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Ngugi wa Thiong'o

Changanpuzha
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Arundhati Roy

Ruskin Bond

Mohsin Hamid

Articles on

Yudhishthira in the *Mahabharata*, Santhal folktales of Jharkhand, theorising a new postulate of laughter, Changampuzha, a study of early Indian women's writing, *Garbo*, *Neru*, Vijayarajamallika, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the myth of decolonization, women in early history and literature of Kashmir, diaspora and life narratives, *The Space Between Us*, *The Beast with Nine Billion Feet*, *Wizard of the Crow*, *TU*, a Marxist critique of Marxism, Arundhati Roy, *The Kitemaker*

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Poems

'Unhappy' Promises and Masculinity: Some Reflections on Yudhishthira in the *Mahabharata*

SAUMYA SHARMA

Abstract

The notion of masculinity is integral to an understanding of the male characters in the *Mahabharata* and is closely tied to their societal hierarchy, power and duties related their social class (kshatriya dharma). Yudhishthira, the eldest son of Pandu and king of Indraprastha, displays several manly traits befitting a warrior yet his masculinity is dented by his speech and behaviour during the dice game, the fateful event that seals the destiny of the Kuru clan. Drawing on Austin's theory of speech acts and Connell's views on masculinity, this paper highlights the gradual emasculation of Yudhishthira through the various speech acts he issues while gambling, his conflicted sense of dharma, the dissonance in his thoughts/feelings and his declining social hierarchy and prestige all of which have serious repercussions for his family and people.

Keywords: masculinity, speech act theory, the *Mahabharata*, language and gender

Introduction: *Mahabharata* and Gender

The *Mahabharata*, a timeless saga about the feud and annihilation of the Kuru clan, is one of the two main Sanskrit epics of the Hindus that has more than 100,000 verses and holds literary, cultural and religious significance (Brockington 116). Its portrayal of the fallibility of individuals (Narlikar and Narlikar 4) even in seemingly flawless characters has caught the imagination of the public, leading to various onscreen dramatizations. The story, originally recounted by bards and minstrels, has also undergone multiple literary adaptations, both in India and abroad, which stands testimony to its value and popularity across time and cultures (Luthra 135). One major aspect of the story is its focus on gender; its organization and conduct in everyday life as seen through the narrative events. Almost all the major characters in the story depict various masculine and feminine attributes and sometimes both, depending on the situations they face, such as, Draupadi portrays devotion and obedience as a wife/daughter-in-law yet she shows agency and power after her disrobing (Blackwell 140), Bhima displays physical strength before and during the war (Pattanaik 74), and Arjuna engages in gender-bending, exhibiting masculinity with his archery and other skills (Pattanaik 62-63) but also femininity during the period of exile by posing as a

female dance teacher. Even Krishna and Shikhandi show both the gender roles, the former in his appearance and divine pastimes and the latter essentially to take revenge from Bhishma, the grandsire of the Kurus.

In the *Mahabharata*, the enactment of masculine and feminine roles is relational to one's circumstances in life and is deeply intertwined with larger questions of *varna* (social class) and dharma (righteous conduct) (Brodbeck and Black 17) a phenomenon that broadly echoes the social constructionist nature of gender, that is, how gender is inscribed and shaped by social expectations, practices and norms prevalent in one's culture (Butler 8-9). For an understanding of the behaviours and attribute of male characters, Connell's (76) views on masculinity become particularly useful. Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity depends on a matrix of power relations, reproductive ability, sexual desire and the gendered division of labour denoting the dominant modes of virile behaviour in a culture. Masculinity is deeply entrenched within the cultural norms and practices across time periods, "enmeshed in the history of institutions" (Connell 29). and to "understand masculinity historically we must study changes in those social relations" (Ibid.). In other words, masculinity is not just visible in word, action and appearance but is the product of power, social hierarchy and class, all of which contribute to gendered behaviour today as in ancient times. Hegemonic sasculinity is associated with stereotypical behaviours such as aggression, physical strength, minimal display of emotion and is contrasted with non-masculine behaviours of being peaceful, non-violent and "conciliatory rather than dominating" (Connell 67). Moreover, Connell (78-79) is of the view that different subordinate forms of masculinity develop in a society that may contradict the dominant forms.

Masculinity in the *Mahabharata* is strongly linked to the social practices, duties of one's social class (*kshatriya dharma*) and power play, broadly reflecting Connell's views. The men in the *Mahabharata* are governed by *kshatriya* rules of manhood which include strength, fighting for justice, engaging in battle, protecting people and social order, readiness to wage war and die for the righteous cause (Gen'ichi 66-67). Thus, masculinity was implicitly understood through the following of Kshatriya dharma which included possessing warfare skills, physical strength, lordship and protection of subjects and animals, virility, power, brute force and "control over indriyas (command of the body)" (Smith 30) among other things. Having a male offspring to continue the lineage, engaging in manly pursuits like hunting, war and polygamy were acceptable manly pursuits and those who did not possess these were castigated as eunuchs (Sahgal 4-8). In fact, *Mahabharata* provides a vivid description of how masculinity is firmly entrenched in the patriarchal system and is constructed in relation

to and in opposition to dharma (Sahgal 4-9). Another essential aspect of masculinity for the married man was the following of *pravritti dharma*, that is, the performance of household duties, protection of the wife and family (Dhand 29-31; Brodbeck and Black 17-18). Those men/kings who were powerful displayed the above-mentioned attributes that were considered the dominant modes of gendered behaviour in those times.

Yudhishthira, the eldest Pandava and king, practices yet deviates from the notion of hegemonic masculinity. He is known as the philosopher king who believes in right thought, speech and conduct, hence the epithet *Dharamraja*. He wins the *Rajsuya yagna* becoming a *chakravatin samrat* (conqueror of kings). He is skilled in warfare and scriptures, embodying the *kshatriya dharma* and manhood and fathers a son with Draupadi, exhibiting the attributes of masculinity. Yet there are episodes in the narrative where his manhood is questionable such as in the dice game. Drawing on Austin's (Chaps. 1-3) notion of speech acts, this paper argues that the emasculation of Yudhishthira and the diminution of his virility is closely tied to his verbal encounters with Shakuni while gambling as analysed in J.A.B. van Buitenen's translation of the *Mahabharata*. The result of the game and Yudhisthira's speech and behaviour before and during it led to a series of devastating events including the bloody Kurukshetra war, hence it is noteworthy for analysis. Furthermore, Yudhisthira being a powerful king is supposed to be the embodiment of masculinity and dharma, yet these notions are not fully performed through his speech while wagering in the game, which becomes a significant reason for analysis. Brian Black (88) on discussing the dice game argues that Yudhisthira's behaviour is governed by dharma and pre-destiny and he is sort of resigned to his fate, enacting what is expected of him, yet textual analysis explains a minor deviation from this image of his. This paper now describes the theoretical framework of speech acts, followed by the analysis proper.

Theoretical Framework

Speech act theory was proposed by John Austin (Chaps.1-3) and revised by John Searle (Chap. 1). Before Austin, much of the work in linguistics focussed on the internal features of grammar/sentence but speech act theory provided a strong link between speech, meaning and communication, squarely putting linguistics within the domain of social research having board applicability since the use of speech acts reflected social norms and conventions (Petrey 13). It allowed one to discuss the speech of the participants taking into account the context, their expectations, attitudes and relationship. The area of literature too "is a speech context" (Pratt 86) where a lot depends on the spoken and the "unspoken, culturally shared knowledge of the

rules, conventions and expectations" (Ibid.) hence literary texts provide ample ground for analysis through the speech acts used by the interlocuters. Moreover, studies in discourse and style show the applicability of speech acts in discourse (Fairclough 115-117; Fowler 87-90; Short 141) for studying social phenomenon such as gender, race, politics etc. thus linking, language to gender, by highlighting what is spoken in a text, by whom and what effects it creates about their gender relations. In other words, speech acts not only reveal meaning in context but also provide insights about gendered behaviours, thus making them a powerful tool for analysis.

In his groundbreaking study on speech acts, Austin (Chaps. 1-3) broadly spoke about three categories in communication: locution, illocution and perlocution. Locution refers to sounds of speech and illocution/illocutionary act being a "conventional act" (Petrey 15) dependent on the conventions of the community where it is spoken for instance, the force and significance of a promise or threat in a particular social setting. Illocutions form the main basis of the theory and are many in number: commands, requests, greetings, accusations, suggestions, warnings, assertions etc. requiring knowledge of the explicit and implicit rules of communication prevalent in a society. The consequences of one's illocution is understood as perlocution and this can be verbal or nonverbal. For instance, if someone promises to perform an action, the hearer can reply in the affirmative, nod or shake their head in disagreement. Austin further distinguished between two broad categories of utterances: constatives that described a state of affairs and performatives that actually performed an action, like naming a child in a religious ceremony. The "issuing of an utterance was the performance of an action" (Austin 6) which meant that the speech act was actional in nature. However, for each speech act to be performed Austin spoke of many conditions that were to be fulfilled, primary among them being felicity conditions and sincerity conditions and the violation of these conditions led to 'unhappy' situations for the speaker. An act was considered felicitous if there existed a "conventional procedure" (Austin 15) to perform the act in a conventional setting by individuals; the speaker and hearer involved must be appropriate to perform the act; they must conduct the act completely and correctly; they must carry out the act with sincerity and right intentions (sincerity condition). That means they should have the "thoughts and feelings" (Ibid.) to perform the speech act/s and must do so accordingly. A breach in any of these conditions leads to an "unhappy" utterance (Ibid.) that can have an effect on the individual and others concerned. For instance, if a speaker promises to do something, felicity condition demands that the hearer must want that, the speaker must be sincere in their intention and both the parties properly carry out the act in a proper setting. Flouting of any of these conditions renders the act infelicitous and becomes significant

for analysis. In a similar manner, different speech acts and their conditions can be analysed to understand what is transpiring in a literary text and/or natural communication. The quotations in the analysis given below are all from J.A.B van Buitenen's translation of the *Mahabharata* from Book II (The Book of Assembly) containing the following details in order: number of the book (2), number of the chapter (27), the respective verses and the page numbers in the end. Due to space constraints, only representative speech exchanges between the characters that shed light on their behaviour and motives have been taken for analysis.

Analysis

An understanding of Yudhishthira's masculinity and language begins before the dice game when he is invited by the Kuru minister Vidura to play with them: "play and enjoy a family game. We should be pleased if thou camest to join us. The Kurus are all assembled here" (Buitenen 2(27)52.8,125). Vidura performs the speech act of inviting and stating their happiness in playing with the Pandavas. He also informs that all the Kauravas will be present for the game. According to his social hierarchy and his intention to give a proper invitation, Vidura correctly performs his speech acts.

> At a dicing, Steward, we surely shall quarrel.
> Who, knowing this, will consent to a game?
> Or what does your worship think that is right?
> We shall all of us abide by thy word. (Buitenen 2(27)52.10, 125-126)

The perlocution of Vidura's invitation is that Yudhishthira issues multiple speech acts of questioning, stating and promising about the game. He clearly states that a dicing game usually leads to quarrels and anyone who knows this fact would think before accepting the invitation. Thus, he knows that the game might in all likelihood create conflict and therefore he asks Vidura for advise on what he should do, or rather what is the right course of action to undertake in this situation. Even though he is king and is socially higher to Vidura yet he gives him more importance and value by promising that the Pandavas will abide by what Vidura says. His statement about the evilness of the dice game and his promise to follow Vidura's advice seems sincere and shows that he is in doubt.

> I know that the game will bring disaster.
> I have made an effort to stop him from it.
> But the king has sent me to your presence:
> You have heard, you are wise, now do what is best. (Buitenen 2(27)52.11, 126)

Vidura's reply is matter-of-fact containing a series of assertives. He asserts very strongly that the game will 'bring disaster' and he has attempted to advise Dhritarashtra against it yet the king has sent him forth with the invitation. The phrase 'made an effort' depicts his sincerity both in knowing the perilous effects of the game and in dissuading the king. However, he ends with a command couched as an assertive to 'do what is best', that is, he leaves the decision to Yudhishthira, absolving himself from any responsibility. He probably does so thinking that since his social station is below the king he cannot advise him but since he was specifically asked for advise, his refraining from it is infelicitous. One can say that Vidura in his own way is endeavouring to both invite and dissuade Yudhishthira.

Yudhishthira then asks him who will the Pandavas be playing against and Vidura complies with that question and answers that the opponent will be the cunning Shakuni. It is then that Yudhishthira makes a decision to go to the game.

> It is the King Dhrtarastra's behest,
> So I will not refuse, sage, to go to the game.
> A son will always respect the father:
> I shall, Vidura, do as thou tellest me.
> I am not unwilling to play Sakuni;
> If I were, he would recklessly challenge me
> In that hall. . . . Once challenged I will not refuse,
> For so I have sworn for eternity. (Buitenen 2(27)52.15, 126)

In the lines given above, he states and declares his intention to accept the invitation since he is a son and Dhritarashtra (his father's elder brother) is like a father to him hence it is his dharma to obey. He addresses Vidura as 'sage' for his wisdom but strangely puts the responsibility of guidance on him when in fact Vidura did his best to desist him in one sense and he did not give him specific advise to accept the invitation. He also states his intention to play the game in unambiguous terms stating his promise/oath taken earlier that if challenged he would not refuse to play. Hence, a conflict arises here. Yudhishthira knows the evil intentions of Shakuni (after the many attempts he made to kill the Pandavas such as the 'house of wax' incident) and that gambling is evil yet he agrees to the invitation due to his duty. He also knows that Shakuni will challenge him as his intention is to usurp the wealth of Pandavas, yet he is bound by his earlier vow to play if challenged. He also knows that his oath can have grave consequences for the Pandavas. Thus, his thoughts (foreknowledge about the game) and his duty are at conflict which makes his promise 'unhappy' and his acceptance (speech acts) problematic.

When Yudhishthira meets Shakuni in the gambling hall, he states the following: "To game with gamblers who play tricks is an evil, but victory in battle according to the Law is a good game and superior to it…Don't play us beyond those means, do not win beyond that, Sakuni!" (Buitenen 2(27)53.10, 128). Through his assertion, he makes his stance clear about following dharma, playing honestly by the rules and how gambling through deceit is evil. He even commands Shakuni not to use duplicity to win the game and this appears more like a request since Shakuni knows that Yudhishthira is bound by his promise. Even though Yudhisthira is king and is socially superior to Shakuni yet in this context he appears powerless vis-à-vis Shakuni due to his oath and making such a request diminishes Yudhisthira's dominance and masculinity. Shakuni instead of accepting his request, challenges him further: "You have come to me: if you think it is trickery, desist from the game if that is your fear!" (Buitenen 2(27)53.12,128). Yudhishthira's earlier speech act of asserting and requesting/commanding highlights his weakness and therefore Shakuni challenges him further, aggravating the predicament. He states that Yudhishthira has come to play the game and if he thinks Shakuni will engage in subterfuge to win, he should avoid playing. This appears as a direct insult to Yudhishthira's manhood, his social power and to his vow, which creates the required effect of making it obligatory on his part to play. Thus, the perlocutionary effect of Shakuni's utterance is prodding Yudhishthira to play.

Shakuni wins the first round of dice by deceit and then an upset Yudhisthira promises and declares to play Shakuni again: "You have won this play from me by confusing me with a trick! All right, Sakuni! Let us now play and grasp the dice a thousand times!" (Buitenen 2(27)54.1, 129). The accusation by Yudhishthira of being cheated and the ensuing declaration acts as a binding promise that makes it obligatory for him to play. The use of exclamation marks and the phrase 'a thousand times' denotes his intense emotions and his resolve. Although the declaration shows boldness and his readiness to accept the challenge, mostly associated with masculinity, yet in reality it is unfavourable since both the parties know that Shakuni will use foul means and Yudhishthira will continue to play, making the latter powerless before the former. Yudhishthira's self-professed dharma was to obey his uncle due to which he accepted the invitation but his twice-expressed promise is questionable. According to *kshatriya dharma*, once a warrior accepts a challenge he does not retreat but continues fighting in the battlefield. Here, the battlefield is the dice game and in one sense Yudhishthira is following his dharma to fight/play the game but his foreknowledge that the game and his opponents are evil clearly indicates that he does not find it to be a dharmic activity. Moreover, the game was understood as a 'family game' when Vidura extended

the invitation and not a real battlefield which cannot be avoided. All this creates conflict in Yudhishthira's feelings and intentions. Furthermore, by vowing again he not only appears resigned to his fate but also consciously subscribes to bind himself to it, portraying his responsibility and choice in choosing to play with evil. Thus, his twice expressed promise creates an 'unhappy' situation for him, his kingdom and people. Shakuni's speech is infelicitous all along because of his insincere intentions to usurp the wealth of the Pandavas plus demean them and it is problematic for Yudhishthira because of his inner conflict and his declining masculine power.

Now begins a series of dialogues between them where Yudhisthira speaks of his assets and Shakuni wins them. Yudhishthira's explanation for each of the possessions put at stake is elaborate, indicating his superior status, wealth and power such as the royal chariot, the caparisoned elephants with their long ivory tusks, the beautifully adorned thousand slave girls, the dextrous male slaves in fine clothing, regal chariots with golden trappings and harnesses, enormous amounts of jewels, the common and learned people of his kingdom etc. Shakuni's iterative statement through which he fools his opponent signifies his deliberate deceit, and it is as follows: "Shakuni decided, tricked and cried "Won!" at Yudhisthira" (Buitenen 2(27)54.7, 129). The number of lines used for Yudhishthira's description of his property and people is much more than the single repetitive line for Shakuni. At one level it reflects Yudhishthira's high social hierarchy and simultaneously his helplessness in defeat. It also shows Shakuni's dominance since he contrives and persistently employs the same language to defeat his opponent. At one point Shakuni even asks Yudhishthira that since he has lost all his assets what would he wager, and as a reply the king staked his brothers and wife. After losing his twin brothers Nakula and Sahadeva, the dialogic exchange between the two parties is as follows:

> Shakuni: I have now won, king, these two dear sons of Madri. Yet methinks Bhimasena and Arjuna are dearer to you."
> Yudhishthira: Surely this is an Unlaw that you are perpetrating, without looking to propriety! You want to pluck us like flowers! (Buitenen 2(27)58.15, 136).

Shakuni's assertion is one of triumph but he also uses the speech act of accusing Yudhishthira, implying that Nakula and Sahadeva were children of his step-mother hence he wagered them, and that his own brothers were dearer to him. This subtle allegation strikes at the core of Yudhishthira's masculinity, his sense of dharma and justice, prodding him to gamble his own brothers too (perlocutionary effect). His masculinity is born of his dharma, valour and power as a king all of which get diminished and divided as the game proceeds, indicating his emasculation. His reply

is a counter-accusation denoting his knowledge that the game is unlawful and the figurative expression 'pluck us like flowers' reinforces his immense helplessness. Thus, Shakuni after winning all the chattel becomes bolder in his accusations and questions, instigating Yudhishthira to gamble further, highlighting a reversal of power play – the king at the mercy of a courtier/relative. The coup de grâce is when Yudhishthira wagers his own self becoming a slave of the Kauravas yet he stakes his wife after losing himself, spurred by Shakuni who once again prods Yudhisthira that the last chance to win himself back is by staking Druapadi leading to the following exchange.

