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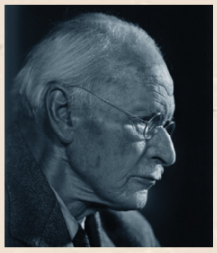

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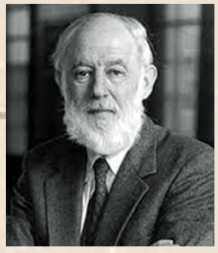

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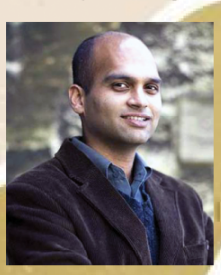

Aravind Adiga

**Articles on**

Spatial Enactments in Literary Texts, JungianPsycho-Analytical Reading, Dravidian Culture, Kalidasa's *Abhijnanashakuntalam*, Geoffrey Hartman, Drama as a pedagogical tool, Distance Learning Strategies, Bengali Literature in Malayalam Translation, Aravind Adiga's Amnesty, *Iyobinte Pusthakam*, Graphic Novel and Migrant Memory, *Kadhaprasangam*, Female Subjectivity

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# A Preliminary Inquiry into Spatial Enactments in Literary Texts

**B. Hariharan**

**Abstract**

This paper argues that literary texts are spatial enactments in which readers discover an array of relationships. It throws up interesting possibilities to theorize about reading such sites over a period of time, not necessarily chronological or of a single generic mould.. It is also a discovery of positions; the location of the reader discovers and describes the spatiality of the story. The argument is elaborated by using examples from a range of authors including Coleridge, Wallace Stevens, Robert Frost, William Carols Williams, Lakdasa Wikkramasinha, T.S. Eliot and Martin Rowson.

**Keywords**: Space, Spatiality, Preposition, Anecdote, Reader, Perspective, Memory

Literary texts are spatial enactments in which readers discover an array of relationships. It is also a discovery of positions; the location of the reader discovers and describes the spatiality of the story. For want of a better phrase, I wish to describe reading as the discovery of a prepositional act. In simple terms, we read texts placing them in relation to other texts, which offer a perspective into their spatial configurations. I remember my teacher in school telling me that if I learn how to use prepositions, I will be able to have a good grasp of how to use the English language. I now realize even more that prepositions have a way of describing relationships in spatial terms. Relationships are spatial enactments.

Consider for instance, the spatiality of story in a poem like "Kubla Khan." The occasion of the poem has always been the staple of romanticizing the opium eating poet, his vision, and the interrupted dream so much that Xanadu becomes a story as well as footnote, suggesting that it is an idyllic place as well. In such an instance, inferences and resultant stories are placed alongside a variety of reading experiences that configure an extra textual spatiality that informs this story of reading. And yet, there are other discoveries of space that constructs Xanadu and the poem. The opening lines report the discovery of a space willed in a royal decree:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea. (1 – 5)

Xanadu acquires spatial dimension as the poem develops and in the process discovers a number of relationships that narrate the reader as well into a textual space. The pleasure dome, the sacred river, the caverns and the sea conjure a seeming physical quality to Xanadu. The desire to physically and poetically articulate and approximate space is a coda written into the poem. It is a very interesting pattern for the subsequent lines elaborate on the physical quality of Xanadu. In that process, it is possible to decipher other spaces created in other preceding texts.

I.A. Richards uncovers such a space when he reads "Kubla Khan." In his discussion to demonstrate how "the mental processes of the poet are not a profitable field for investigation" ("Communication and the Artist" 29) for the psychoanalyst, I. A. Richards draws attention to *Paradise Lost* Book IV from lines 223 to note Coleridge's "indebtedness" (31) to Milton. What is fascinating while reading Richards today is this discovery of a spatial re-enactment of a prior enactment in Coleridge's text. This does not undermine Barthes' idea of the text as "a tissue of quotations" ("Death" 146); it seeks to understand how spaces inform and create new spaces for comprehension. And so, the reader begins to perceive the poem when s/he hears "ancestral voices prophesying war." It is a moment of discovery of space in the poem: "It was a miracle of rare device, / A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!" (Coleridge 35-36).

The spatial re-enactment of people, objects, situations and sequences in *Paradise Lost* in another imaginary becomes a "vision once I saw" of an Abyssinian maid playing on her dulcimer. "Kubla Khan" marks that spatial moment of imagination when the reader becomes aware of the exultation of the song:

…Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise. (49 – 54)

"Kubla Khan" is a remarkable text that speaks thus of multiple spatial relationships connecting author, text and reader. It is quite possible to generate a number of such spatially embedded relational states. Such embedding are quite revealing as relationships emerge at the crossroads where two strangers meet and discover the possibility of enacting a scene of recognition. The scene of recognition creates the textual code marking the space that becomes the text in that moment of comprehension.

It is thus possible to explore very familiar textual codes we address in the many texts we read/create. Now, therefore, let me hazard a thought: Space is an anecdotal experience. Anecdotes are built on relationships. Prepositions tell anecdotes about the relationships between objects, things, persons and so on. Relationships describe spaces. Let me try to elaborate this idea with some examples:

I recall reading a poem titled 'Anecdote of the Jar'. What is the anecdote here? It has to do with the way spaces are formed and experienced. There is a verbal act of placing a jar. It is an act that creates space. "I placed a jar in Tennessee, / And round it was, upon a hill" ("Anecdote"). Tennessee emerges when the jar is placed in what turns out to be a poem. The jar is a poem as well and it is placed in the poem. The poem is an anecdote for it evolves through a set of relationships we read as a "slovenly wilderness" that "surround that hill" ("Anecdote"). To say the least, the reader deciphers a series of relationships discovered in different places in the space of the emerging poem: "It made the slovenly wilderness / Surround that hill" ("Anecdote").

And yet, at the same time, what instances the poem is that crucial placing of the 'I' which makes it possible to create a space that plays out the philosophical ruminations about the relationship between art and nature, imagination and reality and so on. The way in which the 'I' is placed opens up the possibility of extended relationships that create spatial experiences. The 'I' is not a subject that is already constituted but an instant that relates an anecdote of the jar.

An anecdote is a spatial experience: "The wilderness rose up to it, / And sprawled around, no longer wild" ("Anecdote"). The wilderness around the jar foregrounds yet another anecdotal code that unfolds a spatial experience. This has to do with the jar which was 'round upon the ground': "The jar was round upon the ground / And tall and of a port in air" ("Anecdote").

The spatial experience takes over; 'It took dominion everywhere.' Spatial experiences are about moments of recognition, and awareness. It can be about the form and formation of the nature of relationships:

> The jar was gray and bare.
> It did not give of bird or bush,
> Like nothing else in Tennessee. ("Anecdote")

Now we return to the question, what is this anecdote of the jar? There is a curious way in which the poem discovers the reader in relationships in the space of the poem. At the same time, relationships have a lot to do with the nature of emerging temporalities that mark creation of spaces. The reader might ask at this point, what is it that I now know about this anecdote? Then proceed to read from 'I placed a jar in Tennessee':

> I placed a jar in Tennessee,
> And round it was, upon a hill.

It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,
And sprawled around, no longer wild.
The jar was round upon the ground
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.
The jar was gray and bare.
It did not give of bird or bush,
Like nothing else in Tennessee. ("Anecdote")

Space is then a threshold experience, for every instant can be an occupying and relocation. What the readers claim in a reading is therefore contingent on the kind of particular spatio-temporal occupancy that takes dominion. In a sense any text, especially a literary text is a threshold experience.

I will try to discuss briefly this threshold experience of textual space now using a gnomic Robert Frost poem.

We dance round in a ring and suppose,
But the Secret sits in the middle and knows. ("The Secret Sits")

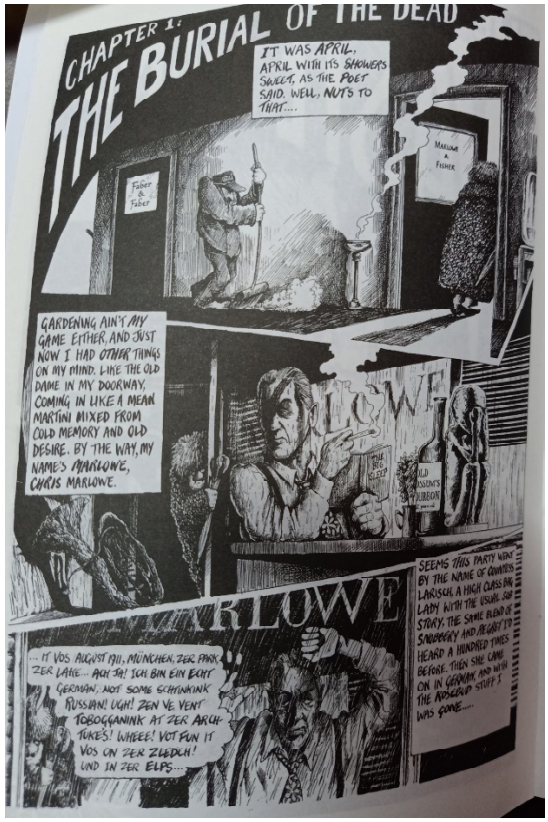
While discussing what is left of theory, Jonathan Culler refers to this poem and makes some interesting observations about "literary interest" and "the interpretive problem" (278). He then proceeds to detail "what the speaker or the poem is doing and what the agents within the poem, 'We' and 'the Secret,' are doing" (279). What I find particularly interesting is the way Culler discusses the positioning of the "We" and "the secret."

Culler says, "And if we ask about the status of knowing in the poem, what we can discover is that the subject supposed to know, the Secret, is produced by a rhetorical operation or supposition that moves it from the place of the object of 'know' to the place of the subject" (279). I am specifically interested here in what Culler calls the 'rhetorical operation or supposition'. To extend what Culler indicates, this is very similar to the rhetorical operation or supposition that creates agency by virtue of bringing and placing objects, selves or things alongside one another. The very important act of the way the secret is moved from the place of the object to the place of the subject is revelatory of the kinesis of space that holds together the structure of the Secret.

Culler continues, "A secret is something one knows or does not know. Here the poem capitalizes and personifies the Secret and, by metonymy, shifts it from the place of what is known to the place of the knower. The knower is thus represented as produced by a rhetorical supposing or positing that makes the object of knowledge (a secret) into its subject (the Secret). The poem says that the secret knows but shows that this is the performative product of a rhetorical supposition" (279).Secrets are not secretive, they are performative. That is to

say, we do not ask what the secret is, but recognize the space that 'makes the object of knowledge into its subject' a performance. Space, like secret is always performed.

This brings me to explore another experience of how we learn to read space.There are ways in which we visualize space. It is, of course, important to realize that what we perceive as space is always contextual. There is always a frame which reminds us of the constituents that announce the making of spatial relationships. Much of spatial composition depends on the constituents and their arrangement inside the frame. The creation of space is dependent on conditions fulfilled and unfulfilled. The poem I propose to use to explore the nature of spatial composition is a remarkable study in the art of composition:




so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens ("The Red Wheel Barrow")

This is a remarkable poem that depends so much upon a preposition. A number of objects, colours, and natural phenomenon are thrown in apparently in a haphazard fashion to create a textured space (pun intended). As the poem arranges everyday objects and experiences in a particular way, it draws attention to how we sense the space we create around us. The poem is a fascinating examination of the staples of how artists have challenged themselves to tell stories. Williams' 'so much depends upon' effects a very interesting variation on the tried and tested 'Once upon a time' opening. The result is a reorientation of the understanding of perspective making it possible to recognize anecdotal relationships in the narrative spaces different texts create around us. So much depends on what I make of the space I create as a reader of texts.

Into more recent times, with a changed and changing world order, a lot more depends on how we read spaces that tell challenging stories. Consider, for example, Lakdasa Wikkramasinha's "Don't Talk to me about Matisse."

This pronouncedly anti-colonial poem carves an important space in post-colonial theorizing. What I am particularly interested in is the way periods in history are spaced alongside to reveal the intent and content of colonialism.

> Don't talk to me about Matisse, don't talk to me
> about Gauguin, or even
> the earless painter Van Gogh,
> & the woman reclining on a blood-spread—
> The aboriginal short by the great white hunter Matisse
>
> with a gun with two nostrils, the aboriginal
> crucified by Gauguin—the syphilis-spreader, the yellowed
> obesity.
>
> Don't talk to me about Matisse…
> the European style of 1900, the tradition of the studio
> where the nude woman reclines forever
> on a sheet of blood. ("Don't Talk")

Instead of the paintings, the reader sees a 'blood-spread' and a 'sheet of blood'. There is only a blood soaked canvas, laying bare the cultural genocide and living spaces left in the wake of colonial conquests.

Painters create remarkable spaces in their works. Perspective is important to view a painting and this is what the poem invites the reader to have. The poem is a kind of painting that challenges the reader to bring in a perspective to visualize the blood drenched history of colonialism.

> Talk to me instead of the culture generally—
> how the murderers were sustained
> by the beauty robbed of savages: to our remote
> villages the painters came, and our white-washed
> mud-huts were splattered with gunfire. ("Don't Talk")

When history is evoked and juxta-positioned, they create polemical spaces. We practice polemics as we practice space. And so, it is even more fascinating to recognize the radical potential such textual relationships narrate.

It is this relationship that Martin Rowson uncovers in his graphic parody of T.S. Eliot's modernist poem "The Wasteland." In the conversation that results when the parodying and parodied texts are placed alongside each other, there is a discovery of spaces. Literary taste and sensibility called it the crowning achievement of high modernism. For Rowson Eliot's poem is "almost the *sine qua* non of the cut-up technique" (Rowson 71); it is a discovery of the art of rearrangement, a juxta-positioning of lines which is an identifiable trope in parodic discourse. For, what Eliot's text opens up is not a straight narrative of early twentieth century crisis of the enlightened subject; the poem becomes a space of juxta-positions that

place moments and stories from cultural histories from across the world. If there is a waste lander, that is the reader who must engage with the temporal ruptures shored up with / in the "heap of broken images" (Eliot 22). An obvious way to identify these ruptures is to recognize the framing of sequences in the lines we read. The reader goes on a quest making connections in the poem; the detective in the graphic novel goes in search of the killers of his dead partner. In that process the later text recalls and recasts the dynamics of "mixing memory and desire" onto a polemical space of irreverence graphically captured in frame after frame.

The first eighteen lines of the poem is a large memory frame which enfolds within the distinct fragments the reader tries to juxtapose assuming a narrative cohesion. The idea of memory frames is a continuous narrative strategy used in the poem beginning with that sidelong reference to the opening lines from Chaucer's "General Prologue." This sets the pattern to discover literary and other memories that soon find etched beside each other evoking a narrative space much akin to the way sequences are arranged in movies.

Not surprisingly, Martin Rowson adapts the filmic frame of this high modernist poem with its narrative sequence placing it with other texts like the Sweeney and Prufrock poems, invented texts in Latin and Greek, musical notations, art movements, sketches of a whole range of luminaries, to name some. Of equal interest are the graphic cameo presences of Eliot himself (Rowson 2, 17, 32, 60, and 61) which seems to indicate how the poet's presence overwhelms the spaces that connect the broken heap of images. The graphic redesign of the cinematic sequence in the poem opens up space to place citations from Raymond Chandler and 1940s film noir. Consider for example the first three frames in chapter I, "Burial of the Dead" in Rowson. The prepositional sequence that takes the narrative forward is quite evident in the three frames that are linked to Eliot's text which recalls prior narratives and reconstructs fragments of memory:

> April is the cruellest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
> Memory and desire, stirring
> Dull roots with spring rain.
> Winter kept us warm, covering
> Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
> A little life with dried tubers.
> Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
> With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
> And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
> And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
> Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
> And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke's,
> My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
> And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
> Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.

In the mountains, there you feel free.
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter. (Eliot 1- 18)

For what Rowson's text does is to re-cite the prior citations, uncovering them in the gutter, that space between the panels. It is not surprising to discover a polemics of space for here is an instance of a literal rendering of the history of even the canonization of the poem. The reference in the first panel to "Faber and Faber, Eliot's old company" (Rowson 70) obviously draws attention to the role the publication house has had in establishing the canon. But what really stands out is that Rowson's work raises certain important questions about the creation and sustenance of canonical space, that code governing the circulation of ideas, fashion, and sensibility, that "gnarled old totem pole" (69). Canonical space, Rowson reminds us, is fraught with unforeseen complications. He discusses the issues he had with the Eliot Estate which is succinctly remarked upon: "The manuscript was returned with all perceived infringements of the Eliot Estate's copyright marked in pink highlighter pen. Apparently, their copyright extended to cover the word 'Michaelangelo', the sound effect 'Throb Throb Throb' as produced by a taxi, and the images of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis" (71). The literary inheritance seems to have overwhelmed the estate.

Clearly then, literary spaces are sighted sites in all variety for authors, texts and readers. This has a bearing on questions like perspective, issues of representation, and the nature of literary texts and their mode of existence. I think this is the reason why there is a lot of interest in our times to discuss and understand the creation of space. There is so much of space to understand and discover that I can only conclude with three lines of a poem in translation:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Furu ike ya* | Old pond! |
| *kawazu tobikomu* | frog jumps in |
| *mizu no oto* | water's sound ("Commentary") |

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# Social Mediations for Peace: A Jungian Psycho-analytical Reading of Two Poems by Christopher Okigbo:

**Damlègue LARE**

**Abstract**

This article investigates how Okigbo envisions social mediations and peace strategies through predictive poetic and imaginary language. Aspects of the language explored include predictive eulogy warning the Biafra war, descriptive metaphors depicting war specter and mediatory imageries to reconcile belligerents. Further hints are given on how to attain resilience after conflicts. The analysis focuses on the poems "Eyes Watch the Stars" and "Come Thunder", where Okigbo warns about an imminent civil war, a way to envision peace. Jungian Psycho-analytical approach is used to study the choice of words and to decipher his poetic vision of conflict preventive strategy.

**Keywords:** Peace, conflicts, development, prediction, mediation.

**Résumé:**

**Les Médiations sociales au service de la paix : une lecture psycho-analytique Jungienne de deux poèmes sélectionnés de Christopher Okigbo**

Cet article étudie comment Okigbo envisage des médiations sociales et stratégies de la paix à travers un langage poétique et imaginaire de prédiction. Les aspects de la langue explorée comprennent l'éloge prédictif avertissant la guerre du Biafra, des métaphores descriptives représentant le spectre de la guerre et des images médiatiques pour réconcilier les belligérants. Des indications supplémentaires sont données sur la manière d'atteindre la résilience après les conflits. L'analyse se concentre sur les poèmes «Eyes Watch the Stars» et «Come Thunder», où Okigbo met en garde contre une guerre civile imminente, une façon d'envisager la paix. L'approche psychanalytique jungienne est utilisée pour étudier le choix des mots et pour déchiffrer sa vision poétique de la stratégie de prévention des conflits.

**Mots clés : paix, conflits, développement, prédiction, médiation.**

## Introduction

Most Nigerian poets of Biafra period present peace talks and negotiations as a resort after an outbreak of conflicts. Wole Soyinka's "Massacre, October' 66" presents the specter of war before ending on notes of reconciliation (Soyinka 1968: 247). Niyi Osundare' s "I Sing of Change" is a complain about an undesirable conflict which is taking time to end (Osundare 1968: 283). Gabriel Okara's "Suddenly the Air Cracks" chants in a plaintive voice the havoc of decimating arsenals on the population (Okara 1968: 49-50). When approaching Okigbo, critics seem to overlook his social mediations strategies; specifically, the predictive aspects of his poetry related to war and his belief that anticipation is the best way of raising collective awareness about conflicts and their remedy. Chinweizu Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike declare that Okigbo is an introvert poet whose social vision is not clear (Chiweizu et at 1983: 148). Emmanuel Obiechina sees Okigbo as "an inspired performer, a composit prophet or seer" but does not specify the extent to which he is negotiating peace through his predictive poems (Obiechina 2000: 195). For Michael J. C. Echeruo, Okigbo's poems have "a sense of local base and local relevance". Such a statement does not say clearly how the poet warns people about war to prevent catastrophe (2002: 95). Obiajunwa Wali assimilates Okigbo to an idiosyncratic poet without venturing into his war poems (Wali 2013: 282). It follows that aspects of Okigbo's poetic vision concerning war prediction and the implied negotiations of peace needs further critical attention. My critical attention is focused on discussing peace negotiations as mediation strategy from a preventive perspective. I specifically want to analyze how anticipating mediation by adopting predictive poetics seems a relevant diplomatic attitude to save lives and material. Carl Gustav Yung' s psychoanalytical criticism will be used in my methodological approach.

## 1. Okigbo and the Poetics of Warning

The tenets of Jungian psycho-analytical criticism are that every work of art bears the imprints of the unconscious psychological drives of its author. Yung developed and explored the terms extroverted (outward looking) and introverted (inward-looking) to describe and differentiate between two personality types. He examined the affinities between the conscious and the unconscious mind. Crucially, he distinguishes between the personal unconscious (repressed feelings and thoughts that an individual develops during his or her life) and the collective unconscious (the structure of inherited feelings, thoughts and memories that all human beings possess). Within the collective unconscious are "archetypes". These are primordial images from the earliest stages, linked to such fundamental experiences and universal rites of passage as going on a journey, coming of age, or facing death. It is the presence of these archetypes, argues Yung that connect and unify the major symbol systems of the world' s myths, religion and literatures. Yung defines archetypes as "a priori, inborn forms of intuition". The two notions "intuition" and "fate" will be explored in this essay. Elsewhere he referred to them as "complexes of experience that come upon us like fate" whose effects are felt in our most

personal life. Contextualizing Yung means for me to analyze the extent to which the selected poems of Okigbo unveil his personal doom and fatal death in Biafran crisis. By predicting the warfare and the calamitous future of the crisis, was he not indirectly predicting his own death? Art like poetry is imprinted with the tentacles of the creative ethos falling out from the authorial ideology and idiosyncratic expression of the writer's social vision and agendas. By establishing that poetry is a work of the mind, Carl Gustave Jung creates a causality relationship between the poet's sub-consciousness and his art which reveals the curative virtue of poetry as it fills up the psychological need of the restorative process: "… a shift of psychological standpoint has taken place as soon as one speaks not of the poet as a person but of the creative process that moves him" (Jung: 2002: 996). The submission purveys the intrinsic connections between what I term Okigbo's social project and his creative ethos. His social project is a visionary assemblage of a vendicative praxis warning the imminence of a broken conflict between governmental forces and Biafra dissidents. At the core of his creative ethos stands the artistic craft hosting the flag of peace. The price to be paid to avoid open war is left to the discretion of the belligerents. But Okigbo will first take position against injustice that negates sovereignity to Igbo dissidents and at the same time unleashes mortal artillery on them:

> … A nebula heads of pods in barren farmlands witness it,
> The homestead abandoned in this country's brushfire witnesses it:
> The myriad eyes of deserted corn cobs in burning barns witness it (LAPOT: 75).

The contrapuntal nexus of predictive poetics sow the poet's mastery of both Nigeria's political millstone and the adjacent intersection with the visionary output he frames. From this perspective the visual aspect of Okigbo's predictive poetics is a warning momentum that adumbrates several aspects of the dangers of engaging in war. One decimal valence of such warning comes in the form of prophesying calamitous conflictual whirlwind in which the belligerents incur loss of material and humans: "The smell of blood already floats in the lavender-mist of the afternoon. The death sentence lies in ambush along the corridors of power; and a great fearful thing already tugs at the cables of the open air" (LAPOT: 75). In this line, the words "open air", Okigbo also sees the Nigerian problem from the perspective of ethnic and inter-religious rivalries.

Chukwuma Azuonye explains that Jungian psychology is primarily concerned with understanding the structure, dynamics and development of the psyche, the totality of the non-physical component of human personality. Yung saw the psyche as comprising two distinct but interacting systems and levels, namely the conscious and the unconscious as comprising two (Azuonye 2000: 162).

It is often said that prevention is better than cure. Predicting the future by anticipation events though a difficult task, has been used by Okigbo as his way of negotiating peace in the Biafra crisis. By anticipating events Okigbo wants to negotiate peaceful settlement of the conflicts. If it were possible for actors to find a way out of the crisis, it is Okigbo's belief that more than one life could be salvaged. He is aware of his role as a poet using poetry to predict the

cataclysm of war. For that he refers to this in the following terms: "If I don't learn to shut my mouth, I will soon go to hell, I Okigbo, town-crier together with my iron bell" (LAPOT: 77). Learning to shout one' s mouth here is a hyperbole to mean that he has done his job by warning and predicting tragedy. It is also an indirect way of expressing a regret for the fact that his message does not meet a favorable reply. I will examine in details the kind of cataclysm he predicts and the language he uses to explain it.

A town crier in African culture is the person who is commissioned by the community leader to deliver information to the population about future meetings when the chief or king wants him to. Okigbo identifies himself as town crier whose messages foretell the calamity of war. These poems were written in December 1965 and the events he is predicting came to pass in the next four years 1966 till 1970. These elements need detailed examination. I will begin with the metaphor of thunder.

Okigbo has used "Thunder" as a metaphor to speak about war at a time when open conflict was yet to be heard of. Okigbo has predicted Nigerian civil war before its occurrence. Most of his poems were written in 1965 to warn about the forthcoming civil war of 1967-1970. In ''Thunder can Break'' the idea of future calamity looms ahead. Thunder is the rain phenomenon that produces lightening and noisy breaking intonation. Thunder is usually associated with fear, suspicion and possible arsonic fire. If rain is itself a good event thunder associated with rain does not fathom something benign. In primitive societies thunder was interpreted as the signpost of the gods' anger. Okigbo uses thunder to designate war or outbreaks of war and the noise of guns: "Thunder can break – Earth, bind me fast – Obduracy, the disease of elephants." (LAPOT: 72) The use of the modal auxiliary 'can' in the verse 'thunder can break' tells about the possibility of an event that has not yet taken place, but which is pending. Elsewhere Okigbo brings the reader to the full reality of war in the opening verses of the poem:

> Fanfare of drums, wooden bells: iron chapter;
> And our dividing airs are gathered home.
> This day belongs to a miracle of thunder;
> Iron has carried the forum
> With token gestures. Thunder has spoken,
> Left no signatures: broken (LAPOT: 72).

An intuition is "the ability to know something by using one's feelings rather than considering the facts. It is also an idea or strong feeling that something is true although you cannot explain why" (A S Horby 2008: 791). Okigbo's predictive poetics of war are achieved through intuition. The reader senses he had the intuition of a sudden calamity on both Nigeria and his own life. He has devoted about six poems to prophesy war, although by the time he wrote them in 1965, there was no clear evidence that war was going to happen. The poems foretelling war are: "Thunder Can Break", "Elegy of the Wind", "Come Thunder", "Hurrah for Thunder", "Elegy for Slit-Drum", "Elegy for Alto". It is true that the post-independence period was marked by political instability, difficult negotiations and ethnic resentment, few

evidences could be gathered to think of possible armed conflicts in Nigeria. Okigbo uses his intuition to warn about Biafran war.

Yung introduces the notion of "autonomous creative complex" which is useful to me in the analysis of Okigbo's poems. The autonomous creative complex is the author's artistic freedom to use imageries, symbolism or metaphysical languages that may elude to the reader. Symbolism and metaphors abound in Okigbo's poems but before analyzing them I would like to dwell longer on Yung's concept of "autonomous creative complex". Yung asserts that "the instinctual side of the poet's personality prevails over the ethical… the unadapted over the adapted… The autonomous complex thus develops by using the energy that has been withdrawn from the conscious control of the personality" (Yung 2001: 1000). The implication here is that as a poet, Okigbo's poetics is decipherable to the extent that one considers his poems in the light of his authorial vision. But beyond the interpretative praxis of the poems, his poetic aesthetics may still contain aspects of his symbols that appear reserved to the author. In relation to symbols and imageries, Yung asserts that in each of these images, there is a little piece of human psychology and human fate, a remnant of the joys and sorrows that have been repeated countless times (Yung 2001: 1001). To be exact, here Yung is explaining the complexification of the poet's psychological drives that may transpire in poems. Let's come back to some of the symbols and metaphors in the poems. I will begin with the thunder metaphor.

## 2. Mediating for Peace through Social Metaphors

Fanfare, drums and bells are musical instruments used to frighten the enemy at the war front. But these instruments are also used to call people for gathering. The semantic field of war includes armaments and artillery but also such elements like drums, bells, fanfares. "Divided airs" stand for divided troops. This is a metaphor for dissidence of Biafrans. One needs to specify that Okigbo joined the dissidents and was killed in the bombing of loyalists. It is in this context that Yung says that "a poet, despite his self-awareness, may be taken captive by his work." He continues to justify this assertion by saying that "a poet who says he knows what he is saying but actually says more than he is aware of. And behind the apparent free will of the poet there stands a higher imperative that renews its peremptory demands" (Yung 2001: 996). These statements mean Okigbo the poet unleashes beyond art, a creative vision that blends his conscious being as a Nigerian citizen directly concerned with the crisis in Biafra that affected negatively the Igbo community whose member Okigbo is, and his prophet identity with his unconscious self as fiction writer. Indirecly said, when fiction meets reality, the writer bears a double mask, that of social critic or reformer and that of creative writer whose art dives into the social reality of his immediate environment. The dissidence in the understanding of Biafrans was meant to achieve the political and geographical separation of Biafra from the mother country Nigeria. Further details on the nature and implications of Nigerian civil war are given in "Come Thunder":

> Now that the triumphant march has entered the last street corners,
> Remember, O dancers, the thunder among the clouds…

Now that the laughter, broken in two hangs tremulous between the teeth,
Remember O dancers, the lightening beyond the earth… (LAPOT: 75)

Here Okigbo apostrophes the political leaders he calls "dancers" to warn them that the crisis may degenerate into war. "The laughter broken in two hangs between the teeth" refers to the cessation of joy and the disappearance of merriment. Political independence in Nigeria brought a lot of hope and joy to the idea that, since Nigerians took control of the management of the country, there were going to be constructive change in economy, education, health, employment sectors, since they would manage resources in a more rational way to benefit the whole population. The failure to meet the expectations of the population created a general malaise in the masses. The military also became power-thirsty and the conflicts between political factions culminated into crisis. The failure of peace negotiations unmistakably points to the high risk of confrontation. Okigbo saw in the future politics the entanglement of the country into abysmal warfare and predicted bloodshed. In the following extract, the smell of blood foretells of the imminence of massive murder.

The smell of blood….
The death sentence…
And the great fearful thing already tugs at the cables of the open air,
A nebula heads of the pods in barren farmlands witness it,
The homesteads abandoned in this century's brush fire witness it:
The myriad eyes of deserted corn cobs in burning barns witness it:
Magic birds with the miracle of lightening flash on their Feathers… (LAPOT: 75)

Here the poet sees beyond the simple outbreak of arm conflicts. He describes the desertion of houses by their inhabitants: "the homesteads abandoned". It is the human dimension of conflicts that come under play. By predicting war Okigbo looks into the havoc that such disaster may occasion. Carl Jung opines that "the conscious mind" of the poet " is not only influenced by the unconscious but is actually guided by it" (Jung 2001: 997). Two ideas emerge here. Firstly, it is the idea that Okigbo' s intuition has its source in and was guided by Okigbo being an Igbo must have analyzed the condition of the Igbo minority groups to foresee that in the future, the majority group in power may decide to repress in violence the secession claim. In that context, the logic of a civil war would be very plausible. Also by 1965, Biafrans had already obtained the support of some European countries like France so that Biafra dissidents afar from the future outbreak of war were preparing for a type of resistance that would cost their lives. So the unconscious propounded by Jung here refers to the instinctive reactions or actions of the subject when he/she realizes the imminence of tragedy like war. "

The arrows of God tremble at the gates of light,
The drums of curfew pander to a dance of death;
And the secret thing in its heaving
Threatens with iron mask

The last lighted torch of the century… (LAPOT: 75-76)

The line "The arrows of God tremble at the gates of light" refers to the belief of the poet that there is a Divine justice that can settle matters aright when minority groups victims of unjust violence are powerless to do justice. The idea is that, if war breaks out, damages will be incurred by both belligerent groups hence the necessity to advert it. Preventing conflicts requires the discharge of some responsibilities by all parties. Each party should be ready to make concessions, to relinquish part of their rightful claims and to consider the supreme interest of the populations. In the context of Nigerian civil war which Okigbo is talking about, the loyal forces and the secessionists need to understand that beyond the guerrilla warfare and the ideological ambitions, their societies are called to cohabitate. It is that necessary cohabitation, which meant to last for generations that should motivate conflicting parties to make concessions and prevent the occurrence of war. Okigbo expresses this idea thus:

> For beyond the blare of sirened afternoons, beyond the motorcades;
> Beyond the voices and days, the echoing highways, beyond the latescence of our dissonant airs; through our curtained eyeballs, through our shuttered sleep,
> Onto our forgotten selves, onto our broken images…
> Beyond the iron path careering along the same beaten track –
> The glimpse of a dream lies smouldering in the cave, together with the mortally wounded birds (LAPOT: 82).

The poet expresses here his poetic vision of resilience of a society after conflict. Resilience is the ability of people or things to feel better quickly after something unpleasant, such as shock or injury. The poet uses anaphora "beyond" to express his idea about the necessity of resilience. Okigbo informs that life should continue. Anticipation does not only enable the poet to warn about the pending war but it also enables him to actually express his optimism about the possibility of society's reconstruction after conflicts. Okigbo foretells the importance of being optimistic. "Beyond" is a preposition that means "on or to the further side of something" or "later than a particular time" (A S Hornby 2008:128). Beyond is used many times in this poem before the nouns it accompanies to express the post-conflicts period. The words used with beyond are: "the blare of sirened afternoons", "the voices and days", "the iron path". All these words are referring to armed conflicts. So Okigbo repeatedly says that life should continue after the warfare.

Okigbo negotiates peace through two communicative strategies:

Warning: it is the most pervasive form of langue used in his poems. He warns through symbols, images and metaphors that appeal to disaster, create fear and advocates catastrophe: "thunder, blood, death" for instance denote cataclysm, apocalyptic images of the nature or society in full tragic drama. He maximizes his poetic analysis to encourage warmongers not to resort to mediation and not let war happen. The adjectives and adverbs used here are mostly intensifiers. The tone is declamatory and oratorical. TQhe reader may say that Okigbno is grumbling when writing his verses.

