniable evidence of their lineage and close kinship. Fingerprints are viewed as physical markers of an individual, akin to serial numbers inscribed on the body. This perception implies that the body possesses an immutable identity that dictates an individual's position, aptitude, intelligence, and role in society. This emphasis on eugenics and the pursuit of being "normal" marginalizes those who do not fit into these categories, perceiving them as monstrous or deviant bodies.

The body plays a significant role in distinguishing between able and disabled bodies, as it experiences pain, joy, intense desire, and physical pleasure. The able body sets the standard

for being "able," with the expectation that the vast majority should conform to the unrealistic ideals of the "normal" spectrum. This notion compels individuals to go to great lengths in order to fit within this normative scale. Dan Goodley, in *Dis/ability Studies: Theorizing Disablism and Ableism*, quotes Kannen, who asserts that the social order is upheld by constructed categorizations of privilege and power, which determine the possibilities available to certain bodies while considering other bodies as "Other" (51). The normative scale has been constructed based on an idealized body that does not exist in reality. For instance, the Greek artist Zeuxis attempted to paint Aphrodite, the goddess of love, by using various female models, each possessing ideal body parts. This exemplifies that the myth or ideal body championed by able-bodied individuals is merely a figment of imagination. Nevertheless, many individuals endure pain in their pursuit of attaining a perfect body, aspiring to experience the luxury and privileges associated with able-bodiedness in society.

In recent times, the concept of "ability" has not only evolved but has taken on a disturbing connotation, emphasizing the negative consequences of disability and perpetuating the notion that being able-bodied is a privilege that affords one the opportunity to pass judgment on those with non-conforming bodies. Fiona Kumari Campbell in *Keywords for Disability Studies,* boldly asserts that "ability" stands in direct opposition to disability, as it serves as a defining factor in an individual's social structure and status within society. It not only shapes our perceptions but also establishes rigid standards for the body and mind, dictating societal norms that extend into both the present and future. Paradoxically, while purporting to define a livable life, the very term "ability" acts as an adversary to disability, reinforcing an illusionary construct that has been woven into the fabric of our society. It is a construct built on a fallacy—a fallacy that has given rise to social hierarchies and a caste system that permeates every aspect of our existence.

The dichotomy between able-bodied and disabled bodies can be likened to a coin, with each side imposing its own terms and conditions that serve to define and devalue individuals. The notion of being able-bodied grants one the privilege of hope and a sense of security, leading them to believe that their existence holds greater worth than that of disabled individuals. Regrettably, those who fail to meet the prescribed standards are invalidated and relegated to a lesser extent, confined within the confines of a disability status. Lennard Davis in *The Disability Studies Reader*, draws attention to the distressing reality perpetuated by eugenics, quoting an official from the Eugenics Record Office who brazenly declares, "the only way to keep a nation strong mentally and physically is to see that each new generation is derived chiefly from the fitter members of the generation before" (24). This chilling statement exposes the extreme measures employed by eugenics to rid society of disability, perceiving it as a weakness that threatens the very fabric of a nation.

The perception of disability is subjective and varies from person to person. Consider the case of Marcus Sergius, a Roman general who, despite facing amputation, resorted to surgical intervention to equip himself with iron rod hands. Marcus went to extraordinary lengths, undergoing extensive surgery, all in an effort to align himself with the societal definition of

normalcy. He realized that his identity would be undermined if he were to fall into the disabled category. The fear of being labelled as disabled casts a dark shadow over one's existence, compelling individuals to take measures to avoid falling into this stigmatized category. Consequently, ability and able-bodiedness become synonymous with an individual's role within the community. Disabled individuals are portrayed as hopeless, impaired, and failed bodies, constantly subjected to scrutiny, rendering their existence seemingly worthless. Mental or bodily ambiguity is seen as an aberration, a deviation from the norm. Throughout these transformations, the concept of "compulsory able-bodiedness," as described by Robert McRuer in *Keywords for Disability Studies*, perseveres—a relentless pursuit of an ideal that, like heterosexuality, remains unattainable. Broadly speaking, "ableism" encompasses the ideological overvaluation of ableness and the systemic reinforcement of norms that govern the identities of both the abled and disabled, permeating laws, social policies, and cultural values. These norms are instrumental in shaping and being shaped by notions of legitimacy or fraudulence surrounding impaired and non-abled bodies, impacting access to social benefits, legal protections, and social status.

A critical examination of "ableism" within the realm of disability studies shifts the focus away from disability as a self-contained category. Lennard Davis, in *The Disability Studies Reader*, sheds light on the eugenics movement's central focus on what was broadly referred to as "feeblemindedness," a term encompassing low intelligence, mental illness, and even poverty (7). Ableism signifies an ideology that upholds the notion of a healthy body, a normal mind, and the expectation of appropriate cognitive abilities and emotional expressions. Consequently, individuals with disabilities are marginalized, labelled as feeble-minded and deemed unworthy. As Robert Murphy astutely points out in *The Body Silent*, able-bodied individuals are confronted with constant visible reminders that their society is riddled with inequities and suffering, exposing the counterfeit paradise they inhabit and their inherent vulnerability (55-56). This discomfort experienced by the able-bodied highlights the core elements of ableism: the notion of a "perfect" normality and the divisive implementation of a distinction that renders the deviant, absurd, weak, and ultimately dehumanized.

In postcolonial or postmodern literary works, the concept of ableism is valuable not only for considering disability, but also for other forms of difference that lead to marginalization or disadvantage. Examining ableism entails reflecting on what it means to be "abled" in various contexts today and how those meanings interact with other ideologies of the body and mind, including race, gender, sexuality, and colonialism.