> Shakuni: Yet there is your precious queen, and one throw is yet unwon.
> Stake Krsnâ of Pâncâla, and win yourself back with her!
> Yudhishthira: She is not too short or too tall, not too black or too red, and her eyes are red with love —I play you for her! (Buitenen 2(27)58.32, 137).

Shakuni's assertion is also an invitation/offer to play the last chance in the game and thus win back his own self and his spouse. The perlocution of this invitation is that Yudhishthira describes Draupadi's physical beauty in great detail (her height, eyes, figure, complexion etc.) and wagers her, indicating his lack of insight and intellect, behaving like a compulsive gambler. Instead of refusing the last chance, he not only accepts to play it but also stakes his spouse, when he himself is not a free person (he's a slave), an issue that is raised by Draupadi when she is disgracefully dragged to the assembly hall. All of Shakuni's speech acts are insincere since he shrewdly covets all of Yudhishthira's possessions, winning them deceitfully. However, even though Yudhishthira's speech acts fulfill the sincerity condition as he describes his assets and his people and, his promises bind him to play that he does earnestly yet they are infelicitous because of the dissonance created in his mind. Not only does *kshatriya dharma* entail protection of those considered weak including women, children, the old and infirm but as a householder Yudhishthira has to also follow *pravritti dharma* which includes sheltering one's wife and family from danger, yet here we see a breach in his sense of dharma. He intends to play dice as part of his dharma and his unflinching promise, yet he violates the other dharma of protecting his family, wife and kin. This violation leads to dissonance in his thoughts and feelings. He mostly appears disturbed with Shakuni's foul play yet he engages in a vivid physical description of his wife in front of others at the gambling court before wagering her and therefore he is described by others as a 'crazed man' implying someone mad with the frenzy of gambling. Before and during the game, he repeats that gambling is evil yet he chooses to do so. All this denotes his conscious choices, his lack of discrimination and emotional turmoil that make his promises and his declarations

(speech acts) 'unhappy' creating disastrous consequences for himself and his family. Even though he fulfills the other felicity conditions and sincerity condition for playing the game in a conventional manner, yet his warped sense of dharma and duty fails him, begetting negative results. Yudhishthira's emasculation ironically occurs due to slaying of the very factors that contribute to his masculinity, his gradual loss of power, prestige and wealth at the game, indicating his loss of hierarchy, his acquiescence and docility in playing despite being repeatedly duped, his primary speech act of promising and other illocutionary acts of questioning, requesting and asserting, all of which depict his resignation to his promise, his choice to subscribe to it and the eventual reversal of power for him. Thus, adhering to the norms of masculine behaviour such as obedience, duty and perseverance as per his social status, paradoxically tarnish his masculine image. With regard to the other felicity conditions of speech, the setting of the dice game is conventional whereby the rules are known to both the main players who have agreed to play, yet Shakuni consistently uses duplicitous means to win without flouting the rules of the game and his dialogues indicate his insincerity in usurping the assets of the Pandavas and disparage them. The problem arises when Yudhishthira, despite knowing all this continues to speak and play in a blindfolded manner that diminishes his power, thus his masculinity is adversely affected.

Conclusion

Masculinity is integral to the understanding of the narrative and characters of the *Mahabharata* and is associated with manly attributes such as physical strength, reproductive ability, power to control, abiding by one's dharma and adhering to duties of one's social class. Drawing on Connell's views of masculinity and Austin's theory of speech acts, this study highlights how Yudhisthira is not virile enough because of his primary speech act of promising (which binds him to behave in a particular way) and his other speech acts of questioning, requesting, asserting and accusing, all of which indicate that his speech during gambling is felicitious in some ways but creates 'unhappiness' due to his divided sense of dharma despites foreknowledge about the non-dharmic nature of the game and the resultant dissonance created in his thoughts and feelings. His gradual emasculation is signified by his loss of assets, social hierarchy, prestige, power because of the wrong choices he subscribes to as opposed to Shakuni who though a mere courtier, persistently uses repetitive speech to dupe Yudhisthira of all his possessions and simultaneously demeans him.

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Fear of Changampuzha / Changampuzha-scare

PRABHA VARMA

Abstract

Changampuzha Krishna Pillai (10 October 1911 – 17 June 1948), an incomparably gifted Malayalam lyrical genius, dominated the Romantic epoch in Malayalam poetry like a lagendary figure. The advent of modernism in Malayalam poetry despite all its fanfare, could not dislodge the image of the great Romantic bard. This paper examines the recent attempt of some writers to denigrate Changampuzha and the excessive emotionalism in his poetry. It appears that lesser writers than Changampuzha are scared of his overshadowing stature. Major poets such as Vailopally Sreedhara Menon (11 May 1911 – 22 December 1985) have, however, offered a clear definition of Changampuzha's character and poetic genius which ought to guide the judgement of the learned critic as well as that of the common reader. Whatever sensibility the modern poet flaunts, he cannot achieve the spontaneous plenitude of Changampuzha's creative output. Changampuzha's poetry is like a natural mountain stream which contrasts starkly with the occasional trickles of pipe water.

Keywords: scare, emotionalism, sensibility, romantic, poetic character

One cannot probably define Changampuzha, the prolifically gifted lyrical poet of Malayalam, better than how Vailoppilli defined him:

'…One who pervaded tender graceful fragrance;
On one whose cheeks tears like jasmine flowers never did stop rolling;
On one whose long neck is filled with an immaculate nectar;
One who is desired with love's dream to kiss by any shepherd lass;
One who is so delicate and so much light
Habituating friendship with tender moonlight…'

One cannot represent Changampuzha's personal character as well as poetic character better than this.

Today in the literary world of Malayalam, there are those who consider Changampuzha and his Romanticism as alluringly deceptive. One of them has remarked that they are cleaning up the Changampuzha-mud. Even though the cleaning has been going on for a few decades, that mud is not going away. Mud is also a life-aiding factor in an eco-system. If it goes away, that will destroy the eco-system itself. Similar is Changampuzha-mud in poetry.

The progressive writers are the ones who have denigrated Changampuzha and hailed Vailoppilli. They say that Vailoppilli has released poetry from excessive romanticism and made her walk through the land steadfast on the solid ground of scientific understanding. But I am intrigued by the thought that when they recognise what Changampuzha was for that same Vailoppilli they will have an afterthought whether that mud needs to be washed off. I also think that those who abuse Changampuzha do not think of themselves as being better than Vailoppilli. If that is not the case, there is not much left to say.

Nostalgia, sentiment - these are quite natural emotions of the mind. If the mind exists, you cannot dispense of these emotions. New thoughts on modern sensibilities cannot get these out of the mind either. Poetic endeavours arising from conceited logic cannot replace them. That is why Changampuzha still stays relevant. Even though many who are intellectually oriented still refuse to accept Changampuzha, the fact remains that no poet who came later is able to excel him in his poetic splendour. Where lies natural water flow without any restriction? Where lies water coming out of a tap at regular intervals? This old question still remains. It is this difference between the two that exists between Changampuzha's poetry and that modern poetry which sets out to correct the emotional excess of the former.

Even the great poet Vailoppilli could not distance himself from that spiritual influence.

'Singing those poems of that

Young blessed bard of Idappaly,

Then playing with neighbourhood-

Maidens by clapping hands,

Did you hear my voice distinct

One who enquires that next day.'

Vailoppilli had always tried to let his voice be heard distinctly. He has also been satisfactorily successful in that attempt. But still Vailoppilli was only able to love and respect that spiritual influence. He was able to do so because of his belief in his own poetic gifts. He knew that he can steady his feet in the poetic world without berating anyone else. Hence he was able to respect Changampuzha. Some less gifted poets who lacked that sort of confidence marched onward with curse-words dipped in jealousy. The mental state that represents the feeling of awe is what was held by those modern poets of Malayalam who wanted to become leaders of such a movement.

Changampuzha was blazing like the Sun. Many could not even be candles before that Sun. Even Vailoppilli had that anxiety whether his voice would be heard distinctly. Vailoppilli in a verse from 'Kutiyozhippikkal' hinted at this. After going to a neighbouring house to dance Thiruvathira at night, the next morning in asking his lover whether 'you heard my voice distinct', there is a tender experienced presence of love, endearment and romance. The poetic context illustrates that. If that alone was Vailoppilli's intention he could have simply

said 'Thiruvathira song' in a general way. But Vailoppilli did not just say that. He also said that they danced Thiruvathira by 'singing those poems of that young blessed bard of Idappaly'. It is not necessary to specify that this 'young blessed bard of Idappaly' was Changampuzha himself. Vailoppilli was enquiring whether his own voice was heard distinct from the musical wonder of a voice like that of Changampuzha. Those thoughts of his also ended there, where the question was asked. For his voice to be distinctly heard, he did not think of suppressing Changampuzha's voice. That is because Vailoppilli had a mind pure, devoid of envy and radiant with love. Minds that did not possess that purity had to rebuke Changampuzha. They did exactly that, and they continue to do that.

There is also another fact that the modernists who lambast Changampuzha led by their modernist bias do not remember. It was Changampuzha who showed the way for them by translating world poetry into Malayalam. Changampuzha did not just translate poetry regularly from one particular geograpghical region. Chinese, Spanish, Italian, French, German, Russian, and Persian poems were translated. Changampuzha was the first and foremost to present world poetry in its apparent entirety in Malayalam. He opened the pathway for all modernists. Keats, Swinburne, Tennyson, Oscar Wilde, Heine, Omar Khayyam, Chekhov: by translating many like these he created the bridge between Malayalam poetry and world literature. In this regard, it was Changampuzha who unraveled world poetry before Malayalis. One can only find one apparent fault in all this. Whichever poet's works Changampuzha translated, all that became the poetry of Changampuzha. Translation was a creative process for him.

'Palgrave's Golden Treasury' comes in five volumes. The poet G Sankarakurup had remarked that Changampuzha had borrowed this from him and returned it only after six years. During these six years, he translated plenty of poems from those volumes.

The truth is that all the poets and critics who came later failed before the poetry of Changampuzha. None of them had the scales to measure the excellence of that poetry to the full extent.

We often mention the popularity of romantic poetry and Changampuzha's poetry in the same breath. Romanticism infact, has two major streams. There is one method of Romantics that loves life so much and still retains responsibility to the society. Kalidasa, Vallathol and Vailoppilli, all belong to this stream. The second being those who sometimes love life, but at other times reject life. This is the trend of European Later-Romanticism. In those, it lacks consistency. Keats and Swinburne belong to that class. This is more aesthetic, at the same time more emotional too. Changampuzha was also a poet of that bipolarity. It was because of that, the shifting visions in those poems quite visibly displayed extraordinary contradictions. If the same sight instilled two different experiences on two separate occasions, both these will be sketched exactly as they are felt. The contradictions between them in thought or impressions do not matter to the poet.

'Dawn, you showed me

Today a celestial nymph',

Changampuzha who writes this one day, writes the next day:

'Women, women, stylus roots

Of global disaster; hellfires'

One day he writes about Mannath Padmanabhan, Kerala's arch anti-Marxist. The next day he writes about Karl Marx. He sings about what he feels at that time. He instantly transcribes into poetry whatever is felt. He does not bother whether writing gives him gain or care loss. He does not at all care whether what he writes will be considered serious poetry or as lightweight. That is in a way the mark of his sincerity.

'Yesterday night I laid down and

Slept inside the smile of a flower'

He writes one day. The very next day: 'In this too pristine moment, oh virtue, you must die

If my idea is cruel, my dear, you must pardon me too'…

There are many more such examples; this is a very special kind of mental state. Changampuzha never concealed it.

He did not attempt to clarify rationally those feelings that arise from sensations and to elevate those to some serious life perspective. No poet with genius needs to do that. However poetry arises from the depth of the mind, he presented his sensations and impressions in exactly the same manner with delicate, pervasive verbal beauty.

Vailoppilli once remarked that he becomes Changampuzha when he becomes over-emotional. One can understand that being over-emotional is when you actually become a poet. Which means whenever he transforms himself into a poet, he becomes Changampuzha. It means one needs to deliberately cross that river. It is upon such deliberate attempts at crossing that river, poets like Ayyappa Paniker reached somewhere like TS Eliot. Vailoppilli could cross the river and arrive at Vailoppilli himself.

No other poet occupied himself and starred during his whole lifetime in a similar way. Not just in his own lifetime, his radiance illuminates even the times to come.

Changampuzha created a Kerala that cannot contain the change into modernism from his romanticism and into the rationality from the sensibility he represented. Even today in Kerala, the same situation persists.

Some critics think that NV Krishnavarrier released Kerala from such a sensibility. Even if you accept it as such, one question still remains. What Changampuzha was for Kerala as a whole, was NV able to be that? Before that question, the pointed edge of reason breaks down. In searching for an answer to that question, we begin to understand Changampuzha even more deeply.

It is a curious hypocrisy in criticism to belittle Changampuzha and his romanticism. That is also the same hypocrisy in arguing that an ordinary enthusiast's level is in any way below that of a learned enthusiast.

Leslie Fiedler in his book 'Is there a majority literature?' shattered this assumption. In that book he asks, 'is the sensibility of a reader who has not acquired technical expertise any lower than one who has acquired that?' He argues that the answer is 'no'. Changampuzha was a poet of the former kind. But the latter ones, can they witness the flow of his words without any wonder? Then gradually comes the recognition that Changampuzha was a poet of both these kinds, everyone's poet in this regard.

What is also true is that Changampuzha's poetry has never given in to critics. If not they would not have collected poems of Idappally and Changampuzha and blanketed it as 'Idappaly-movement'. Where lies Changampuzha's poetry which was obsessed with life? Where lies Edappally's poetry which springs from an aversion to life? One has optimism and the lust of life. The other has pessimist thoughts and a sniff of death. How can one assimilate these two? Where is the literary contribution of Changampuzha that lies like an ocean in frost? Where lies the limited poems of Idappally? The truth is that there isn't any comparison between the two. Changampuzha's poetry was like a natural mountain stream.

These two lines of Changampuzha offer a definition of the poet and his poetry.

'How many worlds upon meditation

will once upon a time arrive this voice;

The very best of inside will know well

its divine greatness inside the heart.'

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Aesthetics of Humour As Reflected In the Santhal Folktales of Jharkhand

SHALINI PALLAVI & M. RAMAKRISHNAN

Shalini Pallavi

Abstract

Occupying an important place within the domain of oral literature, folktales are rich resources for various studies as they are embedded with the messages that deal with all aspects of human societies, and that could be seen as the reason for why they are not merely confined to the realm of interest of children. Though folktales are well known for being orally transmitted across cultures and communities they enjoy other medium for their transmission in the modern context. This simple form of storytelling, in fact, having its message covering simple to complex concepts and ideas, signifying the universality of human psychic conditions with cultural variations and similarities in terms of structure and creativity, the folktales can be studied for understanding the nuances of culture in the backdrop of their social and cultural milieu. For the commonsensical understanding, folktales are chiefly having entertaining aspects, as part of harnessing the attention of the audience who happened to be children, for the purpose of making them to imbibe the message or lesson found within, through a technique of giving sugar coated bills, humour found in them must be treated as an important component that needs special attention since it has various functions that are undeniably significant for the humanity, or universal component of human life. Humour in folktales doesn't seem to appear monotonous or as a mechanical device, but they reflect a lot of aesthetics, creativity and human imagination that distinguish and celebrate various shades and colours of human life. By taking few folktales from the Santhals of Jharkhand, this article proceeds to delineate not only the inherent features, characteristics and functions of the humour found in these folktales, but also the multi-facets of aesthetics that underscores the fact that the moral and ethical dimensions are inseparable components of humour and aesthetics of the marginalized communities.

Keywords: aesthetics, humour, folktale, philosophy, ethics, worldview

Introductioan

The ethnographic account of the Santhals points out that they belong to the Austroasiatic language speaking Munda ethnic group largely settled in Jharkhand and West Bengal and also found settled in different strength in Odisha, Bihar and Assam. A considerable amount of

Santhals are also found outside India, such as Nepal and Bangladesh. In the absence of archaeological evidences, their folklore locate their place of origin to Hihiri (which is identified as Ahuri in Hazaribagh district' (S.C. Karuna 2006: 592-599)), and later they had been pushed to Chota Nagpur Plateau from where they migrated to other areas gradually. The social life of the Santhals is quite interesting as the society is founded on the distinction between "brother" and "guest", although it is a common

M. Ramakrishnan phenomenon in many tribal societies in India, and the society is considered as egalitarian due to its less stratification. The myth of the Santhals narrates the origin of their twelve totemic clans that are identified with their surnames such as Hansda, Murmu, Marandi, Kisku, Soren, Hembrom, Tudu, Baskey, Besra, Caure, Pauria and Donker. The cultural life of the Santhals is marked with festivals, celebrations, rituals, ceremonies, rites, worships, music and dances that integrate a variety of cultural and creative forms that can be grouped under the major categories of oral literature, material culture, performing arts and social customs and beliefs. These materials have symbolic values for them, and with which they have never failed to communicate with other community members. Their spiritual life is occupied by the *bongas*, the benevolent spirits that fill ups their physical and psychological spaces, and similarly its counterpart, the malevolent spirit, is also found to be having an inseparable bond with the Santhals who see these *bongas* in stratified and diversified states. The sacred grove is always part of any Santhal village and known as *jaher*, this grove is an abode for the *bongas* – thus, this nature worship could be seen as synonymous for the community. However, this study is limited to the oral literature of the Santhals, and particularly, it is confined to the folktales that have humour as its principle content which has been seen from the aesthetic perspective for exploring the complexity of some of the concepts such as morality and ethics. The folktales available in print have been chosen for this study and the acknowledgements and credit lines are mentioned along with the text.