Mediatory language or plea for dialogue: Here, Okigbo uses soft language to express his belief that reconstruction is possible. His language is apologetic, conciliatory and diplomatic. In the last five lines of the poem "Eyes watch the Stars", Okigbo uses soft languages, words like "stars", "see", "talk", "mediate", "unite" to describe the process through which peace may be achieved: negotiation and the sharing of interests aznd responsibilities. In line with Jungian psycho-analytical criticism, it is plausible to argue that Okigbo is expressing his intuitive vision of the Biafra conflict as un unproductive venture, a rather destructive enterprise that would be fatal for the parties involved.

To begin with, the 1966 civil war in Biafra took an ethnic orientation when the Gowon government turned against the Igbo with a violent repression and several million Igbo citizens lost their lives. If the European colonial partition of Africa divided African peoples', Okigbo's logic goes that Africans should exploit such divisions to promote positive construction of difference. Specifically, he thinks that ethnic difference should serve as avenue for consultations, mutual enrichment and the construction of social cohesion. To achieve this, the sharing of values, wealth, jobs, among different ethnic groups should be based on intellectual merits, not ethnic belonging. The poet also locates ethnic differences' enrichment at the level of marriages. Inter-ethnic marriages should be encouraged to consolidate social bonding. Okigbo thinks that marriages between people of different ethnic origins (Igbo and Yoruba for example) should contribute to rally the two ethnic groups. Ethnic representations should also be promoted in public administration, leadership spheres, religious gatherings. It means for instance that people working in an office should be from different ethnic groups. This is to encourage peaceful social cohabitation. In leadership too, the board of leaders and the different committees playing leadership roles should be constituted with plural ethnic belongings. When some ethnic groups are discriminated against others, society becomes replete with favoritism, nepotism, and regionalism. As a matter of fact, peace strategies will be endangered leading to the suffering of minority groups. The Biafra problem as aestheticized by Okigbo was rooted in multifaceted cleavages running from the unequal distribution of the oil income, the refusal of ethnic representations in public administration and the non-encouragement of inter-ethnic socialization and mixage through marriage. Such cleavages led to what Chinua Achebe called "ethnic resentment" (2012: 34), and which was already used by Okigbo in his poems to describe the categorization of some ethnic groups, especially the minorities as "other". Ethnic resentment as used by Okigbo in "Path and Thunder" points at social tensions and the general unease created by the non-acceptation of inter-ethnic and religious cohabitation. To be exact, Okigbo's use of ethnic resentment beckons internal rivalry as a dangerous phenomenon, detrimental and counter-productive for Africa's development. From Jungian psycho-analytic perspective, the social distemper is an important contributor of psycho-somatic trauma in individuals. In other words, Jung thinks that the more social problems individual face, the greater chance they stand to develop psychological instability and disorders. What comes to the surface from the internal accumulation of grief due to conflicts is the replicate of the untamable forces that are at work in the individual at the moment of mental and emotional discomfort. In this connection, Okigbo finds that there is a relationship between

the individual's emotional and psychological state and the social forces that strain and pressure him unequally. Peaceful social atmosphere contributes to favour moral stability while social unrest and conflicts engender discomfort, and irritation. The words and expressions used for this purpose are "teeth, thunder, hung and clouds". Semantically, teeth are the part of speech organs that enable the individual to articulate some sounds. But teeth also intervene in the mastication of food. Furthermore, teeth are used as instruments of self-defense from external aggression when the individual cannot used his/her arms or feet. Okigbo uses the metaphor of teeth to highlight the fact that the same element can serve several purposes. Ethnic difference is a social phenomenon that functions like teeth. Humans can exploit ethnic difference to build a peaceful social environment and achieve constructive development if they are committed to that end. Yet if they are not committed to that end, they can still use such difference to prey on one another in a destructive manner. "Clouds" foretell rain. They can also hide the sunlight or moonlight, thus preventing the full illumination of the nature by the sun or moon. In the poem, clouds relate to social identity in terms of ethnic or religious differentiation. Such social identity takes the orientation given to it by the individual or the community. The parallelism between clouds and religious and ethnic identity is that they are derivative and maniable to achieve good purpose or bad one depending on the determination and objective of the one handling them. Ethnic differences will serve good purpose if the individuals work for and use them to that end. They may be prejudicial if they misuse them for negative intents.

The reader may wonder why Okigbo predicts war, with details and underlines its destructive aspects and yet became its victim. Okigbo's death reveals a certain ideological ambiguity which appears difficult to understand. One may argue that a poet like Okigbo who sensed the future advent of war could have possibly taken the necessary precautions to avoid any involvement into the drama. Yet the poet's patriotic commitment was stronger than his artistic ideology. So he joined the rebels on the war front and was killed in a bombing launched by the loyalists. One may argue that Okigbo has not survived his prophecy on the one hand because he thought by joining the physical battle, he could have contributed to the victory of his Igbo Biafran faction; and on the other hand that he consciously died so that his message could have more impact on the readership.

## Conclusion

This article sought to show that anticipating disastrous events like war through predictions can help prevent its occurrence. If only political actors could heed the cry of writers, and be willing to revert the course of events, the Biafran war could have been avoided. Secondly, peace is the decimal without which no sustainable development is possible. It is important therefore to seek to cultivate it through reconciliatory diplomacy, mediatory behavior and appeasing interlocutions. In arts and in society, signs, acts and languages among humans should seek to construct peace and promote development. Thirdly, although Okigbo's predictions did not echoe beyond the boundaries of literature books, readers reckon with him that his insightful ideas are useful to build peace both in Nigeria and outside Nigeria.

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# Can a Priest be a Dalit? A Case from Dravidian Culture

**D. Murali Manohar**

**Abstract**

The paper will study on the sub-caste of Dalits such as Mala Dasari/Mala Dasu/Mittla Ayyavarlu of south India who has the vocation of priesthood for centuries. Can they be considered untouchable priests? The answer to the question will be the result of this paper.

**Keywords:** untouchable priest, sub-caste, Dalit, religion

This paper will focus on caste identity of a Scheduled Caste of Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Maharashtra called Mala Dasari/Mala Dasu/Mittal Ayyalwar. The above mentioned sub-caste is a priestly caste from the Dravidian culture with below poverty line and under-developed caste. Culturally and religiously they are rich but socially and economically they are very badly treated as untouchable and downtrodden people. A great detail about this caste has been discussed by E. D. Thurston in his book *Castes and Tribes of South India Vol. IV.* (Madras: Govt. of Tamilnadu, 1909. Print) There are many writers/ researchers who have dealt with Mala Dasaris in various books/articles namely Tirupati Raghaviah (1980), Kolukuri Enoch (1987), Mikkilineni Radhakrishna Murthi (1992), B.V.R. Murthy (1992), Victor A Doherty (1992), K. S. Singh (1993), D. N. Basheer (1995), K. Ramakrishna (1996), Bonigala Rama Rao (1998), Pillamarri Ramulu (1999) Unnava Laxmi Narayana (2002), Swapna Samel (2004), (Satyanarayana (2005), Namboori Paripoorna (2006), Tirupati Tirumala Devastanam (2007), Nandu Ram (2007), Takkella Bala Raju (2009), Divya (2009), Sri Krishnadevaraya (2010), Ganta Chakrapani (2010), D. Murali Manohar (2010), Yendluri Sudhakar (2011) and Nanumusa Swami (2012).

The important issue about this caste people is that they are appointed to spread Hinduism by Ramanujacharya in 10$^{th}$ century AD. Ramanujacharya propagated Visistha Advaitha Philosophy. It encapsules equality of all castes in Hindu religion. It came after Advaitha

philosophy propagated by Sri Adi Shankaracharya. All castes have been embraced into Hinduism and provided an ashtakshari manthra that is *Om Namo Narayanaya* which was a revolutionary thing during that time. In fact Ramunujacharyulu was threatened to death by the orthodox Brahmins for reciting the manthra to all castes to establish equality within Hinduism. (Source: Sri Trijandi Chinna Jeer Swamy of Hyderabad, Telangana in a speech delivered in a Samatha Sabha on 26th August 2016 in NRI Medical College Ground in Mangalagiri, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh)

Among other castes, the Dasaris have a special status. The reason is that since they are chosen by the gods for their utmost devotion such as Tiruppan Alwar, Chintal Muni Swami, Veedhi Kesava Swami and others. Moreover, they have adopted Ramanuja as their god and called it as Ramanuja matham (religion). Most of the Dasari have adopted Ramunja as their gothram too. This was said to me in my research.

This sub-caste has been listed in the gazette notification but no one has done any full length research on this caste. It was not known in India except the five states that I have mentioned above. I take the privilege to announce to the country that among Scheduled castes; there is a priestly caste. It has also not been accepted by the society. They are made forcefully to accept by the gods themselves. It is not a mystery; it is a fact. They are called untouchable priests. I take a strong objection to this. How can a priest be an untouchable? Let it be any religious priest, be it a Hindu priest, Muslim priest or Christian priest, will there be an untouchable priest? Theoretically it is not acceptable. There is a contradiction in it. How to prove this? There is a way to prove it? How? It is through a research project. How does one get a project? It is through research question? What is the research question? How has it evolved? It has evolved from my parents' religious thought. They have imbibed religious thought in me. Since when have I been imbibed? I have been imbibed since my childhood. I was and am a devotee of Lord Krishna. I have been a practitioner of Hindu religion and have brought up with the image of Lord Krishna in my mind. I have been a volunteer in the temple named Sri Parthasrathi Swamy temple (Lord Krishna) in my native place called Kurnool Town, Andhra Pradesh. As a volunteer I had a notion that every one cannot be a priest in the temple. It was only the Brahmin. But my mother used to say that we were different from other Dalits. I did not understand then. But after becoming faculty in 1998, I have been teaching Dalit Literature. While teaching the course, my orientation was to keep the religious issues as core. In that course, I had prescribed an article entitled "Annihilation of Caste" by B. R. Ambedkar. This paper was not allowed to be presented. But it was published by Ambedkar himself. In that article, Ambedkar demanded from the Hindu religion that (a) the position or appointment of priesthood should not be hereditary but it should be based on Archaka qualification and should have a minimum qualification; (b) The priesthood should have a limited numbers based on qualification like any competitive exam; (c) There should be one uniform scripture for Hinduism for which all Swamis can sit together and come up with a single religious book for Hindu religion; (d) There should be inter-caste marriage and inter-dining across the castes. Some of the demands have been implemented without

acknowledging Ambedkar. For example many caste people have been practicing priesthood; there have been colleges and ashrams which train people to become priests; there has been a talk that more inclusiveness in Hinduism etc. I had presented a paper on this issue elsewhere.

While thinking of this untouchability, I was troubled. Was there anything that removes this stigma? Then I had come across one poem called *Amuktamalyada* written by Sri Krishnadevaraya the Vijaya Nagara Empire King and poet in which a Mala Dasari has been brought into the poem, where he makes the Dalit a moksha giver to the Brahmin. He has been cursed to be a demon for having lent money on extraordinary interest to the people. This poem was a stepping stone for my research question. Who was Dasari? What religion did he practice? What is his status in society? That led to the project entitled "History of Mala Dasaris" and got sanctioned from UGC under Major Research Project between 2011-2013 worth Rs. 7,20,200/-.

I have also pointed out that the link of Tiruppan Alwar is missing as he has been one of the important figures in Bhakti Literature which was traced by Raj Kumar *Dalit Personal Narratives* (New Delhi: Orient, 2010). (Please refer to "Tiruppan Alwar Thurunakshatram" Sri Vaishnavism. November 22, 2010:1-5 Web: http://ramanujadasan.wordpress.com) Like Choka Mela (13-14$^{th}$ Century) a Mahar poet from Maharashtra, Raidas was a cobbler from Uttar Pradesh (contemporary of Kabir), Namdev (AD 1270-1350) belonging to a tailor caste from Maharashtra, Kabir (1398-1418) was a weaver from Uttar Pradesh, Thukaram (1608) was a Kunbi (peasant) from Maharashtra), Rama Dasu, Kanaka Dasu of BC from Karnataka and many others belonging to different castes have been discussed as part of Bhakti literature. How come Tiruppan Alwar who belongs to Mala Dasari community has been placed among the twelve Alwars of Vaishnava Tradition has been ignored? How is he missing? I bring to the notice of Bhakti literature. The term Alwar means the one who is merged with god for his/her devotion. This happened in Sri Rangam, Tamilnadu where we have Sri Ranganatha Temple in which Tiruppan Alwar has been merged into god as a reward for his devotion. To mention another Alwar who is a female named Goda Devi in reciting 30 pasuras to Lord Krishna each one a day for thirty days from December 15 to January 15 up to Sankranti. Ultimately Lord Vishnu marries her as a reward for her devotion. Kanka Dasu who made the Lord Krishna to turn his idol from East direction to West direction in order to provide darshan to his devotee when the upper castes prevented him to have darshan of his god due to caste discrimination. Even today in Udipi the idol is in the west direction for the devotees to have darshan in Udipi, Karnataka. The same thing has been repeated in a small village for a Mala Dasari in a temple called Chenna Keasava Swamy who happens to be the community deity provides darshan to the Dasari by making the wall break and turns the idol to the Dasari who has been doing bhajan behind the temple as the upper caste people prevented him to have darshan.

The most important issue to me was the conversion. Conversion is such a task in which your sole is lost. I had prescribed one article entitled "Conversion as Emancipation" by Ambedkar in which he stressed on converting Dalits into any religion but not retain in Hinduism. But at the end of the essay he gave freedom to the reader to convert or not. Another question that

troubled me was why did Ambedkar take 20 years time to take a decision to convert himself? Another thing to me is that why should I convert to any other religion which is not mine and be an alien and part of alien practices in any religion that one would go to? There is one literary text entitled *Outcaste: A Memoir* written by Narendra Jadhav a Dalit writer in which Sonu who has been worshipping Hindu gods since her childhood. When her husband Damu, who has been influenced by Ambedkar's philosophy, decides to convert into Buddhism, his wife Sonu resists and questions her husband. However, she converts but never gives up her Hindu idols.

Let me come to the project that I had undertaken and share its findings. I had initially defined who Mala/Vaishnava Dasaris and briefly reviewed the references of Mala Dasaris at various literary texts and people who and where they are as I have mentioned in the beginning of the paper. I have talked about the research methodology in which I had said that I had gone to the field work to interview and document the priesthood practices and the temples in which they function as priest of the temple.

The next chapter is about the documentation of the Dasaris being in 23 temples as sample in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh with three regions such as Rayalaseema, Andhra and Telangana. I am sure there are many more temples in which these Dasaris perform as priests and do the service to the people. But one thing that needs to be done to these priests is that they badly need to be trained properly about priesthood. They have a very limited knowledge. As a group, some of the community people went and requested the Swami Sri Tridandi Chinna Jeer Swamy to arrange training for those who require this kind of priesthood practice. The duration of the programme vary from one week, two weeks, one month, six months to one year. He has agreed and has conducted training programmes at Shamsabad, Hyderabad in his ashram. It is a huge ashram where there are: school, college, Veda Pathasala. It has a hostel facility for trainers and a big guest house for the visitors.

In my research the Mala Dasaris had expressed that they needed to be paid more honorariums. Currently they are paid Rs. 1500/- per family and these temples are shared by one family with many branches. Each branch family gets the opportunity of earning/honorarium alternatively. If one family looks after the temple for that year the other families have to look for alternative works such as agriculture field, masonry and other petty jobs. As a result, the next generation is not keen in upholding this tradition and culture. They are turning to other alternatives. As a researcher and the community person it is an alarming bell. It is not only to me but also to the Hindu religion in general and Mala Dasaris in particular. This may be the platform to appeal to the organizers to spread this message and encourage the Dasaris to retain and protect the tradition and culture unless special attention is paid to this community. Otherwise this community's tradition and culture will vanish.

The occupations that these priests do is that they are mendicants, medical practitioners, astrologers, vastu experts, musicians, artists, priests, drama artists, actors and actresses,

They are priests for all castes not only for Mala and Madigas which has been spread across the villages as a result they are branded as untouchable priests.

This priesthood has also enabled them to move to Christianity where they are offered as Bishops, Pastors and other important positions in Christianity which they were not getting in Hinduism. It is a loss to Hinduism. My next project would be on Mala Dasaris to find out the reasons and the number of Dasaris having converted into Christianity. In a way this caste people have been exploited by the missionaries for their own convenience and spread of Christian religion in the states mentioned. This also reveals that the number of Christians has been increased Dalits in general and Mala Dasaris in particular. The Mala Dasaris play crucial role in converting the other Dalits as they are in the priestly community. The mass depend on/ follow the priests. This point is to be noted by the organizers that the community can be brought back to Hinduism if they are looked after well.

The research has proved that the Mala Dasaris are not comfortable with this profession for not having enough livelihoods unlike the Brahmins who have advantage due to the social factor. If the due recognition is given to this community, they will retain in this profession.

When the Brahmin community is looking of other options; how can the Mala Dasaris be in this profession and continue to retain in this tradition?

In my conclusion, I have put some appeal such as the Mala Dasaris who are very well versed in priesthood have to be appointed as chief temples or secondary temples or at least appoint them as priests in normal temples. They have to paid pension or other honorariums to continue to retain and spread this tradition and culture to the future generations. There should be budget allocation to this community under SC sub-plan across the states in order to sustain and flourish the tradition.

The Tahsildars have to issue Caste certificates not through the Mandal Development officer but by the Mandal Revenue Officer/Tahsildars. They are creating hurdles for the community.

The scope for further study is to have nationwide, state wide, district wide and village level study of Mala Dasaris would enable them to have total population of the Mala Dasaris would be known.

The limitation of this project is that it looks at only one sub-caste unlike Dalits in general. But it has made breakthrough in terms of Bhakti Literature. In my conclusion this study was a pioneering work except passing references as I have mentioned them in review of literature.

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# A Narration of a folktale: Bihula-Bishahari (Special reference to Champanagar, Bhagalpur, Bihar)

**Anurag Kumar Pandey**

**Abstract**

A folktale is an oral fictional story, which has been passed down from one generation to another. This folktale is related with Champanagar (Bhagalpur, Bihar) and spread up to Hugli River (Bengal). It is a fascinating and mystic story of Bishahari Devi and Bihula. All gods and deities want to be worshipped, and this folktale explores some threats and consequences of that. A story which presents conflict between acceptance and rejection, validation and invalidation, deity and worshiper. However, some considers this folktale as an epic story by establishing a relationship with the Mahabharata, and some Hindu mythological Rishis. This research article is based on a brief narration of Bihula-Bishahari folktale from its story telling form to some other literary works.

**Keywords**: Folktale, Myth, Fiction, Belief, Ritual

## Introduction

This is an epic story of Champanagar, which is located in Bhagalpur, Bihar (India). The story is not limited to this region only, its geographical reach can be traced till Hugli river of Bengal region. This folktale, and worship of Bihula-Bishahari, is popular in various regions of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Assam. As the folktale has a vast geographical depth, it is natural to find variations in its story and tradition, yet the original theme remains the same. Nowadays, the worship of Bihula-Bishahari is performed on large scale and various activities such as statue, installation, immersion of Goddess etc. are performed by erecting pandals. In this region, there are many contemporary stories related to the belief in the snake-Goddess and her furious nature, which is narrated and propagated by them with great reverence. People still carry out all the activities that are described in the story. Apart from this, they perform other religious activities and also promise to pay voluntary demand (*Chadhawa*) to Goddess. Normally, this worship is performed at every place on 17–18 August itself.

The footprints of Champanagar region can be traced in Mahabharata also. In Hindu mythology, Mahabharata is one of the greatest narrations, which teaches the victory of *Dharma* over *Adharma*. During Mahabharata era, Bhagalpur region was known as Ang Pradesh and Karna was the ruler of Ang Pradesh. Champanagar was known as epicenter of commercial activities in Ang Pradesh. The main character of story of Bihula-Bishahari is Chando Saudagar or Chand Saudagar and the relic of his iron-bamboo house was found near to the fort of Karna (*Karnagadh*). In the present time it is located in Nathanagar of Bhagalpur District.

Several attempts have been made to link this folktale to narratives of Puranas. The *Shloka* (*mantra*) inscribed in the temple of Bihula-Bishahari, in Champanagar, directly points to this.

[* Object too big for pasting as inline graphic. | In-line.JPG *]Figure 1: Written in the temple wall of Bihula-Bishahari, Champanagar

It means that the mother of the Astika Muni, sister of Vasuki Nag, the wife of Jaratkaru Sage, it is greeting to Mansa Devi. These all belongs to great narrations popular in this story. Once, there was a king Janmejaya, who was son of Parikshit (the son of Abhimanyu and grandson of Arjuna), organized a fire ritual to kill all the snakes in order to take revenge of his father's death. The great sage Astika convinced Janmejaya, not to kill the snakes and stop the fire ritual. As a result of this all the remaining snakes were saved. The second character is Vasuki, who is considered as the king of Nagas. The third one is Jaratkaru, who is the husband of serpent Goddess Manasa and father of their son Astika. And the last one is Manasa. She is the Goddess of snakes. She is worshipped, not only for the cure and prevention from snakebite but also for fertility and prosperity. It is widely believed by the followers that Bishahari Devi was an avatar of Manasa devi.

This research article is based on a brief narration of Bihula-Bishahari folktale from its story telling form to some other literary works. Research article will explore the story with two basic sociological approaches, one is functional and another is conflict. It also explains contemporary rituals during Puja ceremony and beliefs towards Devi. In this paper, I am trying to narrate the mythical tale of Bihula-Vishahari. The tale is that of Bihula who saved her husband from the deity's wrath and a snake-bite and also of Vishahari or Mansa, the snake goddess. This story used to be sung in the oral tradition. Nowadays though the oral songs are not as popular, an effort is being made or revive them.

**Brief Narration**

The story is being presented here in its brief form, is based on the detailed fieldwork carried out in this region. The story starts with five sisters, known as Jaya Bishahari, Drotila Bhavani, Padma Kumari, Aadi Kasumin (Aditi Bishahari) and Maina Bishahari. All possess different skills, powers and their representing symbols. Together all the five sisters worshiped as Bishahari. A popular quote in Bangla regarding Bishahari says that *'Vishahore Kalyan Kore Taai Naam Vishohari'*. A famous quote in *Angika* (Ang Pradesh) says that *'Vishahar Har*

*Har Vishahari Maay'*. It describes the power of Bishahari to destroy the poison and grant prosperity. According to the story, five hairs of Lord Shiva were broken and Bishahari sisters were born. That's why Bishahari sisters are known as adopted daughters of Lord Shiva. They are the *manas putri* of Lord Shiva and we identify them as a Goddess, who will lead to fulfillment of our wishes and grant prosperity, that's why we address them as Manasa Devi. According to folktale, the worship tradition of Lord Shiva family did not include the worshipping of Bishahari sisters. As a result of this Bishahari sisters went to their father Lord Shiva and expressed their desire to be worshiped with the Lord Shiva and his rest of the family. Lord Shiva told them that if they could convince Chando Saudagar of Champanagar on earth to worship them, then they worshipped along with other members of the family. Chando Saudagar was an eternal devotee of Lord Shiva.

**Figure 2: A hanging poster of Bishahari sisters in the Bihula-Bishahari temple, Champanagar**

When the Bishahari sisters approached Chando with the desire to be worshipped by him. He refused to accept the proposal on the ground that the sisters ate frogs (Kani beng khaukhi). This infuriated the Bishahari sisters, who then drowned the six sons of Chando along with their trading boats. However, this did not change the decision of Chando.

After some time, Sonika, wife of Chando Saudagar, gave birth to the seventh son– Bala Lakhinder. At the same time Maniko Sahuni, wife of Basu Saudagar, gave birth to Bihula in Ujjaini Nagar. Both got married to the Maya of Goddess Bishahari. Before marriage, Bishahari disguised as an old lady, cursed Bihula that due to her mistake, she will be widowed on the eve of her honeymoon. Both Chando and Basu were informed of the same thing by the astrologer before marriage. But on the insistence of Chando, Bala and Bihula get married. Chando accepted Bishahari's challenge as he had strong faith in Lord Shiva. Bishahari sisters constantly warned Chando that if their wish to get worshipped by him will not be granted, then he will have to face dire consequences. As a result of the threats, Chando got an iron-bamboo house built by Vishwakarma to protect Bala and Bihula. Maniyar Nag, on the instructions of Bishahari, enters the house of iron- bamboo and bites Bala, who died immediately. Even this did not deter Chando in his resolve. Chando cooks a fish-rice dish

and eats it, telling his wife Sonika that if they are alive, there will be more sons, but he will not worship Bishahari. Chando orders Dom to throw away Bala's corpse. Bihula stops this and vows that she will go to Indrasana and bring her husband back to life. For this purpose, she asked to Vishwakarma to build a special type of Manjusha, A type of boat that is in the shape of house. Lahsan Mali decorated that Manjusha and gave a complete description to Bihula and Bala, painted the tragic events that happened to them, including Maniyar Nag with a rainbow hue on Manjusha's wall. Bihula asked to keep some food along with Bala's corps and his personal items in Manjusha.

**Figure 3: Manjusha made for worship ceremony in Chhoti Khanjarpur, Bhagalpur (17th Aug, 2018)**

Bihula kept the body of her dead husband Bala in Manjusha and went towards Indrasana by the waterway. Many ghats are mentioned in the folktale - Gokulpur Ghat, Semapur Ghat, Kagasaini Ghat, Godasaini Ghat, Bochasaini Ghat, Jaukaseni Ghat, Zuari Ghat, Shankhaghat, Galantri Ghat and Netula Ghat that falls along this journey. At each ghat, some event occurs and Bihula had to face various kind of problems. Bala's body melts completely at the Galantri Ghat and Bihula wears his skeleton around her neck. After this, she reaches Netula Ghat, where she meets Netula Dhobin (laundress), who washes the clothes of the gods. With the help of Netula, she reaches Indrasana. Pleasing the gods, she brings her husband Bala and other six elder sons of Chando back to life and heads back to Champanagar. After reaching Champanagar, Bihula forces Chando to worship Bishahari. Chando said that he worshipped Lord Shiva with right hand. But in the end Chando agreed to worship Bishahari with his left hand. After this, Bishahari started being worshiped all-over.

**Current Scenario**

At present, this worship-ritual is celebrated as Mahaparva. Last year in Bhagalpur, which is believed to be the origin of this folktale, Bishahari Pujan pandals were built at 116 places and Bishahari Devi was worshiped with great enthusiasm (Prabhat Khabar, 20th Aug, 2018). This year too, this mahaparva was celebrated with great devotion. Pandals and idols were erected as 119 places (Dainik Bhaskar, 14th Aug, 2019). The main areas where these pandals are erected in Bhagalpur city are Champanagar, Nathnagar, Ghantaghar, Sahebganj, Adampur,

Khanjarpur, Barari Refugee Colony, Lodipur, Ishakachak, Bhikharipur, Parbatti, Golaghat, Mohaddinagar, Kutubganj, Navgachiya, Kahalagaon, Sultanganj etc.

In the worship ceremony, basically two days are important and every year it falls on the 17th and 18th of August. Everyone goes together to bring water in the Kalash and there after the Kalash is brought back to the place of worship and is established methodically. Songs and prayers devoted to Devi, are enchanted throughout the day. Now-a-days these songs are played on cassettes. In the night, the ritual of marriage of Bala and Bihula is performed with lots of vigor. It probably follows all the rituals that are executed in real marriage ceremony. During this, women sang songs. Marriage rituals are performed all night. As per the folktale, Bala got snake bite after marriage and he dies, the same in enacted during ceremony. A Bhagat is also present there during this entire ritual. As soon as Bala dies, the Goddess enters in the body of Bhagat and he starts swinging. After that people queue up in front of Bhagat and reveal the distress. Bhagat listens the misery of people and gives them some remedial ideas. Sometimes Bhagat also blesses people and reminds them of the offerings (*Chadhawa)* that they had promised in return. After some time, he becomes unconscious. After this, when he regains consciousness, he behaves like a normal person. He doesn't remember anything, what he/she was and what he/she said. In the afternoon, they sacrifice *patha* (goat) and take it as Prasad. In the evening, they all go with instruments and Devi-songs to make Manjusha and Devi flow in water. With full enthusiasm, everyone immerses the Goddess.

In a run up to the worship ceremony, people adopt various religious practices. Consumption of meat and alcohol is prohibited from one week, before and after, from the worship ceremony. However, after the worship ceremony is concluded, the *patha* (goat) is eaten as a Prasad. In worship, women participation on the equal level as that of men. Prayer and offerings depend on the willingness of people. There is a fixed place for worship, but it is also certain that a person can go and worship at any Bishahari place. However, on asking for a vow, worship is offered at the same place, which is mentioned in the vow. Goddess comes on Bhagat (A special devotee) and Bhagat is chosen by Goddess herself. Some process is also followed in making Kalash for worship. From the day, the potter starts the work of making the Kalash, he had to stop consumption of garlic and onion in his house. The courtyard of the house is to be cleaned. To make the Kalash, bathing in the morning and burning of incense sticks in that room. He will have to make a Kalash without eating food. This Kalash is not cooked in fire, i.e. it must be of raw soil. However, these rules are being ignored nowadays.

People of this region still have immense faith in Bishahari Devi. However, this faith had decreased during last few decades. Mantri of Sri-Sri 108 Mansa Bishahari (Bihula) Maharani Kendriya Puja Samiti, Bhagalpur, Bihar- Mr. Manoj Kumar (61 years)- says that in older times, preparations for Bishahari Puja started one or two months before the scheduled dates. Devotees used to pay special attention to Devi-songs, follow proper rituals to make raw Kalash, in building of Manjusha, cleaning the Goddess-place etc. Devi-songs were performed every evening and the Goddess was worshiped with great fever. The narrative used to progress slowly with each chapter of the song being sung. People used to listen to them very carefully.

Today there is neither much faith left in people for worship nor do people have enough time for these rituals. Everyone is busy in their own life. Mr. Arun Mandal (60 years) of Chhoti Khanjarpur also said that a few years ago this worship ceremony was celebrated with more faith and seriousness.

However, people still have faith in Goddess. During a conversation, when I asked Mr. Shekhar Kumar (46) to go to the Bishahari Pandal, he refused and said that he had cleaned the dirt of his house, so he can't go to the place of Goddess as it was a sacred place. While neither the Bishahari pandal is put in his place nor do he participate in the Bishahari worship. The purpose of narrating this incident is to highlight the fact that people of this region still have feeling of love and respect for the Snake-Goddess.

This folktale has something special kind of appearance. Basically, in all Hindu mythical stories and rituals, the man, who does fulfill the religion works, is belongs to a Brahmin caste. But here it's not compulsory. During interview, Mr. Arun Mondal further told that during worship the pandit is not necessary to be a Brahmin, it could might be from another caste or a Bhagat (devotee). Isn't it unrealistic and especial! In Bhagalpur, Bhagat belongs to so called lower cast, like Kurmi, Mondal, Kahar, Thakur (Barber), Baniya (Vendor), Julaha (Weaver), Badhai (Carpenter) etc. It means, Bhagat is a non-Brahmin in Bishahari pandals of Bhagalpur. But there is also an interesting thing that the Pandit of main temple of Bishahari Devi of Champanagar is a Brahmin. Nothing is compulsory there; it depends on the worshipping committee. If the worshipping committee agrees to have pandit from Brahmin caste, its considerable, in other sense if committee wants to have pandit from a non-Brahmin caste, it is also considerable. However, during the symbolic marriage of Bala and Bihula, they do need a Brahmin pandit.

Each and every folktale has its own special flavor. Most often these folktales are undocumented, as a result there exist a quality of flexibility. Many new elements are added to them according to the time-situation and many old facts are also removed. The same has happened with this folktale. Interaction with people during fieldwork showed that the folktale had the same origin in people's memories, but in many places different references have been added to it. Someone refers Bihula- Bala a dancer of Indraloka, someone refers Bihula a daughter of Hans, someone narrates the rivalry between Devi Parvati and Devi Bishahari, some called Chando Saudagar as an arrogant devotee, even some refers to Chando as an avatar of Ravana etc. Apart from this, there is a considerable difference in the interpretation and perspective of this folktale. Some understand it as a religious tale while others have tried to portray it as a duality of Aryans and non-Aryans. Certain sections have interpreted it as a conflict of Sur- Asura, whereas others have presented it as the establishment of serpents with Lord Shiva etc.

**Discussion**

However, to understand or express any event or situation there are usually two approaches – Functionalist approach and Conflict approach. Functionalist approach indicates that every

unit of society is integrated and functionally connected. These units are constantly working for the betterment of society and maintains status quo. Functionalism holds that for the continuation of society, it is necessary to maintain synergy in its various social processes to meet the requirements of the system.

In contrast to this approach, the Conflict approach advocates that conflict has always existed in the society. There have always been two groups in the society- have and haves not. The society is divided into two classes – accumulated class and deprived class, dominant class and suppressed class, superior and inferior, lord and slave, capitalist and laborer, bourgeois and proletariat etc. This approach believes in change, which is to be brought by revolution. This perspective holds that society changes through duality and conflict.

According to functionalist approach, this folktale could be a typical example of community collaboration. As per the information provided by the locals, the people living far away from their hometown also comes back at the time of this worship ceremony. Thus, this worship brings people closer to each other. Apart from this, people get chance to interact with each other during the preparation of the worship ceremony. This leads to the development of mutual brotherhood, which plays an important role in enriching the integrity of the community. This integrity increases love and cooperation among them. Collective participation in Devi-songs and performing rituals in the worship ceremony develops a collective sense of belonging, which creates an emotional impulse among peoples. It plays an important role in maintaining order and balance in society.

Whereas when looked upon from conflict approach, this could may be a rivalry story of Aryans and non-Aryans. Chando (Non-Aryan) refused to give worship to Bishahari (Aryan) because she was a snake-Goddess, while Chand himself was a distinguished businessman. The logic is quite simple that if the eminent person of any society accepts the authority of any person himself, then that society will also accept his power. Maybe, something similar would have also happened with Bishahari. From another viewpoint, it would be a story of establishment of serpents with a pre-established grand character Lord Shiva. In Hindu mythology, basically there are three grand characters (Brahma: the creator, Vishnu: the sustainer and Shiva: the destroyer) and Shiva is one of them. Describing Bishahari as the adopted daughter of Lord Shiva and sending Bishahari to Chando shows the close relationship between Lord Shiva and Bishahari. On the other hand, Chando is a devotee of Lord Shiva, which indirectly represents the power of Lord Shiva. In both situations there are two kind of groups, the first one which is not established in the society and is struggling to gain the social legitimacy. And the other one who is already established in society and struggles to maintain its attained social legitimacy.