The idea of normalcy or ability is frequently reinforced in society. In the novel *The Moon Children*, Billy, who has been diagnosed with FASD, is traumatized by his illness and becomes socially invisible. His classmates often bully him and overlook him due to their belief in the superiority of able-bodied individuals. As Sara White writes in "Crippling the Archives: Negotiating Notions of Disability in Appraisal and Arrangement and Description":

> Impairment are the physical, sensory, or cognitive conditions that cause functional limitations, while disability is how nondisabled people respond to people with functional

> limitations in relation to economic, political, and cultural aspects of society. Understanding disability as a form of oppression empowers people with disabilities to confront ableism.… (114-115)

Academic research extensively substantiates the immense hurdles that disabilities pose to individuals, acting as formidable barriers that impede their full participation in society. Regrettably, ableism, a manifestation of societal attitudes towards disability, compounds these challenges by constraining the perceived functional capacities of disabled individuals. Beyond mere limitations, ableism assumes the role of a discriminatory and oppressive force, depriving disabled individuals of equitable opportunities and equal access to resources. It is imperative to acknowledge and confront the deleterious consequences of ableism, while actively striving to foster a society that embraces inclusivity and equity for all, irrespective of disabilities.

Illustrating this struggle against ableism, the novel's protagonist, Billy, exhibits unwavering determination to develop and showcase his talents, despite academic difficulties. Through his unwavering passion for yoyo tricks, Billy discovers a wellspring of confidence in his own abilities, propelling him to pursue his talents fervently. With boundless imagination, he envisions scenarios in which he surpasses able-bodied individuals, skilfully demonstrating his capabilities and receiving the recognition he deserves for his remarkable achievements:

> 'Let's heat it for BILLY RAY, THE AMAZING YO-YO MASTER!" …. Once Billy faltered and he couldn't remember what trick came next, but the song kept going.… And all of them were exactly right…. "Now, regarding the contest winner, congratulations to […] BILLY RAY, THE AMAZING YO-YO MASTER and, in addition to that, a very fine singer!' (*The Moon Children* 134-138)

Performing tricks, which symbolize power and mastery, becomes an empowering tool for Billy as he navigates a society primarily comprised of able-bodied individuals. By taking the wheel and seizing control of his own narrative, Billy embarks on a journey to confront the barriers and prejudices that seek to confine him within the confines of his disability. With an unwavering belief in his own potential, he dares to defy societal limitations and strives to accomplish feats that challenge the preconceived notions of what it means to be disabled. Through his determination and resilience, Billy demonstrates that ability knows no boundaries and that one's capacity for greatness is not defined by physical or cognitive differences.

Within the novel, Billy's encounter with his father's departure at the onset of his story deeply impacts him, leaving behind a lingering sense of abandonment that shapes his perception of self. As described in the text, "The morning after his father left, Billy went and stood on the front steps of their apartment building... Billy picked up a pebble and threw it half-heartedly in the bird's direction. Dumb bird, thought Billy" (8). In this moment of turmoil and confusion, Billy finds himself grappling with the question of who or what is truly "dumb"—the bird or himself. He internalizes his father's abandonment, attributing it to his perceived shortcomings, such as his struggles with reading or conforming to societal expectations. The weight of disappointment settles upon him, evoking envy and deep pain: "A white bolt of

envy crossed his chest... Dad [...] but he didn't want to think about him... Billy closed his eyes against the memory. He didn't want to think about Dad" (10-12). The emotional turmoil intensifies, unleashing an internal storm that threatens to engulf Billy's sense of self-worth and potential: "He felt as though inside him a storm was breaking free, ready to spill out and dislodge anything in its path" (12). The haunting spectre of abandonment amplifies the void within him, leaving a lasting impact on his perception of his own abilities and worthiness.

Furthermore, Billy's experience with FASD compounds his challenges, particularly in the realm of memory recall, further eroding his self-confidence. He grapples with the frustration of forgetting not only his parents' names but even his own, lamenting, "Billy knew he himself had a longer name, but just now he couldn't remember what it was. Sometimes he filed things in his brain and couldn't find them when he needed them" (15). These memory difficulties, a consequence of his disability, become a source of personal struggle and feelings of inadequacy. Billy becomes acutely aware of the impact of his disability on his daily life, including his relationships with others and his own sense of identity. The inability to remember significant details, such as his parents' names, becomes a constant reminder of his perceived limitations, further undermining his self-assurance and plunging him into a state of distress.

The pressure of societal expectations and able-bodied norms imposes a tremendous burden on individuals with disabilities, as highlighted in the novel. Billy's poignant question to his mother, "Do you ever feel like there's a volcano inside you just waiting to erupt? Or a cyclone, or a flood? Or maybe lightning and thunder?" (16), encapsulates the inner turmoil experienced by disabled individuals who constantly grapple with the need to conform to societal standards. Unlike his able-bodied mother, who navigates through life without the need to prove herself, Billy finds himself consumed by the relentless pursuit of "normalcy," causing a profound erosion of his self-confidence and the struggle to live a life free from judgment and limitations.