There is an advantage of having aesthetic as a perspective in approaching the nature of humour found in Santhal folktales. Being flexible and multi-faceted, the concept of aesthetics provides the theoretical framework for judging the object by introducing a judgemental value, or a value based on attitude or experience. However, the reason the object demands to designate its aesthetic value, or to differentiate and elevate it to the level of priority, cannot be seen as a strategy to denigrate other objects that are practical in nature. It is thus clarified here that the objective of having aesthetics as a tool is to even highlight, or to add new value to, the phenomenological and representational content already present in the texts or objects. The identification and justification of some of the properties of the text or object, or redefining/ redesignating them, within the framework of aesthetics could be considered as useful because nothing is added from outside. (For brief discussion on the historical development of concept of aesthetics including aesthetic judgement and aesthetic experience, see Ramakrishnan, M. and Shalini Pallavi 2024). This aesthetic framework draws heavily on the aesthetic judgement and aesthetic experience in which the former is based on the ability that we have to discriminate

either at sensory level or beyond, and here aesthetic judgement cannot go away from the notion of disgust, i.e., a rejection or dissonance. The aesthetic judgement is based on disciplinary training, culture, sentiments, emotions, subconscious behaviour, conscious decisions, social institutions, etc., (Aesthetics 2024) and since aesthetic orientation differs with forms. Though it is difficult to frame a set of universal criteria to experience the aesthetics of variety of objects and all kinds of forms, the following six universal elements of human aesthetics have been provided by Denis Dutton: 1. Expertise or virtuosity (cultivation, recognition and admiration of artistic skills); 2. Non-utilitarian pleasure (refer to the art for art's sake); 3. Style (satisfied with the style because of conformity of rules in composition); 4. Criticism (judgement, appreciation and interpretation by people); 5. Imitation (stimulating experiences of the world); and 6. Special focus (facilitates a dramatic focus of experience). There are exclusions in the list as pointed out by Thomas Hischhorn (2013), and another criticism, for example André Malraux, moved around the problem of universalization as some of the elements are non-existent in many cultures (André Malraux 2009). However, aesthetics is not far away from ethics, because they must be in the hand in hand relationship and there is a purpose for it. A philosophical rationale might be formed by bringing together aesthetics and ethics, according to James Smith Page (2017). The aesthetics has not been away from any debates and discussion, and beyond agreements and disagreements, as a matter of convenience, one must understand the uncanny nature of it or the inherent sublime, or sublimation and the thing, as clearly theorized by Jacques Lacan (1962) following Freud and Maurice Jean Jacques Merleau-Ponty. However, aesthetics is now emerged as a tool for approaching cultural objects, and it also brings under its cloud various ("aesthetic") "objects" or "products" for analysis and interpretation, and while employing, this study considers the criticism on the philosophy of aesthetics put forth by various thinkers including Raymond Williams (1977), Pierre Bourdieu (1984), Timothy Laurie (2014), etc. On this background, the aesthetics, in this study, doesn't aim to identify these select folktales as specific or unique aesthetic objects rather it places them within continuum of a large domain of oral literature that belong to a folk or community. Treating aesthetics as a plausible framework for handling the humorous elements found in the Santhal folktales is a matter of convenience because of its boundary that is flexible and porous to receive and accommodate substance from outside, and also to interpret non-thematic elements that significantly associated with and moved to construct the theme on the line of narrative trajectory.

Humour that appears either in daily language use or narratives or other media necessitates discussions and critical inputs as it has always been treated as it is expressed merely humorously or just for humour. In philosophy, or at least in literature, from ancient to modern times, humor or laughter has always been found its presence whether implicitly or explicitly. The philosophers and thinkers like Frances Hutcheson, James Beattie, Plato, Hobbes, Kant, Henri Bergson, etc. had expressed their thoughts on humour. The book on Laughter by Henri Bergson published in 1900 is considered as noteworthy, and Plato in his *Republic* (388e) warned the Guardians to stay away from violent laugher because of its malicious

nature and that could lead to violent reaction. Moreover, he understood the laughter as a form of scorn, or a kind of evil or a vice, and the reflection of self-ignorance (*Philebus*, 48-50) and he advocated for the right control over it. Aristotle agreed with Plato's notion that humour expresses scorn, but had treated wit as a valuable part of conversation (*Nicomachean Ethics* 4, 8) as well an insolence of the educated (*Rhetoric* 2, 12). The other notions about laughter includes that it should not loud, frequent and unrestrained (Epictetus, Enchiridion 33) and it diminishes self-control (Plato, *Nicomachean Ethics* 4, 8). The objection to laughter and humour is even found the Bible and the mockery had been treated as offensive. For Descartes, who considered laughter as associated with three of the basic emotions such as wonder, love, hatred, desire, joy, and sadness; it is an expression of scorn and ridicule (*Passions of the Soul*, 178-179). The modern theory of superiority proposed by Roger Scruton treated laugher is the expression of superiority either over other or over former state of oneself. Considering that laughter demolishes attention of a person, Roger Scruton mentions that "if people dislike being laughed at, it is surely because laughter devalues its object in the subject's eyes" (quoted in Morreall 1987:168). Though Francis Hutcheson (1750) denied this superiority notion, it is seen as a way of giving relief to oneself as John Dewey mentioned (1894: 558–559). However, the relief theory is better (re)presented by Sigmund Freud who analyzed three laughter situations - "der Witz" (superfluous energy to repress feelings), the "comic" (energy used to think) and "humour" (energy of feeling emotions).(*Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905 [1974])). In this understanding, comparing it with the hydraulic model, of *der Witz*, our unconscious repressed thoughts and feelings find way to conscious mind – which is rejected with the help of examples from professional humorists. However, Freud's theory of laughter or humour is seldom used for general understanding or explanation.

The incongruity aspect of humour, a dominant notion of humour in philosophy and psychology, reveals that when something is congruous it violates our mental patterns and expectations. For instance, for James Beattie (1779), something funny "always proceeds from a sentiment or emotion, excited in the mind, in consequence of certain objects or ideas being presented to it" (James Beattie 1779:304). The humorous laughter is created when "two or more inconsistent, unsuitable, or incongruous parts or circumstances, considered as united in one complex object or assemblage, as acquiring a sort of mutual relation from the peculiar manner in which the mind takes notice of them" (James Beattie 1779:320). In humour, for Kant, our reason does not find anything worth, and comparing it with enjoyment of games and music to point out in all these there is a shifting of sensation along with the shifting of ideas. But for Kierkegaard, it is not incongruity but contradiction that is the essence of humour, that is, between what is expected and what is experienced (1846 [1941]: 459–468). Thus, for him, tragic and comic are same, that is, they are based on contradiction – tragic is suffering contradiction and comic is painless contradiction. Laugher as a result of incongruity considered as irrational and Kant's notion of laughter as pleasure is assumed more physical than intellectual. In the ancient time, the ritualized form of comedy was

contrasted with tragedy, in the sense that if tragedy valorizes serious and emotional life problems including extreme, then, in contrast, comedy embodies anti-heroic and pragmatic attitude towards life's incongruities (John Morreall 2023). When tragedy is seen concerned with matter of royals such as kings, queens, etc., then comedy is filled with characters and protagonists from lower classes. The same difference can be found in the language usage – while tragedy employs elevated language, comedy uses common speech.

Treating humour on par with play, or "the play of thought" according to Kant for whom that has no value other than stimulating internal organs, offers provides occasional rest, in Aristotle's way is extended by Thomas Aquinas, like resting the body for bodily tiredness and resting the soul for psychological tiredness (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* 2a2ae, Q. 168). Humour is seen associated with abilities that are related to thinking and interacting with other people, and there are certain conversation rules that are being broken while joking. (H.P. Grice 1975). When humour becomes a form of activity, it cannot be misunderstood as serious activity, that is, it must have, in ethnologists' terms, "play signals" (smiling and laughing, for example). The social benefits of humour is recognized by Thomas Aquinas who sees a person who is not humorous as someone who goes "against reason" and thus guilty of a vice (John Morreall 2023). Confirming Aquinas' assessment of humour as virtuous, Ted Cohen mentioned the role of humour in fostering tolerance for ambiguity and diversity apart from its role in problem solving. Moreover, he also highlighted the function of humour as social lubricant, engendering trust and reducing conflict, and it tends "to evoke negative emotions—announcing bad news, apologizing, complaining, warning, criticizing, commanding, evaluating—humor can provide delight that reduces or even blocks negative emotions" (Ted Cohen, 1999, cf. John Morreall 2023). Play activities are common in animals and also in humans and they are filled with fun, and they help the participants to learn many skills in the safe settings. However, making jokes with negative stereotypes cannot be considered as positive as they reflect the nature of prejudice and injustice. Sometimes, humour expressions are morally objectionable for being perpetuating stereotypes since they block compassion and responsible action.

Oral literature offer means for understanding human society and its various shades of lived experiences, and it could be understood from the metaphorical expression of life as a narrative, and while narratives reflects one or two problems initially or in the middle, they are resolved to have happy endings. Here the beauty of the narrative is to make us to understand the reality of our real life by creating a form that needs to be filled with conflicts and solution. Interestingly, the problems and their solutions are not presented in raw form, rather they are well delineated with the help of poetically, aesthetically represented and reflected through figures of speech such as metaphors, metonymies, similes, personification, apostrophe, alliteration, assonance, hyperbole, euphemism, antithesis, oxymoron, epigram, irony, pun, synecdoche, and transferred epithet – which make the oral literature suitable for linguistic study. According to Roland Barthes, "the narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different

substances – as though any material were fit to receive man's stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting … stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives … Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself." (Barthes, 1977: 79, quoted in Ramakrishnan 2021: 2006).

Here are few Santhal folktales with which this article proceeds to explain aesthetic aspect of (folk) humour, and it is merely an indicative attempt, not to generalize, but to highlight the fact that humour itself provides aesthetic experience. All the five tales used in this study are taken from P.O. Bodding' *Santal Folktales* (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2007): 1. The Stupid Son-in-Law (pp. 26-33); 2. The Young Man Who Passed the Vegetable on His Way to His Father-in-Law (pp. 56-61); 3. The Story of a Stingy Girl (pp. 54-59); 4. The Man with a Growth in the Forehead (pp. 94-101); and 5. The Story of Two Tricksters (pp. 260-269). The tales chosen here as they seem to be different and they present examples for imagination that is not fallen on the line of ordinary, and it is also to admit that they are merely indicative than exhaustive. The joyfulness and also the playfulness present in the folktales could be seen as the reflection of the simplicity of the Santhal community. And, we are here to reiterate that these tales are not simply humorous but a lot of aesthetics could be explored, and without which these tales may not be truly impressive and beautiful. This short description of each tale will point to the idea that a plenty of opportunities are there in daily life to be joyful as well playful with humours and jokes.

'The Stupid Son-in-Law' presents a humour that is based on the misunderstanding of language use. It is a simple folk tale that delineates the nuances of family relationship as well as and the complexity of language use. The son-in-law made a visit to his in-laws house alone. His mother-in-law was engaged in cooking rice and curry with bamboo shoot. When he was served meal, he thought it was meat curry. He was still confused a bit as he couldn't find any lumps. So he straightly asked her. She said, "Look there what is at the back of you, my son-in-law, that is what I have made into curry for you." So he turned around and saw there was a bamboo door at the back of him. Impressed with the delicious curry and thought that it was made up of bamboo door, he lifted door and reached home when everyone was asleep at his in-law house. When she found the door was missing, she laughed loudly, and told everyone how her son-in-law was dreadfully stupid. Reaching home, he asked his wife to prepare curry of the bamboo door. Unable to refuse, she prepared it and served him. When he tried to bite the bamboo, he felt it was hard. Now she couldn't control herself, and she burst into laugh in which he also joined. The joking relationship between son-in-law and his in-laws is creatively utilized here, particularly with the help of bamboo-shoot curry, a

savoury food, associated with few communities having access to bamboo. Being a person from the same community, he is expected to know about it. But the whole idea of dreadful stupidity is manufactured by twisting him as an ignorant to what is he supposed to be familiar with it. A play of words is beautifully employed, that is, the mother-in-law's reference to the name ("bamboo") ("Look there what is at the back of you") is understood by him as "bamboo door." The light moment of story is that it evokes laughter at three places. While two happen within the narrative and the third happens outside the narrative structure. For example, the first happens when the mother-in-law explained the matter her daughters, and second, his wife's outburst with laughter which was later joined by her husband by realizing his stupidity; and third, it is by the readers.

The second tale, 'The Young Man Who Passed the Vegetable on his way to his Father-in-law' offers another example in which the son-in-law is projected as stupid. The story goes like this. A young man was on his way to his father-in-law's home to bring his wife back. While walking through a forest, he saw a 'death vegetable' climber. With the intention to have feast at in-law's hose, he didn't want to fill his stomach eating the plant. So when he was offered excellent savoury curry and rice, he felt naturally very glad and burst out laughing. That is, he remembered the 'death vegetable.' Misunderstood and felt insulted by his laugh, his brother in law slapped him and drove him away. On his return, he passed that 'death vegetable' and told himself, "If I had taken and eaten this previously, perhaps I should not have had this experience." The embarrassing situation of having had a chance to lose something good has caused him naturally to laugh, and as it happens within oneself, it has provoked the others. Here, the existing belief about the death vegetable is used creatively for constructing this humour.

'The Story of a Stingy Girl' is known for its good imagination that offers an incident in which a stingy girl is being taught a lesson by her father. A man visited another village to see his daughter who was married and settled with her husband and three or four children. On the way he saw an eatable herb and though he was hungry, he didn't want to eat it thinking that he would get good food there. His son-in-law, a good hunter, brought a peacock. However, his daughter forced her father return home under hot sun without giving him food. The old man understood that they would not give him food. Before he left, he advised his daughter, "If he should happen to kill a peacock or the like, be sure to prepare the flesh with mahua oil-cake; it is very savoury." She prepared the curry in the same way what her father told, and it was extremely bitter taste. He understood the fact that his father in law left without food. Here the humorous aspect of the story is that the father took revenge or taught a lesson to his daughter in a funny way and understanding her ignorance about the mahua-oil cake.

Similarly, 'The Man with a Growth in the Forehead' talks about the relationship between husband and wife. The wife did not like to go out anywhere with her husband because he had a growth in his forehead. If they happened to go together, then she would say: "He is giving himself airs and is putting himself forward. Whoever is to have a move in your

company?" In reply he would laugh shrilly which would make her abuse him as "you horrible looking beast!" whenever she scolded him, he grinned and laughed and it made him more vivacious. In this way they would poke jokes at each other (seen as a healthy symptom for family life as the narrator/story-teller put it). Now and then she would cause him pain; still he would bear it. Once she went to attend the *pata* festival alone since for her he was the "horned beast" and people would laugh at her. However, he borrowed some cloths from neighbour and secretly attended the festival with loincloth and turban, so nobody could recognize him. In the festival, he beat drum and danced mostly in front his wife. His wife noticed him and his growth in the forehead, but she was unable to recognize him. He reached home before her and on her arrival she asked him reason for not attending the festival. When he told her about her warning, she realized her mistake of fault-finding with him. Thereafter they lived happily. The humorous aspect of the tale is that it moves on to expose a small problem with the help of local elements that are beautifully interwoven to convey the message which is powerful and realistic. The metonymical representation of the growth in the forehead is effectively used to reflect the rejection of his personality, and later with its help he made her to realize her fault line. The *pata* festival, drum beating, dancing, etc are the elements that belong to the local or cultural settings. Therefore the aesthetics of this humour must be seen from the social and cultural dimension as well as psychological aspect in reiterating the role of or function in binding human relationship.

'The Story of Two Tricksters' is another tale that presents healthy tests between two trickster-friends who wanted to know who the best is. One day seven-trickster visited single trickster's house, and knowing about his coming, the single trickster brought a beautiful girl and hid in his home. Pretending to beat his old wife with mallet, he exchanged his wife with a beautiful girl. The seven-trickster thought if he also beat his wife with mallet, she would also turn into a young beautiful girl. So the trickster secretly took the mallet with him and tried. When no result came he came back to Single Trickster's house and the later told him that single hard blow would yield result. Next, he visited single trickster's house and now the single-trickster trickily showed him how hunting dog could bring home hare. So thinking the dog as extraordinary, the seven trickster stole the dog in the night to be realized later that how he was fool. The similar test was with the fishing-rod that the single-trickster projected as it would drive the fish strait home. So, the seven-trickster took the fish-rod to be realized that how he was fooled. And he accepted the fact that he was no match for the single trickster. The humour is highly imaginative and has brought together too many things to claim that folklife is no nonsensical.

Concluding Remarks: Oral literature cannot be ignored in the development of humour studies, and similarly, the humour studies must consider the interdisciplinary approaches since various elements are taking part in the construction of aesthetics of humour or humours aesthetically. Moreover, it cannot be an exaggeration to claim that the humour has added new dimension to the literature and literary studies. The narrative structures of oral literature can be seen as they accommodate the humour as one of their vital components in shaping and

presenting the humour as more aesthetically appreciable. As these tales are becoming examples, one could understand that the oral narratives have humour-generating strategies that can be seen inter-mixed with the narrative structure. The construction of characters can also be seen as having a vital role in this context. The humour that explodes within the narrative structure has its impact either on the audience or readers, and it could be seen throughout the narrative or at the end of the narrative. The figures of speech are highly motivational and indispensible aspects of humour and they make the humours as more aesthetically enjoyable. Almost all these humorous tales make us to remember what Elliott Oring said that "some jokes are truly beautiful." (2003: ix). These tales are creative and aesthetically enjoyable as they are almost akin to plays that give us relaxation. They have every element to claim that they are the borderline case of art and they never failed to reflect human condition. The humorous tales take the genre to the next level through aesthetically incorporating elements from daily life into the narrative, and also they present their own perspective on human situations. Further, to appreciate the aesthetics of humorous tales presented here, the characters (performers) and their activities (performances) need to be extensively analyzed, and interestingly, these jokes are sometimes esoteric because they carry some of the social and cultural values associated with the community to which they belong. Therefore, to enjoy these humorous tales and remember them for sharing them with others, they must possess elements that are conditioned by aesthetics so that they come to mind during our conversation or speech situation. Finally, as the humour reflected in these tales highlight the point that humour is not an isolated entity, rather it is part and parcel of human social and cultural life and the strong relationship between individuals or groups can be achieved through as well as all the problems associated with human relations can be rectified through humours, particularly the humours that are aesthetically humorous.

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Theorising a New Postulate of Laughter: An Analysis and Development of the Legacy of Humour

PRACHI BEHRANI, VINAYA KUMAR & BEULAH VICTOR

Prachi Behrani

Abstract

The definition of humour is subjective. What may be laughable to one may be offensive to the other. Over the centuries, the principles involving humour have evolved. From laughing at the inferior to seeking humour in the absurd, to finding pleasure in pain as a form of catharsis, the theories of humour have proven themselves dynamic. The 21st century theorists such as Peter McGraw draw from their forebearers such as Aristotle, Plato, Thomas Hobbes, Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer and Sigmund Freud to explain the contemporary functionality of humour as a study of what makes people laugh. This study points out to the inadequacies in the pre-existing theories and posits the question: does a universal and an invariable theory exist for humour? This research studies the historical references and examples shared by the philosophers to theorise a postulate which can amalgamate all the elements of laughter.

Keywords: humour, comedy, laughter, literary theory, Aristotle, Freud

Introduction

Humour, comedy and laughter are perpetual and have known to exist both with and devoid of woes, tragedy and pain. Despite the presence of multiple theories and research by philosophers, we are still devoid of an omnirelevant theory of humour. In the first century, Roman Quintilian in his *Institutes of the Orator* had expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that though many had tried, no one could find an all-pervading theory of laughter. The study of humour and laughter is of serious concern, as John Morreal points out, "As we set out to understand laughter, then, we stand forewarned not only of the great diversity of situations in which it occurs, but of the anomalous character of the behaviour itself" (Morreal 3).