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that in the present time, this worship works to develop social solidarity among the people. From the very basic unit of society, Family, to whole community participates in the worship ceremony. Everyone contributes according to their own capacity and devotion.

They gather and ask for some contributions from people related to the pandal. Every pandal has their own people and working formats. The arrangement of pandal and worship materials are done from the collected amount. During this, people contributes their time and labor. They sing bhajans, perform aarti and participate in the worship ceremony with faith. Offering prasad on the day of worship and after completing the vow the devotee pays towards their promised voluntary demand (*Chadhawa*) to Goddess. According to the Muhurta on the next day of worship, the Goddess is immersed. During this time, a large number of people attend the farewell of Goddess.

In essence, it can be said that this pooja ceremony strengthens the feeling of working together. It leads to fraternity. It brings unity. It brings we-feeling and It enhances mutual love.

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# Material Culture and Symbolic Representation of the 'Lost Ring' in Kalidasa's *Abhijnanashakuntalam*

**I. Vinitha Chandra**

> …objects, seen as material evidence of culture, are entities that resonate with discourses of human relationships, personal and collective identity formation, ethics and values, histories, determination of ethnicity, local and international trade, consumption and above all distinctive futures. It is through ongoing construction of material objects and the materialization of self and society that social transformations and futures are forged. (15, *Asian Material Culture*)

The need to survive since prehistoric times has resulted in the invention of many artifacts that assisted in the rapid growth of human civilization. Sharing those within and outside the community became inevitable. Hence, the tendency to condemn industrial revolution for an insurmountable consumerist attitude among human populace needs to be rechecked. Historical evidence and mythological stories are abundant with such materials classified as token or symbols of human acts of culture. As a result of all the former reasons this trend has heightened a living scenario wherein it is always "material over human identity." Kalidasa's *Abhijnanashakuntalam* (The Recognition of Shakuntala) a reinterpretation of the mythological story from *Mahabharata* is analyzed to introspect tangible human behaviour. A reading of Kalidasa's play announces the significance of "the ring" and its surprising capability to manipulate the fate of its characters. Marxist criticism supported that the reality of the world is due to materialism and human consciousness is also a matter in constant motion. Hence human condition is not a saga of emotions but a struggle against the forces of reality where materials gain its precedence and elucidates human tendency to objectify identity. The paper's objective is to chart out the hidden societal agendas which glorify material significance in the disguise of culture and tradition.

The play *Abhijanashakuntalam* is based on the brief story of Dushyanta and Shakuntala from the text *Mahabharata*, the great Indian epic where Gods, humans and demons fraternize. It is also an epic where infinite human predicaments of life are explored through stories resonating timeless characteristics of life. However, Kalidasa's expertise as a dramatist is

realized with the inception of heightened emotions which blurs the celestial and human identities of the characters and establishes it for a wider reception. Moreover, the play got wider audience due to its first translation in 1789 by Sir William Jones and subsequently into many other languages to be recognized as an iconic play in the history of Indian literature. The play bears testimony to the complexities of man – woman relationship which is intertwined in the societal values and norms of the said time and throws light on how a woman's life is dictated by her abilities to adhere to patriarchal subjugations. Being the daughter of Menaka, a celestial nymph Shakuntala's secret marriage (gandharva vivaah) with Dushyanta is never questioned by her foster father Kanva. It is eventually considered a holy matrimony. The liberty to marry the man she is in love with must have been accepted due to her celestial lineage whereas what follows in her fate is a ramification of existence in the real world. Ranjan Chandra's words points out this very fact "exquisite beauty had been a barrier to his understanding of her. All he saw then was the glow of passion and youth and beauty which he described in images of blooming flowers and tender shoots. Initially Dushyanta had known Shakuntala only carnally; she was an object of pleasure to be enjoyed…." (87, Kalidasa *The Loom of Time*).

David Blankenhorn opines that the institution of marriage has been around for five thousand years in all known human societies around the world. Moreover, reemphasizes Locke's views "Humans are born completely helpless. Compared with the young of other species, human children remain dependent for an unusually long period of time, and they require "the jyont care of Male and Female" parents. For this reason, what marriage demands of men is not "barely procreation," but also fatherhood as a defined *social* role, or what Locke calls "the Office and Care of a Father." (27, *The Future of Marriage*). Shakuntala's ordeal of getting back with her husband for companionship, love and demanding the care of a father for her yet to be born child is examined from prevailing practices of social relationships. This is thwarted by the laxity of the male counterpart who for some time forgets his better-half due to a curse for which the woman must bear the brunt. The story of the play can also be juxtaposed with modern day relationships where lot many sagas of intentional forgetting happen when marriage becomes a mere source of wealth acquisition and subsequently when demands are not met women must bear the responsibility of sustaining a marital relationship at all costs. This often leads to objectifying women wherein there is a constant pressure to enhance the aesthetic aspect of womanhood which is assumed to be garnered through material accessories.

The episode of the ring was absent in the epic *Mahabharata* introduced and it was added by Kalidasa in the play reaffirming the fact that Kalidasa was inspired either by a Buddhist tale "Katthahari Jataka' or *Ramayana* wherein both the stories the ring plays a significant role as cited by Orientalists. It also reflects the society that he was part of that exhibited a fair amount of material indulgence as depicted in scene iii, Act IV where Shakuntala is decked up to be sent to her husband's home. The scene is a vivid description to add on to the physical charm and the aesthetic quotient of the leading lady of the play.

One tree gave us these silk sheaths, white
as the moon;
Another tree poured out the lac to decorate
her feet with bridal red;
Other trees put out hands, with palms raised
from the wrists,
As if the god of the forest had their branches
for his arms,
And offered us these jewels, as fine
as newly sprouted leaves. [77] (93, *Abhijnanashakuntalam)*

Though the accessories are mentioned to be sought from nature, the need of it for the said occasion must have been the norms of the day as literary texts expose substitutes to ways of thinking prevalent at that time. Further in the story, the responsibility to reclaim the lost love and honor falls solely on her shoulders. Her strenuous efforts at building a relationship which goes through curse, loss and recollection rests on the object "ring" given as a token of love by Dushyanta during their courtship days. Shakuntala is cursed by the sage Durvasa for being lost in thoughts of her beloved and subsequently failing her duty as a host. He curses her to forget the person who has occupied her in deep thoughts. Shakuntala is unaware of all that has happened. Her friend Priyamvada pleads with the sage for forgiveness, whereupon he informs her that the ring presented by Dushyanta will save Shakuntala from her plight and Dushyanta will remember her once he sees the ring. Though a simple solution, Kalidasa intensifies the plot by the ring being lost midway during Shakuntala's journey to meet Dushyanta. However, all ends well, when a fisherman discovers the ring inside a fish caught by him and is finally forced to take it to the king. A sudden wave of memories of his liaison with Shakuntala is restored. He repents and the family finally is reunited.

The central theme of the drama revolves around the unity of existence between man, nature and supernatural. Hence culminating its myriad implications and giving unbound strength to a material object in the form of a ring is a twist in the tale indicating how material culture slowly seeped into the mainstream and has a tremendous power to manipulate life. The ring has immense power and dictates the narrative of the play. The symbolic exchange of a ring even today is synonymous of continuing a tradition that is a reminder of the past. Andrew Jones opines that memory is the only way to connect with the past and since it is not tangible, artifacts take its place and helps recreate the experience thus attaining a symbolic meaning which has a deep connection to the past and can replicate human emotions (*Memory and Material Culture)*. The reluctance to cut off from past rituals has somehow immersed human minds to distort the very idea of identifying an object with an experience thereby making a section of the society completely powerless as they do not have means to acquire materials to retain their identity. For instance, the grandeur of royalty becomes evident to a great extent by the plush architectural monuments where they resided, and the treasures stored away from scrutiny. Hence objects attain meaning through human subjects. The myriad symbolism of a ring is intertwined with various facets of life itself as cited below,

> Eternity, unity, wholeness, commitment, authority. The circular symbolism of the ring makes it an emblem of completion, strength and protection as well as continuity – all of which help to give significance to engagement and wedding rings. The oldest surviving rings (from Egypt) are signets bearing either personal seals or amulets, usually in the form of a scarab beetle symbolizing eternal life. Thus from the earliest times the ring has been an emblem of authority or delegated authority, of occult protective power and of a personal pledge. (414, ed. Tresidder Jack, *The Complete Dictionary of Symbols*)

The proclamation of love that culminated in the secret marriage between Shakuntala and Dushyanta is an epitome of the real essence of marriage as a ritual that ought to happen only between the consented parties. However, over time the so called union or marriage which is one of the significant rites of passage in human life has become an elaborate public display across the globe. The tradition of matrimony is symbolized ironically by a tangent union of not just pulsating and a living emotion like love but also lifeless materials, which puts immense pressure on the less privileged. The centerpiece of the play 'the ring' navigates through many connotations. The initial understanding of the role of the ring is a personal pledge by Dushyanta to safeguard their relationship, or as a proof of their commitment to each other or a consummation of their union.

The hermitage status of Shakuntala, which is an abode of life with minimal worldly indulgence, is forced to overlap with Dushyantha's kingly pride that vests in the pomp and splendor of wealth measured by the abundance of material assets. Hence, the ring is powerful and much needed to keep the flames of love and commitment alive from Dushyanta's perspective. Shakuntala also falls in tow with this notion. Dushyanta becomes the intruder who disrupts the sanctity of a place seeped in communion with nature that enjoyed simple pleasures of living. The love that happens between them transcends the journey of nature towards culture wherein there is a strong urge to enhance the value of self through material modes. Shakuntala forays into Dushyanta's world and the transformation of her identity is constructed with the aid of a material object. She is forgotten and remembered due to the presence and absence of an object and this argument is justified as "…material culture is about the physical object…, as much as it is about subject and the person's cultural becoming….The object, its production and its usage are the dynamic mediating factors 'that forge relationships between the self [or society] and others' (12, *Asian Material culture*)

Dushyanta claims the ring as "an elementary mechanism for tracking time, and as an equivalent of an alarm on a clock or calendar - and not as a token to trigger either recollection or recognition" (215, *Abhijnanashakuntalam*) However for Shakuntala, as opined by Vinay her experience makes her comment about the ring as below,

> … 'let my noble husband wear it' is neither a condemnation of the object itself nor an insult to Dushyanta, but a matter – of- assertion that, so far as she is concerned, the ring does not work in any of the extra roles imposed on it- as a gift, as a device to activate memory or cognition, as an instrument of recollection or recognition, as a proxy abacus or a crypto-clock, as a publicly visible emblem of union or reunion, as a means of persuasion, as a token

of love and commitment, and so on. The only function that the ring can and does perform is its straightforward original function, of identifying its owner and conforming his identity, which is inscribed on its body of metal with the letters of his name. thus, as its dramatic exposition comes full circle, Shakuntala seems to shrink the ring back to its own small circumference, without an aura of symbolic, emblematic, and figurative representation….(216-17, *Abhijnanashakuntalam*)

The history of ring as a symbol of alliance between a man and woman hitherto remains an object and its significance as seen by Shakuntala, the play's heroine should be the real logic of material intrusion in human lives. When this idea is distorted the power equation between the subject and object gets on a tug of war making human life a quest for endless greed. Dushyanta too is struck with this realization and this is evident when he comments how ignorant had he been to entrust his commitments upon an object that is insentient by its very nature.

O heart! Revel in your desire,
Which is not without hope——
Your doubts have been resolved.
The one who, in your anxiety,
Seemed to be like fire, and hence untouchable,
Is a jewel worthy of being touched and held. [24] (46-7 *Abhijnanashakuntalam*)

What made you fall
From her hand
And sink in the water,
When her hand has such soft
And lovely fingers?
Alternatively——
Things that are insentient
Are unaware of goodness,
And cannot tell right from wrong.
But how could I, a sentient being,
Reject my love? [138] (141, *Abhijnanashakuntalam*)

The plight of Kalidasa's characters echoes through generations of the ever- widening gap that tears human conscience apart by giving recognition to the haves and purposefully forgetting the have-nots by constantly coercing people on both sides of the spectrum to have objects to produce as a token of their identity to fit in to this make-believe world.

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# From Critical Theory to Hermeneutics: Geoffrey Hartman's Intellectual Development as a Literary Critic

**Manoj S.**

**Abstract**

Geoffrey Hartman's critical career spans almost the whole of the second half of the twentieth century which was a period of unprecedented historic change and growth in American criticism. Although Hartman has advanced the theory and practice of criticism it is difficult to pin down his critical position as he does not align himself with any particular school or ideology. Commentators have labelled him variously as an anti-formalist critic, as a deconstructionist, as a humanist, as a poststructuralist theorist and as "a reader responsible" critic. This article argues that although Hartman has passed through all these phases in the course of his development as a critic, he holds theory to be essentially reductive and that his real achievement lies in his vital interpretive practice and criticism which is remarkable for its hermeneutic persistence and vitality. Hartman's development as a critic parallels the development of American criticism in the last four decades of twentieth century. His attempt to assimilate European thought has been one of the decisive factors transforming the American critical scene.

**Keywords:** Hermeneutics, humanism, formalism, anti-formalism, deconstruction, poststructuralism, phenomenology, psychoanalysis.

Geoffrey Hartman is one of the most difficult, experimental and controversial of twentieth century American critics, whose career extends to the early twentyfirst century. His engagements with philosophical and critical theories ranging from phenomenology to poststructuralism have determined the trajectory of his intellectual development as a critic. He has reconciled ideas drawn from European and Anglo-American sources, progressing from an anti-formalist position to that of an enriched humanism, by way of deconstruction, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, poststructuralism and cultural criticism. But the consistent focus in his criticism has been on the interpretive activity rather than on developing a coherent theoretical system. Concluding a fine and balanced estimate of Hartman's critical position, Douglas Atkins writes:

> Hartman avoids both the Scylla of hermetic criticism (he is very much concerned with large social and cultural issues) and the charybdis of 'secular' criticism (he forgoes neither textual study nor the claims of the sacred) … He suggests, in fact, responsibility both to the texts we have been given and to the needs of society and the possibility of culture. Hartman's is the most reader-responsible criticism we have ("Geoffrey Hartman" 148).

Atkins's estimate highlights two distinctive features of Hartman's criticism – his freedom from theoretical dogmas, and more importantly, his responsibility as a reader to understand and explicate the full potentiality of textual meaning. His sense of reader-responsibility has made him committed to a hermeneutic practice which is of great importance for modern American criticism and for literary criticism in general. Hartman's originality as a critic can be located in his vital hermeneutics and his successive engagements with various critical theories have the effect of steadily expanding, energizing and refining his interpretive practice. His *oeuvre* consists of textual exegesis, theoretical essays, critical commentary, articles on culture and the humanities and marginal polemical writings. The spirit that infuses and unifies all his writings is the desire to find "a way of expanding the range and depth of reading" (*A Critic's Journey* xvii), to be "expansive without ever losing sight of the text" (xv) rather than to construct or defend a doctrinal position. This explains his commitment to a hermeneutic enterprise that goes far beyond formalism. The circumstances of Hartman's life and his cultural background have been influential in shaping his response to European intellectual and literary movements. His anti-authoritarian and anti-totalizing attitude has also been shaped by this influence.

Hartman's first published work *The Unmediated Vision* testifies to his continental outlook and his interest in comparative literature. But it is free from any rigid or constraining theoretical commitment. In his Introduction Hartman describes the work as "criticism without approach" (x). It offers a study of the poetry of Wordsworth, Hopkins, Rilke and Valery, beginning with a brief passage or short poem from each poet and from its detailed analysis moving on to the other works of the poet, centering on the poet's "consciousness of consciousness." In each of these poets Hartman traces a mode of pure representation distinguished from that of Judeo-Christian thought, and a direct concern with Nature, the body and human consciousness.

What is of prime importance in *The Unmediated Vision* is Hartman's method of interpretation aiming at capturing "the unified multiplicity of meaning" (45). Hartman does not make even a single mention of the term "The New Criticism" in the entire work, but he assumes the need to go beyond the New Critical assumption that every poem is an insulated verbal structure having a single dominant meaning. He proposes and works out, in his own words, "a method of interpretation which could reaffirm the radical unity of human knowledge," which would respect "both the persistent ideal unity of the work of art and the total human situation from which it springs" (x). This is an inclusive position which allows Hartman the freedom to move from particular poems or poetic passages to their relevant cultural, historical, even philosophical context. In his later writings Hartman follows this interpretive strategy with varying degrees of emphasis on "the human situation," but never losing sight of the

multiplicity of textual meaning. He develops an intense awareness of theoretical issues as his critical career advances. *The Unmediated Vision*, however, is refreshingly free from puzzling questions of theory, at least at the explicit or conscious level.

Hartman's second critical work *André Malraux* confirms his sustained interest in modern European literature. He examines the whole corpus of Malraux's fiction and his "Psychology of Art" in five judiciously written chapters. Beginning with brief brooding comments on the stylistic features of short narrative units, Hartman passes on to a wide-ranging interpretation of the political and cultural meanings embedded in the novels. Approving of Malraux's exaltation of art above history, he shows that the survival of man on earth depends more on the evidence of art than on the evidence of history. Further he brings into focus the elements of an anti-mimetic theory envisioned in Malraux's critical writing and argues that these elements are important for all future aesthetics.

It is in identifying and analyzing the technical devices employed by Malraux that Hartman's hermeneutic skill is best exercised. He offers detailed comments on Malraux's use of cinematographic methods such as 'montage' and 'fade-out' and probes deeply into the art of juxtaposition which is an essential part of Malraux's rhetorical device. Hartman practices "hermeneutical patience" by carefully unraveling Malraux's art of antithesis in which every statement is questioned, undermined or counterpoised by a further statement. This is in keeping with Hartman's development from "criticism without approach" to a pluralistic approach which allows for the blending of the interpretive activity with theoretical awareness.

*Wordsworth's Poetry 1787 – 1814* (1964) which followed *André Malraux* has been acknowledged as a classic in its field. Dougles Atkins has said that with its publication "Hartman established himself as a major critic of Romanticism" ("Geoffrey Hartman" 137). Together with Northrop Frye's *Fearful Symmetry* and Harold Bloom's *Shelley's Mythmaking*, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787 – 1814* effected a decisive shift in critical interest in favour of the Romantic poets who had been virtually excluded from the poetic canon promoted by the New Critics. Hartman places Wordsworth in a large European and modern context and also links him to Milton and the English Renaissance poets from Spenser. The first chapter of the book states what he calls the "thesis" which is drawn chiefly from phenomenology, although he does not go into the details of the theory of consciousness spelt out by Husserl. Hartman uses "consciousness" as a key term in his interpretation of Wordsworth's poetry, arguing that the abiding interest of Wordsworth's poetry lies in its recording of the continuous indefinite relationship between consciousness of nature and consciousness of self. Hartman deftly demonstrates that the growth of Wordsworth's self-consciousness has a bearing on the substance and form of his particular poems and is linked almost intrinsically to the very nature of his poetry.

The interpretative method Hartman adopts in *Wordsworth's Poetry* represents an advance on the method developed in *The Unmediated Vision*. As in the earlier work he starts with the analysis of short poems, or with short passages from longer poems, and moves on to the other works of the poet, but now the method is modified or controlled by two considerations.

First, as he starts with a thesis, an argumentative context is created and both the choice of the poems and the analytical commentary are determined by the argument. Secondly, the individual poems are seen not only in relation to the dialectics of consciousness and nature, but also in the context of a new reading of literary history. The book has four sections—three sections of argument and textual interpretation and one final section of critical bibliography. In the first section Hartman analyses individual poems of Wordsworth including "The Solitary Reaper" and "Tintern Abbey." The second section explores the relationship between nature and consciousness through an analyzes of the Alpine climb in Book VI of *The Prelude* to show how Wordsworth shifted from supernatural to natural apocalypse. In the third section, which is the largest and most substantial, Hartman traces the growth of the poet's mind, by examining the poems chronologically and evaluates the poet's attempt to humanize the imagination and to "new-create the links between nature and the human mind" (*Wordsworth's Poetry* 337).

It is important to note that Hartman's mode of analysis in *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787 – 1814* is essentially different from the verbal explication practiced by the New Critics. Outlining his critical method, he says in the "Preface", "minute stylistic or structural analysis has been avoided, except for a few 'close ups'" (ix) and goes on to give a caveat against excessive verbal analysis, "An exhaustive analysis of verbal effects is not necessary and may even distract us" (9). Hartman's attitude has certain theoretical implications which he gathers together and states explicitly and coherently in his next work, *Beyond Formalism: Literary Essays 1958 – 1970* (1970). It is a collection of twenty-one essays and reviews, divided into four sections, ranging from perceptive studies on Milton and Marvel to critical essays on formalism, the language of literature and on literary history.

In *Beyond Formalism* Hartman examines the critical scene of his time in a searching and candid spirit and clarifies his attitude to some of the central issues in criticism. He disapproves of the dominant role of exegesis in criticism, "yet our present explication-centered criticism is puerile, or at most pedagogic: we forget its merely preparatory function, that it stands to a mature criticism as pastoral to epic" (57). He criticizes the word-inspired poetics of formalism and makes a plea "to raise exegesis to its former state by confronting art with experience as searchingly as if art were scripture" (57). This is a continuation of his critical project to broaden both the concept of literary art and the method of textual interpretation. In keeping with this project he also proposes a literary history written "from the point of view of the poets – from within their consciousness of the historical vocation of art" (356). Hartman thus tries to relate the literary and phenomenological points of view while insisting on the autonomy of art. *Beyond Formalism* constitutes a major statement of Hartman's critical position in his mid-career. Although it does not wholly anticipate the trajectory of his later development, it does stress his basic position that all theory is ultimately reductive and that true criticism is a form of vital hermeneutic activity.

*The Fate of Reading* (1975) which followed *Beyond Formalism* is a collection of seventeen essays written between 1970 and 1975. In a brilliant review of the work Richard Poirier has

said that it is "a peculiarly non-academic, even anti-academic book" and that it is "much more intensely speculative than *Beyond Formalism*" (New York Times Book Review 21). In this book Hartman continues his attack on the pedagogical and restrictive drive of the New Criticism, but he also opens up new topics of critical interest and offers masterly analyses of the works of Keats, Wordsworth, Valery, Goethe, and lesser poets of the order of Collins, Christopher Smart and Akenside. The critics who are discussed range from I. A. Richards and Lionel Trilling to Harold Bloom and Paul de Man, with numerous Continental critics and philosophers such as Hegel, Husserl, George Poulet, Blanchot, Roland Barthes and Derrida receiving brief but intense attention.

Hartman has stated that his first aim in *The Fate of Reading* is "to broaden literary interpretation without leaving literature behind for any reason" and that "a second aim is to look inward towards the discipline of literary study itself" (viii). An essential part of this project for broadening literary interpretation is his experiment with "phenomenological thematics." Hartman groups together and investigates a series of poems addressed to the Evening Star written during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and demonstrates how they achieve thematic continuity in terms of historic consciousness. Hartman relies on a line of thinking derived from Husserl to support his theory that the history of consciousness is inherent in the growth of literary forms. The literary history conceived or constructed in this spirit can no longer be regarded as extrinsic to literature. The attempt to link a phenomenological sense of literary history to hermeneutic practice represents an important aspect of Hartman's achievement in *The Fate of Reading*.

Another significant feature of the book is that it records Hartman's initial reaction to psychoanalytical criticism, semiotics, technical structuralism, neo-Marxist criticism and other modes of approaches which gained currency in the 1960s and 70s. While acknowledging the growing influence of these approaches Hartman points to the ways in which they blur the focus of literary study by assimilating literature to other disciplines and fields of thought. He comments on "the dangerous liaison between literary studies and psychoanalysis" and argues that "instead of pretending to save literature for psychoanalysis" we must try, "to save psychoanalysis for literary studies" (ix). Similarly, he speaks of the twin dangers of "ideological appropriation" by Marxist critics and "formalistic devaluation" by the New Critics and the structuralists. As for the semiotic approach which is concerned with the production of meaning in the literary text, Hartman holds that it can scarcely account for the phenomenon of tradition or canon-formation or inter-textuality. Semiotics, linguistics and technical structuralism, in his view, do not help good reading as they "convert all expression into generative codes needing operators rather than readers" (272).

Against these prevalent modes, Hartman proposes an ideal of criticism which is speculative, interpretative and creative. He says repeatedly that criticism is part of our "intellectual tradition" and that the literary essay should be "both creative and receptive" (270). The historicism he envisages relates both to the history of interpretation and to the literary tradition expressive of the history of consciousness. Hartman's notion of the status of criticism as being analogous

to that of creative literature is also forcefully expressed for the first time in *The Fate of Reading*. He asserts that literary understanding is bipartite, consisting of literary discourse and literary-critical discourse and that the privileging of the text over criticism "reifies literature still further and disorders our ability to read" (271).

*Criticism in the Wilderness* (1980), Hartman's next important work, was acclaimed by Terence Des Pres as perhaps "the best, most brilliant, most broadly useful book yet written by an American about the sudden swerve from the safety of established decorum toward bravely theoretical, mainly European forms of literary criticism" (*The Nation* 412). The main emphasis in the book is on the Post-New critical revisionist criticism in America, seen intrinsically and also against the historical background of American criticism since the 1930s. The works of Carlyle, Eliot, Bloom, Frye, Burke and Walter Benjamin are examined with the same close attention with which creative writings are analysed. Pointing out the gulf between the *philosophic* criticism of Continental Europe and the *practical* criticism dominating the Anglo-American scene, Hartman hints at the possibility of reconciliation between the two in the emerging revisionist criticism which seeks to alter the literary canon established by Formalist criticism. Revisionist critics who include Bloom, Hillis Miller, de Man and Hartman himself combine an interest in philosophy, abstract thought and intertextuality with sensitive attention to verbal exegesis and text-centred values. In *Criticism in the Wilderness* Hartman lays down the rationale for this new mode of criticism and strives to defend it against its detractors.

One of the focal concerns in the book is related to Hartman's idea about the status of criticism in relation to literature. He resents "any assignment of criticism to a noncreative and dependent function with second class status in the world of letters" (14). Criticism, he argues, can write "texts of its own" (259). This would mean that criticism or commentary has to be treated as a genre having its own history, theoretical basis and rhetorical character. The case for "a freer criticism" is reinforced by Hartman's attempt to recover elements from romantic and impressionistic criticism, based on the awareness that historically "criticism is a relatively free, all-purpose genre," (233) sharing its text-milieu with other forms of literature. In *Criticism in the Wilderness* Hartman places increased emphasis on the hermeneutic task of criticism. In fact, he describes criticism as "a newer kind of hermeneutics" (31), as the older form of literary hermeneutics did not fully take into account the equivocations and ambiguities in the text. He points out that in contemporary criticism "the really difficult task is, as always, the hermeneutic one" (244). The New Critics evaded this task and the speculative freedom and exegetical daring which it demanded. Consequently, one of the main issues of modern criticism can be located in the "quarrel of plain dealers and hermeneuticists" (237), the "plain dealers" being a synonym for the New Critics in Hartman's terminology. Hartman proposes the concept of "a hermeneutics of indeterminacy" which rejects all rules of interpretative closure.

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida has been an important influence on Hartman at this stage. The idea of indeterminacy of meaning and the disbelief in closure are partly derived from him. Derrida's influence proves to be strong and decisive in *Saving the Text*

which is subtitled "Literature/Derrida/Philosophy." The subtitle subtly indicates Hartman's way of placing Derrida between or crossing the lines separating literature and philosophy. *Saving the Text* which represents the deconstructivist phase in Hartman's criticism is his most difficult, most experimental and probably most controversial work. Hartman does not offer a sustained deconstructive reading of literary texts, but makes intuitive observations on key terms, issues and modes of reading characteristic of Derridean criticism. The main focus of the work is Derrida's *Glas* which juxtaposes the texts of Hegel and Genet with extensive commentary aimed at removing the illusion of stable or determinate meaning. Hartman has stated that in *Saving the Text* he is concerned "chiefly with Derrida's place in the history of commentary, and with *Glas* as an event in that history" (xv). He finds that although *Glas* is a commentary on the texts of Hegel and Genet it does not remain subordinate to them and that it proves to be an art form itself. Inspired by what he describes as Derrida's "exemplary contribution to literary studies," Hartman scrutinizes a number of short passages and descriptions from authors ranging from Shakespeare to Tolstoy to demonstrate the possibility of multiple commentary based on a perception of the "equivocal, flexible, tricky nature" of language (122, 139).

Hartman does not, however, indiscriminately follow Derrida's theory or the deconstructivist way of reading the text. As Bernard Bergonzi has perceptively observed, "Hartman's *Saving the Text* shows him at one and the same time engaging with Derrida, succumbing to him, imitating him and resisting him" (*Encounter* 67). Hartman is impressed by Derrida's presentation of texts, deviations, endless word plays, chains of connotations and multiple citations. He endorses the Derridean notions of *differance*, indeterminacy and intertextuality. But he also resists Derrida's influence in the sense that he is critical of those aspects of Derrida's theory which are at variance with or run counter to his own basic critical position. For instance, Hartman does not accept Derrida's referential theory of art which is inimical to his own concept of art as representational. Similarly, he rejects the deconstructivist view that there is no poetic self prior to the text. His own criticism from his first book *The Unmediated Vision i*nvolves the attempt to relate the text to the poetic self. Derrida's theoretical formulations are consequently of less interest to Hartman than his mode of close reading which immeasurably extends the possibility of textual commentary.

A general distrust of theory is characteristic of much of Hartman's work. As Imre Salusinsky has clearly stated, Hartman has "resisted 'critical theory' proper, being suspicious of the totalizing, reductive impulse in any theory that would claim to have mastery over literature" (76). Daniel T. O'Hara has also observed that Hartman does not restrict his aesthetics "to one reductive scheme or set of schema based upon one pseudoscientific discourse, whether psychoanalytic, philosophical, anthropological, rhetorical, linguistic or a sublime mixture of all these modes" (127). This aversion of theory was to become a marked feature of twentyfirst century criticism as represented by Vincent B. Leitch in his work *Literary Criticism in the 21st Century* in which he points out that more time should be devoted to the act of reading itself before engaging in responsible criticism:

> The gist is that the reconstruction of criticism and theory depends on more time to read and fewer critical works, a lot fewer, 75% less. The problem is we are drowning in published scholarship and its main consequences, namely, fast reading, quick writing, and superficial coverage. Missing from the current regime are leisure time, expanded interests, and real pleasure and profit in reading criticism. (25)

Hartman's skepticism towards theory is the obverse of his absorbing interest in a vital hermeneutics. In his early phase he developed a recognizably phenomenological mode of interpretation. As he moved into the domain of deconstructive and psychoanalytic criticism he formulated "a hermeneutics of indeterminacy" which also incorporated elements from midrash or the rabbinic tradition of commentary. During this period he pursued a kind of close reading which was daring, inventive, playful and creative. In the last phase his interpretive method and practice acquire a new dimension through its engagement with humanistic and cultural criticism. What unifies the entire body of Hartman's writings is the vitality and persistence of his hermeneutic practice, which is not based on any formal technique borrowed from Dilthey or Gadamer, but has its own method and its own context in the American literary scene.

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# Drama as a Pedagogical Tool in the Instruction of Business Ethics

**Uma Bhushan**

**Abstract**

For more than two decades now, the concept of business ethics features majorly in the concerns of business ethics in India and the world over. As much attention, however, has not been paid to the teaching of ethical values in management and business courses. Business ethics is taught with case studies of ethical failures witnessed in other corporations over the years in India and the world over. This paper proposes that literature can be a rich resource of characters dealing with and successfully resolving ethical dilemmas. Literature can be a rich source of detailed ethical situations for students to discuss options and alternatives. Historically, several novels such as *Babbit*, *The Jungle* and *The Great Gatsby* has been employed in the teaching of business ethics. This paper puts forth the idea of using drama as a means of teaching ethics. Plays are shorter and due to their emphasis on characters and dialogues, can bring forth issues of ethics with greater detail and immediacy. This paper proposes three plays – David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross*, Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* as possible literary works for effective teaching of business ethics. These plays have powerful plots and polarising characters that allow students to relate with a wide range of drives and character traits.

## Introduction

For more than two decades now, the concept of business ethics features majorly in the concerns of business ethics in India and the world over. This is clear from the increase in the number of books, papers and case studies on ethical problems in business, and the setting up of numerous research and teaching centres specialising in the subject. Parallely, there is a universal acceptance of the need to incorporate business ethics in business school curriculum and the proliferation of training programmes for executives at all levels of management.

Unfortunately, development of appropriate teaching material and methods has not kept pace with this renewed interest in ethics of business. The dominant way of teaching business ethics in most business schools is to rely on 'war stories' - actual and hypothetical case studies of ethical failures in contemporary businesses. (Kenny and Lawson, 1992). A few corporations conduct seminars to discuss and impart ethical mores, but these stilted and strained attempts lose their very purpose due to their over-zealousness about traditional moralities and conventional shibboleths (Jackall, 1988). Open, honest and straightforward discussion of ethical challenges in daily work is hardly ever addressed.

Today's workplaces are under increasing pressures from the dynamic business and economic environment which are in turn keeping pace with changing societal expectations and values. More and more, social forces continue to expect higher standards of ethical behaviour from corporations – over and above those established by law. Companies are being looked upon to voluntarily improve their corporate citizenship practices. More importantly, the scope and intricacy of issues being looked under the umbrella of ethics is expanding. As a result of the combined effect of rapid technological and social changes, tightening of regulation and globalisation of markets, corporations are facing more complex and completely new challenges to their ethical practices.

Ethics is the study of what is just and unjust, right and wrong and good and bad. Business ethics is the study of the just and unjust, right and wrong and good and bad in business practices. Any discussion of business ethics includes a discussion of the responsibilities and rights with respect to each of the various stakeholders of the organisations. Experience shows that ethical dilemmas in business are not easy and simple. While existing policies and guidelines on ethics are a good resource for the troubled executive, this paper proposes a completely new place to look for help – literature and more specifically, drama.