Amidst his pursuit of acceptance and inclusion, Billy's journey is further complicated by the challenges posed by his FASD condition, particularly in the realms of reading and letter recognition. The judgment and misunderstanding of able-bodied individuals exacerbate his difficulties, subjecting him to a cycle of marginalization. An instance that exemplifies this is when Billy visits his mother's workplace during the summer and encounters a signboard near the pool that he struggles to read. As he witnesses other children joyfully engaging in pool activities, a sense of discomfort washes over him, leading him to ascend the stairs and block the slide, inadvertently preventing others from experiencing the pleasure of the activity. This behaviour is a direct consequence of the bullying he endures, both within and outside of school. Billy becomes a target for ridicule due to his reading difficulties, leaving him unable to partake in the same carefree enjoyment as his peers. The criticism he faces not only originates from children his age but also from adults who should be providing guidance and support: "'Hey, kid, what's the matter with you? Don't you know the rules?' The man who had crashed into him spoke angrily, pushing his long hair out of his eyes and reaching a tattooed arm for the side of the pool. 'What are you doing in here alone, anyway? I bet you just walked in off the street!'" (19).

In the context of FASD, individuals like Billy often exhibit distinctive facial features and various abnormalities, making them more susceptible to external scrutiny and stigmatization. These visible differences further contribute to the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, magnifying their sense of otherness and reinforcing societal judgments and prejudices. Despite the inherent diversity of their physical appearances, it is crucial to recognize and acknowledge the shared humanity and worth of individuals with disabilities, ensuring that they are not defined solely by their visible distinctions but rather appreciated for their unique qualities and contributions.

Billy's encounters at the pool exemplify the continuous cycle of embarrassment and ridicule he endures in the face of able-bodied individuals' judgment. A man confronts him, questioning his presence and disregarding his need for assistance. To exacerbate the situation, Billy inadvertently brings a dishtowel instead of a swimming towel, adding another layer of perceived incompetence. As his peers witness this mishap, they seize the opportunity to mock him, further intensifying his feelings of humiliation. Despite the persistent humiliation he has experienced throughout his life, Billy remains resolute and unaffected by their laughter. He defiantly distances himself from the crowd, silently bearing the weight of his self-blame and internalizing the notion of his own inadequacy: "'Why am I so stupid?' he muttered as the hot water beat down on him... At school, it seemed that everything he did proved how dumb he was" (19). This relentless humiliation, coupled with his struggles in expressing himself, contributes to a deeply ingrained negative self-image, perpetuating the damaging effects of ableism.

Leonard Davis, in *The Disability Studies Reader*, elucidates the predicament faced by individuals with invisible disabilities as they grapple with the societal expectation to conform to the dominant cultural norms. They are compelled to navigate their place within a system that privileges and prioritizes able-bodied individuals, often leaving them feeling marginalized and forced to conceal their disabilities. Davis emphasizes the inherent challenges these individuals face in reconciling their authentic identities with society's prevailing standards, asserting that their experience becomes a delicate balance between assimilation and self-acceptance. The constant pressure to conform, while concealing their invisible disabilities, further perpetuates a cycle of self-doubt and the perpetuation of ableist ideologies:

> Many people are more comfortable relating to me and accommodating me if they can be absolutely certain that I am who I say I am, a deaf-blind person. And they are not absolutely certain that I am that person until I bump into a wall or shape my hands into what is to them an incomprehensible language. In other words, I must make myself completely alien to these people in order for them to feel that they understand me. (327)

The concept of an invisible disability highlights the often-overlooked experiences of individuals whose conditions are not immediately apparent. These conditions, which can encompass cognitive or mental health disorders, may not be visible to others but can significantly impact an individual's daily life and functioning. It is important to recognize that invisible disabilities can be constructed around visible disabilities, serving as a constant reminder

of an individual's deviation from societal norms. This intersectionality between visible and invisible disabilities further compounds the challenges faced by individuals with invisible disabilities, including obstacles in accessing appropriate accommodations, social stigmatization, and criticism from able-bodied individuals. By acknowledging and understanding the diversity of disabilities, particularly invisible ones, society can foster inclusivity and empathy towards individuals with unique experiences.

In Billy's case, his struggles extend beyond the interactions with his peers; even his own father fails to comprehend his difficulties. As Billy's father pushes him to read, he expresses frustration and disappointment, emphasizing the societal belief that reading is a fundamental measure of success: "'Come on, Billy, you've got to pay attention! You'll never amount to anything if you can't learn to read.' And Billy had tried to pay attention. The trouble was that no matter how hard he tried, something inside his head just wouldn't co-operate" (20). Despite Billy's earnest efforts, his father's fixation on the narrow definition of "normal" prevents him from understanding his son's unique challenges. The pressure to conform to society's rigid expectations of normality often creates substantial barriers for individuals with disabilities, leading to feelings of isolation and exclusion. In Billy's case, the lack of understanding and support from his father exacerbates his already arduous journey toward acceptance.

According to Dan Goodley in *Dis/ability Studies: Theorising Disablism and Ableism*, the able-bodied society's obsession with 'normalcy' presents significant challenges for individuals with disabilities. The focus on attaining a 'normal' body leads able-bodied individuals to assign blame to disabled individuals. As a result, disabled individuals are subjected to various schemes and aid programs that are intended to address their needs but are often treated as peripheral concerns. Goodley highlights:

> Our obsessions with our own bodies and biology, fuelled by institutional, expert, scientific discourse and the fascinations of popular culture trains our thoughts on to our individual selves, our minds and our bodies to check how we match up to a normative model of humanity. (4)

The able-bodied individuals have developed an obsession with maintaining a "normal" and healthy lifestyle, causing them to view any deviation from their perceived standard as a threat or embarrassment. This obsession with a healthy body gives them a sense of privilege and power over persons with disabilities. The able-bodied individuals go to great lengths to maintain their place on the "normal" scale, training their minds to remain obsessed with perfection.