This research studies the inadequacies found in the traditional theories of humour, namely, the Superiority Theory, the Incongruity Theory and the Relief Theory. In addition to highlighting the major principles and shortcomings of the theories, it is also vital to study the 21st century Benign-Violation Theory to prove that though it is a more developed version of the aforementioned theories, it isn't completely accurate and always applicable. Depending upon both, the historical references and the contemporary situations, the reader might look for a uniform theory of humour.

The Theories of Humour from 360 B.C. to 21st Century

First witnessed as early as 360 B.C in Plato's in *Philebus*, the **Superiority Theory** of laughter studies it as a form of pleasure derived out of malice (50). Developed further in 335 B.C. by Aristotle in his *Poetics*, it refers to laughing at the 'inferior' and the 'disgraceful' (9). In other words, it refers to the humour created at the assumed superiority over the others. It can also be noticed in Cicero's 55 B.C. text which refers to laughter at the 'physical blemishes' of the 'pantaloon' such as his appearance, his mannerism, his exaggerated mimicry and his social condition of being inferior to the rest (*On the Ideal Orator* 373). Thus, the first theory of humour can be called the oldest, the most popular and the most ancient theory concerning the joys of the humans received due to the flaws of the inferior.

This theory also extends to the 17th century where Thomas Hobbes, in his *Leviathan*, points out that laughter is the result of one's "sudden glory" created due to comparison with a "deformed" subject (46). He also points out that this applause of oneself is due to the correlation of the superior with the absurd (*Elements of Law, Natural and Politic* 34). As a form of derision, it refers to ridicule and mockery at the mischances of others. Often, people release their agony or the contempt for the other by laughing at their apparent inferiority. This can also be why Konrad Lorenz refers to laughter as a guided form of aggression. Thus, when the emotional hostility, comparison resulting in dominance and supremacy, and disapproval of the inferior subject, together convert into the physical form of laughter, the Superiority Theory of humour may be witnessed. John Morreal in his 1982 text *Taking Laughter Seriously*, explains how being the most popular theory, the derisive form of laughter "is almost the only kind of laughter found in the Bible" (Morreal 9). In addition to this, one notices examples of laughter at the cost of others in various cultures. Alfred North Whitehead is known to narrate the story that when some of their people were in Africa during the war, the "Negroes" came laughing after going down to the stream. The subject of their joke was that a crocodile had taken away one of their men (Morreal 9). This incident proves that the laughter of the people emerged from the misfortunes of one person, and the others merely laughed at their superiority of being saved. Morreal points out, "In cultures like Samoa cruel laughter and the laugh of ridicule seem to be the dominant kinds of laughter. Among the Greenland Eskimo, contests of ridicule were once their only judicial procedure, even for such offenses as murder" (9). In addition to this many modern-day comedians are known to be successful due to their act of "singling people out of the audience and mocking them in great detail about their race, accent, clothing, ugliness, etc." (9). Satires based on political figures also employ methods to belittle the figure of authority, thus seeking superiority over them through sarcasm and wit. This proves that the Superiority Theory is applicable almost everywhere – religion, politics, society, culture and the entertainment aspect of life.

However, the major drawback of the Superiority Theory serves to be its limitation on the type of laughter arising from matters apart from comparison. For example, laughter due to being tickled, due to sheer absurdities and due to surprise or shock are not explained by the theory. Hutchenson, in the 18th century, disregards Hobbe's ideation of humour only due to

superiority. He points out that incidents due to reasons other than superiority may also elicit laughter and that not all incidents of superiority result in laughter. Thus, "If both these conclusions be false, the notion from whence they are drawn must be so too" (*Reflections Upon Laughter* 109- 110). It is the **Incongruity Theory** which may suffice this. This theory can also be traced back to Aristotle's opinion of comedy being a result of anything which may be a "mistake" or "unseemliness" (*Poetics* 9). It can also refer to Cicero's opinion that laughter may be a result of the breaking of expectations, for when one is hoping to hear one phrase but hears something else (*On the Ideal Orator* 389). This can also refer to verbal puns, shocking remarks or unexpected utterances. David Hartley discusses laughter as a result of inconsistencies highlighting that the reason children laugh when tickled, is due to the initial assumption of upcoming pain, minute discomfort and its immediate removal (*Observations on Man 274-275*). Immanuel Kant strengthened this opinion in the late 18th century (1790) by stating, "there must be something absurd (in which the understanding, therefore, can find no satisfaction). Laughter is an affection arising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing" (*Critique of Judgement* 223). To explain this, Kant shares the story of an Indian on the table with an Englishman who is astonished on seeing a bottle of ale being opened only to let out overflowing beer turned into froth. When the Englishman asks him the reason for his astonishment, he answers, "I am not at all astonished that it should flow out, but I do wonder how you ever got it in" (224). This incident appears funny to the readers not merely because of their superiority over the foolish man, but due to the absurdity of the situation. It creates an expectation in the readers and then diminishes it. Thus, according to Kant, it is important for an incident to appear incongruous to make them laugh. Kant further differentiates between the intentional and the unintentional subversion of expectation and states that while the former may be referred to as "humorous", the person who indulges in the latter can be called a "man of humours" (228). In addition to Kant, Schopenhauer is an eminent philosopher associated with the Incongruity Theory. He points out that it is the "incongruity" or the lack of semblance between "a concept and the real objects" which are humorous (76). He discusses laughter as a result of astonishment both in action and through puns and wordplay (76-79). Though absurdity proves to be a strong reason behind laughter it may not always be true. William Hazlitt in his *Lectures on the English Comic* that incongruity or the shattering of one's expectations may sometimes also result in tears or suffering. This is explained by Søren Kierkegaard when he explains, "The tragic and the comic are the same, in so far both are based on contradiction, but the tragic is the suffering contradiction, the comical, the painless contradiction" (459).

However, there pervades another form of laughter which emerges due to the tragic suffering as well. A laughter which is neither the result of boastful superiority nor of benign absurdities. This form of laughter is what may be the best described by Herbert Spencer and Sigmund Freud in the **Relief Theory**. Spencer in the 19th century describes it to be a hysterical release resulting from minor pain or "mental distress" and a form of joy attained on evading "grave feelings" (407- 410). Freud develops it further in the 20th century describing it to be a release of repressed feelings (87). He points out that jokes on restrained matters or taboos are

capable of relieving pleasure even from the sources which have been subjected to repression, assisting in "overcoming of external obstacles" (131). Thus, to Freud, certain jokes, such as the tendentious jokes are made with the purpose to release sentiments regarding matters which may otherwise be deemed inappropriate or wrong as per the society. These jokes let one release the pent-up emotions regarding the same matters. For instance, when one wishes to insult a person, the person might initially feel inhibitions due to the social propriety and basic politeness. However, instead of insulting the person, if one converts the anger or the offensive statements into a joke, the person would derive pleasure without being chided for being improper. Thus, humour as per the relief theory is described as a subtle method of rebellion along with mental relief. This is a form in which humour may turn therapeutic for people. However, these jokes would only align with the theory as long as the other person does not take offence. If the impact of the jokes is negative, pleasure would cease to exist. To fulfil this gap, Joel Warner and Peter McGraw, in 2015, have devised what is known as the **Benign- Violation Theory**. It can be explained through the following diagram:

Fig 1. Peter McGraw and Joel Warner, *The Humor Code: A Global Search for What Makes Things Funny,* 2015, p. 26

This 21st century theory also marks itself as the most developed and the most applicable theory of laughter. It means that for something to be humorous or laughable, it must first be a violation, meaning something away from the ordinary or incongruous. Next, the absurdity must be benign or harmless (24-26). This includes the three major theories of humour and
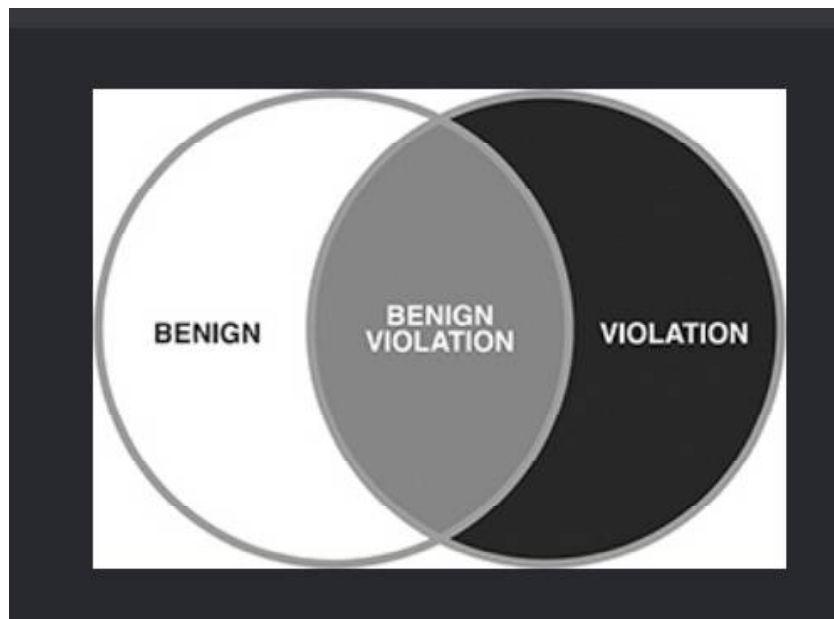
fills in the gaps they have left behind. For instance, if the Superiority Theory suggests that laughter at the cost of the inferior may not always generate laughter, the new theory suggests

that laughter may only be produced if the degradation or the joke made at the cost of the subject must be harmless or benign to them. If the Incongruity Theory may fall short of laughter due to some absurdities generating pain or leading to tragic suffering, the new theory provides the element of benignity, suggesting the presence of a comic contradiction. It also suffices the lack of the Relief Theory by keeping the tendentious jokes moderate enough so that the repressed sources release pleasure without harming the social order.

However, the aforementioned theory also finds itself inadequate in certain matters. For instance, its lack of focus on subjectivity. What may appear benign to the 'laugher' may be a mere violation to the subject being laughed at. This may put forth the questions about the parties involved in conditions of humour: "Who laughs at whom?" and "When is it inoffensive to laugh at miseries of others/ of oneself?". It also makes one wonder about the nature of the humour, wondering about its subjectivity, meaning what may be laughable to one may not be laughable to others, and its impact, which could either be the eruption of laughter or a negative reaction. The question can also be on the technique of humour or the jokes, the intention behind it and its success in reaching the audience. Arthur Beger depicts the techniques to make people laugh in great detail in his 2013 article:

Fig 2. Arthur Asa Berger. "Forty-Five Ways to Make 'Em Laugh." *Israeli Journal of Humor Research*, no. 3, June 2013, p. 47

Berger claims, "I believe explain more adequately than other theories of humor what it is that generates humor in texts of all kinds" (45). His high claim is justified with the notion that "humor is a very complicated phenomenon that people with different perspectives see in

LANGUAGE	LOGIC	IDENTITY	ACTION
Allusion	Absurdity	Before/After	Chase
Bombast	Accident	Burlesque	Slapstick
Definition	Analogy	Caricature	Speed
Exaggeration	Catalogue	Eccentricity	
Facetiousness	Coincidence	Embarrassment	
Insults	Comparison	Exposure	
Infantilism	Disappointment	Grotesque	
Irony	Ignorance	Imitation	
Misunderstanding	Mistakes	Impersonation	
Over literalness	Repetition	Mimicry	
Puns/Wordplay	Reversal	Parody	
Repartee	Rigidity	Scale	
Ridicule	Theme & Var.	Stereotype	
Sarcasm	Unmasking		
Satire			

various ways" (45). The primary fact here is that he lists majorly the "techniques". This means that his focus is the deliberate attempt to make the other person laugh. His techniques,

even if explained in great detail, are meant only for the laughter of the audience. He answers the question "what makes others laugh" adequately but leaves the elements of "why do people laugh" and "what makes one laugh" entirely.

To answer this, and with the legacy of all the aforementioned theories, one may devise a new postulate from their shortcomings. In brief, a theory to be all inclusive may include the following:

- Laughter at the cost of the subject as long as the degradation is benign
- If the joke is not benign presently, the provision of enough time to make the impact softer
- Humour due to incongruence is only laughable when the expectations rise and climax to a positive note of relief
- When laughter erupts from tendentious jokes, the audience must be kept in mind
- Laughter erupting from repressed sources must be considerate of the audience
- Self- derogatory laughter must not be a form of representation for the entire group/ community

The theories also prove that humour, comedy and laughter serve the following purpose

- A weapon to belittle or uplift someone
- A social corrective or satire
- A coping mechanism (by releasing pent-up nervous energy)
- A way to hide pain behind the mask of jokes and laughter
- A form of entertainment and exercise

Conclusion

The Superiority Theory dwells mostly on the intentional humour derived from belittling the other subject who becomes the source of comedy, while the former person takes the role of the "laugher". The Incongruity Theory involves laughter at the cost of existing absurdities, the "laugher" is the audience witnessing the incongruity and not the one creating it. The relief Theory involves humour through the subject's repressed emotions and the "laugher" is the same person or group who releases the emotions. The Benign-Violation Theory involves humour through a violation of the common norm, softened with the element of harmlessness, the person to whom the situation appears benign becomes the "laugher".

The study of the theories of humour from the ancient philosophies to the contemporary researches proves that so far, no adequate and uniform postulate has been formed regarding the functioning of the same. Through the in-depth analysis of their inadequacies and the techniques involved to make a person laugh, the following axiom may be proposed:

"The 'laugher' and the 'laughee' Theory"

Wherein, the 'laugher' is the person laughing and the 'laughee' is the subject of the joke or the one being laughed at. Laughter is the voluntary or the involuntary release of positive and/or negative sentiments, arising as a response to the subject's perception of joy, or in order to lead oneself to the same. It involves the 'laugher's' power to belittle the 'laughee' if they're at an inferior social position by insulting them, and to subvert the power of the 'laughee' if they're deemed superior by the society by elements such as satire. When the 'laughee' employs humour to convert himself/herself into the 'laugher', laughter converts into a form of coping mechanism and a method to release the pain gathered while he/she were a 'laughee'. It may also serve to form a pretence until enough time has passed for the 'laughee' to actually attain the position of a 'laugher'. To both the parties involved, laughter may serve as a form of entertainment. The scope of laughter fits in everywhere, and this theory might serve to form a legacy of an adequate theory.

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Education and Gender: A Study on Early Indian Women's Writing

D. MURALI MANOHAR

Abstract

This paper will look at how women struggled to obtain education in the orthodox society during late 19th century India. The books that will be used are: Non Fictional work such as Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati's *The High Caste Hindu Woman* (1888); and the literary works such as Sevantibai M. Nikambe's *Ratanbai: A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife* (1895) and Krupabai Satthianadhan's *Saguna: The First Autobiographical Novel in English by an Indian Woman* (1895).

Keywords: education, gender, caste, Indian women, Hindu, orthodoxy

Introduction

Education has been a tool for any human being for self-improvement since times immemorial. There has been discrimination in education based on caste, class and gender. This paper will look at how women have been descriminated and denied education by the patriarchal orthodox society in the late nineteenth century. The discrimination has been on women in general irrespective of their being upper caste or lower caste. If upper caste women had a problem in getting educated one can imagine the fate of the lower castes. They could never think of gaining education.

Who led this movement?

The movement that was led during late nineteenth century was an upper caste Brahmin woman named Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati who wrote the non-fictional book *The High Caste Hindu Woman* (1888). What did she argue in this book? The first argument that she made was that the women who live in orthodox Hindu society can never gain education in their life. The reason being, according to Hindu religion the woman is supposed to be looked after by the man in her childhood, adult age, and old age. She can never be independent[1]. If at all she wants to be independent, she needs to change her religion. What religion did Ramabai choose? Why did she choose? It was because at that time the only religion that was available due to British rule was Christianity which was allowing women to get educated. Naturally her choice was Christianity as it was welcoming not just women, but even the lower castes irrespective of gender.

One of the factors that troubled Ramabai was that

> of the ninety-nine million seven hundred thousand women and girls directly under British rule, ninety-nine and half millions are returned as unable to read and write; the remaining two hundred who are able to read or write, cannot all be reckoned as educated" (Sarasvati*The High*: 102) .

Ramabai wanted the women/girls to be "self-reliant" rather than dependents.When the girls were removed from the school for the sake of marriage, according to Sarasvati

> Girls of nine and ten when recently out of school and given in marriage are wholly cut off from reading or writing, because it is a shame for a young woman or girl to hold paper or book in her hand, or to read in the presence of others in her husband's house. (Sarasvati 103)

The other fact Ramabai propagated was to have more native teachers who could understand the problems of women and enlighten them about the evil system of child marriage[2], sati system, widowhood, dependency on the family members without any financial or educational support[3]. Sarasvati also opines: "In a country where castes and the seclusion of women are regarded as essential tenets of the national creed, we can scarcely hope for a general spread of useful knowledge among women, through either men of their own race or through foreign women. (106)

Education and gender in literary novels

Having established Sarasvati's arguments for the benefit of women in her book, let us see the influence of Sarasvati on two writers who wrote novels on the problems of women with the names of the protagonists namely Ratanbai in Sevantibai M. Nikambe's *Ratanbai: A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife*(1895) and Saguna in Krupabai Satthianadhan's *Saguna: The First Autobiographical Novel in English by an Indian Woman* (1895).

Discussing Ratan in *Ratanbai* who has been from a so-called well settled and prestigious family whose father is an advocate in the High court. She has been married off at the very young age discontinuing her education. The issue one can talk about is whether it is education or marriage that is important. In those times marriage was always as a priority as it was the responsibility of the parents to do their job. However, the girl was not taken into consideration for marriage. One can always argue that it was the accepted thing in those days. But it was from whose point of view? It was from the parents' point of view. The girls were not taken into consideration. Even after the marriage, if the girl is interested in education, can she be allowed? According to her in-law's point of view, she should not be. The tradition says the girl should look after the in-laws keeping aside all thoughts of education and self-development. When Ratanbai's parents Vasudevrav Kashinath Dalvi and Anandibaic seek permission to send Ratan to school while her husband Pratapraohad is gone for his higher studies, she was not given permission. In fact the response she got was that she might be sent anywhere, but

not to school. Ratanbai created a favourable impression in the school as "the nicest girl that attends our school". (Nikambe, *Ratanbai*: 27) In fact it was women who were against women getting educated. Ratanbai's mother-in-law opposes her plan to continue her education. On the other hand her father Vasudevrao who admits his limitation saying that once she is married, the decision whether she should be continuing her education lies with her in-laws not with her parents. In Vasudevrao's words:

> I am sorry to say my daughter is not in my hands. If you can persuade her mother-in-law and the other lady, KashinathPant's wife, in the matter, nothing will give me more pleasure, for I am in favour of our girls and women being educated. If some lady were to open a class for the married ladies, I would be the first one to send Anandi. I was thinking, however, of getting a native lady to come to my house and teach her. If Ratan were in my charge, I would send her to school today. I would not have kept her at home at this early age, when she was getting on nicely, too; but our girls are not ours when married? (Nikambe,*Ratan*: 72)

As opposed to Ratan's mother-in-law, the husband of Ratan, Prataprao during the conversation between him and Mr. Rambho:

> They walked up and down the paved path, and then down to the sands, and seated themselves on a large piece of rock. Mr Rambho talked on many matters, and then began about education, just to see Prataprao's turn of mind about it, and to his great happiness he found that Ratan's husband was in favour of education for women. Mr. Rambho then spoke to him about the young wives being educated, told him of the attempt they were making to send Kamallabai to school, and at last asked Prataprao to consent to Rantan's going, should his mother speak to him about it. Prataprao listened, and assented to the final request. Within an hour each went to his house. Mr. Rambho had gained his object, and it is no exaggeration to say that young Prataprao was happy.   (Nikambe, *Ratanbai*: 74)

Having encouraged his wife Prataprao, within six month there is a bad news both for him and his wife. The news is that he himself fails in his BA exam. On the other hand Ratan stands first in her class and receives a prize. Again there is a decision of removing Ratan from the school. However, "Prataprao, in his disappointment, had not at first noticed how his girl-wife was treated, but when he set to his studies with a resolute will, he quietly spoke to his mother about Ratan being sent again to school. His request was very reluctantly granted". (Ratan 79)

Hence men encourage but women don't.