**Literature as a sounding board for ethics**

It is necessary to explore non-traditional sources of knowledge when we are grappling with the complicated and powerful ethical issues confronting the business world. Scholars are increasingly talking about using lessons from history (Luecke, 1994) and classic literature (Clemens and Mayer, 1987). Literature can be a rich source of ethical situations because authors are not constrained by what is available in the real world. While academic authors are bound by the restrictions of factuality and methodologies, the literary license of literature enables endless possibilities to explore behaviours and characters that may not be possible in scholarly works.

Literature can be useful beyond imparting ethical sensibilities. It can actually enable an executive's competence to deal with and overcome specific ethical issues. Literature dramatizes how people deal with their aspirations and ambitions within the cultural roles and constraints they are placed in. Since it is in the realm of creative imagination, readers can visualise various moral problems in a context. Literature helps penetrate the moral apathy that grips most individuals. (Parr, 1982). Literature enables readers to empathise with the moral and

ethical dilemmas of the fictional characters and deal with their own in the real world. (Coles, 1987). McAdams and Koppensteiner (1992) were of the view that the value of literature stretched beyond sensitisation to actually fortifying an executive's ability to deal with specific ethical conundrums.

A review of extant academic literature reveals that the employment of literary works in the examination of ethical issues has been more or less restricted to such novels as *The Jungle*, *Babbitt* and *The Great Gatsby*. The problem with novels is their length and detailing, which do not lend themselves to the short course durations. In this context, plays can be more appropriate tools that novels since they put the spotlight on characters and their interactions. Plays can get readers more fully involved because of the dramatic nature of shorter plays and the dialogues. Plays create a stimulating and shared reality in which the students of ethics can study the comparative applications of various theories and models. (Davies and Hancock, 1993). Plays lend themselves admirably to the purposes of live case studies. Additionally, many of these plays are either staged or filmed. These can be played to the students to kick start interest and participation instead of pedantic lectures or staid discussions.

For the purposes of this paper, this author has selected to look closely at three plays – Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* (1992), Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1984) - for their depth of characters and intensity of plots. That these plays enjoy a very high status as literary works, is not entirely incidental.

These three plays are published across cultures, values and social strata over a period of a century, pointing to the universality and timelessness of ethical challenges in business. These plays depict an array of emotions (depression, elation, hate and fear), traits (naivete, duplicity and betrayal) and motives (greed, revenge) in ethically-charged dynamic scenarios. The reactions of the protagonists reflect their own personalities and self-interests, making them highly complex characters. Authors such as Miller, Mamet and Ibsen place their stories in the real, practical world of business and not from a pedantic ideology. As opposed to presenting academic caricatures, these authors take the readers into the challenging world of moral challenges and the fallouts of choosing either sides. Such a strategy leads to the depiction of real-life situations and characters that readers and students can relate with. This is exactly what business ethics classes need.

**Framework of Analysis**

The purpose of this paper is to present these three classic plays as case studies that can be used in business classrooms to effectively teach ethics by having students delve into morally challenging situations faced by the characters in the plays. In order to do that, this paper will analyse each play and conclude with a set of questions that will foster healthy debate and discussion of the ethical dilemmas faced by the characters as well as the choices they are presented with.

### *An enemy of the People* by Henrik Ibsen

This play by Ibsen is about a local doctor who finds out that the new municipal health spa in his small town is polluted by toxic effluents. This primarily public health and engineering issue has been transformed by Ibsen into a clash of private and public morality vis-a-vis practical constraints.

The protagonist Dr Tomas Stockmann, the head of the spa finds out that visitors are falling ill because of its water. Being an idealistic person, Dr Stockmann makes a public disclosure, only to be directly pitted against his own brother, the mayor Peter Stockmann. Since the town's economy is dependent on the successful running of the spa, the doctor's disclosure brings him into conflict with his brother and the entire population of the town who declare him enemy of the people.

Dr Stockmann loses his job, his twin sons and daughter are ostracized by their friends and neighbours stone his home. Giving into the thread of higher real estate taxes, the local press, also turn their loyalties from the doctor to the dominant discourse in support of the spa continuing unhindered. The play ends with Dr Stockmann, along with his family, choosing tolive on in the same town. He says " the strongest man in the world is the man who stands most alone." (Ibsen, 1964, p. 219)

Undoubtedly, Ibsen admires and sympathises with the character of Dr Tomas Stockmann as someone who takes an unpopular stance in the face of backlash from everyone he knows. He may be social welfare-minded and noble even, but the question remains if this was the only way that he could have shown his concern for the public.

Dr Stockmann is not to be apprised unidimensionally or that his motivations for the disclosure are entirely noble. Before taking up the current job of medical director of the spa, Dr Stockmann was practicing in a deserted part of Norway with little financial and professional success. Added to it, the sibling rivalry with his more powerful brother Peter, who is the mayor of the town, may have all had an influence on Dr Stockmann's act of disclosure. He is shown to be egotistic, who believes that "a man of science must live in a certain amount of style." (p.l 12). He refers to the discovery of the pollution as his own. He says, "Yes, mine! Now let them come, in their usual way saying it's all imagination...."(p. 120). He revels in the possibility outlined by a journalist that the disclosure will "make you the most important man in town" (p. 124). He doesn't object to a proposed procession in his honour.

Whistleblowing or "washing dirty linen in public" also raises questions of internal processes to deal with ethical lapses by an organization. Dr Stockmann publishes his findings in newspapers immediately on discovery thereby closing doors on any internal process to redeem the situation. As soon as the news of pollution was known, the Spa is doomed financially. The tainted water could have been treated, thereby safeguarding the baths and yet protect the local economy. Dr Stockmann unilaterally decides to go public with his findings while organizational protocol dictates that he brings his findings to the notice of his bosses first. He is of the view

that the directors of the spa "will probably not be unwilling to consider whether it might not be feasible...to introduce certain improvements." (Ibsen, 1964, p. 140)

There is a principled reason behind disallowing of employees from openly criticizing their employers – public interest is served if companies are allowed to function without internal harassment. In cases where the public interest supersedes those of the company, a concerned employee is protected from consequences of speaking out. It is called whistle blowing. DeGeorge (1990) is of the view that only on the condition that an unreported corporate violation would do considerable and serious harm to the harm, can an employee blow the whistle to outsiders. Before that, he needs to bring it to the attention of his immediate supervisor and make his concerns known. Even after the supervisor is apathetic, the concerned employee is expected to follow internal protocols to escalate his concerns to higher authorities. Only if everything fails, should the whistleblower go public. Dr Stockmann does none of these. He goes straight to the press.

After asking the students to watch or read the play, the following questions may be posed for discussion and analysis by the students:

1. Is the ostracizing of Dr Stockmann right? Justify your answer
2. What are examples of whistleblowers can you think of in the real corporate world? Did they all meet a similar fate as Dr Stockmann.
3. Would you consider that Dr Stockmann had a hidden agenda? Or is he truly a friend of the public?
4. What is the right way to blow the whistle? How could Dr Stockmann have blown the whistle more appropriately?
5. If you were Dr Stockmann, what would you have done? How? Justify your answer.

**Glengarry Glen Ross**

David Mamet, the author of the play *Glengarry Glen Ross*, described it as holding up a mirror to the American ethic of business and how all manners of deception, betrayal and ethical compromises are labeled as business. "To me this play is about a society with only one bottom line: How much money you make" (Gussow, 1984). Mamet's most celebrated plays are "negative" because in them, the fundamental trust between people is destroyed by selfishness propelled by

"doing business" (Carroll, 1992).

According to Mamet, the real villain of the piece is the system, not the characters who live within it by conning others out of their hard earned money. The play Glengarry Glen Ross is about 4 real estate agents trying to sell lots in undeveloped tracks, using whatever means possible. The main scenes of the play show the allocation of sales leads and the use of an aggressive sales pitch, "Somebody wins the Cadillac this month. P.S. Two guys get f d."

(Mamet, 1984, p. 36). The only desirable outcome is successful sale; the means adopted for achieving it is not a concern at all.

The play opens with a conversation between Shelly Levene, a faltering salesman in his fifties and his manager John Williamson. Once a star performer, Levene is now reduced to a position of begging for sales leads from his boss to keep up his career. Williamson is not willing to risk passing on premium leads to Levene because of his inability to close deals of late. Williamson justifies his actions by saying: "....my job is to marshal those leads," and "I do what I'm hired to do. I'm hired to watch the leads." (p. 19) Williamson further articulates the corporate policy: "....anybody falls below a certain mark I'm not permitted to give them premium leads. The hot leads are assigned according to the board

during the contest." In frustration, Levene responds: "don't look at the contest board, look at me." (p. 22) Dave Moss, a contemporary and colleague of Levene, adds "'Cause it doesn't have to be this way." (p. 33)

There are two major schools of thought pertaining to business ethics. The first says that business should be amoral, without the constraints of any ethical ideals. Businessmen are expected to act selfishly because market mechanism requires such actions in order to satisfy the expectations of all the stakeholders. The second theory of moral unity, however, holds that business is a subset of society and therefore what applies to society, must apply to business too. . Only one basic ethical standard exists, making it possible to harmonize

high ethical principles with the demands of business life (Steiner and Steiner, 1994).

The play Glengarry Glen Ross is clear on which theory it subscribes to. Its characters are not noble or magnanimous and they are easily lead by the predatory practices of their organization and profession. The justification to allocate premium sales leads to those who convert the leads to sales rather than for compassion to save the career of a once successful colleague, itself says a lot. Distribution of scarce resources is the primary challenge in any society.

The market system dictates that this allocation is a function of supply and demand; it maintains that if society's rewards are given away for reasons for equality and fairness, then productive behavior among members of the society is discouraged. Marxist and socialist views however, hold the exact opposite thesis. For them, society's goods and services are to be distributed on the basis of need, regardless of differences between individuals. For them, humanism is the only property that should matter in the fair distribution of societal goods. (Buchholz, 1989).

The policy for assigning premium sales leads in Glengarry Glen Ross gives rise to several questions for discussion:

1. Does longevity of service with the firm entitle Shelly Levene access to premium sales leads?
2. What are the responsibilities of a business organization to the aging workers whose performance is not optimum?

3. Is the organisation right? Or wrong? What is your justification? If wrong, how could it be more just to everyone?

In the closing scene of Act I, the firm's star salesman Richard Roma tells James Lingk, a stranger at the bar, "I do those things which seem correct to me today. I trust myself, and if security concerns me, I do that which today I think will make me secure." (p. 49) Referring to the ups and downs of life, Roma claims:"All it is, its a carnival." (p. 50) He orders a round of drinks for himself and his new "friend,"' and says: "This is a piece of land. Listen to

what I'm going to tell you now." (p. 51)

Behaviour norms in business obviates candor or absolute honesty. It is well accepted that both the bargaining parties reveal and operate with partial information. Statements like "this is my last offer", when a better offer is possible, is considered acceptable behavior in business. (Wokutch and Murmann, 1982). Roma's launching into his personal credo raises the question of how much candor is desirable in financial dealings.

Pragmatic frankness is the accepted premise of corporate and business conduct. Richard Roma's actions are in line with the actions of most admired corporations around the world. Xerox sales people draw up sales contracts such that initial payments are kept deceptively low but in reality recover a very high cost by spreading the payments over longer and longer periods. (Dorsey, 1994) The whole truth about products and services are routinely included in the smallest prints, while partial truths scream aloud in the body of the ads. Richard Roma's interaction with James Lingk raises a number of moral dilemmas:

1. How appropriate is Roma's conduct in ordering drinks just before delivering his sales pitch?
2. Should a salesperson announce his profession and intention to the unsuspecting buyer?

**Death of a Salesman**

The Pulitzer prize winner of 1949, The death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller is about the a salesman who achieved far less than what he aspired for. Willy Loman has been a salesman based out of Brooklyn who has covered the New England territory for more than 35 years. Despite his long service, he has been put on commission and removed from salary-based employment. He makes ends meet by taking loans from his neighbor and avoiding important expenses like replacing appliances and his car. He tells of his situation: "Once in my life I would like to own something outright before it's broken! I'm always in a race with the junkyard. I just finished paying for the car and it's on its last legs." (Miller, 1976, p. 73)

Willy has a greater problem that he doesn't see. His delusions about his past success, his influence over others, especially his sons and his abilities. He holds that "....the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want." (p.33 ). The remarkable thing about his philosophy is that it precludes success based on character (Baida, 1990). He brushes

aside his sons' (Biff and Happy) stealing lumber as action fo "a couple of fearless characters" (p 51). Nor is Willy weighed down by the immorality of his affair a few years ago with a secretary in Boston.

Act II builds the crescendo to Willy's ultimate dismissal and his subsequent suicide. Willy pleads for a position at the New York office "You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away—a man is not a piece of fruit." (p. 82). He refers to an agreement he had with his boss Howard's father Frank Wagner "I'm talking about your father! There were promises made across this desk! And your father came to me—or rather, I was in the office here—^it was right over this desk—and he put his hand on my shoulder—" (p. 83). By the end of the scene, Howard has fired Willy with the suggestion that he needs a long rest. Soon after, Willy commits suicide so that his wife can collect on his life insurance. He dies a disillusioned man, unable to make peace with his failure as a salesman and his dismal relationship with his sons. At the funeral Willy's son Biff says, "He (Willy) had the wrong dreams. All, all wrong. He never knew who he was." (p. 138). Only his friend and longtime neighbor Charley defends him, Nobody dast blame this man. You don't understand: Willy was a salesman. And for a salesman, there is no rock bottom to the life. He don't put a bolt to a nut, he don't tell you the law or give you medicine. He's a man way out there in the blue, riding a smile and a shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back—that's an earthquake. And then you get yourself a couple of spots on your hat, and your finished. Nobody dast blame this man. A salesman is got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory, (p. 138)

Willy Loman's treatment by his employer leads to several questions on the ethical responsibilities of employers:

1. Was the manner of the termination of Willy's employment justified? Could it have been done any differently?
2. Should Willy have been given a job in the home office at New York?
3. Instead of waiting for things to come to such a pass, should someone at Willy's company intervened much earlier and counseled? Rehabilitated him in a different role?
4. Are the verbal promises of the previous head of organization tenable and valid? Is the firm ethical bound to uphold those promises ?

**Conclusion**

The instances depicted in *An Enemy of the People, Death of a Salesman* and *Glengarry Glen Ross* give rise to multiple questions pertaining to ethical and moral behavior in business organsiations. In the true tradition of case studies, these plays do not provide direct answers but put the spotlight on the directions in which students should think, in order to find the answers. Complex problems have complex answers and it is through discussions that acceptable answers can be found.

Ethics by its very nature does not run straight. There are perspectives to the practice of ethics. The three plays detailed here lend themselves to a multi-dimensional analysis of what is right and what is wrong? Who is right and who is wrong? Students learn that moral dilemmas are more easy to list out than resolved and that ethical behavior pervades our entire life and not just the professional sphere. More importantly, the students learn that any attempt to resolve ethical issues often leads to a conflict between the rights of the organization and the rights of the individual with the ideal solution eluding us all the time.

The mounting complexity in the business environment calls for non-traditional sources of knowledge to address urgent issues besetting the profession. Drama and literature offer a vast source of material to study business problems through the prism of. The three plays explored here are the first step in that direction. More academics need to study drama and other forms of literature and identify material suitable for classroom teaching of ethics.

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# Distance Learning Strategies in Covid-19 Pandemic for Engineering Institutions

**Anandakumar**

**Abstract**

COVID 19 has kindled us to learn a new strategy for sharing knowledge over technology to fulfil and enhance the quality of teaching and learning process in the educational system. This paper deals with the various strategies to accomplish a specific goal of learning pedagogy as well as create an environment similar to face-to-face environment for the learners in online mode. In addition, this study is intended to illustrate how distance learning strategies are adopted during COVID-19 pandemic in engineering institutions. This study uses literature survey or research library for grabbing the attention of the investigators in order to find the way to solve the problems in e-learning. Quantitative research approach has been used in this case study to illustrate various analysis which can be a factual way to solve problems of online learning in the relevant sphere, inconvenience connected with learning, feasible solutions to this crisis, the policy approvals of distance learning in engineering institutions.

**Keywords**: learning strategies, online learning

## Introduction

The universal outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has spread throughout the world, affecting almost all countries and territories, and the disease is highly infectious in nature (WHO.int, 2020). As a result, classes shifted from classical classroom environment to online or virtual using the relevant technologies. Some countries broadcasted exceptional breaks to buy more time for better preparation for the distance learning scenario. The start and end dates of the academic year, as well as holidays, are different in each country, so the situation was not consistent (MOE.gov.ae, 2020). India and other populated countries postponed off-line Classes from March / April 2020 until further notice.

Research highlights certain shortages, such as limited online teaching infrastructure, restricted exposure of teachers to online teaching, information gap, environment not conducive to home learning, equity and excellence academic in terms of higher education (https://www.education.gov.in) and (https://www.ugc.ac.in). The guidelines are being given for eradicating the problems in teaching and learning. This article analyses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the distance teaching and learning process through online in order to nourish the ward with knowledge in the relevant sphere, inconvenience connected with online teaching and learning, feasible solutions to this crisis, the policy approvals of the government based on the survey for online teaching and learning mode has been summarized and system forward suggested.

**Literature Review**

Research on distance education has been the subject of many and lengthy debates. Distance learning needs a reliable means of communication between students and teachers (Kittur et al., 2021). Therefore, the history of distance learning begins at the point where a reliable method of communication is established. The main goal of distance learning is to overcome the barriers of place and time in the COVID-19 pandemic. Students may live in isolated rural, less populated and non-urban areas and have to access technology to learn. Distance learning allows education to reach those who cannot physically attend the courses in educational institutions.

In addition, it provides equity in educational opportunity by allowing access to quality education for those who would otherwise have been denied. E-learning systems provide solutions that deliver knowledge and information, facilitate learning and increase performance by developing an appropriate flow of knowledge within organizations (Menolli et al. 2020). The implementation and proper management of solutions, processes and technological resources are necessary for the efficient use of e-learning in an organization (Alharthi et al. 2019). Examples of e-learning platforms that have been widely adopted by various organizations are Canvas, Blackboard, and Moodle. Such systems provide innovative services for students, employees, managers, instructors, institutions and other actors to support and improve learning processes and facilitate an efficient flow of knowledge (Garavan et al. 2019). Functionalities, such as creating modules to organize information from mini courses and learning materials or communication channels such as chat, forums and video sharing, allow instructors and managers to develop training and exchange of adequate knowledge (Wang et al. 2011). Today, utilizing various e-learning capabilities is a staple product to support workplace and organizational learning.

E-learning systems can be classified into different types, according to their functionalities and possibilities. One of the important parts of any e-learning system is the learning management system (LMS), which includes a virtual classroom and collaboration capabilities and allows the instructor to design and orchestrate a course or module. An LMS can be proprietary (eg Blackboard) or open source (eg Moodle). These two types differ in their characteristics,

costs, and the services they provide; For example, proprietary systems prioritize assessment tools for instructors, while open source systems focus more on community development and engagement tools. (Alharthi et al. 2019). Most of the studies have focused on the learning process and the added value that new technologies can offer by replacing some of the face-to-face processes with virtual processes or by offering new phases to the process mediated by technology (Menolli et al. 2020). ; Lau 2015) highlighted how virtual reality capabilities can enhance organizational learning, outlining the new challenges and frameworks needed to effectively utilize this potential.

The main advantage of distance learning is that students can study anywhere, anytime, anywhere they want. Flexibility is the most important advantage of distance learning.

## Method

This research employed quantitative research approach. The online questionnaire was sent through Google forms to the engineering students of an affiliated engineering institution in the south of India. Closed questions, nominal questions, Likert scale questions and 'Yes' or 'no' questions were used to measure whether online education is accepted by the engineering students. Using an online tool was very effective option to reach students as the outbreak did not allow physical contact.

### *Sample size and sampling technique*

The researcher employed the use of random sampling method to assign the sample for study. The total sample size was made up of 111 students. The random sampling method is chosen to ensure that all participants have an equal chance of participating in this study measuring the distance learning process.

### *Research instruments*

An online questionnaire was constructed and used as a research instrument for data collection. The instrument included 10 questions, the first five components were based on demographic questions (Name, Year, age, and department), and the last division included ten items needed for this study. The questionnaire constituted of closed questions, nominal questions, Likert scale questions, and "Yes" or "No" questions for the students in order to respond to. The measurement scale ranged from maximum (MAX)), moderate (MD), and minimum (MIN) which has been procured for availing the survey statements.

### *Data collection procedure*

The researcher used Google forms to design the questionnaire and the link was shared via email and WhatsApp (social media) to all students at the institution.

## Results Analysis

A total of 111 students participated in the survey. Out of the entire study population 63 (51%) were males, and 60 (49%) were female, as shown in Table 1.

*Table 1. Demographic details*

| Item | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| *Gender* | | |
| Male | 63 | 57% |
| Female | 48 | 43% |
| *Age* | | |
| 18–21 | 111 | 100% |
| Total | 111 | 100% |

The study population were the students enrolled in various courses during Spring 2021. All the students who participated in this study belonged to the age group of 18–21 years (100%) as shown in the table 1.

Majority of students were from the first year of the engineering program.

Table 2 presents the feedback and challenges of the students during the closure of the engineering institution due to the COVID-19 pandemic. From Table 2, it is observed that 66 (59.4%) respondents agreed to be able to learn effectively online, while 33 (29.7%) respondents disagreed with that statement. Again, regarding getting interested to attend the online class 81 (72.9%) respondents agreed that understanding concepts during individual studies is challenging due to face to face limitation compared to learning in groups and with the teacher around. However, 30 (27%) respondents disagreed.

In addition, 62 (55.8%) respondents gave a positive response to the statement that they have access to the Internet, and they can use any device for online learning whereas 25 (22.5%) respondents put forth the answers towards facing poor band connectivity in the remote area. 6% of the respondents did not agree with the statement. 73 (54.9%) of the respondents agreed that the online learning system is very effective due to location flexibility, thus will help many students attending the class from anywhere, while 25 (18.8%) disagreed. Regarding the technological resources i.e. (Laptop, Smart phone, Tablet) 67 (60%) of the respondents disagreed that they have issues with technological resources availability at home, while some of the students 37 (33%) don't have some or all of the technological resources at home.

*Table 2 Respondents' answers*

| Survey Statement | Scale | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Maximum (Good) | Moderate (Average) | Minimum (Satisfactory) |
| 1.How often do you get so focused on activities during online classes? | 61 - 54.9% | 25-22.5% | 25-22.5% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2. Are you interested in online classes? | 81– 72.9% | 30 – 27% | No option |
| 3.Which aspects of class have you found least engaging? | 52– 46.8% | 42–37.8% | 17–15.3% |
| 4.Are you missing in person college activities? | 100–90.9% | 11 – 9.9% | No option |
| 5.How difficult / easy is it to use the distance learning technology? | 62– 55.8% | 25–22.5% | 24- 21.6% |
| 6.What device are you using for online learning?a) smart phone b) laptop c) desktop | 67– 60.3% | 37–33.3% | 06 – 5.4% |
| 7.If you are participating in distance learning, how often do you hear from your teachers individually? | 68– 61.2% | 34–30.6% | 09 – 8.1% |
| 8.How effective has remote learning been for you? | 66 – 59.4% | 33–29.7% | 12–10.8% |
| 9. How helpful are your teachers while studying? | 65 – 58.5% | 42- 37.8% | 04 – 3.6% |
| 10. How do you feel overall about distance education? | 78 – 70.2% | 30–27.0% | 03 – 2.7% |
| Overall, did you like the online learning process? | | Yes - 78 (70% | |
| | | No - 33 (29.7%) | |

Furthermore, 68 respondents (61%) agreed that they often get responses from their teachers individually whereas 34 (30%) disagreed. In addition, 66 (59%) respondents agreed that remote learning has been effective whereas 33 respondents (29.7%) disagreed. In the meanwhile, 65 respondents (58.5%) agreed that the teachers are helpful to them while studying whereas 42 respondents (37.8%) disagreed. Finally, 78 respondents (70.2%) felt positive about distance education, but 30 respondents (27.0%) felt satisfactory.

**Discussion**

Many countries have achieved, controlled and decreased the spread of the corona virus by taking drastic measures that included a ban on public gatherings and lockdown of educational institutions until new notice. Although engineering institutions closure is an effective way to minimizing the spread of the virus, has come with its own challenges. Ministry of education collaborating with universities provided excellent rules and regulations to adhere the mandate to all the leaders of engineering institutions of the country in order to ensure the stability of the education practice at the country. The infrastructure of the country also played an active role to facilitate online/distance learning. Thus, online learning has been proven to be effective

as the learner has technological resources and internet access at home. Distance learning gives a big advantage to students as they can study anywhere. (Carnevale, 2000; Dutton et al., 2002). And, transferring the knowledge from one person to another whether via online or in-class are similar, but the communication method is different. In fact, (Lantolf, 2008; Bateman & Waters, 2013; Greenberg, 2005) said that teaching occurs when a person with more knowledge transmits knowledge to an individual with less knowledge.

Some of the respondents stated that e-learning implemented by the Ministry, as well as engineering institutions is very effective, but accessibility has been the issue since students need technological devices such as smart phones or computers and the internet to be able to access them. This has made learning at home during this pandemic very difficult for the students. Learning is also said to be accomplished effectively when the right instructional materials are used for the right purpose during the course. For those who have issue either related to internet access or technological resources, the government rendered additional effort to support them all with gadgets (Sebugwaawo, 2020), to enhance every home to have an adequate learning environment, however, some students reside in small apartments therefore, students are required to learn either in the living room or its bedrooms, which is very ineffective, according to respondents. That's why the involvement of the family (parents) is important, as per García and Thornton (2014), the family involvement in learning, supports to get better students' performance, reduce absence and re-establish parents' assurance in the education of their children.

In the midst of the pandemic where students are left out of university or institutions, most learning institutions rely on online learning which substitute the interaction with the teacher in a physical classroom to a virtual classroom through the use of the internet and technological devices such as the smart phones, computers and tablets. However, teachers were supposed to get trained on how to make the distance learning experience more interactive. It was argued by (McLeod, 2019; Applefield, Huber, & Moallem, 2000) that learning is accomplished when students are made to interact with instructional materials and draw their own meaning from their interaction (Kittur et al., 2021). Also, it was claimed that students learn well when supervised and guided (Okendu, 2012). However, in campus there are many hands-on activities that elevate students' knowledge such as laboratories and it will help students in understanding the concepts better (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). These aspects are disappeared in the distance learning during the pandemic, although students will learn, but getting the correct explanation will be a challenge for them, especially with new concepts and if hands-on trainings are required.

The study revealed that the majority of households in India have internet access. There are several network service providers across the country, which had led to an online learning platform implemented by the Ministry of Education and universities at India being straight forward because most students have technological resources and Internet access.

It is undoubtedly true that most students agreed that due to the limitation of the face-to-face interaction, the online learning system sometimes has become difficult and they don't get proper explanation of some materials (particularly laboratory), and this might be as a result of faculty members' insufficient adoption and adaptation to the distance learning, since it happened suddenly as a reaction to the pandemic, without proper and insufficient training. This has made learning some concepts, especially those perceived as abstract, very difficult for students in this period of confinement and universities or institutions closure due to lockdown. In addition, it is noteworthy, regarding the assessment, which is one of the most challenging items, the current technology is not mature yet, to ensure the integrity and credibility by 100%, because there are always ways to trick these systems in most of the institutions. In fact, the current assessments were designed initially for off-class environment such as open book resource or free access methods, therefore, institutions are highly encouraged to innovate new ways aligned with distance learning environment, to assess their students' knowledge, keeping in consideration the technology limitations.

Finally, and most important, the study revealed that, in most of the engineering institutions, majority of the students (70%) liked the online learning system, and 30% didn't like it. In other words, and after this pandemic, it is highly recommended for educational institutions in India, to shift from traditional classroom environment to blended or online learning system which is combining in-class learning and distance learning as per students' preferences (Kittur, 2016).

## Conclusion

In the wake of the global pandemic, COVID-19, most of the world's institutions has been affected in terms of economy, industries, religion and education. This study examined the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on learning for the students of engineering institutions and revealed their perspective and preferences. Although majority of students liked the distance learning, and would like to have blended learning system, it came to light that the pandemic has had a negative psychological impact on their learning. Many of the students are not used to effective self-study, and they sit down all the time at home, due to the curfew when compared to the study they do in the class with their friends. The distance learning platforms implemented were also a challenge for some of the students due to limited internet access and lack of technological devices. Therefore, the study recommends that students be reintroduced to online learning platforms to enhance the adoption, and how to effectively use it for instructional practice in the wake of such challenges in our engineering educational system, and adapt the pedagogy accordingly, to more effective knowledge transferring. The outcome of this study will be of great help in helping policy makers craft lasting policy to address the challenges students face when they are at home during pandemic of this nature.

## Limitations and Future Work

This study has some limitations. Regarding the research sample used, it was from one institution, which is modest to represent the whole engineering institutions. So, this may not very accurately

represent students' perspective and preferences about the distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, which leaves future researchers to examine more institutions, to discover more insights on distance learning during the breakout of corona virus. Furthermore, the students' performance aspects (GPA/CGPA) were not covered; interviewing students to better understand their perceptions and understand the why behind the findings presented in this paper – a qualitative study can be designed (Borrego et al., 2009; Kittur et al., 2021). Similarly interviews with faculty can also be done, designing survey instruments with relevant factors, and using statistical tests like exploratory factor analysis, one-way or two-way ANOVA can also be potential directions for future work (Kittur et al., 2020; McNabb, 2020). These could be exposed in future to examine the system effectiveness by comparing students' performance pre and post distance learning.

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# Cultural Resonance: Bengali Literature in Malayalam Translation

**Anjana Sankar S.**

**Abstract**

The paper attempts to examine the reasons for the large number translations from Bengali into Malayalam and their popularity, especially the translations of Bengali novels into Malayalam. An analysis of the influence of Bengali Culture, philosophy, literature and art on the Malayali psyche and the reasons for the large number of literary translations from Bengali into Malayalam and the relatively fewer number from Malayalam to Bengali are undertaken. The influence spans across time and different forms of art too. The indebtedness of Kerala Reformation to Bengali Renaissance comes within the purview of the study.

**Key words:** Bengali Renaissance, Brahma Samaj, Hindu Reformation Movement, *advaitha* - Progressive Writer's Association and Jeeval Sahitya Sanghadana, IPTA and KPAC, Communist Disillusionment- Cinematic Influence, Film Society Movement, Baul music

## Introduction

This study seeks to examine the influence of Bengali Culture, philosophy, literature and art upon the Malayalis and their language, and examines how far these factors have contributed to the prevalence of the large number of Malayalam translations of Bengali literary works, apart from the popularity of Bengali cinematic works and Baul Music, Tagore's works and philosophy

## History of Translation in Malayalam

Malayalam has a rich tradition of translations from English and Sanskrit, besides other regional Indian languages. The history of translated works appearing in Malayalam can be classified into four phases, starting with works translated from Sanskrit to Malayalam followed by the second phase comprising of translations from Arabic language followed by the third

phase of translations from European languages while the fourth and final phase is distinguished by translations from other regional languages to Malayalam..

However the popularity of Bengali novels translated into Malayalam, is illustrated by the fact that many, like M.N.Satyarthi's translation of Bimal Mitra's novels directly from Bengali to Malayalam, were serialized for years in *Janayugam* weekly, run by the Kerala faction of the CPI, which served to increase the overall circulation of the weekly, while Ashapoorna Devi's novel Trilogy was serialized in *Mathrubhoomi* weekly where the translation was undertaken by P. Madhavan Pillai from Hindi to Malayalam. Both writers and their works were so popular that many children born in Kerala during the period were often named either after the novelists themselves or the central characters appearing in their novels. Bengali works translated into Malayalam, from Hindi, English and Bengali were largely published later in the book form, both by private Publishers and Government funded ones.

The noted critic and academician of Kerala, Prof. M.N.Karasserry has noted that the same order of Nationalism, Revivalism, Renaissance and Communism seen in the two states -Kerala and Bengal- explains the larger number of translations appearing in Malayalam from Bengali. However Leela Sarkar, a Malayali who married a Bengali and settled in Mumbai and translated more than eighty works from Bengali to Malayalam, has said that her attempts to translate popular Malayalam writers to Bengali were not so successful, as the Bengali readers proved to be not so receptive. In the interview given to *The Hindu* in 2007 when she came to Calicut to receive an award constituted in memory of M.N. Satyarthi, she has emphasized the cultural similarity between the two states.

The widespread popularity of novels and novelists like Sharat Chandra Chattarjee and Bankim Chandra were exceptional. In the 1970s itself there were 48 translations of Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, closely followed by 30 of Bankim Chandra, but above all of them came Tagore, whose works had 50 translations in Malayalam which included those done by famous poets like G. Sankara Kurup and others. Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's popularity is revealed by O.N.V.Kurup's statement. "...Sarat Chandra's name is cherished as dearly as the names of eminent Malayalam novelists. His name has been a household word"(92).

**Bengal and Kerala: Socio-Political and cultural Verisimilitude**

The widespread popularity of Bengali writings in Malayalam can be attributed to various socio-cultural factors inclusive of literary habits, entertainment and aesthetic tastes. In this context one is automatically reminded of Raymond Williams' observation that culture is a way of life. Both Bengalis and Malayalees have as their staple food, rice and fish, are great football fans and show high rates of literacy. Moreover, the large number of migrant population working outside the respective states in both Bengal and Kerala and the mixed population in both states as well as the geographical similarities between the two states, with their paddy fields and thatched straw houses, ponds and rivers that one sees in the countryside all reinforce this aspect. The earlier affinity towards Left liberal politics is another common shared feature.

**Influence of Bengali Renaissance on Malayali Society**

Apart from these geographical and cultural affinities, there are several historical bonds as well. The main figures of the Bengali Renaissance exerted a powerful influence upon the Malayalee psyche. The first great modern reformer, Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) who laid the real foundation of modern Bengali prose as well as the Indian Renaissance in general, is referred to as "The Father of Modern India." He made invaluable contributions to the nineteenth century reform movement which was closely wedded to the political movement, thereby influencing political authority, administration and legislation.

In the religious sphere, Raja Ram Mohan Roy led the Reformation Movement and his main target of attack was the Hindu system of idolatry, its mythology and culture. The founding of the Brahmo Sabha Ram Mohan Roy championed the abolition of *Suttee*, the self-immolation of widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands, and also opposed child marriage and advocated female education.