Goodley argues that individuals with intellectual disabilities do not face problems, but rather crises when it comes to accessing transportation or technology, receiving support, participating in school and work communities, and being accepted. According to him, "problems of a disabling society that threatened the very existence of people who were cognitively different to the mainstream" (Goodley, *Dis/ability Studies: Theorising Disablism and Ableism* 7) create these crises. Disabled individuals are capable of accomplishing tasks

that are often considered beyond their abilities by able-bodied people. This very phenomenon poses a threat to the able-bodied because it challenges their sense of normality.

Tanya Titchkosky's concept of normality focuses on the critical examination of disability to investigate the normative ideas related to physical and social aspects such as measuring one's mind, body, emotions, and senses. According to Titchkosky, the able-bodied project the idea that being normal is static, and when an individual has an unwanted condition, they are deemed abnormal. The historical production of disability is uniquely related to the concept of normality. Lennard Davis, as quoted by Titchkosky in *Keywords for Disability Studies*, suggests that "the sense of a normative order required that the human sciences not only make 'man' (humans) an object but also make them knowable, to one another, through 'norms, rules and signifying totalities'" (372). Consequently, Titchkosky argues that being normal is viewed as the dominant version of oneself in modern society. The power of normalcy encourages individuals to compare their bodies in all aspects, which leads to the taken-for-granted assumption that a normal life is the only acceptable way to live.

The concept of normate norms is often used as a reference point to illustrate that being normal exists within a referential system rather than as a pre-given condition of existence. Disability studies have focused on the creation of normalcy and have shown that disability is stigmatized. This demonstrates that the problem is not with disability itself, but with the way normalcy has been constructed to create problems for people with disabilities. Disability studies have also shown that being normal is not a static concept but changes over time. Despite the fact that many individuals live with disabilities, they are often not accepted within the social structure. Therefore, the idea of what is considered normal is determined by the majority of the population.

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's perspective on the concept of "normal" provides a valuable viewpoint. As she argues, "the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them" (*Keywords of Disability Studies* 374). This highlights how belonging to the normative scale grants individuals the power to exert authority over people with disabilities. This idea reinforces the belief that being disabled holds less value in society. It is documented that normalcy standards contribute to other forms of dehumanization, which pushes some individuals to the margins of existence.

Disability studies consistently demonstrates that ability is not fixed but varies across groups, perceptions, and locations. Able-bodied individuals often forget that most people experience disability at some point in their lives, yet disability remains unrecognized within social structures. This creates a situation where being "normal" does not reflect the desires of the majority, but rather represents what the dominant population expects. To achieve normalcy, able-bodied individuals must strive to appear flawless and suppress any perceived differences that set them apart. This leads to the conclusion that being abnormal is not a deviation from the norm, but rather reflects what the majority is expected to produce when confronted with

perceived differences. This creates stigma, as described by Goffman, where social and societal processes work against minority groups such as people with disabilities.

Disability studies has the unique ability to scrutinize the power of normalcy to ostracize and stigmatize, as it rejects the idea that normality is an inherent trait. Rod Michalko asserts that "One of the most 'abnormal' things about being 'normal' is attending to its production" (*Keywords of Disability Studies* 82), emphasizing the significance of analyzing how role obligations are employed to conform to, resist, and reconstruct the norm. Nevertheless, scholars, activists, and artists have demonstrated that despite the daily pressures to conform to normalized perspectives of oneself and others, individuals can still disrupt the norm through practices such as crip and queer theory. Thus, it challenges the modern imperative that all group expectations must be normalized.

The term 'normal' is frequently used by able-bodied individuals as a means of prejudice towards disabled individuals. This has a significantly more negative impact on those who are differently-abled. Billy, for example, is subject to bullying from his classmates who use the concept of normality to assert their dominance over him. They take note of his mistakes and use their abilities to belittle him. This is evident when his classmates pass notes about him during class. Despite being aware of these comments, Billy is unable to defend himself due to his inability to read, making him even more vulnerable. "Sometimes, the other kids would write notes about him. Billy knew this because he'd find them sometimes, small scraps of paper with his name on them, but he couldn't read what they said. He just knew they said bad things" (20-21). Billy feels helpless as nobody seems willing to understand his needs or his unique circumstances.

Billy's father exemplifies a similar approach to parenting as Jane's father, as he neglects his responsibilities towards his child and fails to comprehend the challenges posed by Billy's disability. In a parallel manner, he chooses to deny his child's condition and insists on enforcing societal norms of "normalcy," further complicating the situation. Instead of acknowledging Billy's disability, he projects his own subjective perceptions of normality onto his child. This phenomenon, as conceptualized by Sigmund Freud, is a defense mechanism utilized by individuals to evade confronting uncomfortable truths about themselves and their environment.

Billy is capable of remembering to take his medication independently without requiring assistance. The notion of what is considered normal can vary in different contexts. Billy recognizes the importance of taking his medication as it helps him control his hyperactivity and prevent him from behaving erratically. As the text states, "Billy remembered he was supposed to eat breakfast. He ran out to the kitchen and took his pill..." (34). The act of taking medication is a typical practice for individuals with or without disabilities to manage their health. However, society often stigmatizes individuals with disabilities for taking medication, whereas it is viewed as normal for able-bodied individuals. The perception of what is normal can differ based on one's ability status.

Ableism in disability is a persistent issue characterized by discriminatory attitudes and practices towards individuals with disabilities. Despite increased awareness and legal protections, ableism continues to manifest overtly and subtly, intersecting with other forms of oppression. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these disparities, revealing ableist biases within healthcare systems and creating additional barriers for disabled individuals. Scholarly exploration of ableism in disability provides a foundation for understanding its historical and theoretical aspects, while emphasizing the need for transformative change to address the ongoing challenges faced by disabled individuals.