Krupabai Satthianadhan's *Saguna: The First Autobiographical Novel in English by an Indian Woman*[4] (1895) portrays two women who have suffered in the patriarchal society. Initially it was her mother Radha who had the notion that girls need not have education as their work is always at the *chool* not at the school. If the mother has this notion it is very difficult to have a positive notion in the daughter. Thus she never encourages Saguna to get education. However, when her brothers study she hides, overhears and then learns on her own. Radha has been changed after her husband dies.

Radha later on takes Saguna to the school for her education. In fact, her mother is ready to spend money on the daughter's education and appeals to the teachers. The mother encourages the daughter and she is motivated to continue with her studies. When she is admitted in the school, the Principal wanted to test her knowledge. To their surprise she proved to be more talented than they expected. Saguna is promoted to higher class without hesitation. She is like Ratanbai who has been sincere, diligent and intelligent.

In addition to her intelligence, luck has also worked well for her. The missionary has supported her education. The conversion of parents, especially Hemchander, who was a Brahmin and later on converted himself into Christianity, also helped her. Along with Hemchander without any choice,Radha the wife of Hemchander also converts. As a result of this background Saguna though born into a Brahmin family, by religious practice of Christianity she is supported and promoted.

The most important person in her life was her brother Bhaskar who took her to the college for his convocation day to receive his degree. Later on Mrs. Roberts, Miss T who sharpened her education skills and made her what she was. Whenever she asks for books she is given plenty of books. She read Edmund Spenser's *The FairieQueene* whether she understood it or not. The act of reading is what is important.

Saguna is encouraged, after seeing her outstanding performance, to do medicine. She is awarded a fellowship to study in the United Kingdom. She is shown somewhat gender discrimination just because she was a woman. Look at the way Saguna responds to the man who expresses typical patriarchal views on women:

> You see you can't understand. It is not necessary for all girls to earn their own living and devote their lives to study. It is only those who cannot get husbands that must do this.

> While he spoke he watched me closely with held closed eyes. I was burning all over, and began to feel angry. 'I don't know what you mean by getting husbands, 'I said, I don't want to get married.' (Satthianadhan*Saguna*: 148)

Further, Saguna is very clear about her education and career which should not hinder her ambition. In response to a man's suggestion that she can get married Saguna says marriage in not an end for women:

> 'You can get married, you know.'

> 'Married?' I said, catching his drift at last and astonished beyond words. 'Married?' I repeated, while he smiled in a more insinuating manner, as if he was about to say: Yes, what can girls do? Marriage is the end of all their ambition,.' …

> 'Marriage is not the goal of every girl's ambition.' I said. (Satthianadhan *Saguna*149)

Saguna proclaims that she will not marry if men think marriage is the goal of every woman's ambition. In other words her concern and ambition unlike other girls is to study and grow.

Mr. A is the man who is in charge of making arrangements for Saguna going to England. He was the missionary in charge. Generally, it is assumed during those times girls may not stand the climate that prevails in England. However, Saguna was confident in managing it. She was so excited about meeting the in-charge. Contrary to her excitement, she finds gender barrier comparing her opportunity with a boy who had opportunity utilizing and becoming victim of the climate. Same thing is applied for Saguna and diverted her admission within India.

Mr. A shows gender difference with Saguna as follows:

> He accosted me with my full name, Bai and all, and when I timidly hinted that I was Bhasker's sister, he smiled and said: "Yes, you are Bhasker's sister. Bhasker's sister,' again reflecting, 'and you wish to go to England.'
>
> 'Yes, to pursue my studies.'
>
> 'Pursue your studies? But do you know that there are objections? said he, with his peculiar smile and looking me calmly in the face.
>
> 'No.'
>
> 'Well! Sagunabai, the Mission implicitly trusts my discretion in this affair, and so I must be perfectly candid with you. Were you my own sister, I would not recommend you to go.'
>
> 'Why?' I said, and my eyes filled with tears.
>
> 'I am sorry to grieve you my dear girl, I have seen one promising youth die. He was a wonderful boy, but he was killed by overstudy. There was no stopping him and now I cannot give leave to another to sacrifice herself. I would be acting falsely to your old mother. The fact is you would not stand the climate and the hard strain. You can stay in India and still learn.'…
>
> 'Let me only go to England; you will see I am strong, my constitution will stand it.' He kept on meditating and looking out for a while, and then without taking the least notice of my last words, he began in his measured way; 'Then what is your wish, Sagunabai? Shall I make arrangements for your study in India or not?'
>
> 'Yes,if there is no hope of my going to England.'
>
> 'No hope. But you have reflected on the consequences of even continuing your studies here? Are you ready to brave opposition, loneliness and life in a strange place and among strangers?
>
> 'Yes, I am ready.'
>
> 'The feeling even in England is very strong against a girl learning medicine, and here it is stronger still. You will have to bear a great deal. (Satthianadhan *Saguna* 150-151

The reason that was given not to send her to England was that she would not be able to adjust to the climate of the cold country. This was why she was recommended for the first

Christian Medical College,Chennai.In fact in those days she was the first one to study medicine. She stands highest in her class. However, she could not complete her medical course.

Conclusion:

It was Saraswati's notion that women should be educated and self-reliant that made a difference in her life. She was also convinced of the need for native women teachers who could contribute to the community. This is central to these two novels.

Ratanbai's zeal for education made her an educated and refined person. Otherwise she would have been another home maker without education. Thanks to her father Vasudevrao, and her husband Prataprao and the uncle Kashinath Pant who encouraged her to study despite severe criticism from the women's side. Ratanbai attending the party that was thrown by the teacher in a public place was a welcome move by her and the mother who initially reluctantly sent her. That made her undecided as to whether to follow that trend or to follow patriarchal notions advocated by her mother.

Similarly, Saguna who had this notion of education in her from her childhood has sustained that desire in her later years. She could become the first woman doctor from Madras Christian College.

On the whole the two early women had to struggle for their education along with gender disparities with the help of men and women.

ENDNOTES

[1] "Her father protects her in childhood, her husband protects her in youth, and her sons protect her in old age; a Woman is never fit for independence." Manu IX, 2.3. Quoted in *The High Caste Hindu Woman,* P. 54.

[2] It is not easy to determine when the childhood of a Hindu girl ends and the married life begins. The early marriage system, although not the oldest custom of my country, is at least five hundred years older than the Christian era. According to Manu, eight years is the minimum, and twelve years of age the maximum marriageable age for a high caste girl. (PanditaRamabaiSarasvati *The High caste Hindu Woman* (1888) p.29)

[3] Those who diligently and impartially read Sanscrit literature in the original, cannot fail to recognize the law-giver Manu as one of those hundreds who have done their best to make woman a hateful being in the world's eye. To employ her in housekeeping and kindred occupations is thought to be the only means of keeping her out of mischief, the blessed enjoyment of literary culture being denied her. She is forbidden to read the sacred scriptures, she has no right to pronounce a single syllable out of them. (Sarasvati *The High Caste p.*55)

[4] The original title of this book was *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life.* It has been changed to the current title. I think this means a lot as far as religion is concerned from Christianity to Hinduism.

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Garbo: A Study of Intricate Human Relationships

CHANDER MOHAN & SHRAWAN K. SHARMA

Chander Mohan

Abstract

Relationships are a significant aspect of humanity that helps maintain social harmony with the help of various social apparatuses and moral codes, like love, trust, peace, responsibility, right conduct, non-violence, etc. But as Lord Tennyson in his poem *Morte d' Arthur* says, (Tennyson, Morte D' Arthure) "The old order changeth, yielding place to new, And God fulfils Himself in many ways." It is a hint for humanity to understand the nature of life that it keeps changing its connotation and nature with time. In the same way, human relationships in contemporary times have become complex to understand. This complexity in human relationships has given birth to social and psychological disharmony in the age of agitation for equality, private space, the right to choose, etc. It has become challenging for contemporary society to maintain psychological balance when humanity and values have become an amalgamation of ideologies, where the state controls our actions and thoughts, not human values and moral codes. Modern relationships no longer seem to believe in keeping trust, staying truthful to self, and being responsible to humanity. Thus, the paper shall portray the psychological variations and unstable behaviour that lead to the complexities of human relationships caused by the amalgamation of ideologies and the decay of human values in the play *Garbo* by Mahesh Elkunchwar.

Keywords: intricate relationships, human values, ideologies, psychological contract, unpredictable behaviour

Methodology

The research paper divulges relationship complexity in Elkuchwar's play *Garbo,* using the psychoanalytical theory, which begins with Sigmund Freud. The earliest expression of psychoanalytic criticism can be traced from Freud's reading of *Hamlet* (1899) and Dostoevsky's (1908). (Nayar 67) Specifically, it shall emphasise the psychological contract, a psychological tool used in 1957 by Argyris for the first time in his early works. Later, it was propagated by Rousseau and Greller (1994). (The Psychological Contract, p278) Psychoanalytical contracts deal with the relationship between an organisation and its employees. Still, the research study intends to use the tool to analyse the relationship between society and individuals, decoding the psychological contract.

Shrawan K. Sharma

"Psychological contract refers to beliefs that individuals hold regarding promises made, accepted and relied upon between themselves and another." (277). Fundamentally, promises and beliefs in any social setup go parallel between society and individual relationships depending upon the norms of society in any specific social setup. For instance, the Indian marriage institution ensures social security for a married couple in India, and there are particular norms that one has to follow within the institutional fold. Any couple outside the institutional fold has to take legal security if available. "The Allahabad high court, while dismissing a plea filed by an interfaith live-in couple seeking police protection, has observed that such kind of relationships are "more about infatuation" without any sincerity, and "they often result in timepass". (Pandey)

Social acceptance determines the credibility of any relationship in society. Love, for instance, between two people, is a credible and accepted feeling in society. However, it has no space for betrayal as it is a socially immoral practice. The credibility of love among nonrelatives has been established by historically set examples, such as Romeo and Juliet, Heer and Ranjha, Laila and Majnu, and Radha Krishna. Such examples have made the acceptance of relationships socially sublime and pious. The social acceptance of the sublime emotion has given legal and social space to non-binary and other relationships outside the marriage institution fold. (YouTube) But such relations also have to keep trust and fulfil promises to sustain the social credibility of the relationships. Because individuals make a society, an individual will represent the whole, and the whole will represent the individual.

"I was a flirty guy from my school days, and I had fallen in love about 30 times or so, but perhaps I felt the sense of first love in my 31st one" (Sharma 17). The reference shows that the relationships between young girls and boys have become a trial-and-error process that has made the emotion of love non-serious. Falling in love and breakups have become non-serious affairs that create a social obscurity about the girl and boy relationship. Therefore, society will not consider such relationships to be genuine. Consequently, such non-serious relationships will lose credibility, dignity, and societal acceptance. Non-serious emotion can affect the sublime feeling of love, one of the core human values. The value stands for trust, and promise is the basis of all human relationships that help establish a family. Many families together establish a society that lives with peace and harmony. These non-serious relationships between young boys and girls can make serious relationships sceptical, for it will be challenging for a community to differentiate between genuine and non-serious relationships. In such a situation, real relationships may also lose credibility, dignity, and respect, which should never happen. '"Saath le kr jana hei kya? "We want to take you", she questioned. 'Aunty aap chalogi?' "Anty, will you go with us?" Manish asked Haan haan kyon nahi, "Yes! Why not." main bhee chal lungi our agar tum kaho toh who bhe chal legi. "I also can go with you, and if you want, she also can go" (She pointed towards the most beautiful girl in the group). How much will you charge for her? Breakfast ka 100 our lunch you "100 for breakfast and one thousand for lunch and dinner" dinner karoge to 1000' she answered". (Sharma P56) The

same boy who felt his first love in his thirty-first one was excited to meet call girls along with his friends in Mumbai. They sent Manish, one of their group friends, to ask the call girls and find the rates they charged, which were unaffordable for them to pay. Lately, they go home saying they are uninterested in such activities. Herein, it can be stated that the girlfriend and boyfriend relationship has been made non-serious and culminated into social obscurity and dilemma towards the relationship can lose its social acceptance and dignity for in the situation, it is very challenging for any society if a particular relationship is genuine.

Garbo is a two-act play that unfolds, illustrating the psychological and social unrest dimensions among four characters, an apparent resistance to tradition and values. The play unrolls with the conversation between Intuct and Pansy discussing their music taste. Here, classical music seems outdated to Intuct, who reluctantly visits classical music concerts, knowing it no longer brings him ecstasy and peace.

> **Pancy**: why don't you come along? You're a dead loss, Intact. God knows what fun you get out of all that lalalala classical stuff.
>
> **Intuct**: Who said I get any fun out of it?
>
> **Pansy**: why else would you go to all those stuffy concerts?
>
> **Intuct**: My dear boy, that's a different thing altogether. You should see the crowds that come there. God knows where the Basterds buy all the enthusiasm. The vocalists, male or female, sit under the arch of two tanpuras like some deity. They go crazy about their own marvellous voices… It's a real laugh. (Elkunchwar 5)

Classical music here can be associated with traditional values, morals, and ethics, which Intact seems to be fed up with. He tells Pensy, a seventeen-year-old boy, how people in classical concerts pretend to be great admirers of classical music. However, they need a basic sense of it. "Once, I was clapping the skin of my hands when a baldie next to me said, 'Wonderful Kaushi Kanada. I made my face even more dreadfully solemn and said, … it wasn't Kaushi Kanada. It was Nayaki Kanada (Elkunchwar 5). Despite being a great admirer of classical music, symbiosis 'traditional values, morals and ethics. Intuc and his two friends, Pency and Sharimant, live with a prostitute, Garbo. Pansy also wants to enjoy the respect associated with traditional values (old school). "I want to be great too. I must attend art school regularly now. Do you think I will make it?" (P 7). Although Pansy associates with old classical stuff, he enjoys being in the company of Garbo and his friends, intuc and Sharimant. This hypocritical behaviour signifies the social structure that one has to follow. Inctuc, Pansy, and Sharimant are the ones who don't practice what they admire and don't admire what they practice secretly. They respect the social values that prevent them from taking pride in how they are living with a prostitute, which is not socially accepted in a particular social structure. One can't make the choices if they are not socially credible and accepted. One admires his actions if they are respected on social and moral grounds. For instance, a thief would not want to be called a thief socially because even a thief does not

appreciate immoral deeds. So would be the case with a rapist, layer, stoker, cheater, or any socially corrupt practice.

Behaviors and actions in relationships are predetermined. There is a social understanding among the masses of how people behave in any particular relationship, whether kinship or non-blood relationships. The actions of a daughter and father relationship, mother and son relationship, or sister and brother relationship are socially understood and accepted. Socially unaccepted actions or behaviours between blood relationships shall be rejected and criticised for violating social norms. For instance, a brother and sister can't behave like husband and wife. So is the norm for other kinship relationships.

As far as public relationships are concerned, they also have social credibility and trust, which help maintain harmony between public relationships. There is a psychological contract between public relationships and society. For example, a teacher-student relationship is there, which has social credibility, respect, dignity, and the role of a teacher assigned. If a teacher makes any relationship that is not socially accepted between a teacher and a student, it can degrade the credibility and social trust in the profession.

> **Prabha**: Get rid of that airy teacher first. It comes whistling here.
>
> **Vahini**: what's wrong with him?
>
> **Prabha**: He teaches for free. Ranju is seventeen. Put that together. (28)

Ranju's parents do not entertain the behaviour of the teacher. Every time, he would visit the house whistling to teach Ranju. He would teach her for free, which bothered the parents because it was not professional on his part. "Where will you go? Into films in Bombay? Or run off with that teacher?" (p53). The family doubts the relationship between Ranju and the teacher, which is socially expected to be sacred in any Indian social setting.

Socially unwanted behaviour in teacher and student relations causes insecurity among parents and disturbs academic values. Unwanted activities can disrupt the achievement goals of any society.

> **Aai**: Oh, thank God. You are back, Ranju, my child...
>
> **Sudhir** (to Ranju). Go on in.
>
> **Bhaskar**. Where did you find her?
>
> **Sudhir**. In Bombay.
>
> **Bhaskar**. And the fellow?
>
> **Sudhir**. I couldn't find the teacher. I inquired at all the police stations as soon as I got to Bombay...that was lucky. What a dreadful neighbourhood it is, bahu! (64)

Such unrest in the family shows how tough it can be for a society to deal with the unaccepted relationship. One single incident can disturb established social values and credibility.

"two more days, and I'd have had to hide my face from the village. Just as well, you came at night. Did anyone see you?" (65). The insecurity can be seen here in Ranju's father.

Likewise, if students and teachers in institutions indulge in socially unwanted activities, it will disturb the academic and social planning to make an educated and sublime society.

Friendship, one of the fundamental social relationships, possesses the core human and social values traced from the Hindu religious scripture, *Mahabharata,* wherein an unconditional friendship between Lord Krishna and Sudhama sets the example of unconditional Friendship. It also establishes credibility, high values, and regard for friendship. But modern friendship has turned selfish and conditional. It doesn't regard the established values. Self-ego is above friendship, which is sustained through worldly means. (P13) "I don't have to take orders from you Intuc. This place belongs to me. Do you think you can sit on your bloody arse having a ball at my expense and then lord it over me, you son of bitches? Get out. Just get out". The friendship between Intuc, Pansy, and Shrimant seems very conditional and selfish. Everyone in the relationship is looking for self-convenience.

> **Shrimant**: Intuct, stop blackmailing me. You know I will go stark staring mad if I have to live here alone. (Pause) Do you mind if I have a drink?
>
> **Pansy**: The house is yours. And so is the liquor. Who are we to interfere?
>
> Being together, these three were unable to pay respect to each other. (14)

Discussing Social and illegal relationships wherein more than one man is involved in a live-in relationship with a single female. As prostitution in India is an illegal practice, it is socially criticised.