These social and religious reforms in Bengal also had a deep and abiding impact in the Reform movements in Kerala. The members of the upper castes like Brahmins and the Kshatriyas were awakened to the evils of the caste system. The affinity shown by Bengal towards Reformation in the form of new ideas, explains the emotional bond experienced by Malayalis towards Bengali literature, especially novels. It is interesting to note that it just took twenty years after the publication of the first Malayalam novel *Indulekha* in 1889 for the appearance of the first Bengali novel translation in Malayalam, in the form of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Anandamath* in 1909, followed by *Durgeshanandini* in 1911 and another translation of *Anandamath* in 1920.

**Influence of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Swami Vivekananda**

The Ramakrishna Mission, the Theosophical Society and the Arya Samaj helped to create the need for reform in the minds of the Hindus of Kerala. The services of Swami Agamananda (1896-1961), born into a Brahmin family in Kerala, who drew inspiration from Swami Vivekananda's teachings, deserves special mention. As a sanyasin, he had also visited Belur Math and his close relationship with the culture of Bengal gave him an impetus to fight against the Brahmin predominance and caste hierarchy among the Hindus of Kerala. In 1936, as a part of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's Birth Centenary celebration, he set up Ramakrishna Advaitha Asramam at Kalady, renowned as the birthplace of Sankaracharya, for the cause of the eradication of caste barriers and Harijan upliftment. Agamananada subsequently went on to establish a Sanskrit School and a college as well, at Kalady, both of which still provide education to hundreds of youth.

**Kumaran Asan's Visit to Calcutta**

The great Malayalam poet Kumaran Asan (1875-1958), one among the modern Triumvirates of Malayalam poetry, was a follower and disciple of Sri Narayana Guru, the Ezhava saint and social reformer. With no Mahakavya to his credit, he won immortal fame as a great poet

through his small lyrical poem *Veenapoovu*. What is to be noted is the fact that Kumaran Asan, under the advice of his teacher Sree Narayana Guru, had spent a few years in Calcutta, prior to the composition of *Veenapoovu*. As the capital of the British government in India, Calcutta in those days, was permeated with the language and culture of the British. The two years that Kumaran Asan spent in Calcutta between 1898 and 1900 brought him into close contact with the poetry of the British Romantics and Robert Browning. Inspired by the romantic imagination of the great English poets, he went on to write one of the best lyrics written in Malayalam language. The sojourn in Calcutta also provided him with a profound spiritual insight in the form of the doctrines of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Swami Vivekananda. This strengthened the spiritual grounding received by him from his Guru which was reflected in the spiritual elements found even in his famous love poems. Moreover Rabindranath Tagore who combined the Western secular influence with the traditional Indian culture, provided an example for Kumaran Asan.

Tagore provided the country with a new sense of oneness, opening the windows to the world, thereby providing a dynamic synthesis of modernity and tradition, as well as a new rationality and universality of outlook. Tagore's philosophy bears direct relation with the Brahmo Movement and the Bengali Renaissance which switched allegiance from the Puranic pantheon to the Upanishadic literature, free of ritualism in its philosophic quest of universal truth. The rationalist minds saw in it the nearest co-relative to modernist beliefs within the Hindu tradition.

**Sree Narayana Guru's meeting with Tagore**

Even today Malayalees proudly remember the visit paid by Rabindranath Tagore to Sivagiri Ashram to meet Sree Narayana Guru and the meeting between the Gurudev of Bengal and the Gurudev of Kerala.

The reformation movement of Sree Narayana Guru was totally different from the Brahma Samaj, for the latter was influenced by the ideas of western humanism, inspired by the slogan of equality, liberty and fraternity. But Narayana Guru, born into a low caste family, never had the privilege of learning English, or to come into touch with the Western civilization. Receiving a purely traditional, Sanskrit based education, his doctrine of spirituality and Godliness – "All are one" – was based more on the *advaitha* philosophy that the same spark of divinity shines in all. Hence he preached the doctrine "Ask not, say not, think not caste." Being a victim of the caste system Sree Narayana felt an emotional affinity with the people he wanted to uplift. This was the main difference between his reform movement and the Brahma Samaj, which chiefly operated among the Brahmins and Kayasthas of Bengal and not the low castes.

**Brahma Samaj and the Malayala Brahmin Reformation**

The Brahma Samaj operated at the intellectual level and appealed to the intellects of the educated elites without affecting the suffering and downtrodden masses emotionally.

The knowledge of Sanskrit and the Upanishads was central to Brahmism from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Tagore. They adapted Hinduism to the needs of the age by eliminating the superstitious obstacles to progress without giving up the eventual doctrines. Ram Mohan Roy stimulated thoughts on comparative religion in modern India, using a number of languages, pioneered Bengali prose and was instrumental in having the practise of *Suttee* banned. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-91), a great Sanskrit scholar with a strong streak of western democratism in him, wrote important works in Bengali, and virtually forced sections of society to accept widow remarriage. This was the first social reform cause to be taken up all over the country and was carried to a successful conclusion.

These revolutionary steps had their repercussions in Kerala too, especially among the Malayala Brahmins among whom the lot of the Brahmin Namboodiri women was pathetic; often married to men old enough to be their grand fathers before the attainment of puberty, the young *antharjanams* (Namboodiri women) became widows even before the consummation of the marriage. The first Namboodiri widow remarriage which shook the orthodoxy, took place between the widowed sister of V. T. Bhattathirippad, a great social reformer and the author of several literary works depicting the social evils that existed in the community, and M. R. Raman Bhattathirippad, popularly known as M.R.B. M.R.B'S brother Premji, a great actor and writer, also married a widow.

In this context, the powerful influence wielded by the Bengali Renaissance in these reform movements of Kerala can be seen in V. T. Bhattathirippla ins the attempt made by him to educate his illiterate younger sister by sending had's *Jeevitha Smaranakal*, a memoir. He exper to Calcutta in the company of Balamaniamma, the famous poetess and mother of Kamala Das, and her husband V. M. Nair V. T. terms Bengal as the cradle of national progress and cosmopolitan culture, a clear indication of the high esteem in which Bengali literature and culture were viewed in Kerala. In Kerala, the Punnapra Vayalar uprising fired the imagination of many leftist poets and writers including Vayalar Ramavarma, P.Bhaskaran and O.N.V.Kurup, all three of whom gained name as lyricists in films too.

**Lalithambika Antharjanam and Ashapoorna Devi**

Lalithambika Antharjanam (1909-1987) a gifted female writer who rose from among the ranks of the patriarchal Namboothiri community to become a gifted writer, has set down her indebtedness to Bengali literature, in her autobiography *Aatmakathakku Oramukham*. Her reading of B. Kalyani Amma's translation of Tagore's *Home and the World* at the impressionable age of fourteen or fifteen , bred a close affinity with the characters of Bimala and Sandip, as well as the widowed sister-in-law in the novel.

> On entering the literary field as a short-story writer, Tagore was my 'God' in literature during the first phase. My introduction to Tagore was through the translations of Sri. Puthezhattu Raman Menon and Kalyani Amma. The other novelists like Bankim Chandra followed later. Moreover the close contact with Sri Ramakrishna Ashram from youth, the inspiration derived from Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Swami Vivekananda also helped

> in the formation of the literary outlook. Even now my imagination is groping in the shadow of these huge shadows (or rather beacons of light) (Antharjanam 55).

Antharjanam's first published story "Journey's end" was based on Seethadevi Shatopadhyaya's English translation of Santha Shatopadhyaya's Bengali story 'End of the Journey' that appeared in *Modern Review*. Both the stories depict the tragic plight of child widows in the Brahmin community.

Comparisons have been drawn between Ashapoorna Devi, the famous Bengali writer and the first woman to have won the Jnanapith Award, and Lalithambika Antharjanam, in their attempts to portray the plights of the Brahmin women. Ashapoorna Devi's trilogy *Pratham Pratishruti* (1964), *Subarnalatha* (1966) and *Bakul Katha* (1973) were also popular among the Malayali readers through translations.

**Popular Translations of Bengali in Malayalam and their Translators**

Moreover Bengali classics like Tarashankar Banerjee's *Aarogya Niketanam* and *Ganadevata,* Bibhuti Bhushan Bandopadhyay's *Aranyak* and *Pather Panchali* (immortalized by Satyajit Ray into a film by the same title), were all very popular in translations. Mani Shankar Banerjee who is popularly known as Shankar, Sabitri Roy, Manoranjan Hazra, Narayan Gangopadhyay, Gajendra Kumar Mitra, Bimal Mitra, Manik Bandopadhyay, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Buddhadeb Guha, Bimal Kar, Mahasweta Devi and Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay are some of the major Bengali writers to be translated into Malayalam. In Kerala, women translators like Neelina Abraham, who taught Bengali in Maharaja's College, Ernakulam, and Leela Sarkar who wrote an exclusive Bengali-Malayalam dictionary, translated famous Bengali novels into Malayalam. The Late M.N. Satyarthi was one of the major translators to master the language of Bengali and to undertake translations of many well-known classics from Bengali to Malayalam. Other translators from Bengali to Malayalam include Ravi Varma, M. P. Kumaran and more recently, Jayendran and Sunil Nhaliyath. G. Vikraman Nair, a Malayalee journalist who spent the major part of his life in Calcutta, wrote popular books in Bengali and his travelogue, *Paschim Digante Pradosh Kale*, has been translated into Malayalam.

**Bengali Ethos on Malayalam Poetry**

G. Sankarakurup (1901-1978), the famous Malayalam poet who won the Jnanapith award in the year of inception in 1965 for *Odakuzhal,* exhibits the influence of Rabindranath Tagore in the mystical symbolism of his poetry. Mahakavi, G., as Sankarakurup is known in Kerala, has translated Tagore's *'Gitanjali'* into Malayalam after learning Bengali. K. C. Pillai who studied in Viswabharati was perhaps the first to translate *Gitanjali* into Malayalam.

Kumaran Asan's indebtedness to Tagore has been pointed out by many critics like Sisir Kumar Das : "The external texture of Asa's poem might have been influenced by English Romatics , and remotely by Tagore" (206). Again in a different context, analysing the narratives of suffering in Indian Literature, Sisir Kumar Das draws attention to Asan's poems

*Chandalabhishuki*(1922) based on a Buddhist legend of Buddha's disciple Ananda accepting water from a Chandala girl and "his last, and claimed to be the greatest work *Karuna*(1923) also based on the Buddhist tale of the courtesan Vasavadatta and the monk Upagupta", which bears no relation to caste, but with Karuna(compassion)which alone, in the poet's view, can save the world that has been transformed into narrow sectors. Interestingly enough

> Tagore wrote a poem on the same Buddhist tale under the title "Abhisar"(1900,Tryst), and about a decade later the theme of *Chandala Bhishuki* reappeared in his haunting play *Chandalika* which is also a strong repudiation of the caste system. ( Das 307)

The establishment of Kerala Kalamandalam, a centre to teach Kathakali, Thullal, Mohiniyattam as well as the music and instruments which accompany these art forms, by the great nationalist poet Vallathol Narayana Menon in Cheruthurutti near Thrissur, was a historic event in Kerala's cultural scenario. Vallathol visited Calcutta and recorded his appreciation of Tagore's work and Kalamandalam must have been formed, drawing inspiration from Shantiniketan . This centre which has at present become a deemed university, has done much to revive and to preserve the native art forms of Kerala.

**Communism and its Impact on the literary scenario of Bengal and Kerala**

Following the period of influence of Tagore, Malayalam literature came under the sway of the communist movement which gained prominence in Bengal as well. In India, Bengal and Kerala remained the two states where communists shared power with their allies for long . The growth of the communist movement affected the writers in both Kerala and West Bengal where they were in power from 1977-2011, for seven consecutive terms, whereas in Kerala they alternate sharing power with the Congress led Front, rising to power for two consecutive terms in 2020, for the first time. The intelligentsia of the states were largely attracted by the ideology. The formation of the Progressive Writer's Association in Lucknow in 1936 saw an active participation of writers and intellectuals in social causes. As an offshoot of this, the Jeeval Sahitya Sanghadana was formed in Kerala.

In spite of the disillusionment of the Russio-German Non-Aggression Pact and the Soviet invasion of Finland (which Tagore bitterly criticized) the Progressive Writer's Movement survived and gained strength with Hitler's declaration of war upon the Soviet Union in 1942. A few months later, the Anti-Fascist Writer's and Artist's union was founded in Calcutta with novelists like Manik Bandopadhyay and Tara Sankar Bandopadhyay, poet Bishnu Dey and many others as members. In a determined attempt to reach out to the working class, Benoy Roy and others sang rousing political songs among the industrial workers in Calcutta and other large cities.

These developments resulted in the formation of the IPTA (Indian Progressive Theatre Association) in Bombay in 1943 whose purpose was to revitalize folk art and to fill it with revolutionary consciousness. The staging of Bijan Bhattacharya's *Nabanna* (The Harvest) in 1944, co-directed by Shambu Mitra and Bijan Bhattacharya, had a tremendous influence on the cultural scene in Bengal. It depicted the shocking realities of the Bengal famine in a

language that the common man could follow in a manner that shook their hearts. Soon every major figure in the performing Arts was in the IPTA. The participants included Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen, Geeta Shome (who later became Geeta Sen, Mrinal Sen's wife), Utpal Dutt and Sobha Sen, who later became his wife, Hemanta Mukherjee, Balraj Sahni, K.A. Abbas, and Salil Chowdhary. The IPTA sought the power of folk art forms in the cause of the class struggle.

The Progressive Writer's Association (Purogamana Sahitya Sanghadana) was formed in Kerala on January 29, 1944 as a developed form of the Jeeval Sahitya Sanghadana. The main aim of its formation was to create a literature with a progressive outlook in order to attain social development and to open new vistas of independent human development, in leading a battle against the reactionary forces of the society. Many eminent figures like the critic Professor Mundasseri, the Education Minister in the first Communist Ministry of 1957 headed by E.M.S Namboodirippad, Changampuzha, the great romantic poet, critics like M. P. Paul and Kuttippuzha Krishnapillai, and the novelist Ponkunnam Varkey were initially very active in the association. But a deep disagreement between the communist and non-communist writers brought its activities to a standstill.

However the formation of the KPAC (Kerala Peoples Arts Club) gave a fresh life to the theatre movement in Kerala. In 1952, Thoppil Bhasi's *Ningalenne Communistakki* (You made me a Communist) was staged as a sharp attack against the feudal set up and depicted the resurgence of the working class. Despite the banning of the play by the Congress government, a court order was procured and the play was staged after lifting the ban. The grand success of the play won much acclaim for the KPAC and the troupe was chosen to represent the state in the IPTA meeting held in Bombay. The split in the Communist Party shocked Thoppil Bhasi who wrote *Innale, Innu, Naale* (Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow) to present the dilemma.

Like the IPTA which ceased to function as a coherent organization due to the violent conflicts that arose between the political leaders and the artists, fissures appeared in the KPAC as well. Differences of opinion arose between Thoppil Bhasi and the KPAC authorities in 1974 regarding the staging of the play *Bharatakshetram* that severely criticised the policies of the communist party. This prompted the dramatist to leave the theatre and migrate to Madras where he made a mark as a script writer in Malayalam cinema.

Parallel developments had taken place in the IPTA earlier when its founders like Bijan Bhattacharya, Sambhu Mitra and Ritwik Ghatak found it hard to tolerate the dogmatism or the real politik of a communist revolutionary process. The communist leaders of the country were largely directed through the British communist party and these western models of the communist leadership were unpalatable to these writers. As creative writers, they were deeply concerned with the individual human being to fully support the 'people' – oriented communists. Bijan Bhattacharya refused to write doctrinaire plays in which "good and evil, capitalism and slavery, freedom and oppression were treated in black and white" (Das Gupta

226). Forced to appear in front of a one-man commission, Ritwik Ghatak was charged of being a Trotskyite and expelled from the party. As a film maker, Ritwik Ghatak continued to inspire many film directors in Kerala, especially John Abraham who attended the Film and Television Institute, Pune, and was his student.

**Disillusionment with the Communist Party**

The disillusionment with the policies of the Marxist Communist Party led many youngsters in Bengal and Kerala, to the extreme left, especially following the Naxal Bari Movement. M. Sukumaran and U. P. Jayaraj in Kerala were two such writers. C. V. Balakrishnan, a later novelist has confessed how he was inspired to write his major work *Aayussinte Pustakam,* (The Book of Life), while reading the Holy Bible, sitting in front of the altar in the famous St. Paul's Cathedral in Calcutta during the Christmas time. This novel which probes into the human psyche and analyses the working of sin, is a landmark novel in Malayalam literature and the author has expressed his gratitude to the strange experience of reading the Holy Book that dates back to several generations, and the divine atmosphere within the St. Paul's Cathedral in Calcutta. The art and culture of Calcutta, its literature and history have inspired others like C. V. Sreeraman to write *Vaasthuhara* based on his experience there. This story was later adapted by G. Aravindan into a Malayalam movie by the same name.

**Give and Take between Malayali and Bengali Film Industry**

Malayalam films have also been deeply influenced by Bengali movies. Satyajit Ray provided a role model for many Malayalam directors like Adoor Gopalakrishnan. "Cast in the Ray Mould, Gopalakrishnan writes most of his own stories, looks through the lens to check every frame and is in every sense the auteur of his works, in control of all aspects of film-making" (Das Gupta 247). Shooting the film on actual location and using natural ambience recorded from the location were techniques shared by both Ray and Adoor. The strong impact of the film society movement is also another aspect shared by both Bengal and Kerala.

The involvement of Bengali technicians and artists in the making of Ramu Kariat's *Chemmeen*, an adaptation of Thakazhi's novel by the same title, which was the first Malayalam film that won a gold medal at the national level, is noteworthy. Hrishikesh Mukherjee was its editor and Salil Chowdhary composed the music. Salilda, as he was popularly known in Kerala, was the music director of numerous Malayalam movies and all of them became hits. The Bengali novel *Devadas* was made into a film in Malayalam more than thirty years back while more recently in 2001, *Arogyaniketanam* was filmed into a Malayalam movie *Jeebon Moshai*, by the journalist T. N. Gopakumar.

The cultural, social and political similarities between Keralites and Bengalis are thus manifold. The synthesis of classical tradition and modern thought, of simplicity in lifestyle and richness in culture and the basic love for learning are all responsible for the still continuing literary and cultural give and take between the two states and its people. In 2007, Shyamaprasad's Malayalam film adaptation of Sunil Gangopadhyay's Bengali novel *Heerak*

*Deepthi*, *Ore Kadal* won many awards and the same year also saw the Cinematic adaptation of Sethu's famous Malayalam novel *Pandavapura*m into Bengali as *Nirakar Chhaya* (Formless Shadows), which too won many accolades. Baul Sangeet has also become very popular in Kerala, thanks to Parvathy Baul, hailing originally from Bengal and trained under leading Bauls, wife of a Malayali Puppet Artist in Trivandrum, where she runs a school for music named *Ektaara*

**Conclusion**

The richness of the Bengali culture and literature has thus definitely enriched Malayalam language, culture, society and art, bringing to mind Gopalakrishna Gokhale's famous comment that what Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow.

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# Being and Becoming the '(In) Visible Minority': The Irony of Immigrant Experience in Aravind Adiga's *Amnesty*

**Supriya M.**

**Abstract**

Immigration is a phenomenon that entails not just a relocation from one geographical territory to another, it poses a threat to the immigrant's very identity. The label 'immigrant' gets perpetually tagged onto his identity, marking him out as the 'other' and a 'marginal' vis-à-vis the natives, who occupy the centre. Aravind Adiga's protagonist Danny in his novel *Amnesty* (2021) has joined ranks with several Tamils in Sri Lanka who have sought to migrate to Australia due to fear of persecution in their home country. The story of Dhananjaya Rajaratnam's transformation to Danny is the story of a migrant's struggle for survival – the struggle of a Brown man to survive in the White man's land. The irony of Danny's immigrant existence lies in that he is branded an illegal and denied a refugee status, even though he has landed in Australia in the most legal way possible on a student visa. Danny belongs to the category of "Visible Minority", a term designated for people who were identifiably non-white or non-Caucasian minorities in a racially prejudiced White community. Quite ironically, an immigrant has to keep himself invisible' to ensure his continued survival in the migrated land. Adiga records Danny's desperate attempt to keep himself 'invisible', lest he would be detected and either sent to a detention centre or will be deported. To Danny who is resolved not to return home, this 'invisibility' is necessary to fulfil his dreams. In narrating the strange circumstances that lead to Danny's deportation, Adiga at once brings to light the irony of an immigrant's existence, as also hollowness of the 'multicultural, melting pot policy' upheld by Australia.

**Keywords:** migration, marginality, visible minority, amnesty, refugee

Salman Rushdie considers those individuals who "come unstuck from their native lands" as migrants. He calls them "uprooted drifters" who have escaped the 'gravity' of 'belonging' and "have floated upwards from history, from memory, from time" (*Shame* 87). This relocation from one's homeland to the migrated land is not just a displacement from one geographical territory to another, it poses a threat to the immigrant's very identity. Once he severs the domiciliary relationship with his homeland, and reaches the land of destination, he is perpetually labelled an 'immigrant' – an appellation which henceforth defines his identity. However, this umbrella term hardly addresses the varied factors which are integral to his new identity – the time and condition of migration, the educational qualification, age, gender, class, religion, economic and professional background of the immigrant etc. Aijaz Ahmed observes that no firm generalization can be offered to so large and complex a phenomenon like immigration which involves so many individual biographies because:

Immigration, has had its own contradictions: many have been propelled by need, others motivated by ambition, yet others driven away by persecution, for some there really is no longer a home to return to, in many cases need and ambition have become ambiguously and inextricably linked. (263)

Immigration is thus a multifaceted phenomenon, which is sometimes propelled by dreams of a 'greener pasture' elsewhere, or at other times out of negative pressures of fear of religious and communal persecution at home. Aravind Adiga's protagonist Danny in his novel *Amnesty* (2021) has joined ranks with several Tamils in Sri Lanka who have sought to migrate to Australia due to fear of persecution in their home country, accusing them of having links with the LTTE, a separatist group fighting for an independent homeland for Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The story of the Dhananjaya Rajaratnam's transformation to Danny is the story of an immigrant's struggle for survival – the struggle of a Brown man to survive in the White man's land. Working as a house cleaner, with a vacuum cleaner strapped to his back, makes Danny look like an astronaut. For four years, Danny has been living as an 'illegal' in Sydney, since he has been denied refugee status. Australian immigration policy stipulates that no one who comes to Australia by boat without a valid visa will be allowed to settle in the country. The irony of Danny's immigrant existence lies in that he is branded an illegal, even though he has landed in Australia in the most legal way possible, on a student visa and has not smuggled into the land on a boat. Danny joined Mackenzie Technical College with the full assurance of a job and a visa guaranteed by the representative at the 'Study in Australia Education Fair' in Colombo. Besides, he had before him the success story of a Tamil doctor who had migrated three decades back and now owns a huge mansion in Melbourne. But before long, Danny realises that by the end of two years, he would end up with a post-graduate competence certificate, only to be let loose to the streets of Australia to "tar roads, install windows, and wok-fry noodles" (*Amnesty* 173). So he decides to quit college, but definitely not to leave the country. With that decision, he very well knows that quite ironically he has become "free forever in Sidney", but at the same time "trapped for ever in Sidney" (*Amnesty* 178). Having overstayed his twenty-eight days allowed to all immigrants who drop the course, all his rights

in Australia expired and he gets under the brand of 'illegals', living forever in the threat of being apprehended and deported. He can't seek amnesty status either. The irony of the situation is that while Danny used a legal way to reach Australia and ended up as an illegal, denied even the claim of refugee status, his cousin Kannan who has illegally entered Canada on a boat gets a refugee status there. All around him Danny hears stories of illegal immigrants awaiting deportation in detention centres; some of them desperately committing suicide. The voice of reason tells him to surrender at an immigration office and receive the sentence of deportation, otherwise however much he may try to run and dodge and hide, finally he will be arrested.

Rushdie states that mass migration has created a radically new types of human beings – "people who have been obliged to define themselves – because they are so defined by others – by their "otherness" (*Imaginary Homelands* 124). As Arnold Itwaru, the Canadian immigrant writer, points out:

The stranger categorized in the name and label "immigrant" is already invented as "immigrant", a distinctiveness which is also anonymous, upon arrival. The person is no longer only the bearer of another history, but has now become a particular *other*, the bearer of a label invented by the "host". This person has become the immigrant – this term of depersonalization which will brand him or her for the rest of their lives in the country of their adoption. (13-14)

Identity, for the immigrant, is always in terms of his new domiciliary status. Hence when an Australian woman questions Danny, "What are you"?, his impulsive reply is "Australian" (*Amnesty* 3), because he thinks that with his hair dyed golden, he might have passed off as an Australian. But her immediate rejoinder, "No, you're not", is a categorical assertion that all his attempts to camouflage his real identity will never be a success. Danny is baffled when she says. "You're a perfectionist", and the clarification she gives, "That's irony, mate. What I have just said about you being a perfectionist" (*Amnesty* 4). It is exactly the same response he gets from a White man also, "You look like one of us. Your hair. I'm being ironic" (*Amnesty* 241). Danny realises the futility of his assumption that with his gold-highlighted hair no one would ever again mistake him for someone born outside Australia, is just an illusion. His desperate attempt to keep himself 'invisible', to "stay unseen" (*Amnesty* 18) is in vain.

"Visible Minority" is the term designated for people who were identifiably non-white or non-Caucasian minorities in a racially prejudiced White community. The term "Visible Minority" was coined in 1975 by activist Kay Livingstone while discussing the socio-political inequalities experienced by non-white minorities in Canada. Nilufer Bharucha points out how this concept is "constructed predominantly on pseudo-scientific Darwinian notions of the superiority of the White races, scored over the colonies populated by the darker races" (13). Ever since the cessation of the White Australia Policy in 1973, Australia has pursued an official policy of multiculturalism, which has led to large waves of immigration from across the world. However, the 2013 'Operation Sovereign Borders' policy of the Australian

Defence Force to deter asylum seekers and refugees from arriving by boat in mainland Australia and its territories, is a pointer to the 'zero tolerance' towards what it has termed 'illegal Maritime Arrivals'. This "stop the boat" policy has led to the reopening of several detention centres, where the detained asylum seekers have to wait for years in miserable living conditions for their cases to be processed. It is this fear of deportation and detention that makes the so-called 'visible minorities' keep themselves as much 'invisible' as possible, yet another ironic dimension of an immigrant's existence.

The attempt at adaptation is every immigrant's desperate attempt to make himself less and less 'visible'. Danny tries to cover up his alien identity in all ways possible – in his posture, by wearing shorts in public, by keeping himself immaculately groomed, by growing his hair long and dyeing it golden. But, most importantly, he has taken great care with his accent, that is, 'to speak English without an accent'. To master the language of the natives is a crucial strategy to remain invisible – "to be invisible for four years you need the tongue of an Australian" (*Amnesty* 36). Danny wants to wield that "magic keys to Australianness" (*Amnesty* 36). That is why even before he got to Australia, he was practising 'becoming Australian', by standing in front of a mirror and slowing down his 'V's when pronouncing 'volleyball'. "The thing that makes an Aussie an Aussie" is "sounding Aussie" (*Amnesty* 36), and so Danny consciously tries to avoid all mannerisms Tamils bring into their English. But what Danny has not anticipated is the silent hostility from the "legal migrants" who look upon the "illegals" as a threat to them in the new land. Becoming 'invisible' to White people, Danny believes, is easy, because they don't see you any way; but the hardest thing is becoming 'invisible' to brown people, who will see you no matter. "Ideal bloody Immigrant" (*Amnesty* 50), Danny calls the legal immigrant from back home. From the very way he watches you, Danny perceives that he is legal – "the brown man in a white man's city who is watching other brown men" (*Amnesty* 49). Even worse is the "I've got nothing in common with you, mate" (*Amnesty* 49) attitude of the Australian-born children of immigrants.

Migration accords to the immigrant a position of marginality vis-a'-vis the natives who occupy the centre. The very term 'immigrant' is coined to establish his difference with the 'native' and relegate him to the periphery. In her essay "Explanation and Culture: Marginalia" Gayatri Spivak observes, "It is the centre that offers the official explanation; or, the centre is defined and reproduced by the explanation it can offer" (107). Thus the immigrant develops a sense of 'marginal self', which gets reinforced by the attitude of the natives. As for Danny who dreams of that day he would be felicitated in Sidney, the resentment of the natives to his presence is thoroughly disheartening. However much he tries to tell himself, "You are in Australia. You have been here for four years. Start thinking like them" (*Amnesty* 35), Danny finds himself reminded by the natives that he is an outsider. He feels that even little children stare at him, with the "I know what you are" (*Amnesty* 37), expression writ large on their eyes, to which Danny silently retorts, – "Little legal policeman. I am never going home" (*Amnesty* 38). But his illegal status is a reality, which he has to confront on a daily basis – living in the storeroom of a grocery store in exchange for working in the store and giving the

owner a third of his earning. Danny is not even in a position to change his phone to the updated version, because for that he needs all official documents. He would rather go about in the old gadget, than put his life to risk by exposing himself before the immigration authorities. Because, he does not entertain a second option, being firmly resolved that, "I am never going back home" (*Amnesty* 207). Danny's predicament is that even back home, he was a 'minority', belonging to the minority Tamil community in Sri Lanka, constantly under the scrutiny of the local police and security officers. Living now as he is, as a Tamil Sri Lankan living in Australia, makes him doubly marginalised – "a minority within the minority" (*Amnesty* 69). Hence, there is no longing for a 'lost Eden' in Danny. Even when he left Sri Lanka he had already resolved that it would be the last time he left. Return to homeland, is never a promising option for him. A 'journey back home' presenting no better alternative, there is no escape for Danny. Home, would remain a distant geographical location with Danny – at once evoking ambivalent feelings of nostalgia and bitterness.

The biggest irony that characterises an immigrant's existence is the concept of 'home' – very often a place which he has voluntarily abandoned, but which simply refuses to 'abandon' him, adamantly remaining with him either as nostalgic thoughts or as bitter memories, depending on the circumstances which occasioned his migration. Discussing the ways in which 'home' is imagined in diaspora communities, John Mc Leod observes that the idea of home, besides giving one a sense of one's place in the world, also tells him where he originated from and where he belongs (210). The sense of 'non-belonging' in the migrated land tends to make the immigrant nostalgic. For Danny, his native city of Batticaloa which he voluntarily left behind, is the most beautiful land – 'jewel of the east of Sri Lanka' where the fish sings in the lagoons, and mermaids emerge out of it dripping with moonlight. Every object, sight, sound and smell in the new land brings back memories of home. The giant gum tree of Australia with its mottled white-and gray bark reminds him of the much dreaded disease back home, leprosy. The sound of the 'big and loud' Australian crows makes him feel that home is just around the corner. The 'fat mynahs' of Australia are quite unlike the 'demure mynahs' of home. Danny likens the gray-shirted employee of the railways with a glossy silver hair and silver beard to "an Aussie version of the Tamil sage Thiruvalluvar" (*Amnesty* 35). The sandstone clock tower of the railway station brings to his mind a minaret with a timepiece set into it near Battticaloa. The 'blueberry ice-cream coloured dog' makes him yearn to see a 'fat and familiar Sri Lankan dog' like an Alsatian. Even as he sees the blue colour of waters of Sidney Harbour, he wonders whether they put blue colour every night into it, since "the ocean in Sri Lanka does not look this blue" (*Amnesty* 90). The hazy blue eyes of an Australian baby appears to him as "hard, cloudy and blue as a Sri Lankan street marble" (*Amnesty* 126). The metal, bridge along Parramatta River reminds him of the Kallady Bridge in Batticaloa. All these persistent images of the past make him feel – "How near it feels again: home" (*Amnesty* 35).

Adiga's Danny is not the one to cling on to what Rushdie calls the "treasured mementoes and old photographs of the past" (*Shame* 63). Though he still believes that Batticaloa is the

most beautiful city, Danny has only bitter memories about his homeland. He is forced to leave Sri Lanka, having been tortured by Sri Lankan police as an LTTE suspect, on his return from Dubai. The memory of the cigarette stub pierced into his hand, suspecting him to be an LTTE agent who was raising money in Dubai for making bombs, remains a festering wound in his mind, which has embittered him against his homeland. The bump on his forearm is a perpetual reminder of the torture he has suffered at the hands of the 'uniformed government agents' of Sri Lanka. But the Australian authorities are not ready to entertain his request for a change of visa status from Student (Subclass 500) to Protection (subclass 866), on grounds of what they consider fraudulent protection claims. They are sure that Sri Lanka is a "diverse, multicultural nation, and we do not believe that any Tamil should fear to live there". There was also a note of threat in the letter – "if you do apply for a protection Visa now, inside Australia, be aware that in the light of the zero-tolerance policy you will likely have to spend some time in detention, and your case may well be rejected after" (*Amnesty* 171-2). This letter seals his fate in Australia - to be branded an 'illegal' for ever, always alert to evade the watchful eyes of the Australian Law. Danny stands defenceless to explain his situation before them. He finds all around him people doing lip service for the asylum seekers of Australia, while cases of increasing instances of suicide among people who wait deportation in the detention camps are reported. It is easy to see through the sympathetic whites who fight for the rights of the refugees. He is also aware as to what the gracious offer of amnesty, promised by the Immigration office if you appear before them and admit your illegal status, implies – "Amnesty. Gates will swing open, manholes will fly, and an underground city will walk into the light" (*Amnesty* 135). Danny is aware of the irony which characterises his existence – "appearing to be one thing and then becoming another" (*Amnesty* 182) – because he neither falls into the category of those immigrants who get into boats, get caught by Coast guards, go to special jails, and there will be lawyers, social workers, and left wing ideologues to champion their cause. Nor does he belong to the category of those who arrive by plane, legally with a visa printed on their passport and after doing all menial jobs for five or six years, become a citizen in the seventh. But after coming to Australia legally, Danny has made himself an illegal, or rather – "an illegal's illegal, with no one to scream for you and no one to represent you in court" – what he feels is a "custom-made cell within the global prison" (*Amnesty* 183).