The concept of ableism is intricately linked to society's representation of the body and the idealization of certain physical abilities. Disability challenges these norms, often resulting in the labeling of individuals as "defective" or "deviant." Eugenics and the pursuit of "normalcy" further marginalize those who do not conform to these ideals, reinforcing the perception of disability as a personal tragedy to be prevented or cured. The emphasis on an able-bodied standard perpetuates the privilege associated with able-bodiedness, creating social hierarchies and imposing rigid standards for the body and mind. Addressing ableism requires a critical examination of its manifestations, intersectionality, and the urgent need for inclusive practices that promote social justice and equality.

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Comparing the Connectivity of Nature and People through Eco-Marxist Lens in *Unbowed* : *A Memoir* by Wangari Maathai and *Vananchal* by Jayant Pathak

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Abstract

In the present study, Eco-Marxism theory is employed as a critical framework to analyze the portrayal of the human-nature relationship in literary works, namely *Unbowed : A Memoir* by Wangari Maathai and *Vananchal* by Jayant Pathak. Eco-Marxism, combining ecology and Marxism, gives an understanding of how society and the environment connect with each other. The paper analyzes the human-nature relationship in the said works further drawing a comparison between them. The works keep in sharp focus the ecological awareness and delves into the challenges faced by communities in their struggle for survival amidst resource scarcity while remaining intricately linked with their ecosystem and the environment. The study reveals that literature is functional in voicing the collective consciousness to protect the greener globe in midst of environment conservation cry and crises.

Keywords: Eco-Marxist, Human-Nature Relationship, Environmental Justice, Sustainability.

Introduction

In the contemporary world, the delicate balance between human society and the natural environment is increasingly strained. As we witness the devastating effects of climate change, deforestation, and pollution, it becomes clear that our current economic systems are at odds with ecological sustainability. In order to understand and address these challenges, scholars have turned to various theoretical frameworks. One such framework is ecological Marxism, which offers a critical perspective on the relationship between capitalism, human society, and the natural world. The complex interaction between humanity and the natural world has been a longstanding focus of academic attention and worry. In our present time, characterized by escalating environmental deterioration and ecological emergencies, the examination of human-nature connections becomes increasingly crucial. This paper utilizes the perspective of Eco-

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Marxism, which amalgamates aspects of Marxism with ecological theory, to meticulously assess how human-nature relationships are depicted in two separates yet thematically connected works: Wangari Maathai's *Unbowed: A Memoir* and Jayant Pathak's *Vananchal*. Wangari Maathai's memoir examines the struggle for environmental conservation and social justice through the lens of the Green Belt Movement, while in *Vananchal* by Jayant Pathak, there is a dual purpose: the preservation of his deep bond with nature through written expression and the promotion of the significance of conserving culture and tradition.

Eco-Marxism serves as a valuable theoretical perspective, providing a comprehensive framework to comprehend the historical, social, and economic forces that underpin humanity's exploitation of the natural world. This examination will investigate how these texts, originating from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds, intersect with Eco-Marxist concepts to illuminate the multifaceted aspects of human-nature connections. *Unbowed* chronicles Wangari Maathai's groundbreaking environmental activism in Kenya, while *Vananchal* offers insights from the Indian subcontinent, delving into the intricate relationships between communities and their natural environments. Using the Eco-Marxist perspective, the study aims to reveal the concealed power structures, class interactions, and ecological impacts interwoven in the narratives of these texts. Ultimately, it contributes to a more profound comprehension of the intricate and evolving links between humanity and the environment in our interconnected world.

Eco-Marxism

Ecological Marxism, a subfield of Sociology, offers a critical perspective on the complex interplay between nature and capitalism. This theory applies Karl Marx's principles to the study of environmental issues, aiming to challenge the concepts of conservation and sustainable development. By examining the historical development of Ecological Marxism and its growing relevance in recent times, one can gain a deeper understanding of the dialectics of nature from a Marxian perspective. Ecological Marxism emerged in the late 20th century as a response to the growing ecological crisis and the need to understand its root causes. "The concept was first introduced by Ben Agger in his book *An Introduction to Western Marxism* in 1979" (qtd.in Li). Since then, scholars around the world, including China, have delved into the study of ecological Marxism, analysing its background and nature. This framework has its roots in the works of scholars such as John Bellamy Foster, Paul Burkett, and James O'Connor. John Bellamy Foster's book *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (2000) played a pivotal role in reinvigorating the ecological dimensions of Marxism, exploring how

Karl Marx's original writings contained ecological insights that had been overlooked by earlier interpretations. The concept of the "metabolic rift" (qtd. in "Metabolic Rift") between society and nature became a central idea in Ecological Marxism, highlighting the disruption caused by capitalism's exploitation of natural resources.

Climate change is acknowledged, but understanding is limited. Unsustainable economy is supported by citizens, blaming governments. Unrestrained growth, fossil fuels cause lasting environmental damage. Eco-Marxism explores change possibilities optimistically. Eco-Marxism, born from the fusion of Marxism and ecology, highlights the synergy between humanity and nature. It attributes environmental degradation to capitalism's profit-centred approach, considering it the root of both social inequity and ecological harm. "This contradiction between capitalism's infinite growth model and the earth's finite resources obstructs the fundamental nutrient and resource cycle, as there is an over-accumulation of nutrients in end products, which end up causing pollution and not returning to the soil" (Tsigka). This philosophy underscores the interdependence of people and the environment, a concept central to Marx's ideas. Capitalism's exploitation of nature for profit is seen as detrimental, leading to resource inequality and detachment from the natural world. "This contradiction between capitalist growth and the needs of the ecosystem naturally leads to crisis phenomena" (Lievens 18). Eco-Marxism advocates for preserving forests, communal land use, fertile soil, and responsible water consumption. It addresses the alienation caused by capitalism, where workers are disconnected from their labor, nature, and each other due to low wages and social disparities. Ultimately, Eco-Marxism seeks to rectify these issues by fostering a harmonious relationship between humanity and the environment.