In the play, *Garbo* Intuc and his two friends who live with Garbo treat her as a prostitute who they think has no dignity and needs no emotional support. Also, they don't have regard for her despite claiming that she is their friend. The relationship among these four characters is complex to understand. They treat her as a friend, prostitute, or sex machine, and sometimes they get emotional about her. These mood swings depend upon their convenience.

> **Shrimant**: You suppose! Why the bloody hell should I go visit Garbo? She is the only one who's available any time you go. And she is just great in bed.
>
> **Pansy**: I know. (Pause) But then, she is a great woman.
>
> **Shrimant**: Her only business in life has been jumping from bed to bed. She is nothing but a sex-machine. (Paused with the Phrase) A sex-machine. Yeah boy! A sex-machine. (p16)

Conveniently, the three friends pretend to be generous and feminist towards Garbo, differentiating her consciousness, soul, and body. "To put it in a nutshell, Garbo never becomes common. Even after fulfilling the needs of all three of us, a part of her still remains untouched". (19) The conversation between Shrimant and Intuc discusses Garbo's character

on social and moral grounds. In the discussion, Shrimant believes that the female body is everything she has to save to protect her dignity of being a virtuous woman. A female with more than one partner to Shrimant is not entitled to respect. Intuc, despite treating Garbo as a sex machine, philosophically makes a feminist statement that women also have an ever-sacred soul that remains untouched despite sleeping with many partners.

Further, the play illustrates the dichotomy of established cultural values and nonconformists who mock traditional social values. Nonconformists seem to proclaim that saviours of human and social values are hypocrites.

> **Intuc**: Pansy is a bad reporter. Tatyas's exact words were, 'Please remember that you live in a respectable neighbourhood. If you want to dance naked, shut your doors and windows first. We shall have no objection then.

> **Shrimant**: Christ! Why the hell should we close our doors and windows? If they don't like to see us dancing naked, let them shut their doors and windows. Mind you, if it were Garbo dancing naked, then they would start complaining about our keeping our doors and windows closed. This conversation confirms the rebellious nature of the characters who want to attain their desires, ignoring the social and illegal norms. They take pride in humiliating the people who aim to protect established values. Tatya, in the conversation, tells them to enjoy privacy without disturbing others. Instead, they make a joke of Tatya's suggestion. (24)

Relationships of the times have turned unreal, as people don't mean how they address people they share relationships with. Sometimes, they claim people are like their sister, brother, mother, or father. Still, these metaphors help them hide their evil deeds from society, for they are in intimate relationships with people they claim to be like their blood relations:

> **Garbo:** Oh dear. I was flooded with letters after that. 'Dear sister, will you adopt me as your brother? I said I would. Don't you remember? Even in the old days, Pansy used to tell me that I was like an elder sister to him.

> **Shrimant:** so that makes him a sister fucker as well" (24)

Pansy, who initially claims that Garbo is a motherly figure for him, towards the end of the play, proposes her to be his girlfriend:

> **Pansy**: I love you.

> **Garbo**: He came to me because he was alone, without a mother or father. Then all that remained was the body." (54)

Immoral and hypocritical behaviour can result in a trust deficit society. A trust-deficit society will disturb human values, peace, harmony, and social achievement goals.

Unlawful relations push toward new rights have to be created, and rebel relationships reject and criticise the existing system for attaining their desires without understanding the significance of the particular culture they live in:

Shrimant: you must first come and stand glaring, with dilated nostrils, trying to shame us by a show of moral indignation. When you see we are not ashamed, you come about Indian culture and heritage, etc." (30)

This is part of the conversation in which they assume to be one another to play a game wherein they mock the Indian cultural values they neither possess nor believe in. Further in the game, they caricature lord Rama, using his name for Garbo's sex partners.

Garbo: I was wrong. My mind is evil. How could I have doubted a saintly man like you? Please, please give me your shawl. I shall hang myself with it.

Intuc: Don't, my dear. My shawl is brand new.

(Pansy continuous to laugh) And you must think of the other life within you. And what sin has that innocent, pure, and unknowing little creature committed?

Garbo: then where shall I go?

Intuc: come to me, my daughter. Did Valmiki not give shelter to Sita? I shall travel the four corners of the earth to bring your Rama.

Shrimant: But Tatya, she has too many Rama. (p32)

Talking of live-in relationships is a matter of social debate on the legitimacy of the relationships and the children born out of them. In India, live-in relationships are complex to understand. The nation's religious diversity and cultural values make it more challenging for the state to provide people in live-in relations with legitimacy and security. Women are also insecure about the future of the kids born out of such relationships and their social acceptance.

For instance, Garbo, in the play, is pregnant with a baby, and she holds the three friends responsible for it. They initially get insecure and wonder who must be the baby's father in Garbo's womb. Garbo asks for the alimony of ten thousand rupees, which, after a lengthy discussion, they agree to pay to get rid of it anyhow:

Garbo: "So, you've talked the whole thing over, have you? The minute I become pregnant, I also become cheap. We'll allow ourselves to forget those days when you followed me around like dogs and could not do without me. Look here, I have not come to throw myself on your mercy. I don't want any help from you. I came here simply because I was feeling restless and uneasy. But today, I have seen you in your true colour. Remember one thing, though. I could implicate all three of you in this if I wanted to, so don't think you can shrug off responsibility.

Pansy: But Garbo, I haven't talked to you the way these two have. Why are you lumping me with them?...

Intuc: This is nothing less than blackmail. (P 36-37)

The relationship between man and woman, who are responsible for the procreation of humans on Earth, depends upon their mutual contribution. In modern times, priority is given to being self-independent over the creation they are capable of. The natural art of creating a new life has been trivialised due to the creation of new rights that violate legal and social norms. It seems that bodily needs have become bigger than the emotions of mother and father. For instance, when Intuc asks Garbo, who has aborted the baby, to let Intuc and his three friends be part of that beautiful creation. "Intuc, yes. And we will all humble ourselves before him. He will be our creation" (p40). Later, when Intuc discovers that she has aborted the baby, he then says, "Let's return to filth. The world we desired was not for us… Let's go back to the world now, to the world of filth". (p49)

Excepting this, the young generation is very much into bodily pleasure and desires, ignoring the social values and the significance of the sublime human creation they are capable of. This new socially unaccepted culture in Indian societies and the patriarchal construct of being muscular have developed sexual performance anxiety among the young generation. Sometimes, because of that, they face psychological trauma. For instance, the consumption rate of condoms, abortion pills, Viagra and other medicines to avoid pregnancy and improve sexual performance affects their mental and physical health. And because of this, they may face psychological trauma:

Shrimant: "… Tell them (pause) what is the point of hiding anything now?... I am a flop on her bed these days. D'you know that? Flop, flop, utter flop…"

Garbo: Don't Excite yourself, Shrimant.

Shrimant: you'll never understand it, Garbo. It is a terrible thing. You are the only one who has never laughed at me. Babi laughed. Shirin actually spat…. There was a time when I could tire these girls out night after night, and still, I had more to give".

Garbo: this may be temporary.

Shriamnt: It is not. The doctor says so. I am over-drugged. I used to take drugs to turn myself on. Injections! Now, even they don't help…" Actually, Shrimant wanted the baby Garbo had aborted so that people would not discover Shrimant's sexual incompetency. "…all I had was my body. … and now it is my body that has let me down. … I wanted that child. It would have borne my name. People would never have known about me then. (52)

Conclusion

The complexity of relationships results from diverse ideologies and individual ways of life that don't parallel mass consciousness, the social construction to achieve one social goal. Social values and norms help establish trust, and social bonding culminates into social harmony.

There is a mutual understanding between individuals and society that each one in a particular society has to follow the social norms and respect social values. So that the social balance isn't disturbed, people in any relationship who break established social norms must face societal challenges. That can be social security, acceptance, identity crisis, insecurity, etc.

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Neru as a Site of Discursive Resistance Against Patriarchal System: A Psychoanalytical Reading of the Unspeakable

ANEJ SOMARAJ & ANCY ELEZABATH JOHN

Anej Somaraj

Abstract

Sexual assault and its various forms have become frequent in our society. Its manifestations have been recognized by almost all the society and have been recorded in history. Sexual violence goes regardless of age, gender, or orientation and its impact goes far beyond any physical injuries. It is not a crime that has to be pinned down against the women but it is the crime against the basic human rights of all the individuals. Most of them are raped or sexually assaulted at some point in their lives most often by someone they know and trust. The stigma associated with sexual assault cause superfluity or disgrace for some. The healing process can be painfull and takes time.The trauma of being raped or sexually assaulted is totally heartbreaking. It instills an immediate shock within them making them feel scared, depressed and humiliated. The survivors may even develop PTSD, depression and bouts of madness. But it is to be kept in mind that if the victim shows a positive attitude and create mentally the power to regain and adopt methods to heal, bring back their body and mind under control and rebuild their self-worth. This paper tries to focus on the impact of the film Neru (The Truth) on the portrayal of the trauma undergone by a adult blind girl who has been sexually assaulted by an intruder. Apart from the usual pattern of framing the victim as fragile and broken, Jeethu Joseph's Malayalam courtroom drama, Neru surpasses the prototypical tragedy to intercommunicate significant message that the backwash of rape should not stand for an irrevocable loss of the self.

Keywords: rape, sexual assault, amendments, Nirbhaya case, incest, rape, psychoanalysis, PTSD, trauma, legal provisions

Rape as a Crime: Historical outlook

The concept of rape has been known to us through all ages of our civilization and has been complex. The process of understanding of rape as a violation of human rights has been slow throughout history. Ancient Babylonian society considered women as a 'property'- a property owned by man.Society viewed raped women as damaged goods and no longer marriageable assets. The first rape law emerged in Babylon during1900 BC. The Code of Hammurabi prescribed punishments for rape, though focused on women as property [A Brief History of Rape Law].The Code of Hammurabi dictated that if a man forces sex upon another man's wife or if a man forces sex upon a virgin woman that "is living in her father's house," then "that man should be put to death" (Gold). This set a legal precedent rape was merely a form

of theft and mischief. Even though the woman was harmed in a rape they were labeled as immoral, and the man escaped from the scene. Centering in this idea that rape was simply an act of one man damaging another man's property, Winnie Tomm concludes that "by contrast, rape of a single woman without strong ties to a father or husband caused no great concern" (Tomm). This perspective stayed constant for a long period of time until in the 1600 English law created the first wave of change in society's conceptualisation of rape by re-defining this felonious act as "the carnal knowledge of any woman above the age of 10 years against her will" (Gold).

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In the United States rape was only considered a crime when it was committed outside the bonds of marriage. Society looked upon women in rape trials as guilty of loose behaviour, moreover it became the duty of the woman to prove that she had not given any indication of consent. To refute and prove her innocence became a difficult task. When a woman who got raped enters the legal system, she is addressed as a defendant and witness. She was not declared a victim unless at the close of the trial the man was found undeniably guilty of forcing sexual intercourse upon her without any indication whatsoever, of her desire for said intercourse (Kilpatrick).

In Indian history too we can see depictions of God and Goddesses in old times finding gratification through indulging in sexual act wherein the woman was deserted after the entertainment. In rare cases the offender of rape was seen punished during Mahabharata and Ramayana times. Even in Christianity and Islam instances are seen where the act of rape is punished. Instances were there when the victim was put to death or stoned to death. The East India Company set up the penal norms of criminal justice. Indian Penal Code, 1860 acted as the cornerstone of criminal law in India for over 160 years. It deals rape under Section 375 and the punishment for rape is given under Section 376. IPC was replaced in December 2023 by a new code called the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). In BNS the severeness of punishment varies depending on the victim's age group. BNS does not criminalize rape of an adult man which remains as a major point of contestation which is yet to be addressed. Crucial change is made in law for rape of a minor. Rape of an adult woman above 16 is considered to be a criminalised act. The modern era has adopted penal norms to punish the offenders of rape but societal taboos and conditioning of people yet has to be changed.various amendments have been made regarding rape laws in India but certain loopholes still exist in the system.

A tremendous reform came in India after the Nirbhaya rape incident in 2013. The viciousness and cruelty of the case led to widespread protests around the country. The public demanded a change in prevailing law and this acted as a turning point for anti-rape laws in India. The Indian legal system reconsidered the existing criminal law and many other crimes that were on a rise against women like acid attack, pestering, and marital rape were considered within this legal framework. The recommendations put forth by Justice Verma Committee

were accepted and thus The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 was passed. The Kathua rape and Unnao rape case incidents led Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Arunachal Pradesh to pass anti-rape laws for committing rape of minor girls. Again a huge woe and cry arose in the country and The President of India gave assent to The Criminal law Amendment Act, 2018 The Criminal Law (Amendment), Act 2013 was enacted for effective deterrence against sexual offences. Further, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018 was enacted to prescribe even more stringent penal provisions including death penalty for rape of girls below the age of 12 years. (Ministry of Home affairs)

But still sexual molestation and violent rape incidents have been reported agitated the country even after such laws. According to official data, India has 2,43,237 POCSO cases pending in its Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) till January 31, 2023.The country will need at least nine years to clear this backlog. In some states such as Arunachal Pradesh and Bihar, it could take more than 25 years to bring the pending cases to closure (Jaison Wilson, The New Indian Express). This points out clearly the extent to which our judicial system fails to bestow justice in the right time. Swift court procedures and safety measures for the women should be enhanced. Strict laws are to be implemented on people who commit heinous crimes against women and stringent laws should be added in the judicial system of our country.

Rape culture in India

We live in a culture where innocent victims are blamed, shamefaced and considered as if they asked for it while the perpetrators are protected by normalising the sexual violence. The affected women are burdened and their character and code of conduct being questioned. A woman is socially conditioned to behave, think, dress, walk, make friends, and move around in a stipulated way. When a rape is reported questions are immediately asked on these grounds. Commonly used phrases like "Boys can have all the fun", "Boys will be Boys", "She's asking for it dressed like that" are known exemplar which acts as a shield for the offender within rape culture. Using these types of phrases and saying rape jokes while having fun within their groups is unethical, insensible and wrong.

In India, rape is reported on an average of 86 cases daily. According to the 2021 annual report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 31,677 rape cases were registered across the country. According to NCRB 2021 statistics, Rajasthan reported the highest number of rapes among Indian states, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Among metropolitan cities, Delhi continued to have the highest incidence of rape at 1,226 cases in 2021. 89% of the rapes were committed by persons known to the victim (NCRB).We know the fact that the actual numbers are much bigger as most of the rape cases go unreported. Looking into the frightening cases of sexual molestation an analysis is to be made to find out the factors that contribute to the ascension in the number of rapes and sexual molestation in the recent decades.

India with its diversity of numerous cultures, traditions and religions has paved the way for the creation of rape culture. Rape Culture is a term that generally gets shadowed because of the negative mindsets people have towards accepting the truth. Rape is mostly addressed as an issue that has caused due to the wrong behavioural signs of the victim. Solution is often sought by generalising certain aspects like dress code, limiting the freedom of movement and so on. Victims are often constrained and limited in their opportunities rather than the penalisation of rapists. The general attitude of the society towards women, lack of proper sex education in schools and family, power politics, gender politics, objectification of women bodies in popular culture, toxic masculinity, sexist humor and more such things normalizes rape and sexual violence, thus allowing a fertile ground for rape culture to flourish.

Victim blaming is another major reason why most of the survivors end up taking their lives. The rape survivors are mostly advised to keep it as a secret and to refrain from taking openly about the assault to their friends or to the concerned authorities. As the blame is put on the shoulders of the victim it makes them emotionally weak to come forward and report the abuse they faced. Making derogatory statements like "you dressed provocatively", "why you were in a wrong place in the wrong time" or "you provoked him", makes the victim feel accountable for the mishap. This notion of making the victim silent, making them feel embarrassed leaves most of the cases unpunished and unnoticed. This only creates a situation of aggregating the trauma and assuring protection to the offender giving him more confidence to conduct such actions in future.

Even in this century people are not ready to come out of this thought process. Misogynistic songs and dialogues in movies, objectification of women in advertisements, movies, work culture all in the name of entertainment and media hype and many more adds fuel for a considerable role in the growth of a rape culture. How long we have to wait to erase the marks of hegemony and stigmatisation? How long we have to wait to uproot the barrier of

sexual discrimination? How long we continue in the process of protecting the offenders from facing the legal action they deserved?

Susan Griffin in 1970 termed rape as a "form of mass terrorism." Griffin wrote about how rape restricted women's lives because they lived in terror, in abject fear of going out alone: "[women] will not be free until the threat of rape and the atmosphere of violence is ended, and to end that the nature of male behavior must change" (Griffin). It's high time to reverse the role and understand that it is the rapist who needs to get punished. Though it is a violent nightmare change comes only when the victim moves from the position of a victim to a survivor where we stand together and fight for it and finally turns out to be a winner. Consciousness raising, support, and legal changes are to be made.

A Synoptic View of Mind

Psychoanalysis is a controversial discipline which analyse a set of theories and therapeutic techniques that deal in part with the unconscious mind. It's effectiveness as a treatment has been under constant dispute. The discipline was established in the early 1890s by Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud, who developed the practice from his theoretical model of personality organization and development. From the mid-20th century psycho-therapeutics is widely applied in areas such as psychoanalytic literary criticism, analysis of film, fairy tales and in other philosophical perspectives as a cultural phenomena. Psychoanalysis tries to implicit in a method of interpreting the patient's unconscious conflicts that interfere with their day to day happenings. A synthesis is done on the individual to find out how various phobias, anxiety, depression, and compulsions are intervening in the normal life of the survivor. Strachey (1936) from Freud observations stressed that figuring out the different ways in which the patients distorted perceptions, unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, difficulties with interpersonal relationships and sometimes physical Symptoms can be done effectively. Psychoanalysis addresses the most private anxieties and meanings to culture and gives us a perspective on them as cultural formations.

This paper intent to analyse the Malayalam movie - *Neru*, 'The Truth' as a harbinger of change of perception towards rape. The sexual assault as experienced by Sara, a blind girl by a complete stranger who takes advantage of the situation as he comes to know that she was alone at home. The movie clearly states a change of perception in the thought process of the victim from being docile, fearful to a situation where she outgrows herself fighting against all odds. The movie is analysed from the psychoanalytic viewpoint of the rape victim. Initially Sara is in the state of a mental shock, as the most unexpected has happened. Slowly she gains the courage to speak out and fight with resilience to get justice. The courtroom scenes in the movie are dealt in an extraordinary angle focusing on all the nuances of issues that would affect the victim both physically and psychologically.

Neru begins with an exploration into the life of a rape survivor's journey. The movie begins focusing on a young girl who is lying motionless on her bed with her face down. Her

mother sitting next to her is seen overwrought. Soon the viewers come to know the victim Sara, played by Anaswara Rajan, is blind. She has been sexually assaulted by an interloper when her parents were away. Tears roll from her eyes but keep herself in control. She feels broken and gets anxious of the people that come near to her after the incident. She gets down with emotions at times but never gets shattered.