However, it is not Danny's immigrant status that poses the ironic climax of the text. It is his involvement in the death of Radha Thomas, one of his clients. In fact, the entire action of the novel unfolds in the course of a single day, when Danny busies himself with his cleaning routines, only to be unsettled by the news of Radha's murder. Only Danny is privy to Radha's extramarital relationship with Prakash, who passes off as a doctor. He was forced to accompany them and remain a silent witness in many of their amorous escapades. It is only to Radha he has confided about his illegal status, something which he has kept hidden even from his Malaysian girlfriend Sojna. When Prakash gets wind of Danny's intention to inform the police, he threatens to be an informant in his turn by exposing the latter's illegal status and handing him over to the Immigration officers. Danny himself knows that if he reveals

Prakash's role in the murder, he would be exposing himself to the rigid Australian laws against the illegal migrants. "If I tell the law about him, I'll also tell the Law about myself" (*Amnesty* 88) – the secret which he has been struggling to hide all these four years. The threat of deportation against the moral responsibility of 'honest Danny' to reveal the murderer pose an irresolvable conflict before him. Because, however much Danny admires the incorruptible Australian laws – "blondest animal in Australia: their Rule of Law", he is aware that it is more than just fair – "blind and fair" (*Amnesty* 113). He can very well visualise the responses it would evoke - "A man who is illegal dobs in another man who is a killer, but is so stupid he doesn't remember he's not legal and is deported. Read and laugh, Australians" (*Amnesty* 245). However, when he fears that Prakash will also murder Radha's husband, he makes up his mind, because of his conviction that "a man without rights in this world is not freed from his responsibilities" (*Amnesty* 137) – strangely, yet another irony that seals his fate. As per Danny's information, Prakash is arrested by the police in connection with the death of Radha Thomas. The next day's newspaper carries the report – "The person who tipped police off on the hotline confessed during questioning that to being illegally present in Australia and is now being processed for deportation to his home country" (*Amnesty* 253). The story comes a full circle with the transformation of Danny back to Dhananjaya Rajaratnam.

As a novelist, Adiga argued, he was always trying to "dramatise and highlight" a situation. In *Amnesty*, he does the same — "dramatise the moral crisis at the centre of the story that is faced in various forms by immigrants around the world" (Anjum). Adiga's *Amnesty* becomes a document of an immigrant's struggle for survival. Danny's life in Australia is marked by a series of ironies. If his legal entry which denies him an amnesty is the first of that irony, the last and the final irony being that, when a man branded as an illegal does a legal act of bringing to book a culprit who has cleverly evaded the stringent Australian Law, he stands exposed, not even considered eligible for amnesty. Danny was all along struggling to remain 'invisible', but the one phone call to the police hotline makes him 'visible' to the authorities – that he has no Medicare, no tax file number, no passport, no driver's license – thus satisfying all the 'eligibility criteria' to be branded an 'illegal'. "There is no way Danny, for you to keep silent today and live tomorrow" (*Amnesty* 245) – he goes on to heed to the voice of his conscience, but at the cost of his dreams of making it big in the new land. Thus ends the story of "Honest Danny. Brave Danny. Intelligent Danny" (*Amnesty* 225), who has lived an 'invisible' life in Sidney. Adiga's *Amnesty* takes on the dimension of a social text with its strong indictment of the inherent injustice in Australia's policy of 'Operation Sovereign Borders', throwing to wind the human rights of asylum seekers it sends offshore. As Hoda Afshar, the 2018 prize winning photographer of the image of Kurdish-Iranian scholar Behrouz Booochani who suffered a long imprisonment in Australian immigration detention, observes:

This is not just about Australia. This is about a new world that we are seeing come into being before our eyes. A world in which the defense of borders depends on the drawing of new lines between the included and the excluded, between citizens and their lives. But these are very dangerous times, for what is being redrawn here are the limits of our human community

and the very fragility of those shifting lines means that one day any one of us might find ourselves on the outside" (Loughnan)

*Amnesty*, which Adiga considers as his "most personal novel", (Anjum) becomes a register of protest and a pronouncement for humanitarian consideration for the immigrant community which lives under the constant threat of being 'outsiders'. Adiga says, "I don't know if a novel can change anything, but I at least want to stir debate, to get people talking and thinking" (Kidd). *Amnesty* will no doubt make people 'talk and think' about the hypocrisies and contradictions underlying the 'multicultural, melting pot' claims of Australia.

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# Alternate History on Screen: A Critique of *Iyobinte Pusthakam*

**Aswin Prasanth &**
**Sreena K.**

**Abstract**

*Iyobinte Pusthakam* (dir. Amal Neerad) is a Malayalam period film which portrays the local history of Munnar, in the high ranges of Kerala, from 1900 to 1976. The film narrates historical tropes like the development of plantations, emergence of the Communist party, fall of feudalism, tribal and proletarian strives, Kerala Renaissance, emergence of trade unions and declaration of the Emergency. The film presents the evolution of powerful colonial double and foregrounds the operation of colonial hegemony which is perpetuated by the native bourgeois after independence. The filmmaker follows a genealogical approach to visualize the historical events within the economy of spectacle. The filmic text is an alternate history of Munnar, partly in the form of cultural memory, and addresses serious theoretical issues like the New Historicist view of history, cultural memory as a form of history, characteristics of genealogy, nature of colonial mimicry and significance of the colonial double.

**Keywords:** New Historicism, genealogy, colonial double, alternate history, cultural memory, colonial mimicry

## Introduction

Amal Neerad is an Indian filmmaker, cinematographer, screenwriter and producer. He is noted for his stylish cinematography. His filmography includes *Big B* (2007), *Sagar Alias Jacky Reloaded* (2009), *Anwar* (2010), *Bachelor Party* (2012), *5 Sundarikal* (2013), *Iyobinte Pusthakam* (2014), *Comrade in America* (2017) and *Varathan* (2018). *Iyobinte Pusthakam* (2014) is an Indian Malayalam language period film written by Gopan Chithambaran and directed by Amal Neerad. Fahadh Faasil, Lal, Jayasurya, Isha Sharvani, Padmapriya, Reenu Mathews and Lena portray the lead roles. The film spans the history of Munnar from 1900 to 1976. The story is narrated in the third person by a communist

leader who reminiscences the development. It describes the life of Iyob and the sibling rivalry among his sons Dimitri, Ivan and Aloshy. The three brothers are named after the characters from Dostoyevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. The plot of the film is also inspired by Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Sibling rivalry, emergence of communism, feudalism, tribal issues, working class unrest and development of tea plantations form some the major themes of the film.

**History and Film**

A historical film presents an interface of history and film and shows how historical facts are transmuted into moving images which carry the messages of both history and film. Historical films are never consulted as documents of history. In this regard, Robert Rosenstone observes in *Visions of the Past* (1995): "Films are inaccurate. They distort the past. They fictionalize, trivialize, and romanticize people, events and movements. They falsify history" (46). This is accomplished through the adaptation of historical tropes into a comprehensive film script. Thus, history is appropriated by the screenwriter and further mediated by the imagination and ideology of the filmmaker. Therefore, "film is out of the control of historians"(Rosenstone, *Visions* 46). Rosenstone further remarks: "Film creates a historical world . . . Film is a disturbing symbol of an increasingly postliterate world" (*Visions* 46). The historical world presented in film is a fictional world objectified through the visual medium. In other words, a historical film explores how film as a visual medium can be used to redefine our relationship to the past.

Mark Carnes has examined the relationship between films and the historical reality they represent. In some films, historicity is implied whereas in some others historical content is explicit. Director John Sayles observes that producers prefer to make historical films for the only reason that "the audience appreciates [sic] . . . something really happened" (Carnes 17). He adds that they are easier to be made because the stories or plots already exist in public memory and may have already become legends. According to Sayles, history is more complex than films and hence more satisfying. But complexity of history has recently been incorporated into historical films. Sayles explains that historical tropes have been progressively treated in different but interconnected narrative discourses: from history to fiction to film. But there is a remarkable distinction between the historian and the filmmaker in the treatment of history. Though every filmmaker, like every historian, has an agenda, filmmakers do not consult one another whereas historians read each other and call for more documentation. For the historian, history is documented past. But for the filmmaker, it is "a story bin to be plundered" (Carnes 16). Historical accuracy is relevant to the filmmaker only to some limited extent: only if the film remains true to the spirit of the story of the narrative. Sayles argues that the greatest task of the filmmaker is to present different versions of the same events and convince the audience that people think differently. But the filmmaker is not expected to judge the spectators' capacity to comprehend the complexity of history. He presents a story out of the reservoir of history which the audience are familiar with.

Rosenstone observes that film can be a legitimate way of representing or interpreting the past. He argues that historical films should not be evaluated on the basis of their capacity to recount the events of the past by the canons of History. Historical films provide a context to view history on the screen, a process which Hayden White terms "historiophoty," a way of examining the relationship between the moving image and the written word of history ( "Historiography"1193). According to Rosenstone , in historical films, moving images transcend the ordinary form of information conveyed through words: ". . . images carry ideas and information that cannot be handled by the word . . ." (*Visions* 5). The filmmaker charts the possibilities of rendering the past on to the film. Rosenstone contends that this method is detrimental to the interest of historians: "it results in a kind of complicity, an identification that . . . the very nature of the visual media forces us reconceptualize . . . whatever mean by the word history" (*Visions* 6). Pierre Sorlin also explains how films redefine the very notion of history as narrative. This perception of history as narrative, as literary artifact, results in Louis Montrose's formulations: the historicity of texts and the textuality of history. Montrose explains:

> By the historicity of texts, I mean to suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing . . . by the textuality of history I mean to suggest, firstly, that we can have no access to a full and authentic past . . . unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question . . .; and secondly that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are constructed as 'documents' on which historians ground their own texts, called 'histories.' (20)

His conception of history as text, as representation of external reality, is a construct and the basis of historical praxis.

A text serves to communicate, reproduce, circulate and valorize the dominant power structures. Textualised history is "a product of language . . . and a narrative discourse" that represents the power structures of that historical epoch (Davis and Schleifer .373). Historians admit that study of the past is no longer objective and unproblematic. It is a product of textual/discursive practices: "the past is something we construct from already written texts of all kinds . . ." (Atkins and Morrow 188). This leads to the emergence of alternate, often contradictory, histories as opposed to the single unitary history. Contemporary pedagogy of History "rejects the idea of 'History' as a directly accessible unitary past" (Cox and Reynolds 4). It underlines "the conception of 'histories' [as a part of] an ongoing series of human constructions" (Cox and Reynolds 4). Therefore, "the New History Films" are not simple unproblematic products of the visualisation of the past. They are, as Rosenstone remarks in *Revisioning History* (1994), serious attempts at "extracting meaning from the encounter with the past" (7). They explore the possibilities of creating history on film, constructing history in the visual space of the popular medium.

Filmmakers reject the contention of historians that written history, which mirrors the past, is the only means to understand the past. They also reject the argument that film, which signifies the past through moving images, fails to convey the full meaning of a written historical

text. In this context, R.C. Raack argues that film is a more appropriate medium for constructing history than the written word. He suggests that written history is too linear and too narrow to represent fully the complex, multidimensional world which we live in. Raack insists that only film, with its juxtaposed images and sounds, can "approximate real life: the daily experience of ideas, words, images, preoccupations, distractions, sensory deceptions, conscious and unconscious motives and emotions" (416). He argues that only films can make sufficient "empathetic reconstructions to convey how historical people witnessed, understood and lived their lives [and] recover all the past's liveliness" (418). This is because film relies on its own truth, its own structure and grammar to arrive at its truth.

The truth claims of films are constructed out of its visual and aural realms. They constitute a rediscovery of historical truths which depend on the perspective of the narrator. In *Visions of the Past,* Rosenstone observes that the new historical past constructed in the interface of history and film is potentially more complex than the written history which proceeds from the oral traditions. Thus, the complexity of the narrative gradually increases as the historical tropes progress from the oral text to written text to filmic text. Therefore, there is a paradigm shift in each transition. It requires a shift in the consciousness to think about and understand our past. Historical films mark one such paradigm shift. According to Rosenstone, they attempt "the search for a method of getting at these moving artifacts that always seem to escape our words that overflow with more meaning than our discourse can contain" (*Visions* 13). Thus, film is the major carrier of the historical messages of our times. Rosenstone foresees a time when "written history will be a kind of esoteric pursuit" (*Visions* 23). He means that historical films increasingly substitute written historical text in the comprehension and representation of the past.

***Iyobinte Pusthakam***

The film *Iyobinte Pusthakam* can be evaluated in the context of Rosenstone's observation. The film starts with the narration by a communist leader writing a book Iyobinte Pusthakam while awaiting his arrest on the day of the Emergency. The story starts in 1900 Munnar during the colonial era. A British businessman named Harrison established tea plantations in Munnar and baptised his most loyal native servant as Iyob. Iyob married Annamma and they have three children- Dimitri, Ivan and Aloshy. When Harrison's wife left him, he married a native girl named Kazhali. During World War I, Harrison's business declined and he left for Britain but died en route. Knowing this, Iyob threw out Kazhali and assumed the charge of the mansion and the plantations and became a brown saheb. Aloshy, Iyob's youngest son, left Munnar at a very young age after witnessing the rape and murder of a servant girl in their home by his elder brothers. He joined the British army during World War II, but was dismissed later for revolting against the British with the rebels. He returned to Munnar in 1946 and was disgusted by the acts committed by his father and elder brothers. He met his childhood friend Chemban and his love Martha, who is the daughter of Kazhali and Harrison.

Iyob kicked Aloshy out of the house when he learned that he became acquainted with the communists. On the way to Kochi, Aloshy was attacked by his elder brothers who tried to kill him. He was saved by Chemban and nursed back to health by the tribals. Iyob was overpowered by his sons when his health deteriorated and they entered into business negotiations with Angoor Rawther, a businessman and landlord from Tamil Nadu. Meanwhile, Dimitri found out the illicit relationship between his wife, Rahel and Ivan. Ivan killed Dimitri and assumed control over the mansion and the plantations. Iyob escaped from the mansion and sought asylum with Aloshy, who is now supported by the communists. Rahel is the daughter of Thacho, whom Iyob had killed, and she was using Ivan as a pawn to take revenge. Iyob confessed to Martha that her mother, Kazhali is the true inheritor of Harrison's assets. Aloshy was arrested by the police but released by the narrator and the communists who were against Ivan and Angoor Rawther. Rahel, without Ivan's knowledge, made a deal with Angoor Rawther for killing everyone and claiming possession of Harrison's assets. Ivan and Angoor Rawther tried to kill Iyob, Martha and Aloshy in a forest. Aloshy, Chemban and Martha survived the feud in the forest while the others died. The film ends with the narrator being arrested by police officers subsequent to the declaration of the Emergency.

**History as Narrative**

New Historicism is an approach to analyze literary narratives in the context of historical co-texts. It is based on the vanishing difference between history and literature as narratives. It considers historical texts as literary artifacts and tries to find historical tropes in literary texts. New Historicism deconstructs the conventional view of history as objective. It is a fallacy that history is documented facts and is therefore objective. History is primarily a narrative and the nature of narrative depends on the sequential ordering of the historical tropes into different permutations and combinations. This ordering is called emplotment by Hayden White. According to White, historical narratives are "not only about events but also about the possible sets of relationships that those events can" have among themselves (*Tropics* 94). The sets of relationships are not inherent in the events but depend on the verbal structures that the historians use to narrate and space them in the narratives. Historians use figurative language which inevitably contains an element of imagination. Therefore, emplotment depends on the ideology and subjectivity of the narrator or historian. Thus, there is always an element of subjectivity unconsciously assimilated into the narrative structure of history.

A narrative structures the tropes into a convincing story using a language which prefigures certain forms of ideologies. According to White, historical narrative is "a verbal structure . . . that purports to be a model . . . of past structures and processes . . ." (*Metahistory* 2). In order to emplot a meaningful story out of the events, historian makes certain choices in arranging the events in certain order. This set of choices that creates story out of events is termed emplotment. Any story thus emploted is only one of the many alternate stories that can possibly be emploted. Therefore, there is the possibility of having many alternate/equivalent stories: there are as many stories as narrators. Emplotment is therefore the act of providing a structure to the narrative. The narrative structure depends on the organizational strategy

used by the historian. Each strategy aims at to reinforce or resist a prevailing power structure: "A story the strategist tells is but one of the many competing alternatives woven from a vast array of possible characterizations, plot lines, and themes" (Barry and Elmes 433). Therefore, emplotment is not merely a schematic ordering of events into a narrative structure, but an intertextual arrangement of events within the epistemological structure of the text. Emplotment also subjects the story or narrative into different types of mediation.

New Historicism also challenges the concept that history is singular and documented. As emplotment depends on the narrator/historian, history is not singular. There are histories based on any permutation and combination of historical tropes. It is also true that only a small portion of history is documented. Most of the histories remain as oral narratives and scattered in myths, legends and memories. These are alternate histories which do not conform to the history of the power structures that govern the nations. They diverge from the mainstream or empirical history. New Historicism treats history as a set of discourses in dialectical relation with the structure of the governing system. New Historicism has developed from the ontological positions of postmodernism that reality or truth is multiple and inevitably relative. As a discourse and as a form of representation, the truth claims of history in New Historicist perspective remain within the text/narrative. The objective of New Historicism is to unravel the truth claims of historical narratives and transpire the convergence of history and fiction (film) as narrative discourses.

Hayden White suggests metahistory as a means to determine the epistemological status of historical representations. White argues that narrative is the only form of representing history. White draws a parallel between historical and literary narratives as verbal artifacts. Narrating history consists of emploting chronicles into stories. According to White, "histories gain part of their explanatory effect by their success in making stories out of mere chronicles"(*Metahistory* 83). Since historical facts are "fragmentary and always incomplete," chronicles make no sense of their own. Therefore, historian makes a plausible story out of the tropes through "the encodification of facts contained in the chronicle as components of specific kinds of plot structures" (White, *Tropics* 223). The compulsion to emplot stories out of tropes makes historian to explore literary artifacts to narrate the story. White explains that "the events are made into a story by . . . all of the techniques that we would normally expect to find in the emplotment of a novel or a play" (*Tropics* 223). Thus, historical events can be emploted in many different ways "to provide different interpretations of these events and to endow them with different meanings" (White, *Tropics* 224). Emplotment permits historian's choice of events and figures and consists of their sequential arrangement based on the relative prominence given to them. The personal choice brings in elements of subjectivity and ideology in the historical narratives. Consequent to emplotment, historical narratives become "verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature" (White, *Tropics*.222). According to E.H. Carr, emplotment is a process of transforming past events and is actually historian's interpretation of the past. Historical representations as literary artifacts blur the boundaries

between history and film. Therefore, history has become metafictional, which converges with the metahistorical in the plane of self- reflexivity. In this context, Elisabeth Wesseling observes that there is a politics of exclusion inherent in emplotment : "the absence of ethnic minorities from . . . history does not result from some sort of natural, automatic process, but from deliberate exclusion" (166). This idea gives legitimacy to the voice of the subalterns in historical narratives. The conception of rewriting history from the perspective of the subalterns is a way of releasing history from the vicious influence of dominant ideologies. Therefore, alternate histories constitute a resistance to the hegemonic structures created by the dominant ideologies circulating in society.

The past has no meaning unless it is connected to the present. History is reconstructed past. Writers/historians follow different methods to reconstruct history in narratives. Since history is primarily a form of narrative, there are elements of subjectivity and identity in the representation of history. Reconstruction of the past is a literary enterprise as both historical and filmic narratives are literary artifacts. This makes the narrative open- ended with multilayered semantic or ideological structures. It creates a problematic that makes the narrative transgeneric and transforms the cultural identity into a political construct. Reconstructing the past is politically relevant for the subalterns who find it a means to articulate their identity and resistance. It also helps them to analyze the voids and silences in the narrative structures of subaltern texts. The subalterns have developed their perspectives on historical tropes to subvert the hegemony and oppression of the dominant groups. It is in this sense that the different forms of genealogy offer alternative and counter hegemonic historical narratives. The postmodern writers/historians reconstruct the past figuratively, transforming the past through the politics of narration which synthesizes the power of language and the power of imagination. G.R. Elton emphasizes the roles of imaginative reconstruction and interpretation in the narration of history: ". . . in order to rediscover the event, the historian must read not only with analytical eye of the investigator but also with the comprehensive eye of the storyteller" (77). He means that the historian must have the analytical sense of an investigator and the comprehensive sense of a narrator of stories.

The term alternate history has problematised contemporary cultural critique. Postmodernism has deconstructed the conventional notion of history as objective. History has always been narrated from the perspective of the dominant groups who control society. This type of history called mainstream or empirical history has always filtered historical tropes through the consciousness of the dominant groups. The marginalized groups like women, the proletariat, the dalits and the tribals remain on the margins of history and culture. The exclusionary strategies adopted by the dominant groups are detrimental to the identity formations of the marginalized. Postmodernism views history as plural, multi-perspective and discontinuous. The possibility of having several historical narratives on a combination of certain historical tropes has been established by postmodern historiography. Thus, alternate histories narrated from the perspective of the marginalized groups become part of the contemporary debate on historical analysis. This kind of histories "narrated from below" is

called genealogy. Genealogy may be in oral or written form and may not be documented. Genealogy constitutes memories, oral narratives, myths and legends which form part of the cultural artifacts and practices of a marginalized group.

### *Iyobinte Pusthakam* as Alternate History

The film *Iyobinte Pusthakam* is an attempt to visualise an alternative history which the mainstream academia is reluctant to acknowledge. The working class movement has never been a prominent trope in Kerala history. The tropes of proletarian protest have been largely confined to the strives of peasants, tenants and farm labourers of Malabar and Kuttanad. The movements of plantation workers never find a place even in the margins of Kerala history. It is in this context that the historical account of the resistance of the plantation workers narrated in the film becomes significant. The narrative of the film is a working class genealogy confined to the geopolitics of Munnar. Filming history is more difficult than narrating history. As already stated, narration of history depends on the selection and combination of historical tropes called emplotment. One or more of the historical tropes are given prominence in the narrative at the expense of the others. The selection and combination of the tropes depend on the ideology and subjectivity of the historian/narrator. Thus, subjectivity enters the historical narrative often unconsciously. When a historical narrative is filmed, the filmmaker also makes a selection and combination of the tropes. In the case of film adaptations, the choices of the writer and the filmmaker may be different. But in *Iyobinte Pusthakam*, with an original script, the narrative is constructed solely for the purpose of the film. In this context, the selection and combination exercised by the screenwriter and the filmmaker converge. This convergence of the script and the film text has made the filming more coherent. Whatever be the reconciliations in the screenplay adapted for the film, they have been made prior to the filming of the narrative. These remain outside the public sphere of film critique. The filmic mediation of the historical narrative is limited in this context.

But the other mediations inherent in the process of emplotment function in the filmic narrative. The first mediation is between the individual events and the story as a whole. An event acquires meaning only in relation to other events in the development of the story. Emplotment mediates and coheres the tropes, organizes and configures the network of events into a meaningful story. Thus, the different tropes like the evolution of Communist Party in Kerala, development of plantations, exploitation of labourers by the colonizers and the colonial bourgeois, dalit and tribal protests, proletarian strife, emergence of trade unions, Kerala Renaissance and declaration of Emergency are interconnected events and they are emploted into a coherent story. The second mediation affects the heterogeneous elements in the narrative like the agents, goals, means, interactions and circumstances. They are configured into the grand theme of the story. In the script, there are agents of different groups or ideologies like feudalism, colonialism, capitalism, communism, democracy and so on. They have different goals and they use different means to achieve them. The interactions among the different groups are crucial to the credibility of the story. The different agents triumph or face setback in different circumstances. Emplotment mediates these diverse and heterogeneous elements

in the narrative. A story is more than a chronology of events in a serial order. The third mediation is between chronological time and narrative/teleological time. The episodic dimensions of the narrative are chronological whereas the narrative of time is not. Emplotment configures chronological time into teleological time and synthesizes various elements into a story by providing a point of view. In the film, the chronology of events begins with 1900 when the Harrison plantations were established and ends in 1976 with the declaration of Emergency and the arrest of political leaders including the narrator. But the teleological time is condensed to the duration of the film, about 159 minutes.

The film begins with the establishment of tea plantations in Munnar by Harrison, a British businessman. After his death, his loyal servant Iyob assumes power over his position and assets and becomes the colonial Other. The narrator is a minor character in his narration of the story. He appears during the emergence of communism in Kerala. Feudalism resulting in land encroachment and tribal eviction can be seen through his narration. References to World War I, World War II and Kerala Renaissance are made in the narration through the characters of Iyob, Aloshy and P.J. Antony respectively. The narrator connects himself and some of the characters with historical events in Kerala, India and the world. This is a way of historicising the text as suggested by Montrose. When the characters are connected to historical tropes they acquire the dimension of historical figures. Land plays an important role in the narration. Greed for land is seen as the reason for feud in the plot. Feudalism is represented in the film through Iyob, Dimitri, Ivan and Angoor Rawther. They are representatives of the oppressive and exploitive forces. The exploitation of the tribal groups by Iyob and his two sons Dimitri and Ivan can be seen in the plot. By identifying groups of characters with political systems or ideologies, the narrator has prefigured systemic oppression and ideological dominance in the narrative.

The character of Chemban and his community are portrayed as the victims of oppression and exploitation. The tribals resist the encroachment of their land and their exploitation. The communist party later supports the tribal resistance to end the hegemonic feudal system. Aloshy also becomes part of the tribal resistance and is supported by the Communist Party. After the collapse of the feudal structures, the encroached lands are distributed to the original owners. The narrator is arrested at the end of the film on the day of the Emergency for being a communist. People migrating along with their families in search of land can also be seen in his narrative. The battle between feudal lords for land and its resources can also be seen through the enmity between Iyob and Angoor Rawther. The narrative also hints at the emergence of labour and trade unions. The emergence of tea plantations can be seen at the beginning of the narrative as Harrison establishes tea plantations in Munnar for exporting tea.

The ideological architecture of the film is overtly Marxist. Since the narrator is a communist, he filters every historical trope through his political unconscious. Marxists have a dialectical view of history, culture and society. The Marxist knowledge of labour and capital has influenced the narrator in identifying certain characters and tropes with certain forms of ideologies. The narrator views every trope as dialectic of base and superstructure. That is

why he connects the world wars and Kerala Renaissance with certain characters and their ideological identification. The narrator looks at the breakdown of feudalism, the protests of dalits and tribals, the emergence of trade unions and declaration of the Emergency through the monocle of Marxism. The narrator also critiques colonial oppression, the emergence of colonial double and colonial bourgeois, power of the native bourgeois in the postcolonial phase and the abuse of centralized power of the Executive. The characters who survive the feud represent the dalits, women and the proletariat. The narrator hints at the emergence of a grand alliance of the subalterns in spite of the declaration of the Emergency and the abuse of state apparatuses.

The film is an alternate history narrated by the representative of the working class. The local history of Munnar seldom gets represented in mainstream historical narratives like the colonial history of India or the history of the modern state. As the narrative voice is conditioned by the narrator's class consciousness as a member of the proletariat, the historical narrative is governed by his ideological position. As a member of the place, he may have a subjective approach to the history of Munnar. Therefore, the historical tropes have been selected and combined on the basis of the ideological and subjective positions of the narrator. The story of Iyob and his sons constitute the literary tropes in the narrative. This is complemented by the stories of the subalterns of the place. Thus, the film narrative entwines historical and literary tropes where they get synthesised into a coherent text.

**Cultural Memory in *Iyobinte Pusthakam***

The concept of cultural memory has a close connection with a nation's past and its cultural identity. Cultural memory refers to the construction of a shared past by various subcultural groups with their institutions and practices. It provides a symbolic form and order to their culture. In spite of the shared cultural memory, the process of individual memory also exists. The reconstruction of a shared past resembles the process of individual memory. Historical narrative depends on the memory of the narrator, especially in the case of retrospective narratives. Sometimes the narration progresses through the unconscious of the narrator wherein feigned memory or betrayal of memory also plays a significant role. The recovery of memory through the reconstruction of the past is a narrative technique and it is a means to retrieve a submerged cultural identity. Memory is essential to understand the past and connect it to the present in the signification of historical tropes. Alon Confino argues that a shared cultural memory can be represented in various media. Confino observes:

> Used with various degrees of sophistication, the notion of memory, more practiced than theorized, has been used to denote very different things,. . . it has come to denote the representation of the past and the making of it into a shared cultural knowledge by successive generations in 'vehicles of memory' such as books, films, museums, commemorations, and others" (263).

Confino means that collective memory is a representation of the past as well as a cultural knowledge shared by generations of the cultural community. The reconstruction of the past involves retrospection of the past events. In this context, Birgit Neumann comments:

> Characteristically, fictions of memory are represented by a reminiscing narrator . . . who looks back on his . . . past, trying to impose meaning on the surfacing memories from a present point of view. Thus, the typical pattern for the literary representation of memories is retrospection or analepsis. (335)

The narrator/ historian can reminiscence the tropes in a story as in a stream of consciousness novel. The experience of the narrator enables him to signify the present, giving meaning to his memories. The most remarkable aspect of retrospection is the fictionalized mode of memorization.

The story in the film unfolds through the narration of a communist leader who reconstructs his past memories in 1976. The unnamed narrator is awaiting his arrest on the day of the Emergency while writing his book which has the same title as that of the film. The events he reminisces cover the history of Munnar from 1900 to 1976. It is a linear narrative as his memory is contaminated by class consciousness. The film can be referred to as a "memory film." Munnar constitutes a geopolitical subculture with its cultural memories and myths which serve as metahistory. The cultural geography of Munnar as a site of tea plantations contributes to the local history which is often excluded from the mainstream history of Kerala or the colonial history of the modern state. The Emergency declared by Indira Gandhi is a significant event of cultural memory in different parts of India. The narrator hints at the possible imprisonment and torture of political opponents like himself for being a member of the Communist Party.

### *Iyobinte Pusthakam* as a Genealogy

Genealogy is a historical perspective and investigative method. Genealogy constitutes both resistance and critique which are inseparable. Michel Foucault appropriates Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of genealogy to deconstruct logocentrism, especially the notions of subjectivity and history. In Foucauldian genealogical analysis, history is constituted of dispersion, disparity, difference and division. Foucault conceives genealogy of history in opposition to pursuit of origins: ". . . genealogy reveals disparity and dispersion behind the constructed identity of origin; it shows historical beginnings to be lowly, and beneath 'measured truth, it posits the ancient proliferation of errors' " (Bouchard 143). Foucault contrasts traditional history with genealogy based on Nietzsche's conceptions of descent and emergence. The analysis of descent dissolves unity and identity behind the historical origin, resists the tendency to consider phenomena as interrelated and continuous and manifests itself in the dispersion associated with events. Genealogy rejects the notions of continuity and stability associated with traditional history. In this context, Foucault observes: ". . . it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the

heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself" (Bouchard 147). Briefly, genealogy contradicts apparent unity, stability and homogeneity.

Genealogy can also be approached from the point of view of emergence. Emergence is not a culmination of events, but a momentary manifestation of the "hazardous play of dominations" or a stage in the struggle between forces. The emergent forms are only transitory "episodes in a series of subjugations" (Bouchard 148). In this perspective genealogy deals with confrontations, conflicts and systems of subjections, and hence there is no place for a constituting subject. Emergence is therefore not the act of any agency, but the effect of the play of dominations. Foucault conceives of historical change as a continual institutionalization of forms of systemic violence or the succession of one mode of domination by another. Foucault considers the appropriation of a system of governance as a form of interpretation. In this view, the progress of humanity is a series of interpretations and it is the objective of genealogy to document them.

As a critique, genealogy reveals the historicity of qualities or entities which apparently lack history. It offers a critique of the present. It helps in analyzing the relationship between knowledge, power and the human subject and how their being is shaped by historical forces. According to Foucault, genealogy challenges the traditional practices of history, philosophical assumptions and the misconceptions regarding knowledge, power and truth. Genealogy displaces the primacy of the human subject found in traditional history. It focuses on discourse, reason, rationality and certainty. Foucault's genealogical analyses encourage a revaluation of the discourses and knowledge of the human sciences. Genealogy rejects extra-historical structures and processes on the one hand and focuses on the singularity of events on the other. According to Foucault, genealogy is a working in the direction of eventalisation (Gordon and Miller77). Eventalisation is a set of theoretico-political functions which emphasizes pluralisation of causes: it shows that events are the products of multiple processes and relations.

Genealogical analysis constitutes endless task of interpretation approved in the form of truth. So genealogy is opposed to the pursuit of origins and the idea of timeless universals. It considers discontinuity as the common tangent between human life and nature. Genealogy assimilates even human body to the realm of history. Genealogy treats history as the effect of haphazard conflicts, chances, errors and relations of power. In this context, Foucault observes that the objects of genealogical analysis are not "the noblest periods, the highest forms, the most abstract ideas, the purest individualities" (Bouchard154). They are often neglected, lower or mundane forms of existence and knowledge. For instance, Foucault's genealogies on topics like the body and sexuality are remarkable. Genealogy prefers the concrete to the abstract since abstract principles cannot explain the situations which produce resistance. Genealogy makes sense only in the concrete situations.

The narrator presents a working class genealogy and views history and culture dialectically. The narrator is a member of the Communist Party. They were part of the resistance against feudalism along with the subalterns. The aim of the Communist Party was to end the hegemonic

feudal system. His narrative can be seen as a tale of class struggle between the feudal lords, consisting of people like Iyob, Angoor Rawther, Dimitri and Ivan, and the working class consisting of Aloshy, Chemban and so on. The protagonist Aloshy is also a communist who got terminated from the British army during World War II for joining the rebel groups in a revolt against Britain.

The film is a genealogy in the true Foucauldian sense. It critiques not only the ruthless administration of the colonizers but also the unscrupulous political decisions of the modern day rulers who may be termed native bourgeois in postcolonial critique. The film also presents resistance by the working class, the tribals and the dalits against both the colonisers and the rulers of the new nation state. The critique and resistance embedded in genealogy remain throughout the histories of the marginalised groups. Though the oppressors may change, they continue to remain as the oppressed in the genealogical narrative of the film.