Ecological Marxism, as an intellectual framework, extends Karl Marx's theories to examine the ecological consequences of capitalism. It seeks to analyze how capitalist systems exploit natural resources, leading to ecological degradation and imbalances. Additionally, it explores how capitalism's emphasis on endless growth and profit accumulation can undermine ecological sustainability. According to Clark and Foster, "the problem of nature is a problem of capital" (qtd. in Maity). Within the context of Ecological Marxism, there is a call for systemic reform and alternative socio-economic models that prioritize both environmental sustainability and social justice. This reform may involve a transition away from the current capitalist economic paradigm toward more sustainable and equitable modes of production and consumption. Scholars like John Bellamy Foster and others have played a significant role in developing and promoting the ideas of Ecological Marxism. They argue for a deeper integration of ecological concerns into Marxist analysis and the need to address the environmental crisis as an integral part of broader struggles for social and economic justice.

Unbowed: A Memoir by Wangari Maathai

Wangari Maathai (1940–2011) was a pioneering Kenyan activist and the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Holding degrees in Biology and Anatomy, including a PhD from the University of Nairobi, she founded the Green Belt Movement in 1977. This

initiative combined tree planting with women's empowerment, expanding globally to promote reforestation, environmental preservation, and women's rights. "Through tree planting, Maathai has reshaped the lives of millions of disempowered Africans. She not only broke gender barriers in education and employment, but also overcame seemingly insurmountable political oppression in her home country" (Xuan 1). Maathai used her influence to challenge corruption and advocate for sustainable development. Her legacy as an environmentalist, women's rights advocate, and social justice champion continues to inspire profound change.

Unbowed: A Memoir by Wangari Maathai is an autobiographical account of her journey from rural Kenya to becoming a Nobel Peace Prize-winning environmental and political activist. The book details her upbringing, education, and challenges against gender bias. It highlights her role in founding the Green Belt Movement, an organization advocating tree planting, women's empowerment, and social justice. The memoir illustrates her resilience in the face of adversity, her fights for democracy, human rights, and environmental conservation, emphasizing the unity of social, political, and environmental concerns.

Vananchal by Jayant Pathak:

Jayant Himmatlal Pathak, a distinguished Gujarati poet and literary critic, was born into a Gaur Brahmin family in Gujarat, India, on October 20, 1920. He earned a Bachelor of Arts from M.T.B Arts College in 1943 and a Master of Arts in Gujarati and Sanskrit from Vadodara College in 1945. In 1960, he obtained his PhD under Vishnuprasad Trivedi for his research on Gujarati poetry's cultural context. Pathak served as a professor at MTB Arts College in Surat from 1953 to 1980. Revered for his contributions to nature poetry, his verses seamlessly blend human emotions with nature's beauty, inspiring reverence for the Earth. He received numerous accolades, including the Sahitya Akademi Award, and a poetry award now bears his name. Jayant Pathak's memoir *Vananchal* (1967), a Gujarati memoir, evokes nostalgic childhood memories against the backdrop of East-Panchmahal's natural beauty. The word 'Vananchal' as defined in *Hindwi Shabdkosh*, means "*van se aachchhaadit anchal ya bhoo-bhaag*" (a forest covered area). Here the word 'Vananchal' represents the Bhartiya concept of 5 8 A ' H 5 A A. M,. M! (qtd. in "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam!"), which means the world is one family. This expression emphasizes the importance of looking out for the greater good of society over narrow self-interest and also highlights the interdependence of various ecological components. The twelve-chapter narrative chronicles the diminishing of these elements during the author's infancy. Returning after decades, he found a stark contrast between modern civilization and nature and felt alienated. The text captures children's joy, alongside the poverty and suffering of native tribal people, portrayed in vivid prose. Pathak's imaginative writing showcases remarkable achievement in depicting both beauty and pain.

A Comparative Study of Representation of the Relationship between Nature / Environment, and Human Beings

Unbowed: A Memoir follows Wangari Maathai's path from gender-based education hurdles to leading the Green Belt Movement, uniting women through tree planting and environmental

advocacy. The book prominently emphasizes the profound connection between humans and nature, underscoring the importance of local life sustainability. Wangari Maathai's upbringing in a family deeply rooted in the land serves as a poignant testament to this enduring bond between humanity and the natural world. Her birth in a humble mud house symbolizes the intimacy and harmony with nature that characterized her early years. These formative experiences in her hometown presage the emergence of her fervent environmental activism, foreshadowing the life's passion that would propel her forward. As Maathai eloquently expresses, "We lived in a land abundant with shrubs, creepers, ferns, and trees, like the *m)tindi, m)keu*, and *m)gumo*, some of which produced berries and nuts. Because rain fell regularly and reliably, clean drinking water was everywhere. There were large well watered fields of maize, beans, wheat, and vegetables. Hunger was virtually unknown. The soil was rich, dark red-brown and moist" (3-4).