Sara lost her vision at the age of 12 due to a health issue. She acquired the art of sculpting from her father who used to sculpt images. As the police fails to find any evidence of the assaulter, she decides to sculpt the image of her attacker which she does judiciously during

the molestation. This shows the inner strength of Sara who knew that the only way she could identify the culprit was to sketch his features in her mind with the help of feeling his face using her fingers and palms. The sculpture which she makes turns out to be the exact replica of the molester. Though helpless in the situation Sara remain intelligent and is able to control her mind at the time of misfortune. But Sara has to face more verbal and mental assault as the lawyer of the molester tries to pin her down emotionally by questioning her fidelity. Sara overcomes this by turning her gravest pain into art - the act of sculpting the face of the prosecutor with all minute detailing. This turns out to be the core of this movie underscoring Sara's resilience and invincible spirit.

Trauma and PSTD

The trauma of being raped or sexually assaulted is totally heartrending. It creates an immediate shock and numbness within making them feel frightened, downhearted and

embarrassed. Most of them continue to be in a terrified position constantly being haunted by nightmares, flashbacks of the same incident, and other bitter memories related to the hostility.

The world doesn't feel like a safe place anymore. As trust is broken the victim finds it difficult to trust others and even oneself. Some may put the blame on themselves and consider them as dirty. They take long hours of shower to cleanse their body, mind and soul. When it comes to relationships they feel dangerous, doubtful, and find hard to establish intimacy. Above all some of them may develop anxiety, depression and PTSD.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), can be seen apparent through different symptoms such as being quiet, detachment from daily chores of life, and losing trust in all. Herman asserts that in order to recover, "remembering and telling the truth" is a prerequisite for healing and restoring social order (Trauma and Recovery). Recovery starts once the victim narrates the atrocity in the way they could recollect. It may be narrated in a fragmented manner or in a contradictory way. But opening up is essential for the victim to come out of the trauma.

The movie *Neru* unrravels how initially Sara gets the shock of her lifetime in a place where she considered being the most secure one- 'her home'. For a short time period the rape trauma causes a change in her behaviour, attitudes, thinking and interactions even with her parents. Slowly she employs her own defence mechanisms in her journey towards healing. Sara overcomes her anxiety even after being bullied physically and verbally by the perpetuator and opposition lawyer. Mohanlal who acts as Advocate Vijaymohan, helps Sara to gain confidence and advice strategies to solve her anxiety and guides her to face the questions of the opposing lawyer Rajasekhararan (Siddique) judiciously. The director sets the tone right from the very first scene that rape is not the end of the world, and that the survivor has no reason to feel any shame, guilt or humiliation.

Neru: A Recovery Narrative

The movie *Neru* turns out to be one of the major movies which 'redefine' survivorship towards rape. Sara's courage, resilience and determination shows how new age women are evolving out themselves to make the culprit faceless in the society. A pool of characters surrounding the victim is used to portray the psychological dilemma, and the element of altruism present in them. Sara's advocate Vijaya Mohan, The police officer, C.I. Paul Varghese (K.B Ganesh Kumar) who investigates the case, Advocate Ahana (was the co-writer of the movie, with Jeethu Joseph),the one who probes Vijaya Mohan to take up the case, represents selflessness in their humanity.

All these characters exhibit significant part to give Sara the confidence to fight for her justice with vigour and vitality. The Police officer offers all the help he could to give justice to Sara. Infact he sees his daughter in her and shows genuine interest to get all possible details to help them out. Whenever Sara is intimidated in the court by Adv. Rajashekaran, she is able to tackle the situation due to the wise advice of Adv.Vijaya Mohan. At one point

when Adv. Rajashekaran feels that he would lose the track Sara reaffirms her faith in him. She says "I know we will win the case. I can sense it".

Her presence of mind and strong will power to bring out the truth is seen when she crafts the masterpiece of Adv. Rajashekaran amidst of all the sexist terms and abusive words he used to make her emotionally weak. When looking from the angle of the perpetrator Michael (Sankar Induchoodan) is completely a spoilt brat. He has been into the habit of using girls for his pleasure. His well-to-do background, where his father is a renowned industrialist managed to escape him from the charges he has been accused before. Michel is engaged to a minister's daughter when he rapes Sara. As the case becomes registered his family engages top notch defence lawyer, Rajasekhararan, to fight his case. As the trial begins, Rajasekharan gets bail for Michael during the very first hearing. The public prosecutor does not put any effort to secure a longer custody. This calls in for the need of another lawyer for Sara. Ahana reach out for Adv. Vijaymohan, an out-of-practice lawyer, whom she knew personally as a lawyer with great practice experience. He had got a past intertwined with Rajasekhararan and his lawyer daughter Poornima (Priyamani).

The courtroom drama begins from this point where a series of sittings happen. The director Jeethu Joseph, known for his careful detailing of events as seen in 'Drishyam' maintains the same meticulousness in *Neru*. The title of the movie is justified in being certain to establish the profound truth. The perpetuator takes advantage of Sara's blindness thinking that she couldn't reveal his identity. Even the defence lawyer thinks that he could override her confidence through character assassination and humiliation. Sara proves herself valiant, not succumbing to any pressure and ends only with Michael's Punishment. Sara emerges victorious and reveals her face to the world bravely. The crux of the movie deals with the idea that a person's physical weakness should not be taken into account to spoil one's right to live in this world. Sara, though blind proves to the society that even when she was not able to see her rapist physically, her inner sense was sharpened enough to make the culprit dumbfounded.

This forms the most motivating feature of *Neru* - the evolution of a character from being docile to a character with substance. It is a welcoming factor that the stereotypical pattern of victim presentation and resisting some of the popularly held myths that discredit rape victims has been changed. Sara is not depicted as a victim frenzied by misery but as a strong individual who challenges the existing societal stigma. Thus Sara is elevated to the position of a 'She heroine'. The film conveys a powerful message to the society that sexual molestation cannot wipe out the identity of a person. It may remain as a painful chapter in the life of the survivor but that does not define the futuristic aspirations of the person. This raises a clarion call towards the viewers to rekindle the age old perceptions they had in the past. The film instils a sense of hope, strength and audacity with which rape victims can build self confidence in them. The enduring strength of the human spirit is displayed at the end of the film where Sara emerges triumphantly with her face uncovered and walks out of the court with her head held high.

Conclusion

Unwelcomed sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, verbal or physical gestures of sexual nature, demands for dates , sexual jokes, provocative comments on the way of dressing , body shaming, whistles, and derogatory statements of a person comes under the purview of sexual harassment. Probing into a person's sexual orientation, spreading baseless rumours and gossips, drawing cartoons or pictures of sexual nature too comes under sexual abuse. At present mostly modern technology is used to widely to harass someone sexually by sending inappropriate text messages, emojis or videos. Threatening messages may also be send to make the person emotionally weak. Teenagers who suffer from sexual harassment find it more difficult than adults to overcome the trauma.

Empowerment of Sara begins where she emerges as the instigator and arbiter of her own recovery, leading her not to succumb to the intervention that defence lawyer tries to shake. She strengthens herself in the act of sculpting the image of the defence lawyer. It was possible for Sara only because of the manifestation of individual consciousness which resulted from the confidence of her ability to prove herself. This powerful emergence is an essential element in the movie which emphasizes her resistance, resourcefulness, and emotional strength. In this manner, the movie reinforces the dynamics of trauma and resistance, development, and recovery. Sara emerges capable to get back on her feet again to survive, accepting vicissitudes of life in growing.

Neru is able to reflect a problem which is deeply associated with the social psyche of humanity. It address how problems occur in a rape, the immediate response raised in society, its developmental process, and how to face the reality in a positive way. Movie *Neru* sends a critical message to the victims that if someone is or have ever been a victim of sexual assault, 'speak up'. Sara's strong gesture towards controlling the impact of the rape incident is note worthy. Her anger towards the perpetuator's cruelty and on seeing his confidence to be left scot-free acts as a potential for resistance. The movie moves towards a more comprehensive understanding of traumatic experience and the recovery narrative achieved through resilience, reconciliation, and resistance. Recovery is the ultimate goal that the survivor has to reach. Existence is finally normalised when safety and connection between survivors and their community is established.

Men are not born with a natural instinct to harm women. It is the general societal norms, attitudes, patriarchal notions that one develop from family and society and other exterior factors weave in a wrong notion of women. Family plays a major role in instilling discrete ideologies in the minds of children about their societal roles, position and their responsibility. This injects a negative attitude towards women, looking down at them as weaker sex, an objects to be used according to his whims and fancies. Despite the country's rapid social and economic progress, media which plays a major role in fixing a norm continues to perpetuate gender inequality, misogyny, and patriarchal attitudes. The biased behaviour of some of the police officers and Judiciary personnel's makes it a really difficult task for the survivor in the

Pronouncement of justice. The impediment gets accelerated for survivors who come from deprived communities.

Film acts as an important tool to present sensitive issues like rape in a fictional background. It gives an opportunity to talk about issues like sexual oppression without any barrier. By bringing timeless theme into a modern perspective, Neru paves a newer way for viewers to relate to previous incidents and make them understand how remaining mute by the victim is not the solution for the horrendous act of crime that has been surpassed for centuries. Voicing against traumatic sexual events and forbidding such atrocities is need of the hour. In conclusion, the objectification and sexualisation of women in Indian films are a significant problem that needs to be addressed. The film industry has a responsibility to create content that promotes gender equality and challenges traditional gender roles. By doing so, they can help create a more equitable and just society where women are valued for who they are and not just for their bodies. Truth is a goal that has to be constantly striven for.

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Turbulence of a Soul that Swallowed Ember: The Literary Oeuvre of Vijayarajamallika

BINU K.D. & ANNE PLACID

Binu K.D.

Abstract

Vijayarajamallika whose fame mainly rests in the first Malayalam transgender autobiography *Mallikavasantham,* is also a poet and a social activist. *Mallikavasantham* explores the experience of growing up as a transgender in the heteronormative, transphobic Kerala society. As hinted in the very title of her memoir *Mallikavasantham* which means 'The blossoming of Mallika', Vijayarajamallika, in spite of the myriad obstacles en route her struggle for self-affirmation, celebrates her trans identity. This is further clearly evinced by the lullaby *"Aanalla Pennalla Kanmani nee"* (You are't a Male or Female, Dear) penned by her, which is the first intersex lullaby in Malayalam language. However, *Mallikavasantham*, more than a personal testimony, is an articulation of the predicament of the transgender community at large.

The poetic oeuvre of Vijayarajamallika resonates with disquieting questions at the oppressive binary social norms. Her anthologies like *Daivathinte Makal* (God's Daughter), *Aan Nadhi* (Male River)', *Matoru Pennalla Njan* (I am not Just Another Woman'), *Lilithinu Maranamilla* (Lilith is immortal), *Pennayavalude Kavithakal* (Poems of one who Became a Woman) articulate the mental anguish and psychological dilemma of the trans subjects in a powerful and telling language. This paper attempts to demonstrate how Vijayarajamallika, through her writings, navigate and negotiate her identity as a transgender in the Kerala milieu characterized by heteronormativity. It is further argued that Vijayarajamallika is using her 'self' as a frame, to question the heterosexual binary notions of gender identity, challenging dominant discourses that deny the LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and agender) individuals societal inclusion and equitable representation. Being a Dalit transgender, Vijayarajamallika's position becomes more vulnerable than others as she is an "Outsider within".

Keywords: transgender, intersex, performativity, heteronormativity, transphobia

Transgender studies have emerged as a movement of interdisciplinary interest in the contemporary times. According to Susan Stryker, 'Transgender people are those individuals, who deviate from the binary assumptions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'; the identities are 'lived', 'embodied', 'experienced', 'performed', and 'encountered'. They are complex and are varied from the binary sex or gender ideologies' (3). Richard Ekins and Dave King however prefer the term 'transgendering' over 'transgender', considering it as more of a

social process than an identity marker. In the preface to their book *The Transgender Phenomenon* they observe:

> We prefer the gerund 'transgendering' to the noun and adjective 'transgender' because of its focus not on types of people, but on behaviour and social process. Transgendering, for us, refers to the idea of moving across (transferring) from one pre-existing gender category to another (either temporarily or permanently); to the idea of living in between genders; and to the idea of living 'beyond gender' altogether. (xxxiv).

Anne Placid

The state of Kerala, in spite of its well touted claim of being at par with the developed nations, in terms of economic progress and inclusive social development, has been retrogressive in recognizing the rights of sexual minorities. LGBTQIA+ individuals' libidinal desires are still considered by Malayalees as social and psychological aberrations. It is true that after the Hon'ble Supreme Court's NALSA Judgment (2014) which recognized the political and civic rights of the transgender community, the state of Kerala adopted a transgender policy in 2015 for protecting the rights of transgenders. Further, in its 2018 verdict, the Hon'ble Supreme Court abrogated Section 377 of the erstwhile Indian Penal Code (IPC) that had criminalized homosexuality and other non-normative sexual practices. In spite of the above positive developments, transgenders are still facing multiple marginalization in Kerala. They are subjected to all kinds of discrimination including denial of service and unfair treatment, although the transgender Act prohibits any discriminatory practice against transgender persons. Though access to educational and employment opportunities were provided by the state many of the trans persons had to discontinue their education and quit their jobs because of the oppressive circumstances. Trans subjects remain susceptible to physical, sexual and psychological violence on everyday basis and their rampant suicides are worrying.

The cultural domain, reflecting the inherent prejudices and homophobic practices of the social domain, has been constructing narratives that normalize the hetro-patriarchal values. Negative stereotypes centering trans subjectivities have been widely employed in Malayalam Cinema as pointed out by critics like Rajesh James and Sathyaraj Venkatesan:

> Barring a few exceptions, most of the films produced in Kerala (since Malayalam cinema's inception in 1928) have characterised LGBTQIA+ as aberrant, abnormal, or deviant. Such constructs of sexuality, particularly LGBTQIA+ subjectivities and their desires, expose the regressive nature of Malayalam cinema in spite of its prodigious claim as an industry that represents/ renders a fully literate and progressive society in India (85)

Rajesh and Sathyaraj further demonstrate that contemporary Malayala Cinema is gradually opening up spaces for the transgender bodies. However as Anu Kuriakose has argued transgender sexuality, their familial and social spaces require more critical and qualitative engagement in cinema than what is being done (114). Writing in the context of the film *Njan Marykutty* (I am Marykutty) she observes that "though the film is celebrated as a step forward to the visibility of transgender people in Kerala, it fails to acknowledge the plurality

of trans identifications when it adheres to the hegemonic social construction of a hetero-normative cis female body' (109).

Transgender discourse emerged in Malayalam, in the new millennium, disrupting *Malayalees'* (people whose mother tongue is Malayalam) binary gender perspectives and articulating the silences of those who have been destined to live their lives in bodies of not their own. Transgender writing is concerned with the expression of transgender voices and construction of their identities differently from the way mainstream discourses have constructed them. While questioning the stereotypical representation of their experiences in elite discourses, trans writers attempt to find alternative ways of expressing their selves. Vijayarajamallika is the first transgender writer in Malayalam and her literary oeuvre is reflective of her identity as well as the heterocentric social order that has shaped it.

Vijayarajamallika has broken the silence imposed upon her lot by the traditional socio- religious order that sanctified heterosexual relations, by articulating the concerns of her transgender self and expressing her strong dissent against caste and patriarchy that sustained the traditional gender roles. In her autobiography *Mallikavasantham,* she candidly writes about the terrible experiences that she had to undergo on account of her deviance from the binary sexual norms of the society. Breaking free from the societal perceptions and without waiting for the arrival of a spring, *Rajamallika* is blooming fervently in the literary orchard of Malayalam. *Mallikavasantham*, which bears the subtitles , " the unseen fronts of sexual rights" and "the autobiography of a transgender", by its sheer candidness and candor, unparalleled in Malayalam literary realm, shakes and shocks the readers out of her/his moral complacency and questions the notions of elegant progressiveness that hallmark the Kerala society.

The work puts to interrogation the much celebrated Kerala social system and exposes the deep fissures and chinks within it, which makes the life of the sexually 'deviant' persons a veritable hell. Presenting herself as a living victim of the false sense of societal pride and notions of acceptance, Vijayarajamallika elaborates on the insensitiveness of the suffocating social atmosphere which subjected her to medical treatments, devastating her physical as well as mental wellness. The loneliness and agony that she had to undergo are unmistakably etched in powerful language, finely balanced with figurative expressions, which in turn accentuates the effectiveness of narration. Like a bird housed in an enigmatic cage , her self was painfully imprisoned within a strange corporal structure.

Mallikavasantham reads, one and the same time, as a trauma as well as a survival narrative; not a mere story of survival but a narrative of victory. It expounds in detail how a lone fighter tides over umpteen distressing life situations, treads through several untrodden paths, to break open her own way to success and acceptance in life. Her own words in the forward to the book bear testimony to the joy and contentment that she feels after achieving several feats which also attest her intellectual acumen and her literary as well as aesthetic sensibilities : "the incredible intoxication that oozes out while clearing one's own ways all by oneself is something which no alcohol or marijuana can offer" (*Mallikavasantham*, 10).

The first part of the book details her past life from child hood to middle age. Looking back on her childhood, she realizes that as a child with a different chromosomal makeup, not adhering exclusively to either male or female being, she had to endure inhuman miseries till the time of her outing. She says that it was not possible for her in her childhood days, when she was Manu J Krishnan, to comprehend the female conditions as diversity when it occurred in her male body. Those days were replete with pain as the interactions with others and their approaches towards her were far from being pleasant. She recollects how a boy studying in a higher class used to pelt stones at her on seeing her and how she was called a *shikhandi* by fellow students and excluded from their company (16). She poignantly narrates how the boy Manu J Krishnan, while studying in 7th class, was sexually assaulted several times by men who were attracted by his femininity. She observes "How deep were the wounds inflicted upon my body and mind when you ascended manhood by experimenting your manliness upon me at *Aaryampadam*, *Paramekkavu* nooks and *Kuttoor* fields?"(18).

Going to school was a scary experience for Manu J Krishnan. He was at the receiving end of various forms of isolations in the school. As a Dalit transgender child, he suffered double jeopardy. On account of his dalit identity and black colour, he was called a 'blacky', 'chimpanzee', *Karinkorangu* (Nilgiri langur) and so on. Even some of the teachers used to jeer at his feminine mannerisms. Unable to withstand their insults, the poor child even tried to commit suicide by drinking ink. One Hindi teacher used to tickle his body with sexual intent. His harrowing experiences at school demonstrate that when a school becomes an

unsafe place for a child where it spends most of its time, the child's very existence becomes precarious. Manu J Krishnan's experience in the college too was not different. He tried to end his life by jumping down from the college building when he was ridiculed and humiliated on account of his feminine traits.

While the realization of having been well educated and disciplined makes Vijayarajamallika happy, it pains her deeply to recollect the wounds inside her, caused by her family members who did not accept her sexual orientation as naturally ordained and made her suffer unspeakable horrors. They considered the existence of a transgender child in the family as a dishonour. Though her mother was a teacher and recipient of model teacher award, on account of her false sense of pride in having a male child, she failed to accept the fact that her child is not a male but a female. When a man named Viswanathan who loved her approached her family with a proposal of marriage, her family opposed it strongly because such homosexual marriage will be a disgraceful to family's reputation. It was her elder sister who opposed it most. She feared that such a same sex marriage would adversely affect the future prospects of her life. The only person who understood her was her father but he was helpless. Her family did not allow her to visit her father when he was hospitalized and later was on his death bed, because, by then she had publicly disclosed her transgender identity.