**Mimicry and Ambivalence in *Iyobinte Pusthakam***

Homi K. Bhabha deconstructs Edward Said's notion of the fixity of essentialist signification he advanced in *Orientalism* and appropriates the Lacanian concept of the Other to advance his theory of mimicry. Mimicry is a response to a circulation of stereotypes. According to Bhabha , mimicry is the low literary effect in colonial discourses:

> Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a *subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence;* in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. (86)

Bhabha constructs the colonial Other as recognizably similar to the colonizer but "not quite" similar (86). The colonial Other is the hegemonic double of the colonizer and often complimentary to him. Colonialist discourses want the colonized to be like the colonizer but by no means identical. According to Bhabha, "mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (86). But "the menace of mimicry is its *double* vision which, in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse, also disrupts its authority" (Bhabha 88). In the postcolonial context, "ambivalence" unsettles the undisputed authority of colonial domination and disturbs the simple relation between the colonizer and the colonized. The ambivalence of colonialist discourse is a fluctuation between the fixity of signification and its division and is manifest in the incompleteness of colonial authority. Ambivalence is therefore an undesirable aspect of the colonialist discourse for the colonizer. The colonizer's attempt to maintain hegemony is destabilized by the ambivalence of mimicry. Ambivalence provides a context for the colonial subject to intervene in the colonialist discourse and appropriate it.

The colonialist discourse functions to produce compliant subjects who can reproduce the assumptions and values of the colonizer. In other words, colonialist discourse makes the colonized "mimic" the colonizer. But in practice, the colonialist discourse produces ambivalent subjects whose mimicry is not aesthetically distant from mockery. Ambivalence describes this fluctuating relationship between mimicry and mockery and unsettles colonial dominance.

The ambivalence of the colonialist discourse thus "enables a form of subversion . . . that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention" (Bhabha105). Dominance is a condition for intervention in cultural politics. Bhabha conceives of mimicry as a kind of agency without a subject. Bhabha argues that the colonialist discourse is compelled to be ambivalent as it never wants colonial subjects to reproduce exactly the images of the colonizers and challenge the colonial dominance. But he contends that mimicry is a greater threat to the colonizer than the ambivalence. Mimicry ensures counter domination wherein there is the double domination of the colonizer and the colonial Other, a mimesis of the colonizer.

Iyob can be seen as the colonial Other imitating his colonial master Harrison. He has assimilated western culture through Harrison and has become a brown saheb. After the death of Harrison, Iyob assumes charge of Harrison's mansion, plantations and other assets. He in turn becomes the new feudal lord and dominates and oppresses the marginalised and migrant communities in Munnar. His position changes from that of an oppressed to an oppressor. He mimics the ideology of his master Harrison and has become a dictatorial and authoritative feudal lord. He gets enraged when he learns of Aloshy's termination from the British army for revolting against the empire. He also asks Aloshy to leave the house on knowing that he has become a communist. Iyob along with Dimitri and Ivan terrorise and victimise not only the tribal community but also anyone who does not obey their laws. Iyob can be viewed as a colonial bourgeois, a potential substitute for the coloniser. He follows the same methods used by his colonial master to rule and oppress the subordinate groups. The narrator gets arrested towards the end of the film on the eve of Emergency. He hints at another autocratic ruler as despotic as the colonisers in the governance of the country.

**Conclusion**

The film is a visual representation of an alternate history of a small hill station in the Western Ghats, Munnar. The spectacle of the film constitutes the cultural geography of Munnar as a place of tea plantations. The alternate history of Munnar has several historical tropes like trade union movements, emergence of communism, conflict between landlords and tribals, dalit and tribal unrest, Kerala Renaissance and the Emergency. This alternate history is a powerful genealogy which at once critiques the colonial rule and the modern Indian regime. The film also visually represents the cultural memory associated with Munnar in particular and India in general. As a genealogy, the film represents the resistance of the working class, the tribals and the dalits against the oppression and the exploitation of the landlords. Towards the end of the film, the narrator also hints at communist resistance to the totalitarian rule of the central government. The film offers visual images that represent idioms of postcolonial critique like colonial Other, colonial double, colonial bourgeois, native bourgeois, mimicry and ambivalence. Thus, the film is a visual paradigm of an alternate history which, as a genealogy, serves to critique the mainstream historical and political discourses and to resist their hegemonic hierarchical structures manifest in the systemic power of the colonial and postcolonial rulers of India.

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# Graphic Novel and Migrant Memory: Reconstructing *Sea Prayer* as Narrative of Visibility

**Shalini Attri & Sudipta Sil**

**Abstract**

The research investigates the notion of connection between memory, inter-community relations and intricacies of inclusion and exclusion in context of the idea of Visibility. Hosseini's *Sea Prayer* narrates the account of pain and trauma of forcible relocation which alludes to dislocation, graphically. The brush paints the agony, violence, insecurity and uncertainty through the simple colors and strokes. The present paper analyses the different components of storytelling through pictures, sketches, the lexis and enunciation that basically displays the personal and communal denunciation of people from a disturbed political background. This study emphasizes on memory, its construction and reconstruction through various events and experiences. It tries to find an address, therefore stability, of the migrated memory within this globe. The Graphics allow readers and creators to visualize the experiences of the migrants and the pictorial documentation calls into question how history might be recorded and circulated.

**Keywords**: Graphic narratives, Migration, Memories, Identity

## Introduction

*Sea Prayer* by Khaled Hosseini is a narrative on the trauma and suffering of refugees in war torn Syria and is based on the realistic account of Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old child in order to reach Europe got drowned while crossing the sea. The graphic novel illustrates about the geographic displacement that combines the narrative structure producing immersion and interaction pointing towards the dualistic position of the migrants. The unfolding of the narrative shifts the readers to the past through the childhood memories of the father which stands in stark contrast with the nations' reality during this refugee crisis in Syria. The visual images describe the landscape and reconstruction of physical spaces through the memories of father. The graphics gradually evokes emotional responses. The setting of the story and

**Sudipta Sil**

the improvised movement into the sea causing death explains the miseries and grief of war. Home is seen as a place that is beautiful and harmonious. The personal and national identities are established and the act of migration as a fracture with this identity begins to take form within the narrative. This transition in the colour imagery used can be viewed symbolically as a representation of the dark time which Syria has been plunged into on account of the war. Graphics are "polysemiotic" i.e., composed of words and images that embodies the visual rhetoric of the state. Graphic novel through frames, words, and images is characterized by diversity of representation reconstructing lived experiences through pictorial descriptions.

**Literature Review**

Various authors have seen the crisis of migration and its multi-faceted effects on human mind and society at different times, through varied works. The positioning of the migrants at the sea towards the end of the narrative also develops migrants' position of non-belonging and duality as indicated by Elliot et al. The unstable reality of their homeland and the country of arrival are vividly portrayed in Graphic narratives. The graphic novel's non-linear chronology and fragmented and disconnected sequences mimic the nature of traumatic memory, where short disjointed scenes highlight the distress of the event. Furthermore, Chute argues that the graphic novel's interactive, cross-discursive dialogue that deals with challenging subjects gives a voice to "unspeakability, invisibility, and inaudibility" (2010 a 3). So, here the story reveals through its graphic presentation 'How do Graphic text usually describe the production of cultural memory in local contents and global mediascapes?', 'How do they engage and generate, new forms of testimonial address?', and function as mnemonic structures?' Another point of contemplation is the role of memory in creating the graphics. Memory may be physical, psychological, cultural, and familial, plays a crucial role within the contexts of migration, immigration, resettlement, and diasporas, because it provides continuity to the dislocations of individual and social identity (Creet 3-26). People recall past incidents that later on become history. Tzofit Ofengenden states that [m]emory is not a literal reproduction of the past, but instead is an ongoing constructive process. Memories are modified and reconstructed repeatedly (34). The representation of migrants and their experiences are shown through various narratives highlighting different configurations of description of forced migration and displacement. Home, has a special place in these accounts that is shared across time, region and space by the migrants. There is another side to the story as the host countries are also spaces of belonging as well as longing, places infused with the memories of childhood and life is full of instability, displacement and death. The perception of refuge place are the liminal spaces where old and new generations remain. In *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Paul Ricoeur exalts poetry for preserving memory while the instances of power often silence and obliterate it for political interests. The fictional imagination preserves memory and history

raising the voice of resistance and dissent against forgetful power. The same principle works for all migrants undergoing forced displacement from their "homeland".

**Methodology**

Glissant remarks that the writer alone can touch the unconscious of a people and apprehend its multiform culture to provide forms of memory capable of transcending "non history" and literature is a privileged source to reveal the writers' ability to read the future of their communities and nations in a reassessment of the past and tradition. The paper discuses visual imagination of nation in the collective memory of displaced, dislocated refugees and their quest for home through graphic depiction of memoirs in *Sea Prayer*.

**Sea, Prayer and Readability**

The story, here, is written in reminiscent style. *Sea prayer* has two kinds of prayers as mentioned in reader response theory, psychological approach by Norman Holland in Literature and Brain (2009) that the reader's brain engages in this text to find out one's own thought process that may be a pinning pleasure. Now the prayer can be towards the sea and this prayer here is unconscious for taking those disturbed people to a peaceful land or according to that neuro psychological-theory where it is mentioned by Holland that a reader gets absorbed in reading, from that reading comes a prayer of sea to its perturbed shore for a piece of peace. The sea may not have a single connotation of a geographical barrier and a cavity full of water but this sea separating two continents could be a symbolic metaphor of a pool of problems, the unresolved issues or the unknown fears of both the continents. The sea gives a hope, a feeling of security that is available on the other shore and maybe available to the immigrant Syrians as well. On the other side, the same sea leaves a burden of immigration related problems to the community of the relatively peaceful land. The title talks about 'prayer' and this prayer can be seen horizontally and vertically. Both the words of the title are of two different nature – one is vast as it is 'sea' and another is strongly abstract being it 'prayer'. This abstract noun plays a stronger role to form and frame the concept as it is from within of an individual. The individual's desire to relive and revisit the peaceful homeland is much stronger than a desire to simply attain something. The strength of this desire resounds like a prayer from the memory recollection. Politically speaking, a prayer can be a request to the other land and its government for providing help and support; this manner of prayer may be considered as horizontal as it goes from land to another land. Another prayer that is vertical and very sublime in its nature is the voice of the soul which is represented through the graphics in the text. This graphic literature in the form of memoir, reminds us of the cultural reproduction and the cultural and social capital mentioned by Pierre Bourdieu in his book *Distinction* (1979). This memoir consists of description, recollection that clarifies the author or narrator's affection and attachment to the said culture existing in the homeland before the outbreak of war. But this 'prayer' has another side which is subvocalization of prayer and it is quite visible through the perceptibility at a distance. Although the concept exists in 'computational linguistics', we, in the context of 'Sea Prayer', may disembark into

the world of literaturist to discover another dimension. The following examples like "I wish you hadn't been so young", "I wish you remembered Homs as I do …", " I wish you remembered the crowded lanes …" , " But that life, that time …"(Hosseini 6) do not talk about the obvious meaning of the visible vocabularies, but these lexical chains utters the desires that are subvocal. Although there exists no intellectual disability as the prayers and unspoken desires have no lack of clarity, instead multiple cohesive lexical chains are available where concrete relations form the meaning in the whole text. Here, "wish" is one single category that points to another idea (not a word alone). These philological chains provide the reader the clues to determine coherence and discourse (that belong to the migrants or migrant narrative); thus, a deeper semantic-structural meaning of the text (Morris and Graeme 1991). The subvocalization of the "wish" indicates an aspiration of a better life while going through the existing etymological chains in the story. The meaning, in this context, is indicating toward a real dystopia. The dystopia is real because memory records its existence.

**Trajectory of Memory**

The memory travels by being carried through a person. Memory can be short, long, varying from person to person, yet it keeps coming back on the verge of accepting something new (whether expected or unexpected). This cultural capital turns out to be a cultural baggage, cannot be shred off, while adopting to a new space, time and lifestyle. This cultural capital or cultural baggage is traced in a person's memory and as memory travels along with the person, it reconstitutes as well as reconstruct the present through receptivity of reality or real life situations of a person, and the past through words and visual art. Graphic novel is one among those visual art forms that provides traces of autobiography and the identity of the narrator and his narrative as studied by D McAdams in "The Psychology of life stories", published in Review of General Psychology (2001). *Sea Prayer* is, indeed, an evolving story of the self that the narrator has constructed to talk about it, giving a meaning of its existence in the tangible world. Gilles Deleuze mentioned in his essay "Postscript on the Societies of Control" in 1990 that Modern society still suppresses difference and alienates people from what they can do. This suppression or oppression generates memory. Memory is all about past, further, memory dominates language; and this past that is inculcated in memory cannot accept the present that is recollected in memory through the following words – "…in the days before the sky spat bombs" (Hosseini). This recollection forms a story, a picture of the 'bustling city of Homs', its lanes framed in words, yet these words trigger the recollection of the reader or the audience and re-form a city of Homs as the childhood is experienced by the reader. The reader tries to re-locate the protagonist in the same city as the narrator. This repeated formation of the story, in the mind of different readers from different background and experience, makes the story alive and the narrator relives it every time it is read. Ricoeur saw that interpretation, especially of symbolic forms, sometimes plays the role of revealing a hidden or repressed meaning in an apparent or commonly accepted meaning (Theodore 2020). Words in the graphics text have reconstructed the narratives through and creates an impact on perceiving of things. Words like 'impatient', 'dread', 'uninvited', 'unwelcome', and

expressions like 'in search of home', 'take our misfortune somewhere', talks about emptiness that can be interpreted as a crisis still finding the ray of hope. As a desolate mother, an immediate childless father's emotion echoes through the following words – slay, deep vast, indifferent, powerless, cargo. Each of these words reverberates an endless momentum with the thread of the story toward an unending hollow. The story does not end with these 35 pages of the book alone. For example, an etched memory of being under 'three-quarter moon' – it seems to be a very simple description of the surrounding or the time of a particular day, yet it is to be noted that the moon is not a full moon. It could be in figurative sense that remarks revisiting the memories of home. Again, 'nothing bad will happen' indicates hope and optimism for a future. It is not a direct dialogue but a mode of dialogue from the memory to the storyteller's son who is still a child. Stating such a hope, holding the finger of a motionless body talks about that memory of our conscious mind that wants to forget the past and look for a sunrise or a bright future. Even after uttering such hope, the father expresses his powerlessness through the word 'cargo' – a closed, airtight, suffocating space - looking at the sea that separates them from an apparent destiny. Further, the choice of the name of the little hero around whom the story revolves, is also pertinent to look at. The name Marwan has its origin in Arabic word '*maruw*' means minerals. As the minerals are found in nature, so the hero found his ultimate destination showing the human race its final destination and probably also telling that the fighting, bombing, killings would result in nothing as the destination cannot be changed at the end. Thus, the end is not an end but a window to a solution.

**Graphic and Visibility**

"Visual storytelling," writes Sharmila Lodhia, "through a set of graphic texts, presents a particularly evocative context for gender critique of sexual violence and for analyzing terrains of social inequality and injustice (Lodhia 791). In graphic narratives the creators use pictorial materials and produces a different narratological spaces. In trauma narratives the images can be used to define narratological spaces outside the main action of the plot, where subjective experiences of time and space is brought in front of the reader. These personification and pictures produce spaces of empathy and identification that allows the reader to combine with autobiographical experiences in spaces outside of narrative time and deviates the perspective of the reader. The ability of graphic narratives ensures reader-participation creating a visual dialogue between the narrative and the readers where the readers become active participants foregrounding the question of ethics. The passive gaze is thus converted into empathy and identification. Thus, the idea of empathy and ethics vis-à-vis the strategies and techniques employed in the graphic narratives encourages reader-participation and make them sensitive to the sufferings of 'others'. The complicated dominant narratives of the migrant crisis represent their experiences through humanizing portraits and images that comes out of the imagination of the writer. The landscapes and sketched descriptions of the migrant experiences creates an everlasting impact of the mind of the readers.

The emergence of graphic narrative theory, Gardner and Herman suggest, is the result of "disciplinary reconfiguration[s]" (2011b 3) in narratology and in comics studies. These

reconfigurations attest to an increasing interest among postclassical narratologists in a broadened textual and medial corpus that includes various types of graphic narrative as well as a growing concern among scholars for theoretically and methodologically advanced assessments of the narrative properties and specific medialities of graphic narrative (Stein and Thon 3). When the narrative, we may call as migrant narrative, comments like "… All of us in search of home. …", its expectation is clear yet its weakness is quite visible in the following lines where the same narrative talks about "… uninvited, … unwelcome, … we should take our misfortune elsewhere." (Hosseini 39).

## Conclusion

In *Narrative and Graphic Storytelling,* Eisner remarks that "the story is the most critical component in a comic . . . the intellectual frame on which all artwork rests" (Eisner 2). Hence, all graphics can be categorized as novels and the essential characteristic of a novel is not its length but the realism existing in storytelling. Infact, Paul Ricoeur elaboartes that "two kinds of time are found in every story told: on the one hand, a discrete, open, and theoretically undefined succession of incidents; on the other hand, the story told presents another temporal aspect characterized by the integration, the culmination and the ending in virtue of which a story gains an outline" (Ricoeur 427). Graphic novels convey both the linear and narrative formations of time through the 'sequential art' and the story of a graphic novel is told through a progression of frames, technically referred to as 'panels.' The readability of graphics and the visibility of narrative bind the story together and runs it on the panels. Panels "secure control of the reader's attention and dictate the sequence in which the reader will follow the narrative" (Eisner 40). Another frame of progression, we call it time, works hand in hand with other frames and ensures the progression of the story. In its turn, this same progression reveals the platform, the scenes and the crisis based on it. Here, 'Sea' could be the imagery of time but it is almost limitless and present between two pieces of land or continents, therefore, it, here, is rather a space like 'palette' to draw all the pictures appearing in the mind of the father. This palette of 'sea' spreads the colour blue all over the graphic narrative just like the countless thoughts of a human mind and, thus, the pictures are visible, yet not prominent; perceivable yet not recognizable and without clarity like a far-off island. The same palette of 'sea' lies there as a bridge of the gap between utopia and dystopia. The graphic narrative unveils of a mind which is not focused, determined to its goal because the goal of peace and cohabitation through acceptability will be set by the social and political set-ups.

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# *Kadhaprasangam* – An Aristotelian Performance: A Comparative Study, within *Poetics*' framework, of Leo Tolstoy's *The Power of Darkness* and V. Sambasivan's "Anīsya"

**Joyesh Johnson** &
**Anne Angeline Abraham**

**Abstract**

The paper presents a comparative analysis of *The Power of Darkness*, Leo Tolstoy's play and "Anîsya", V. Sambasivan's kadhaprasangam performance derived from the play, within the framework of *Poetics*. Both the play and the performance go along the lines of Aristotle's theories of dramatic composition. However, the Tolstoyan tragedy follows Aristotle only loosely and does not offer complete development of all the tragic features. Sambasivan's kadhaprasangam, on the other hand, is properly Aristotelian. Kadhaprasangam, the art form involves the narration of literary works. It was a popular form of art in Kerala. An Aristotelian examination of the merits of "Anîsya" over *The Power of Darkness* is an attempt to prove that the art possesses classical qualities as well.

**Keywords:** Anîsya, imitation, kadhaprasangam, kadhikan, performance, tragedy, transcreation.

Kadhaprasangam, the art of story-telling, is the performance of narration with the accompaniment usually of songs and music. Renowned literary works are narrated onstage most often by a single person called *kadhikan* if male and *kadhika* if female, he/she enhancing its entertainment value with the aid of musicians. The artist also sings and acts the parts of the characters from the works and hence is a narrator, actor and singer, all at the same time. The art form is unique to the land of Kerala and was most popular in the latter half of the twentieth century. C. A. Satyadevan is the founding father of kadhaprasangam and K. K. Vadhyar, M. P. Manmadan and Joseph Kaimapparamban, the celebrated artists in the field. However, it was Kedamangalam Sadanandan and V. Sambasivan who revolutionized the art form, making it the most popular mass medium of the twentieth-century Kerala.

Sambasivan rose to fame with his performances of the poems of Vayalar Rama Varma and Thirunallur Karunakaran, "Āyisha" and "Rāni", in 1953 and 1955 respectively. He was the

first ever kadhikan to derive performances from materials outside poetry- the performance of S. K. Pottekkatt's short story "Pullimān" in 1961 being the first of this kind- as also to make performances of his own writings, the celebrated of them being "Divya Thīrtham" (1986), "Artham" (1988) and "Vyāsanum Marxum" (1989). He is also credited with popularizing the narrations of World Classics in the stages of Kerala and has twenty-five such performances to his credit from "Anīsya" (from Leo Tolstoy's play *The Power of Darkness*) in 1963 to "Ezhu Nimishangal" (from Irving Wallace's novel *The Seven Minutes*) in 1995.

**Anne Angeline Abraham**

*The Power of Darkness* is the English translation of the play *Vlast Tmy* (1886) of Count Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), the Russian master of realistic fiction and one among the world's greatest writers. The work is a brilliant sketch of the powers of darkness- urging one to restrain from the forces of the evil spirit- and is set against the backdrop of the rural peasantry in Russia. Son of the righteous father Akím and the crooked mother Matryóna, Nikíta, a labourer in the household of the aged and sickly village peasant Peter Ignátitch, falls subject to the love of Anísya, Peter's second wife and stepmother of Akoulína. In order for them to unite, he betrays the orphan girl Marína whom he did woo and Anísya murders and steals the wealth of her husband with the help of Matryóna. Yet thereafter, Nikíta starts secret affair with Akoulína. Anísya arranges for the girl's betrothal but soon discovers that she has been impregnated by her new husband. Akoulína delivers the child in secret and, though against his will, on the insistence of his wife and mother, Nikíta kills the child brutally. However, wearied by the prick of conscience, he confesses to his father of his dark deeds – betrayal, adultery, murder – and surrenders to the law on the eve of Akoulína's wedding. It was from *Tamaśakti*, the Malayalam translation of the play, that Sāmbaśivan derived his performance "Anīsya". In the biography *Sambasivanum Kathaprasanga Kalavum*, it is said: "'Anīsya', as a kadhaprasangam performance, has considerable specialties. It was the first ever story to reach the kadhaprasangam stage from a foreign work of literature" (Dr. Sambasivan, 2015: 64). While the drama is a tragedy, the performance is a dramatic romance. In the performance, unlike in the play, Nikhita and Anīsya reconcile, reunite and happily join the wedding festivities.

It was to an almost wholly illiterate mass – one that had little knowledge whatsoever of the literary trends outside Malayalam – that Sambasivan brought this performance. The work became a huge success and the artist a historical figure who enriched the arena of his spectators' entertainment by broadening their understanding of life values to include global and universal perspectives as well. In this regard, the biographer records further:

> "'Anīsya' enabled all- even the lowly tillers and trolley-pullers- to appreciate a classic of world literature in the whole of its aesthetic and performative aspects. It took by storm the mountain of limitations which, imposed in the early ages, had been degrading the then social

setup of Kerala with respect to arts, literature, education, religious faith and the freedom of movement." (Dr. Sambasivan, 2015: 66-67)

The kadhaprasangam "Anīsya" was first performed in the year 1963. In the performance text, the narrator himself writes of its composition: "It was in an attempt, the first of its kind, to introduce works from literatures foreign to Kerala to the field of kadhaprasangam that I picked up *Tamaśakti* (*The Power of Darkness*), the Russian author Count Leo Tolstoy's work" (V. Sambasivan, 2014: 13). The work *Sambasivanum Kathaprasanga Kalavum* furnishes more details:

> What led V. Sambasivan to "Anīsya" was the novelist K. Surendran's work of literary criticism *Mahalsannidhiyil*. Written in dialogue form, it is the presentation of the writer's fictitious literary discussions with such eminent personalities as Tolstoy, Ibsen, Raymond Roland and Maupassant. A synopsis of the play *Tamaśakti* is incorporated in the section 'Tolstoy'. (Dr. Sambasivan, 2015: 64)

The first issue that was met with in the way of transcreating *The Power of Darkness* was with regard to the characters' names. The performer did make changes in their pronunciation. Hence, Anísya became Anīsya, Nikíta Nikhita and Akím Akim. In order to make the Tolstoyan nomenclature memorable, he incorporated the names of the major personae into melodious songs of his composition. He avoids names hard to reproduce and highlights either the essential nature or the pathetic situation of such characters. For instance, he avoids the name Matryóna and calls her "the terrible woman" instead; he refers to Peter Ignátitch only as 'the bedridden landlord'. He also stylizes the name Akoulína as Aquilīne. Tolstoy presents a whole lot of characters in his play including neighbours, girls, villagers and the like but Sambasivan's performance is peopled only by six characters- Anīsya, her husband (the bedridden landlord), Nikhita, Akim, Nikhita's mother and Aquilīne.

While in the Tolstoyan drama Peter Ignátitch is only a village peasant, in Sambasivan's performance he is a landlord and while the playwright presents the character only as sickly, the performer makes him bedridden. There is disparity also in the ages of him and his second wife. While in the play there is only a ten years' age difference, in the performance the landlord is seventy-seven and Anīsya twenty-six. This great difference in the partners' ages was brought about by the performer to serve a higher purpose – the defense of his heroine's morale. In this regard, it is said in the work *Sambasivanum Kathaprasanga Kalavum*:

> It is the kādhikan's duty to highlight the heroine of the story he narrates as virtuous. So Sambasivan could not oversee the fact that an extramarital affair is sure to undermine her value. Yet it can be justified if it be driven by the pressure of circumstances… In the kadhaprasangam [because her husband is so aged and bedridden]… it will seem only natural if she falls for the handsome youth who serves in the household. (Dr. Sambasivan, 2015: 64-65)

Of both the play and the performance, the man-servant Nikíta (Nikhita as Sambasivan calls him) is the tragic hero as it is to him that the spiritual doom and the final purgation happens.

Yet in the drama, there is want of the elements *spoudaios* and *hamartia*. Even from the start, Nikíta is presented in an offensive light. He betrays Marína, the orphan girl whom he did woo, only to enjoy a life of material comfort with Anísya. The betrayed girl yells at him: "You have ruined me for nothing, you have deceived me. You have no pity on a fatherless and motherless girl!... You have deserted, you have killed me…. You are a brute… God will give you no joy" (Tolstoy, 2020: 26, 27).

On the other hand, Sambasivan's Nikhita upholds nobility in character (*spoudaios*). He is not, as in the play, of an irresponsible type and subject only to his master's indignation but one who is virtuous, absolutely dutiful to the bedridden landlord and handsome. In the renowned garden scene of the kadhaprasangam (which is entirely the performer's conception) when Anīsya discloses her love to Nikhita, he tries to prevent her at first saying: "No, madam! You shall never blabber blindly. I am only a servant, one who worships my master's wife, an admirer of her grace. There is, for me, a frontier and please restrain from insisting me impulsively to oversee it" (V. Sambasivan, 2014: 27).

While in the garden, Anīsya urges Nikhita to call her by her name. Because he is a servant obliged to fulfill the wishes of his master's wife, he tries but fails at first. However, he succeeds afterwards and instantly, an intimacy develops between them. According to Sambasivan, there is nothing unnatural here as they are of the same age. Nikhita has felt discomfort during the earliest days of his service in the household to address Anīsya as 'madam'. This intimacy gives way to a romantic – though illicit- relationship. Though this explanation cannot be counted as the *hamartia* involved in the performance, it still serves to name a cause that triggered Nikhita's downfall – a particular one the like of which Tolstoy does not offer.

In both the works, *peripeteia* occurs when Nikíta (the Nikhita of Sambasivan) comes to know of Anísya's/Anīsya's act of murder, begins to loathe her and falls into a secret sexual affair with Akoulína (Aquilīne in the kadhaprasangam). In *The Power of Darkness*, Matryóna is the informer. But the Reversal of the Situation therein is presented only as a single statement and in the form of narration when, towards the end of the tragedy, Nikíta, in an attempt to recount the bygone episodes in his life, tries to justify his actions. In "Anīsya", however, this portion of the tragedy is given considerable space and is presented in the form of action. It is Anīsya herself who reveals to Nikhita her secret- how, so as to have a happy life with him, she murdered her aged and sickly husband.

Sambasivan describes the relationship between Anīsya and Nikhita in the romantic lines of John Keats from the 1818-narrative poem *Isabella, or The Pot of Basil*: "So said, his erewhile timid lips grew bold,/ And poesied with hers in dewy rhyme:/ Great bliss was with them, and great happiness/ Grew, like a lusty flower in June's caress" (V. Sambasivan, 2014: 29). However, coming to know of the truth regarding the landlord's death from Anīsya herself, Nikhita gets horror-stricken and screams:

> You! You cannibal! You, who killed your spouse to spouse the servant, are not a woman but a cannibal!.... To make me yours! Yuck! Murdering him that God gave you, and lavishing with me! Without the slightest prick of conscience! You are no woman! Be this so, will you not someday…. Oh! How can you, who killed your aged and sickly husband for a handsome youth, not kill me someday for one more handsome? You cannot, I tell you! Cannibal, you cannot! (V. Sambasivan, 2014: 40)

To heighten this spectacular effect, Sambasivan introduces into his performance the pub scenes. Nikhita, in his extremely turbulent state of mind, resorts to drinking and gradually becomes an alcoholic. Disgusted with Anīsya, he feels a sexual desire for Aquilīne. Such a show of *peripeteia* is more emphatic wherein the spectators see the tragic turn of situation by which the noble, dutiful hero becomes a drunkard and a womanizer. The pub scenes also serve another purpose- they enhance the 'whole' and 'magnitude' of the tragedy. They stand in the place of the episode where, in the Tolstoyan play, Anísya tells Akím about Nikíta's bank deposits and the old man resents it as an act which, encouraging sloth, drives humans away from the divine will. The episode enables the audience to know of the change in their hero's mindset but has no direct connection with the tragic plot, it being Tolstoy's critique of modernization. The kadhikan also excludes the characters Anna Petróvna (Nan)- the daughter that Peter Ignátitch begets from Anísya- and Mítritch- another labourer- who serve only as comic relief and does, in no way, contribute to plot development. In the light of the kadhikan's enrichment of the dramatist's *peripeteia*, it is obvious that these exclusions make the whole of the tragedy coherent and the plot of the play magnificent.

Thus, "Anīsya" offers a complete development of all the features of tragedy while in *The Power of Darkness* only *anagnorisis* and *catharsis* are the tragic features fully developed. This is the case also with respect to the structure of the tragic plot. Considering from the viewpoint of the classical plot diagram, it can be found that *The Power of Darkness* is a disorderly mixture. The elements of the rising action – Nikíta submitting to the love of Anísya, Matryóna handing over the poison to Anísya and Anísya executing the act of murder – are entwined with those of the exposition – the introduction of the characters, detailing of the sickly state of Peter Ignátitch and the dejected state of Anísya. Moreover, the climax is not presented onstage. It is only in the form of narration that the playwright explains how Nikíta came to know of the actuality of his master's death.

However, the kadhikan makes a perfect structure out of this mixture. It is only after proper detailing of the nature of his characters that he gets into the story proper. Anīsya's dejection and her desire for Nikhita are properly presented at the beginning. From the garden scene the action rises until the landlord's death. The climax of the story has a proper place in the performance. Thereafter, the tragic action falls and the hero is morally degraded; but in his final confession there is resolution of the tragedy.

The final section of the tragedy deserves special note. In *The Power of Darkness*, the ending is catastrophe. The tragic hero confesses to his righteous father at the cost of a girl's wedding. At the close, Nikhita is bounded up by the police officer and Akoulína's wedding is not

shown done. On the other hand, there is no involvement of legal forces in Sambasivan's performance. Akim, the godly figure in the story, pardons all wrongdoers and therefore the ending of the kadhaprasangam is resolution.

The character sketch is admirably perfect in both the play and the performance. Akím/Akim, the father of Nikíta/Nikhita is the only one truly righteous in both the works save Peter Ignátitch (the bedridden landlord). He is the spokesperson of both Tolstoy and Sambasivan. In the play, he tells Nikíta at the beginning: "Mind, Nikíta, the tears of one that's been wronged never… never fall beside the mark but always on… the head of the man as did the wrong. So mind…" (Tolstoy, 2020: 21). Yet the son comprehends the significance of his father's words only at the end. As he confesses, he laments: "Father, dear father… You told me from the first when I took to bad ways… I would not listen to your words, dog that I was, and it has turned out as you said!" (Tolstoy, 2020: 118) The moral lesson of the whole story can also be traced out from Akím's words:

> You see, Peter Ignátitch, I speak. 'Cos why? You know how it happens. We try to fix things up as seems best for ourselves, you know; and as to God, we… we forget Him. We think it's best so, turn it our own way, and lo! we've got into a fix, you know. We think it will be best, I mean; and lo! it turns out much worse- without God, I mean…. It turns out worse! But when it's the right way – God's way – it… it gives one joy; seems pleasant, I mean. (Tolstoy, 2020: 19)

Sambasivan's Akim keeps on chanting: "*kalavāyi sākśi paranjidalle/ kolapātakam ningal cheyyaruthe/ vyatiyānam dharmathinekidalle/ vyabhicāram cheyyānorungaruthe*" (V. Sambasivan, 2014: 19). Poetic form of the Christian regulations that one shall never say false witness, do murder or adultery and deviate from the path of righteousness, this conveys a similar message.

When considered as an individual artwork and social performance also, "Anīsya" is highly meritorious. In the biography *Sambasivanum Kathaprasanga Kalavum*, it is said in this regard:

> World Literature flowed as a flood through Malayalis' mindscapes, invoking in them the experiences of a renewed enlightenment and inspiring in their veins a sharpened urge for the marvels of narrative influence. Kadhaprasangam then became the aorta that pumps life for the growth and development of a culturally elevated community. (Dr. Sambasivan, 2015: 67)

Therefore, studying the Tolstoyan drama *The Power of Darkness* and V. Sambasivan's kadhaprasangam performance of it "Anīsya" comparatively, it can be inferred that the latter is more Aristotelian than the former or, rather, the performance is properly Aristotelian while the play is Aristotelian only loosely. The performer makes the hero of the drama a perfect tragic hero, offering a complete development of all the features that the *Poetics* says the character should possess. He also takes up the disorderly mixture of the components of the dramatic plot and frames a perfect structure out of it, arranging the parts as perfectly befitting

the Aristotelian proposition. Hence, it can be concluded that "Anīsya" is not actually an imitation but a representation of *The Power of Darkness* – not a mere retelling but an effective transcreation of the drama.