Nature provided them with regular resources such as regular rainfall, clean water, forest with a variety of wild fruits and fertile soil for cultivation of crops, and vegetables to live their lives. They rarely felt hunger. Maathai also illustrates how rituals accompanying newborns forge a deep bond between humans and nature. These rituals symbolize unity, using natural elements to connect babies with ancestral land, highlighting our essential place within the ecosystem. The portrayal of nature as a protector during danger highlights this connection as well. Thumbi's forest refuge saved him in war, reflecting nature's security. Maathai's woodlot escape aligns with ecofeminism's caring role. Environment offers solace and shield, fostering a safeguarding connection. However, Sultan Alghofaili in his article "Wangari Maathai's Postcolonial Environmental Struggle" discusses as,

> During colonization, the British treated Kenya and its people simply as a private property for investment. Thus, the destruction of forests was done under the umbrella of agricultural investment. The indigenous plants which provided the main source of food were substituted by cash crops, such as tea and coffee. In this manner, the poor were used merely as tools for producing profits for the White beneficiaries (18).

This impacted lives, emphasizing the vital reciprocal bond between humans and the environment. In this way, the narrative demonstrates how interdependently connected people and nature are.

Jayant Pathak's memoir *Vananchal* explores his return to changed hometown Goth after decades, delving into nature's impact on his childhood. The East-Panchmahal's beauty, people, and culture are vividly described. Pathak highlights the nature-human bond through his experiences, contrasting modern dominance, leaving him feeling estranged in his own nation. For instance, Pathak has described in his memoir about the sympathetic nature of Dr. Bhavanishankar with the locals, when he reminds them of the doctor's treatment. The doctor used to cure humans and animals together, which reflects nature-human interdependence. This illustrates mutual reliance and a symbiotic bond, essential for a harmonious community.

The setup underscores our connection with nature, fostering empathy and environmental consciousness. Like Maathai, Pathak's childhood is also spent in the lap of nature. Pathak's clay house and their childhood activities underscored their deep connection with nature. Their simple abode reflected sustainable living, while swimming, forest play, and tree climbing fostered a bond with the environment. Playing with natural elements as toys showcased creativity and adaptation in the face of resource scarcity, epitomizing a harmonious relationship between humans and their surroundings. The festival of Holi, significant for the Goth people, employs dried tree wood in rituals followed by fire-lighting. It beautifully signifies human-nature connection: winter to spring transition, vibrant colors mirroring nature, and water celebrating earth's cycles. These rituals echo ancient agrarian ties, highlighting our interdependence and shared growth with nature transcending cultural limits. In Goth, despite hunger and scarcity, the poor didn't turn to crime for food. This underscores their strong bond with nature, relying on community values. Mutual understanding of nature's limits fosters empathy, cooperation, and a sense of safety in the jungle.

Message of Nature Conservation in the Select Works

Unbowed: A Memoir by Wangari Maathai passionately advocates for ecology, sustainability, and nature preservation. The memoir paints a vivid picture of Maathai's childhood in rural Kenya, revealing her deep connection to the natural world. The narrative highlights the wisdom of her Kikuyu community, emphasizing sustainable practices and the harmony between humans and nature. Central to the story is the Green Belt Movement, which empowers communities, particularly women, to actively safeguard their environment through tree planting and local engagement. Maathai's portrayal of deforestation's devastating consequences highlights the urgent need for sustainable practices. Her environmental advocacy amidst political challenges demonstrates the intersection of ecological and social justice. In *Unbowed*, Wangari Maathai vividly describes how multinational corporations and powerful elites in Kenya exploit natural resources, particularly forests, for profit. This exploitation is in line with Eco-Marxist perspectives on capitalism, which prioritize profit and resource extraction at the expense of environmental sustainability. Maathai's narrative reveals how capitalist interests drive deforestation and land degradation, leading to what Eco-Marxists refer to as the metabolic rift between society and nature. This concept emphasizes the disconnect and ecological imbalances caused by capitalist production methods.

The memoir's core focus on women's empowerment within the movement strengthens commitment to sustainable actions and community-based conservation. Reflecting on the balance between modernization and nature, Maathai's return to Kenya exposes the disconnect between society and the environment. *Unbowed* effectively weaves the lives of individuals and the environment together, illustrating their interdependence. Through personal experiences and stories, Maathai illustrates how environmental shifts impact human well-being. Her memoir compellingly showcases the synergy between individual efforts, community engagement, and activism in nurturing ecological sustainability. It focuses on the importance of honouring traditional knowledge and empowering marginalized groups to ensure a harmonious relationship

with the environment for current and future generations. The dispossession of land from local communities in Kenya, often for commercial purposes, is a central theme in Maathai's memoir. This dispossession highlights how capitalism perpetuates social inequality and environmental injustices, as marginalized communities lose access to their traditional lands and resources. Wangari Maathai reflects on how her life's mission originated from a seemingly simple idea – planting trees in her native Kenya. Across Africa, much of the land owned by individuals and communities has suffered due to various factors, both human-made and ecological. Deserts have expanded, topsoil has eroded away due to deforestation, and land fertility has declined due to overuse, grazing, and chemical practices. To counter this deteriorating environmental situation, "Wangari Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement (GBM) in the 1970s" (qtd. in "Kenya's Green Belt Movement"). The GBM aimed to address these issues by mobilizing local women to grow indigenous tree seedlings and plant them in forests. For every surviving seedling, women and men received a small financial incentive, providing them with an income source to support their families. By 1977, the tree-planting initiative had gained widespread popularity, epitomized by the slogan, "One person, one tree" (qtd. in "Kenya's Green Belt Movement"). The communities themselves began rallying behind the movement. The true heroes of the GBM were the hardworking women who established tree nurseries, planted seedlings, and nurtured them. These women were like 'foresters without diplomas' and formed the backbone of the movement. As these women-led efforts multiplied, there was hope that the Earth would eventually be restored and rejuvenated, returning to its lush, green state. Eco-Marxism emphasizes the unequal distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, where marginalized and impoverished communities bear the brunt of ecological degradation and pollution. Maathai's experiences exemplify this dynamic.