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# Writing the Body into Existence: Audrey Thomas' Depiction of Female Subjectivity in her Selected Oeuvre

**Manju P.B.**

**Abstract**

Audrey Thomas, one of the most prolific women writers in Canada has inaugurated what Atwood has called "gynecological fiction". For her works Thomas explores the female experiences and penned it in a way that attracted the attention of readers and critics alike. My paper is an attempt to trace and thereby position Audrey Thomas as a feminist who has depicted female subjectivity in her oeuvre from a different perspective. The techniques deployed by the author to make a unique stamp of her own have also come under the realm of this paper. Through writing, the author discovers her own identity and makes it a potent tool that captures women's resistance and self-definition. For this end, structurally loose looking stories are braided with fine expertise to bring forth the difficulties posed by the female characters in a male-centred culture. Thomas successfully positions her feminist voice in a discordant world torn by postmodern, postcolonial experiences.

**Keywords:** gynecological fiction, subjectivity, female sexuality, fragmentation, identity.

Audrey Thomas is one of the prominent postmodern women writers in Canada. With her first story "If One Green Bottle…" she inaugurated what Atwood has called "gynecological fiction" (Bowering 20) – the world of domesticity or the special experiences of gestation, giving birth, and nurturing, or mother-daughter and woman-woman relations. Essentially a writer who explores the female experiences, Thomas has contributed greatly to the growth of women's writing in Canada during the 1970s. In her article "Is there a Feminine Voice in Literature?" Thomas admits that her work has been shaped by some of the great women of the past like Harriet Beecher Stowe, Louisa May Alcott, Willa Cather, Emily Dickinson, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Virginia Woolf, Doris Lessing and so on. This paper is an attempt to trace and place Audrey Thomas as a feminist who has depicted female subjectivity in her

oeuvre which has laid a unique stamp in Canadian literature. The techniques employed by the author to deal with her subject have also come under the purview of this paper.

Audrey Thomas is not a feminist in the strict sense of the word. But she works to advance women's knowledge of themselves. She wants to demonstrate "the terrible gap between men and women" and "to give women a sense of their bodies" (Coupey et.al., 98,107). She is among the clan of writers like Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, Marian Engel, Constance Beresford as opposed to the group of radical younger writers like Aritha Van Herk and Jane Rule. Yet her fiction is different from that of the other women writers primarily on account of its experimental nature and frank exploration of female sexuality. Her concern for the body has drawn her into the orbit of the French feminist Helene Cixous, who advocates the translation of the body to create a new woman's discourse.

Audrey Thomas has been open to a wide variety of experiences as a result of having lived in four places 3000 miles apart. The fragmentation caused by these displacements is a theme of her fiction which is often interspersed with allusions from many writers. This is due to the fact that along with Canadian tradition, she also inherited a broad Anglo-American tradition that she learned through formal study. Like many other expatriates she has used writing to bring order to her varied existence, giving herself a context through words. Writing for her is a form of discovering her own identity. Most of her novels are metafictional, through which she finds to bring order to her fragmented identity. Writing is presented as one of the most effective way of women's resistance and self-definition, though celebration of their achievement is always undermined by deep unease and guilt about what they have been doing.

Thomas' major novels are *Songs My Mother Taught Me* (1953), *Mrs. Blood* (1970), *Intertidal Life* (1984), *Graven Images* (1993), *Blown Figures* (1974), *Latakia* (1979), *Coming Down from Wa* (1997), and *Munch Meyer and Prospero on the Island* (1971). Along with the novels she has published several collections of short stories like "Ten Green Bottles" (1967), "Ladies and Escorts" (1977), "Real Mothers" (1981), "Two in the Bush" (1981), "Goodbye Harold, Good Luck" (1986), "The Wild Blue Yonder" (1990) and "Path of Totality" (2001). She has written several radio plays and won several prizes including the Marian Engel Award and the Canada-Australia Award for fiction and has been short listed for the Governor General's award. Her fiction is remarkable for its experimentation and literary techniques as well as for the exploration of female subjectivity.

Thomas is a novelist of memory because she has taken from autobiographical moments both stable and unstable narrative foundations for her houses of fiction. A few themes also recur in her fiction: emotional abuse, neglect, loneliness, the demands of motherhood and marriage, lost children, male chauvinism, gender politics, unhealthy relationships, self-exploration and independence. Her writing is considered as feminist because it revolves around female characters and the difficulties posed for them in male-dominated cultures. Her characters are "women who are struggling with these questions about what it means to be a woman" (Gillam 134).

Through her self-reflexive and autobiographical writing, Thomas transforms the images of women in her fiction using two methods. She doesn't fictionalize or invent characters and situations. Her content is autobiographical which enables to make changes in the story form. Structurally these stories look loose but they are braided or interweaved with expertise and finesse.

Audrey Thomas' feminism is of a different kind as her female protagonists are not traditional women stereotypes but strong yet erratic women torn by love and broken relationships. For this end, she uses fairytale elements and allusions to myths to emphasize the contrast between the expected models of female behaviour and her own protagonists. Another technique employed by her is to create an image that confronts directly the traditional images of women. She brings out the contradiction using traditional myths and legends. Though autobiographical in nature , her fiction is experimental and not bound by traditional narrative patterns and the character delineations they demand. The myths and stories exist in her consciousness along with her own experiences. She treats these stories as the core subject rather than the background and succeeds in transforming the images of women by deconstructing the old images and thus clearing the way for the new. Well known fairy tale figures are dexterously employed to bring out the contrast because these women as opposed to the simplistic happiness of the fairy tale figures are often unhappy or caught up in complex and conflicting emotions.

Most of her fiction circles around her own life experiences, ranging from the experience of Africa, miscarriage and broken relationships. Moreover, many of her characters are writers who display a fascination for words. As a child Thomas had a romantic dream of being "A Writer", wanting "to be known and all those things" to compensate for being small and shy. She was an avid reader, alerted by her grandfather to the magic of words, and a listener of her "Shanty Irish" father's storytelling. She wrote some poetry when she was about twelve, adding fiction at about 19. None of her apprentice works has been published and Thomas considers them "really terrible stories." Juggling babies, graduate school and teaching, she has little time for writing, though the stimulation of U.B.C "tuned (her) on to words again" (Coupey et al.95). She submitted about a dozen stories to Prism and other periodicals and collected rejection slips. The shock of Africa, amplified by the experience of a miscarriage, placed her under a compulsion to order the chaos of her life. "Words were all I had …" in that state of despair, says Thomas (Coupey et al. 94) to "organize the pain and turn it into art." "I realized that it wasn't going to kill me. So I really began to write to go down deeper." Her experiences are transmuted in all her works.

Thomas' writing suggests that not only in "literature", a category which this anti-genre, anti-sentence, anti-form writing devalues, but in the world, men and women are thrown, not into an intense awareness of self, but into the infinite play of discourses. The narrative techniques that she employs are a way of representing the female subjectivity which disrupts the linearity of sequence as well as the sentence thereby enabling the random movement of

memory in its own depiction. For her, writing about self embraces the metaphor of exploration, its trajectory of search shaping the interrogation of her consuming interests: female identity, female sexuality, female socialization, female physiology and above all female creativity.

Subjectivity is a product of discourse. Is there a relation between the speaking self and the writing self? There is a direct and natural relation between the written self and the self who writes – between The "I" of Isabel, Rachel, Miranda or Alice and the self who signs "I" am Audrey Thomas. Anthony Boxill concluded that "in spite of the basic dissimilarity between characters … one always has the feeling that Audrey Thomas' fiction is substantially autobiographical" (116). In Thomas' fiction, the "I" speaks not as a unified presence which seeks to tell a story but as an absence created, implicated and dislocated by I at the cite of linguistic play, at the crossroads of discourse.

*Songs My Mother Taught Me* was Thomas' first novel, though it was not published until 1973. Set in New York State of the author's childhood, it chronicles a girl's growing up, from Blakean "innocence" in the emotionally violent world of her home and social life to "experience", acquired through grotesque revelations of human misery in a mental hospital where she had a summer job. What appears first to be a conventional first person narrative is in fact a curiously constructed record of two voices, the speaker sometimes referring to herself as "I", and sometimes as Isobel, a third person who observes from a distance, or directly addresses.

Thomas' fiction is marked by characteristics it would seek to negate by its blank pages or fissures in the discourse. In *Mrs. Blood,* she organizes the horror of utter futility of a six-month long drawn out miscarriage in a hospital in Africa. She uses the technique of splitting where the unnamed narrator sees herself as two figures: Mrs. Thing and Mrs. Blood. Instead of delineating the story in chapters, the novel is divided into sections spoken sometimes by Mrs. Thing and sometimes by Mrs. Blood. This technique recurs again in *Munch Meyer and Prospero on the Island*. Prospero is the diary of a woman who is writing the novel *Munchmeyer* about a male writer who keeps a diary.

*Blown Figures* is Thomas' most experimental work, where a collage method of narration and the use of space on the page reflect the schizophrenia of a woman haunted by guilt and the sense of loss from a miscarriage. She relieves psychically a journey to Africa, gradually turning in her own mind into a doomed and destructive witch. This novel with its "juxtaposition of pictures, comic strips, letters, nursery rhymes, definitions, ads says that every text, every self-not simply those women write as appropriate – is a "weaving together of what has already been produced elsewhere in discontinuous form: every subject, every author, every self, is the articulation of an intersubjectivity structured within and around the discourses available to it at every moment in time" (Sprinker 342).

*Ladies and Escorts* established Audrey Thomas' reputation as a brilliant writer of short stories. The complex emotions and ideas explored never strain the capacities of the form, whether in stories depicting the subtle nuances of sexuality and the unfathomable depths of

pain, violence and sadness in human relations. Epistolary novel *Latakia* which captures the atmosphere of Crete as well as of places visited on a sea-voyage to Europe shows Thomas' rare gift of evoking places. The Syrian port of Latakia, where language difficulties trigger a fierce culture-shock, provides a metaphor for the love-affair, now over between two Canadian writers who, despite strong physical attraction, are separated by a gulf of non-comprehension, created in part by Michael's need to make Rachel his subordinate and by his resentment of her superiority as a writer. The novel signals the woman's need for both love and art, but cannot sacrifice art for love.

Audrey Thomas' *Intertidal Life* is a novel about friendship and also about marriage – its rituals, its expectations and its disappointments. The protagonist in the novel is a subject in search of an identity that she ties to construct from text-scrapes. Thomas uses excerpts from exploration accounts to head every section of the novel and correlates them with Alice's private exploration of her identity and existence. Doomed relationships appear in *Real Mothers* (1981), which contains one of Thomas' best stories the delicate, haunting "Natural History." It is the celebration of the love between a mother and daughter duo and draws together several levels of narrative into one moment of illumination. *Two in the Bush and Other Stories* (1981) contains a selection from *Ten Green Bottles* (1967) and *Ladies and Escorts* (1977). The stories in *Goodbye Harold Good Luck* (1986) and *The Wild Blue Yonder* (1990) develop similarly subtle analyses of emotional life often with a witty ironic touch that eases the pain of failed human relationships. In the novel *Graven Images* (1993) nature plays an effective role in the travel of two women to England in search of their roots. *Coming Down from Wa* ( 1995) is another version of the return to Africa again in search of family history, but this time with a male protagonist.

Thomas positions her feminist voice in a discordant world torn by postmodern, postcolonial experiences. Her narratives are powerful evocations of the female body, and in Thomas' fiction, the devices of discontinuous and fragmentary narration, intertextuality, confessional self-writing and wry humour transform the female body into the site where postmodern angst is enacted. She presents the intricacy of human relationships with subtlety, along with brash images of sexuality. The varied experiences she gained along a life of displacements and disappointments colour her visions. Through this paper I have tried to analyse how Audrey Thomas' oeuvre highlights the complexity of identities that an individual, especially a female has to tackle in the fragmented global scenario and thereby positioning the author in modern Canadian literature.

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# "CURE MY PAINS"

**Mohd Ibrahim Khan (MIK)**

The only guiding star of my ship,
I had lost in wine sip.

Sank the ship of my heart,
In the word's darkest part.

What're the promises of love and intentions of faith?
The walls of sand, everyone comes to wrath.

Beautiful things are in this world,
But my fortune let nothing in my hold.

Heaps of mountains and boulders,
Ceaselessly I feel on my shoulders.

O' ultimate ship come fast,
Cure my pains, and give me rest at last.

## "UNFORGETTABLE SNOW OF KASHMIR"

Kashmir is unparrelled among all,
It's broken mass of heaven ball.

The princess state is divided into three,
Kashmir is golden crown of thee.

It's festooned with many bewitching sides,
Gulmarg, Sonmarg and Yousmarg are its brides.

Heaps of mountains are its ornaments,
Even that, it is always wailing, and laments.

Alas! We don't cut it in peace,
All have crushed it to freeze.

Even senseless things are in cage,
How can we move freely in chains of outrage?

It is winter and winter all over,
And unforgettable snow cover.

Kashmir is walking on nails and bushes,
Melting snow with warm red flood to extinguishes.

Some cells are dead, some are alive,
But, its warm red cells are always in drive.

O' Allah! Bring warm spring,
Melt the chains of snow string.

Bloom new flowers in the sand,
So, it'll become a green land.

## "UNWONTED SIGHT"

Unwonted and unidentified sight,
Had come to delight.

Allah had bedecked the universe,
By sending thee down to nurse.

Bloomed the barren land of coy,
With eternal flowers of joy.

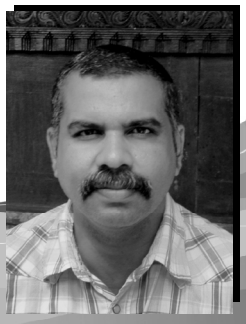
Even angels are anxious and jealous,
Of what they see in conscious.

The little heart is expanding so fast,
The dark ocean is going to last.

Allah had brought warm spring,
Unfrozen the chains of winter string.

# I am yours

**Premji**



I am yours,
I will embrace your religion
if you tell me
the religion of
love,
lust,
hatred,
thirst
and hunger...
I am yours,
if you answer me...

## Nails

Nails:
my beloved friends
in childhood
and I kept them
carefully in a
metal chocolate box!
Small pins,
stolen from aunt's
dissection box
and I used to pin
small butterflies!
Drawing pins
taken from Dad's
table drawer
and I had fallen
for their wild glitter!
Lost interest
in small ones
as I grew up
and bigger iron nails
flooded in the dark corners
of household!
And I never knew:
someone could utilize
them to fix the top cover of
Grandma's coffin
and that day
Jesus touched my heart!
And today, all rusted
they sink beneath
every footstep
and pierce my heart
every moment!

# Of Innocence and Privilege

**Urvi Sharma**

I am innocent.
The fact
that
my freedom
rests on the
Subjugation of millions who were oppressed over centuries,
my happiness
that is founded on the
Doom of millions who were tormented over centuries,
my belongingness
that is possible
because millions were Uprooted over centuries
does not make me
enjoy my freedom, my happiness and my belongingness any lesser.
I often think I even deserve it
more than the Others.
And still
I stifle
when someone points out
my Apathy
my Indifference
in my face.
Ain't I a
good human,
I tell them,
to consider the oppressed
and the tormented
and the uprooted
humanly?
I am different from my ancestors,
I tell them.
It's not Casteism.
It's Privilege for me
more elusive
less whimsical
eversame
and
untraceable

# Golden Giant

**Yuan Hongri**

Written by Chinese Poet Hongri Yuan
Translated by Yuanbing zhang

Who is sitting in the heavens and staring at me?
Who is sitting in the golden palace of tomorrow?
Who is smiling?
Golden staff in his hand
flashes a dazzling light.
Ah, the flashes of lightning-
interweave over my head...
I walked into the crystalline corridor of the time-
I want to open
the doors of gold.
Lines of words in the sun-
Singing to me in the sky-
I want to find
the volumes of gold poems
on the shores of the new century
to build the city of gold.

Laozi with rosy cheek and white hair-
Smiles at me in the clouds,
A phoenix dances trippingly
and carries with it, a book of *gold*.

Lines of mysterious words
made my eyes drunken,
countless giant figures
came towards me from the clouds.

Ages through seventy million years
emerged leisurely before my eyes,
the cities of gold
surrounded with crystalline gardens.

A sky of sapphire
sent out a colorful miraculous brightness,
onto green hills of jasper,
dragons and phoenixes were flying

Exquisite pagoda-
with majestical palace of gold,
the airy pavilions and pagodas
stood within the purple-red clouds

Laughing girls
riding the colorful husbands and wives,
propitious clouds
sprinkling the colorful flowers.

I opened the door to a golden palace,

saw the rows of scrolls of *gold*,
a giant who had the haloes all over his body-
there was a golden sun over his head.

Smiling, he picked up the books of gold
recited the sacred verses-
Intoxicated with the miraculous wonderful
words
I was enveloped with purple-gold flames.

A golden lotus
bloomed beneath my feet,
lifted up my body,
wafting it up out of the golden palace

The red clouds
drifted by my side,
in the far distance I saw
another golden paradise

the leisurely bells
calling to me.
There- countless giants
roamed in a golden garden,

with skies of ruby,
rounds of sun
like the golden lotus
blooming in the sky,

intoxicating fragrances of flowers
like sweet good wine,
golden trees
laden with the dazzling diamonds,

wonderful flowers
in bloom for a thousand years,
this land of gold
inlaid with the gems.

The pavilions of gold were
strewn at random, clustered in multitude.
Someone was playing chess
Someone was chatting...

Quaint clothes
colossal statures
miraculous eyes-
happy and comfortable.

White cranes
flying in the sky,
husbands and wives
crowing leisurely.

Beside an old man I approached
as if he were waiting for me
in this golden pavilion.
He opened an ancient sword casket-

A glittering ancient sword
engraved with abstruse words and
expressions,
which were clear and transparent, like
lightning,
dimly glowed with purplish-red patterns.

He told me a metaphysical epic:
The sword came from nine billions years
ago,
made from hundreds of millions of suns.
It was a sacred sword of the sun-

It could pierce the rocks of time,
open layer after layer of skies,
let the sacred fires forge the heaven and the
earth
into golden paradises.

The old man's eyes were deep, archaic,
difficult to discern-
Dimly showing the joyful flames.
He let me take this sword
to fly towards a new golden paradise:

The huge golden lotus floated leisurely-
I flew among the skies, for a thousand miles.
Huge pyramids
loomed impressively in front of my eyes

Mountainous figures of giants

walked about in front of the pyramid,
the huge pyramids of gold
far taller than the mountains.

The giant trees of gold
like a forest
stood in the sky
laden with the stars.

The multi-colored propitious clouds
were like a colossal bird
in a silvery sky,
crowing joyfully.

I came to the front of a pyramid-
a door was opening wide for me,
a group of blond giants
sat with smiles in the grand palace.

An old and great holy man
recited in monotone.
The temple was painted with the magical symbols
and giant portraits of Gods.

The palace was full of silvery white light
blooming with magnificent flowers,
a peal of wonderful mellifluous bells
that made one suddenly forget all time.

I heard an immemorial verse
that was written hundreds of millions of years past,
relating countless eras of giants,
the creation of the holy kingdoms of heaven.

Their wisdom was sacred and great
knowing, omniscently, the past and the future of the universe.
They flew freely among the skies
landed on the millions of planets in the universe.

They altered time per one's pleasure,
encompassed other powers, such as-
turning stone into gold,
making gold bloom into flowers.

They were like the bulbous sun,
which could erupt with sacred flames
let all things blaze in ***raging*** flames..
Manifest imagination into reality..

They landed on planets
establishing golden paradises
and with their magical, cryptic wisdom
built platinum cities.

I saw the splendid words
spied from the volume of *gold*
and the magical wonderful halos
rotating like colorful lightning in the sky.

I came to another wonderful planet,
saw a massive monumental edifice of platinum,
the whole city, an intricate work of art
emanating, softly, a brilliant white light.

A huge round square
encased unearthly works.
Giants of great stature
came and went leisurely in the street.

They wore spartan, common clothing
covering their bodies,
all with smiles upon their faces,
both men and women looked beautiful.

They spoke a wonderful language
intriguing and pleasant as welcome music.
Some of them travelled by spaceship
flying around silently in the sky.

I walked into a towering edifice of platinum-
saw a magnificent hall,
its platinum walls were inlaid with gems,
among which was a row of unusual instruments.

Their eyes were like bright springs

and they wore multi-colored clothes.
Some were operating the instruments.
Some were talking softly among themselves.

I saw a fascinating picture, a simulacrum that
drew giant planets,
arranged cities on those planets,
with crystal gardens.

I opened a crystal door-
noticed a group of men and women, who were happily,
singing softly,
with glittering books of *gold* in their hands.

Arrangements of flowers and glasses filled of golden wine
sat on the huge round table.
Golden walls were sparkling
carved with all kinds of wonderful images.

I saw a demure girl,
with sparkling golden halo above her head,
adorned in a lengthy purple-gold dress
peerless in its quality.

Pages- were marked with cryptic glyphs
or lines of ancient magic words or symbols,
each of their books were made of gold
inexplicably constructed in golden crystal.

I understood their euphonious songs-
*They were singing the sacred love*
*They were singing great ancestors*
*They were recounting the civilization of the universe*

Gardens filled their city, everywhere,
surrounded with the sweet rivers.
The whole earth was a piece of jade,
the clay, a translucent layer of golden sands.

I saw enormous bright, white spheres
suspended high above the city,
emanating outwards a dazzling light-
illuminating the skies and earth- bright as the crystal

The towering, great buildings stood in great numbers
As if carved by a singular piece of platinum.
Doves and colorful birds
were flying among the heavens.

A mono-train was
flying swiftly through the sky,
the streets were illuminated in bright white,
and any moving vehicle could not have been seen.

These people's bodies were unusually strong.
Playing a wonderful game-
they piled up the pieces of great stones
arranging into grotesque works.

Similar to giant eyes
and ancient totems,
there were strange birds
covered with lightning feathers.

I saw a couple of tall lovers-
aviators, riding in their spaceship.
Their eyes were quiet and bright,
colorful halo around their bodies.

This wonderful space was gyrating leisurely like a huge, resplendent crystal.
I said goodbye to the unusual city,
towards a space of golden light.

The cities flashed in the sky.
I flew over the layers of the sky again
and I saw a new-fangled worl:
the multi-colored city of crystal.

The high towers were exquisitely carved
displaying multi-colored pearls,
layers of its eave painted with dragon and phoenix,

hung with singing golden bells.

The earth was a crystal garden,
the palaces were limpid and crystal,
huge mountains were like a transparent gems
lined with the golden trees.

I saw the tall giants-
who wore their purple clothes,
with heads of round suns,
bodies enshrined with halos.

They sat up in the main halls
singing a mellifluous song.
Some were roaming leisurely in the garden.
Some were summoning the birds in the sky.

The crystalline airy pavilions and pagodas
were beset with jewels and agates,
a huge jewel on the spire,
shining golden lights.

I saw a holy giant
sitting in the middle of a main hall
the purple-gold flame, flashed around his body,
which filled with the whole majestic main hall.

Full-bodied fragrance filled the hall
like a cup of refreshing wine.
Solemn expression was merciful and joyful,
a huge book was in his hand.

The hall was full of men and women
listening quietly to the psalms of the saints,
the lotuses were floating in the sky
where the smiling giants sat.

The golden light poured down from the sky
bathing the whole of this crystal kingdom.
The jewels above the giant towers-
the golden suns.

The golden walls of a golden tower
were carved with the lines of *golden* words
I had glimpsed-
hovering around the dragons and phoenixes,
as if they were intonating the inspiring poems.

The smiling giants in the sky-
With wide halo flashing around their bodies,
were each dignified and tranquil,
floating in the golden translucent sky.

I flew over this crystal kingdom,
saw a vast golden mountain in the distance
sending out the brilliant lights in the sky
where the propitious clouds were blossoming.

This was a *golden giant*
sitting in the golden translucent sky
his body composed of thousands of millions of constellations
the golden sun rotating on his forehead.

He lit up the whole marvellous universe-
the kingdoms of heaven shone in the sky.
Here there was no the sky nor earth,
lights of pure gold emanated in every direction.

The smiling giants were sitting
on the *gold*-engraved pavilions.
The pavilions levitated in the translucent sky
shining the layers of purple-gold light.

A scene of multi-colored translucent mountains,
propitious clouds floating in the heavens,
large wonderful flowers blooming in the mountain peaks,
trees of pure light.

A river flowed from the sky
and with river bottom reflecting a layer of golden sand.

There were strange and beautiful birds and beasts
some like aerial phantoms.

This was a world of light.
Everything was made of light.
The divine light formed all things
and the golden paradises.

The *golden giant*-
shines the kingdoms of heaven within his body.
The cities of *gold*-
brilliant and fascinating in his bones.

I observed lines, words of incredible profundity
arranged into a huge book in the sky.
It seemed as if they were the bright stars
constituting a wonderous drawing.

There was a golden pavilion in the sky
guarded with behemoth dragons and phoenixes.
An old man with a whisk
waved to me and smiled in the pavilion,

I seem to be attracted by some sort of magic-
leisurely came to his side.
He told me the golden giant
was namely my great ancestor

This was an eternal palace-
There's no concept of time here.
Holy light- was exactly the God.
What I witnessed was better than the heavens.

He pointed to the huge book in the sky
told me that it was the mystery of the universe.
The book contained magical wisdom,
created the countless worlds of *gold*.

He pointed to a pagoda in the sky,
told me that it was the temple of words.
The light turned into the sacred words,
and the words created the time of *gold*.

He held up a very large pearl
in which flashed the pictures (and all images).
He told me that it was the future time-
the embodiment of all the wonderful worlds.

He told me that it was another universe.
Still desiring to go to these paradises,
he gave me the magical pearl,
to let it be my future guide.

I said goodbye to the old holy man,
set afoot onto a new road towards the heavens again.
I sat in a golden pavilion-
*lightly flew to the distant outer space...*
02.09.1998

# Rajnath. *Postcolonial Criticism and Theory: A Critique.* Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2022. ISBN: 978-81-316-1253-8. Pp.174. Rs. 995

**Ashish Kumar Pathak**

If one believes in the original meaning of the word 'critic' as someone who offers a judgment on an event by using the tools of comparison, analysis, interpretation and evaluation, Rajnath's *Postcolonial Theory and Criticism* reiterates him to be a veteran in the field of literary criticism. This book attempts a revaluation of postcolonial criticism by analyzing the major critical concepts of Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K Bhabha. There is, in fact, no dearth of writings on these stalwarts but the distinction of this work lies in its comparative reading which demonstrates why Said is head and shoulder above the rest two. It is an epitome of evaluative criticism.

The book is divided into three parts, each part containing three essays, with an Appendix in the end. The first essay, 'The Rise of Postcolonial Criticism and Theory', expose the politics of western intellectuals who relegated postcolonialism to deconstruction. The next essay entitled 'Edward Said and Postcolonial criticism' begins with the discussion of influential thinkers such as Vico, Gramsci and Foucault who shaped Said's worldview. While delineating how Said rejects formalism and contemplates on Vico's concept of 'inventio', Gramsci's 'affiliation' and Foucault's 'power' to formulate his postcolonial theory, Rajnath highlights the difference between Derrida and Foucault. This subtle comparison between Derrida and Foucault culminates in assessing the extent to which Said is a poststructuralist. The author demonstrates how Said extends Foucault's concept of 'power game' to elucidate the East-West relationship on the one hand and adds the dimension of 'otherworldliness' to Derrida's post structuralism on the other. Deservedly highlighted here is Said's disapproval of Samuel Huntington's theory of 'the clash of civilizations' and different trends of 'nativism' that emerged in India and Africa. Rajnath firmly believes that nativism cannot be a viable alternative to Orientalism or imperialism. A remarkable aspect of Said is his capacity to unearth the latent political content in some of the classics of western literature such as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Austen's *Mansfield Park* and Forster's *A Passage to India,* to name a few. The third essay of this section makes a significant point about the reception of Said whose ardent

stand on western imperialism has been understood in the context of resistance only while he has strongly expressed his faith in reconciliation and resolution of conflict. Referring to Said's essay 'Freedom from Domination in Future', Rajnath emphasizes that Said dismisses Eurocentrism or Orientalism no less than he does 'Occidentiosis' a concept propounded by Jalan A. Ahmad. Said's advocacy for the harmony between the two spheres stems from his personal experience of witnessing the perennial conflict between Palestine and Israel.

As a perceptive critic Rajnath ponders over Said's limitations as well. If Said is lauded for making the political content of literary texts as significant as aesthetic or thematic for analysis, he is critiqued for being casual in distinguishing among different versions of Orientalism. He candidly expresses his reservation about Said's views on the rise of the novel in the West. Said goes astray in his appreciation of Kipling's *Kim* and forgets that it was propaganda for British imperialism. Said doesn't clarify his stand on the texts which have great artistic merit without palpable political content. The author has paid adequate attention to the charges leveled against Said by his detractors such as Aijaj Ahmad, Moore-Gilbert and Robert Young.

The second part of the book again contains three essays critiquing postcolonial positions of Spivak and Bhabha. The first essay 'Language, Reality and Criticism' focuses on the complexities haunting Spivak's critical concepts. Rajnath maintains that the basic problem of Spivak is her attempt to reconcile Derrida and Said who are two opposite poles so far as their views on language are concerned. If Said sets great store by the worldliness of text which necessarily has political affiliations, for Derrida a text is a self-contained entity because language is self-referential. The certitude of meaning emphasized by Said flies in face of Derridean deconstruction for which meaning is elusive. Similarly, the discourses of Feminism and Marxism cannot exist without belief in the certitude of meaning. Spivak ignores this important fact and 'this results in inconsistencies, misunderstandings, misapplications, illogicalities, even her unreadability' (67). Spivak's critical opinions are muddled because she tries to be a poststructuralist, a postcolonialist, a feminist and a Marxist at the same time. Rajnath's critique of Spivak is not based on hypothetical statements but strong argumentation which testifies to his voracious reading and rigorous method of analysis. He cites particular references where Mahashweta Devi and Derrida disapprove of Spivak's understanding of their writings. To contextualize Spivak's problem, Rajnath elucidates the views of V.L. Volosinov, Bakhtin, Edward Sapir, and S.P. Mohanty towards language. This essay is an exemplar of comparative criticism. The next essay interrogates Spivak's notion of subaltern for the exposition of which she is well known. She is discovered to be disagreeing with Gramsci who believes that only a subaltern can understand and lead the subaltern; and one can concede to her views here. But the attitude of Spivak towards the subaltern whom she chooses to represent is devoid of empathy. Making a comparison between Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* and Spivak's *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Rajnath states, "As it is, she is more interested in distancing herself from the subalterns than in getting close to them" (79). While representing the subaltern she is expected to have sincerity and empathy in her tone and texture. Further, Spivak's misunderstanding of this term and its misapplication to the

texts such as 'Draupadi' and 'Breast-Giver' has been highlighted. Her deconstructive-postcolonial-feminist approach 'murders to dissect' these stories. Both Dopadi and Jashoda are strong enough to speak and be heard by their opponents. In fact, Spivak's criterion for assigning a character or people a subaltern status is itself flawed as it area specific, mostly a decolonized space. Questioning this very ground the author says, "One wonders why Blacks in the US and ethnic minorities in the metropolitan West cannot be brought in the category of subaltern"(89). There is no dearth of readers who often complain about the incomprehensibility of Spivak's writings, but rare are the critics who strike at the cause of the problem in such a brazen commentary.

The third essay of this section undertakes an analysis of Bhabha's favourite terms say ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity. Bhabha's problem is not very different from Spivak's as he also shares with Derrida a deep distrust of logic and reason. Because of not believing in the referential property of language, Bhabha attaches immense importance to undecidability and indeterminism which become the hallmarks of his critical speculations. He forgets that a postcolonial stand cannot be taken without certitudes. Rajnath reiterates, "Ambivalence and uncertainty may have a place in what is purely an academic exercise or a literary creration, but postcolonialism is rooted in worldliness . . . ."(97). Thinkers such as Said and Fanon understood this and therefore their views on hybridity and identity are free from indeterminism. Bhabha's obsession with ambivalence and 'in-between space' incapacitates him for making a distinction between the views of Jurgen Habermas and Derrida about language and logic. Rajnath exposes the evident weakness of Bhabha's critical terms when faced with the issues of Holocaust, apartheid or colonial exploitation. How can one take an ambiguous stand on such issues? Such argumentative essays fall in line with the tradition of debate and dialogue in the realm of literary criticism.

The third section begins with the discussion of postcolonial criticism and the aesthetic dimension. Although aesthetic dimension or literariness is relegated to the background in postcolonial criticism, Said paid some attention to it as compared with Spivak and Bhabha who neglected it altogether. Rajnath believes that literature has to be contextualized in terms of politics and culture to deal with the issues of gender, identity, class, nationalism, race and ethnicity but the criterion of literariness can't be ignored in evaluation of literature. The worth of a work has to be ultimately judged by literary standards and for this a critic should be aware of the difference between literature and non-literature. On account of not having this awareness Bhabha emerges as a social scientist rather than a literary critic in his writings. The next essay focuses on the concept of culture as it has been a contesting zone for Said, Spivak and Bhabha. Said vociferously resisted to the cultural bifurcation made by the West to justify their rule over the so called underdeveloped and uncivilized East. Like Fanon and Amilcar Cabral, he advocated for the cessation of the East-West conflict. However, such clarity of intention and message is absent in the writings of Spivak and Bhabha owing to their obsession with deconstruction. Spivak fails to understand that 'sheer heterogeneity' in the absence of cultural dominant will lead to anarchy and no culture can be conceived without

some of the universal human values and ethics. Bhabha's notion of hybridity is deeply flawed because his fondness for undecidability precludes the possibility of distinguishing the exploiting West from the exploited East or the colonizer from the colonized. These two essays clarify why Said is readably comprehensible and enjoys a wide readership with his limitations.

This section ends with the analysis of *The Cocktail Party* in the light of postcolonialism. Here Eliot is told to be sharing the orientalist attitude despite his praise for the ancient wisdom of India. A meticulous analysis of the play brings out Eliot's derogatory attitude towards modern Hindu culture and religion. The book ends with an 'Appendix' which gives an overview of English teaching and research in India in the contexts of colonialism and postcolonialism. The most fascinating aspect of this essay is the discussion of the syllabi of English literature in India and very fruitful suggestions which can benefit teachers and students in a holistic way. The book is highly recommended as it offers a fresh perspective, i.e. critics' attitude to language, to understand the trinity of postcolonial criticism in a comparative way.

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