Jayant Pathak's memoir *Vananchal* masterfully champions ecology, indirect sustainability, and nature conservation through vivid themes and examples. Pathak's return to his hometown sparks a reflective journey into the evolving environment and its impact on humanity. The coexistence of humans and animals in a dispensary encapsulates the interconnectedness of nature and people, fostering mutual well-being. The Holi festival's celebration with natural elements underscores the integration of culture and nature, urging harmonious coexistence. The resilience of Goth's impoverished inhabitants highlights their capacity to thrive amidst scarcity, offering lessons in sustainable living. The text advocates against forsaking the natural connection between humans and nature due to modernism's excessive focus on materialism. The contrast between indigenous people's direct connection and modern disconnection serves as a cautionary tale, emphasizing the importance of preserving this relationship. Environmental degradation due to uncontrolled progress showcases the need for responsible development to restore equilibrium. In essence, the memoir underscores the profound interplay between humans and their environment, illustrating the urgency of safeguarding nature for future generations' prosperity. It invites introspection on personal nature connections and encourages a concerted effort to nurture a symbiotic relationship with the natural world.

Eco-Marxism asserts that capitalism's pursuit of profit often results in the exploitation of both natural resources and marginalized communities. Both Maathai and Pathak emphasize the strong connection between the environment, society, and the economy. They show that the health of the environment directly affects the well-being of communities. This highlights the need to consider all these factors together when addressing environmental issues, rather than treating them separately. Eco-Marxism emphasizes the importance of collective action and community involvement to counter the negative effects of capitalism on the environment. Both authors stress the importance of involving local communities in environmental conservation. Maathai's Green Belt Movement and Pathak's depiction of humans and animals coexisting show how community involvement benefits the environment. This approach instills a sense of responsibility and shared ownership over natural resources. Eco-Marxism also acknowledges the importance of cultural and societal factors in shaping our relationship with the environment. Both memoirs emphasize the blending of culture and nature. Maathai's work shows how traditions can align with environmental conservation, and Pathak's depiction of Holi with natural elements highlights the importance of preserving cultural practices that promote harmony with the environment. This shows that respecting cultural heritage can promote sustainable living. Moreover, Eco-Marxism scrutinizes capitalism's mode of production for its unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. Both Maathai and Pathak share concerns about how modernization harms the environment and our connection to nature. Maathai raises concerns about materialism, while Pathak cautions against growing disconnected from nature. They both advocate responsible development to safeguard the environment.

Unbowed by Wangari Maathai and *Vananchal* by Jayant Pathak exhibit differences too in their approach in advocating the environment sustainability and the enhancement of the human-nature relationship. One notable difference lies in their geographic focus. *Unbowed* predominantly revolves around Wangari Maathai's experiences and environmental work in Kenya, whereas by offering different perspectives on the intersection of capitalism and the environment in a diverse cultural and ecological setting, *Vananchal* delves into Jayant Pathak's hometown and his experiences in childhood. This geographical distinction brings forth diverse cultural and ecological contexts that shape their narratives and perspectives. Another distinction is in their emphasis on gender empowerment. While both memoirs underscore the importance of empowering local communities, Maathai's work places a particular emphasis on women's empowerment through the Green Belt Movement. In contrast, Pathak's memoir offers a broader view of community empowerment with expression of equality to bridge the gap between needy and rich in the society, reflecting the varying priorities in their narratives. Eco-Marxism often considers issues of resource scarcity and abundance within the context of capitalist exploitation.

Unbowed and *Vananchal* together emphasize the importance of interdependence, interconnectedness, community empowerment, cultural integration, and raise concerns about the materialistic progress of human race at the cost of exploitation and depletion of nature.

They both advocate for ecological sustainability and a deeper connection between humans and nature. These memoirs inspire readers to reflect on the deep connections between humanity and the environment, urging stewardship of our planet. However, there are differences in their geographic regions focus, gender empowerment strategy, issues of scarcity or abundance, and narrative style, which help to broaden our understanding of the varied landscape within the area associated with environmental activism.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, *Unbowed: A Memoir* by Wangari Maathai and *Vananchal* by Jayant Pathak offer insightful viewpoints on the complex interrelationship between people and the environment. Maathai's memoir, which is based on her experiences and the origins of the Green Belt Movement, highlights the critical need for sustainability and the relationship between environmental protection and more general social justice goals. Pathak's introspective return to his homeland in *Vananchal*, meanwhile, highlights the inherent interconnectedness between people and nature. His story illustrates how communal resilience, cultural practices, and shared values support sustainability.

In both memoirs, a resounding call for a future characterized by peace and justice is accompanied by a passionate plea for the preservation of our natural world. By highlighting the common message of connection, community empowerment, integration of cultures, and opposition to modernization, they bridge the gap between individual narratives and the universal requirement for environmental action. These writings encourage readers to consider the intricate relationships that exist between people and the environment and call for collective sustainability of our planet.

It's important to remember, though, that while these memoirs exhibit subtle distinctions, they also present these overarching commonalities. Geographical focus, women empowerment emphasis, how scarcity or abundance is handled, and narrative style are all different between *Unbowed* and *Vananchal*. These distinctions improve our comprehension of the diversity of opinions within the field of environmental advocacy. They highlight the numerous perspectives from which we might examine the intricate connection between people and the environment. In essence, these memoirs serve to highlight the urgent need for a harmonious relationship between people and nature while also celebrating the variety of viewpoints and approaches that might help create a sustainable, peaceful future.

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