Mallika confesses the fact that the sore experiences that she had are much intense than what she has expressed in *Mallikavasantham*. But the book narrates not only the bitter experiences of her past but also of those blissful moments, especially her search for Vasanthasenan, her ideal of manhood. She has presented Vasanthasenan as an ideal human being. It was not any particular quality or state of mind that she wanted to celebrate through Vasanthasenan but the man who would fully embrace the diversity in her. She wanted him to be a man different from the traditional patriarchal notions of manhood.

One of the the highlights of Mallika's memoir is the narration of her outing experience which is delineated in great details. Her transposition from Manu J Krishnan to

Vijayarajamallika wasn't at all very smooth. It was fraught with a lot of mental conflicts and psychological agony. It was when Manu was studying in the 7th grade that he felt, for the first time, the spark of femininity churning inside him. Till then he was like any other boy. When he reached the sixth standard, he began to feel an uneasiness, a disjoint between his body and his inner self. Neither Manu nor his parents and teachers were able to understand the change that was taking place in him. His peers vied with each other to make him a butt of ridicule. Vijayarajamallika says that the psychological dilemma, mental trauma, frustration, and desperation that Manu underwent are all beyond words. This agony continued till the age of thirty two when the woman in Manu finally got liberated. Vijayarajamallika writes that it was the lack of support from her family that pained her the most. She says that she had a doting family when she was Manu J Krishnan. But when Mallika in her struggled to prove her existence, the same family sternly denied her ample space to open up. Added to this, she had to undergo several treatments including psychiatric ones. Finally at the age of thirty two, her second childhood began!

The most outstanding aspect of her autobiography, however, is the cheerful optimism that she exhibits throughout. Indeed Mallika is celebrating her identity as a trans woman. Rather than being a pitiable spectacle of a cisgender, the picture of the author-narrator that emerges is that of someone who fights her way, trying to carve out a niche for herself within the rigid confines of religion, caste and patriarchy, all of which support and sustain heterosexualism and condemn transsexuality. The very title of the memoir "Mallikavasantham" which means 'blossoming of Mallika', from the very outset, sets the cheerful tone. More than an account of the trials and tribulations of the past of the author-narrator, *Mallikavasantham* turns out to be a foregrounding of the positive mindscape and gender consciousness of a transgender who is determined to swim against the current. Where as in most transgender testimonies, the trans subjects present themselves as silent victims, being objects of physical abuse, psychological oppression and social discrimination evoking compassion, *Mallikavasantham* presents the transgender as a speaking subject who voices her protest against the constraints of a heterosexual social system that constantly obstructs the mobility of transgender bodies. Thus, her memoir inspires and motivates her fellow trans folks to face their life with courage.

For Mallika, it was the realization of the enabling effect of her painful experiences that helped her to celebrate her transgender life optimistically. Spontaneity is unmistakable in the outpourings of a troubled soul in the book albeit thoughtfulness being a part of it. The work was delivered with a noble thought of leaving a positive influence on her fellow transgenders and therein lies its social significance. " I place with this the desire that [my] writing that is intense with the life experience of one who lived thirty years as a male and the rest as a female may prove beneficial for such births like me (9). Indeed Mallika's experiences of struggle and survival carry the power to inspire trans subjects.

But, the book is not addressed to the transgender readers alone. The second person 'you' in the narrative stands for the 'straight' readers exhorting them change their traditional

mentality of treating the transgender as abnormal and deviant. True, *Mallikavasantham* has made people conscientious about the historic inhumanity committed against queer subjectivities. Thus, the book has a curative effect on mainstream society, as her self-narrative is capable of eliminating many of the negative stereotypes about the transgenders that lie deeply ingrained in Malayalee's social and cultural unconscious.The autobiography bridges the gap between the transgenders and the society.

When Vijayarajamallika was Manu J Krishnan

Like her autobiography, Vijayarajamallika's poetry too voices the silences imposed upon people of her lot by a heterocentric patriarchal order and its traumatic effect on transgender selves. She asks:

"Do you think silence has no voice?

It bears the pain of a roaring sea.

She asks similar probing questions about the differential treatment accorded to the Queer subjects:

"Even though I wore your spectacles

I couldn't find the differences in you, which you saw in me.
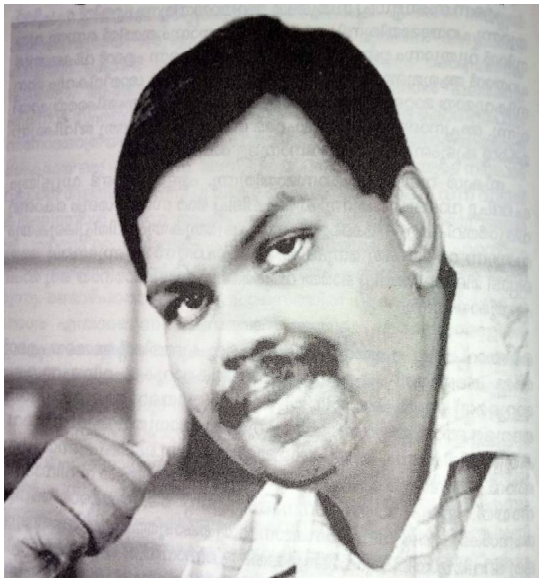
Where lies the trouble?

Is it with the spectacles or with the perspectives?

These disquieting questions of Mallika put to light the reality of how narrow the horizon of the mainstream society's perceptions about the transgenders are. Her poems deepen our understanding of the precarious nature of the existence of transgender bodies in our society and call for a more inclusive and equitable social order. It is her life experiences that form the core of her poetic work *Daivathinte Makal (God's Daughter)*. Each of the poems in *Daivathinte Makal* narrates the problems and predicaments, desires and disappointments, dreams and realities surrounding a transgender self. Commenting on the poems in the collection *Daivathinte Makal* (God's Daughter), in her preface , noted Malayalam novelist K. R. Meera says "Reading these poems will burn the heart of the reader like the bird that swallowed ember

mistaking it to be a fruit" (13). The whips and lashes, the spittle and sarcasm that people gave her as a trans other were transformed into poetry by Vijayarajamallika. However, the poetic 'self' is used as a frame for traversing the issues of LGBTQ+ individuals at large. The poem "Komarangal" is a typical example.

While her poems serve as a focal point in understanding the intersectionality of gender, class, caste and patriarchy, all of which contribute to the oppression and marginalization of transgender bodies, they also express universal themes like love, quest of the self for the other and so on. For instance in the poem "Prananaathan" (Soul Mate) from the collection *Daivathinte makal,* the poetic persona intensely longs for her beloved, resembling Radha's etternal quest for Krishna. Some of her poems make subversive use of mythical characters as in the poem "Brihannala". Brihannala has both male and female eyes. If the people accept those eyes they get not only sight but also insight. The poem says that society should be able to accommodate the consciousness of transgenders too.

Intrinsically, *Daivathinte Makal* has helped the cisgender, transgender and queer individuals to find a new path. It is her own experience as a transgender that forms the basis of the book. They are rooted in her feeling that she is different from the rest. But it is the society that makes her feel so because it treats her differently, excluding and separating her from the mainstream and she writes about this feeling of being different, being alienated and being excluded. Today Transgender Studies have become part of academic interest in the universities and colleges in Kerala. However, the academic acceptance has not paved way for social acceptance as indicated by the steady increase in violence against transgenders.

However, it has to be stated that the harrowing experiences narrated by Vijayarajamallika have given more visibility to transgender subjectivities. At a personal level, as already mentioned, writing bestowed upon her a psychological relief. Narrating the traumatic experiences is one effective way of tiding over the horrors of the past. Though writing about the queer subjects is not a new phenomenon in Malayalam Literature, the writings of transgender-insiders is new to Malayalee/s literary sensibility. While transgender-outsider discourses tend to glorify the society's kindness, love and empathy towards trans individuals, the transgender insiders like Vijayarajamallika register their dissent by shocking the reader into awareness about the cruelties and inhumanities committed against trans persons. Trans vignettes reveal the other side of the truth and help people overcome homophobic determinism.

In the social and literary life of Vijayarajamallika, one finds a synchronization of art and activism. Her social engagements and literary endeavors are characterized by a profound commitment to the cause of the oppressed LGBTQIA+ who are doomed to live their lives in silence with scorched soul. In the introductory part of her memoir, Mallika remarks. "How many transgender selves collapse in the prison of their bodies unable to open up their selves and surrender themselves before death or throw their colourless lives to the frothing streets. I dedicate this book to such people" (1). Unlike the past, when fear of social castration prompted people to suppress their sexual instincts, now there is an increase in the number of

people who openly declare their queer identity. For such people, the writings of Vijarajamallika read like a manifesto which state 'all those who are born in this Earth, male or female, intersex or transgender have a right to live their life as human beings with dignity' (2).

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Fear of the 'Other': A Reading of Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

STANCILAUS S.

Abstract

Pakistani English fiction has gained prominence in recent years. The 9/11 terrorist attack has been the subject of many novels including *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid. This article attempts to represent the fear, anxiety and distrust about Muslim 'others', and Islamophobic tendencies post the 9/11 attacks. Islamophobia or the irrational fear, dislike or hatred against the practitioners of Islam is delineated through an expatriate Pakistani youngster named changez. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* a 9/11 narrative documents the fear and hatred towards the 'other'. The craft of the novel is noteworthy as it lends the reader a different perspective through the eyes of an easterner, with a passive American listener. Post the 9/11 attacks the US and European governments awoke to the threat of terror, which resulted in widespread hatred and suspicion against Islam. The other is regarded as sinister and a threat deepening the Us versus them dichotomy. Changez, a representative figure is subjected to repeated scrutiny and abusive treatments that drive him into trauma

Keywords: islamophobia, fundamentalism, trauma, identity, othering, displacement, hybrid identity, alienation, terrorism

Pakistani fiction in English is gaining increasing attention among the reading public in recent years, when compared to the lacklustre reception it commanded before the 1990s. A large section of Pakistani writers of English fiction either live, or are educated in the west and have gone on to win International awards and recognition, thus cementing the place of Pakistani English fiction on the Global literary scene. Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Mohammad Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* are some noteworthy novels which announced the arrival of Pakistani fiction on the world stage. Despite their diverse backgrounds these writers have proved their ability to "live between East and West, literally or intellectually" (Shamsie xxiv). Mention should also be made of eminent Pakistani diasporic writers like Bapsi Sidhwa, Hanif Kureishi, Zulfikar Ghose, and pioneers like Ahmed Ali and Mumtaz Shah Nawaz who took to writing fiction in pre-Partition India. Pakistani English writing developed from its tender roots as a marginalised, unsung body of works, to the dynamic, influential body of writing in the twenty-first century.

Terrorism poses an ominous challenge to the global population. The world shudders in the wake of terrorist acts of brutal violence, inflicting unending misery and suffering on

innocent victims. The aftermath of 9/11 has plunged the world into a never-ending war. The impact of 9/11 and similar terrorist acts has been the subject of creative works like films and novels. The 9/11 terrorist act has drastically changed not only the world's geopolitical scenario, but has left an indelible mark on literature. An attack of such gigantic proportions was bound to impact the writers of the times. Post 9/11 Pakistani fiction has succeeded in recording the minute imprints of these transformative events. Before moving on to an analysis of Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, it would be worthwhile to take a cursory glance at some other novels that depict the fear of 'others' as the basic premise.

A case in point is the novel *The Scatter Here is Too Great*, by Tanweer B., which offers a glimpse into violence torn urban life in Karachi, Pakistan. The novel describes, quite graphically, a bomb explosion that leaves the city in chaos and its inhabitants in utter misery and trauma. The novelist captures the searing pain, loss, and terrible loneliness experienced by the victims of the inhumane violence. *The Blind Man's Garden* by Nadeem Aslam throws light on the victims of the American War on Terror. Set in Afghanistan, the novel visualises the impact of 9/11 and the subsequent war on terror on the lives of the ordinary people. The novel points to the trauma inflicted on innocent children, who are trained in the Jihadi camps and sent to Afghanistan. The novel delineates how the helpless children end up betrayed and tortured in a war in which they have no role or interest. It is an undeniable fact that following the 9/11 terrorist attack in the US, a certain fear, anxiety and distrust about Muslim 'others' gave rise to increased number of Islamophobic crimes. Islamophobia may be explained as an irrational fear, dislike, hatred and discrimination against practitioners of the Islamic religion and way of life.

In the early twentieth century, the term 'Islamophobie' was used in French literature to denote anti-Islamic sentiments. Islamophobia may be denoted as a form of xenophobia, a dislike and fear of others. Negative outlook regarding Islam and its practitioners has been around even before the term Islamophobia gained currency. Negative portrayals emerged as nearly as early as Islam itself. This was heightened during the time of the crusades during the middle ages.

Pakistani literature in English has highlighted complex issues like the political instability, terrorist attacks, military coups, poverty, unemployment etc. Among the writers who have projected these themes, Mohsin Hamid deserves attention for capturing the minute details of the fabric of Pakistani society.

Of the present corps of renowned Pakistani writers in English, most of whom came of age in the early to mid-2000s, Mohsin's Hamid is perhaps the most famous. Writing regularly for publications like 'The New Yorker', 'The New York Times' and 'The Guardian', and with internationally acclaimed novels like *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Exit West* to his credit. Hamid has established himself as an authority figure in Pakistani culture and politics. (heralddawn.com)

Hamid, a British Pakistani novelist and brand consultant has contributed in catapulting Pakistani English Writing to the global stage. An alumnus of the Harvard Law School and Princeton University, Hamid describes himself as a "mongrel". He states:

> The choices I faced were confusing, New York or Lahore? Novelist as my entire profession or as only a part? And the choices were related. If I left my job to write fulltime, I would lose my employment-based work visa and be forced to depart permanently for Pakistan. As I had done once before, I turned to my writing to help me understand my split self and my split world. *Moth Smoke* had for me been a look at Pakistan with a gaze altered by many years I had spent in America. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, I thought, would be a look at America with a gaze reflecting the part of myself that remained stubbornly Pakistani (*Discontents and its Civilisations* 42)

Hamid's debut novel *Moth Smoke* documents his nation's social issues, like the influence of Western culture on urban people, social and economic discrimination, unemployment, role and position of women in Urban society, corrupt legal systems etc. *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* takes place in an unnamed country that has close similarities to his homeland, Pakistan. This second person narrative chronicles the travails of an unnamed hero who relocates to a bustling city from a poverty-stricken hamlet. Hamid displays his fictional craft by weaving in a metaphorical look at the fast paced social and economic changes sweeping across "Rising Asia" while narrating a straight forward tale of love and desires.

Exit West deals with the themes of emigration and refugee crisis. Hamid incorporates elements of magical realism to narrate the story of a young couple, who flee from an unknown city in the throes of a civil war, using a system of enigmatic magical doors, which lead to different exits around the globe.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist may be read as a 9/11 narrative that documents the fear and hatred towards the 'Other'. The novel discusses Islamophobia through the life of the protagonist Changez, a Pakistani citizen. The entire novel, in a way, is shaped by the September 11 terrorist strikes, and its repercussions. The impact of 9/11 attacks, has been depicted in many novels, most of them by Western writers, which typically project the western point of view. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is different in the sense that, it is the work of a Pakistani author, lending the readers a different perspective through the eyes of an easterner, with a passive American listener.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks had far-reaching geopolitical impact. The terrorist attack, aimed at challenging the supremacy of the United States, was carried out by the Islamic Terrorist group Al-Qaeda, under the leadership and patronage of Osama Bin Laden on 11 September, 2001. The terrorist group hijacked passenger airlines and crashed into the World Trade Centre complex and other strategic locations ripping apart the hitherto inviolable security apparatus of the United States. The direct response to the attacks was the US counter attack which turned out to be a war on terror against Afghanistan and Iraq. The post 9/11 American

life was noted for increased patriotic fervour, nationalistic jingoism, a heightened degree of paranoia and fear regarding future terrorist attacks and a general fear against Islam and its believers. The US and European governments awoke to the threat of terror and vowed to wipeout terrorism from their soil, which often ended up as widespread hatred and suspicion against everything connected to Islam. Government policies aimed at pre-empting further terrorism had only one enemy, and that was Islam.

Islam has seeped into the consciousness of most Americans, including academics and intellectuals, principally because it has been linked to newsworthy issues like oil, hostile nations like Iran, Afghanistan, Palestine, or terrorism. Edward Said observes that this had come to be called as "the Islamic revolution", or "the crescent of crisis", or "the arc of instability", or "the return of Islam" (Covering Islam 16).

Hamid discusses the changes that came over the US attitude towards Muslims after the 9/11 attacks, though the roots of Islamophobia run much deep in Western psyche. Through the narrative, the author poses a number of questions about the attitude towards Muslims. The post 9/11 days, thrust upon the American mindset the fear of fear that Muslims are aliens, strangers, potential threats and a menace to be around. There was perceptible change in the way the West viewed Muslims and Muslim dominated nations like Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, though Pakistan was an ally of the United States. They were regarded sinister and a threat to the liberal values of the West. Branded as the sinister 'Other', thus a clear reinforcement of the 'US' vs 'Them' dichotomy. A person was linked to Islamic Extremism and terrorist acts of violence just because of his faith and a Muslim surname. The protagonist of the novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Changez being a Muslim faces many hardships. Overnight he turns into a suspect and is met with suspicious glances and whispers at his workplace. He undergoes thorough scrutiny at the airport and is subjected to verbal abuses by total strangers. Such repeated scrutiny and abusive treatments drive him to a trauma. The discriminations faced by Muslim employees at the workplace and outside based on their skin colour, dress code, shape of beards and even their surnames are realistically documented by Hamed in the narrative.

Islamophobia has been rising in Western countries, triggered by high rates of immigration, child births and conversions. Consequent to terrorist acts like 9/11, a particular anxiety, dislike and dread about Muslim 'others' led to hate crimes, suspicion and hostility against Muslims. Some scholars substitute words like 'anti-Muslim prejudice', 'anti-Muslim bigotry', 'anti-Islamism', 'anti-Muslim hate' to refer to Islamophobia which in essence is the fear of Islam, as a religion taking over other non-Islamic religions. Islam is also perceived as a major form for the construction of political and cultural identity. There is an increased focus on Muslims and Islam in the American and Western media, most of which is highly exaggerated stereotyping and replete with hostility. Said observes in *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*:

There also seems to have been a strange revival of canonical, though previously discredited, Orientalist ideas about Muslim, generally non-white people-ideas which have achieved a startling prominence at a time when racial or religious misrepresentations of every other cultural group are no longer circulated with such impunity (xi-xii)

Said goes on to add that:

Malicious generalisations about Islam have become the last acceptable form of denigration of foreign culture in the West; what is said about the Muslim mind, or character, or religion, or culture as a whole cannot now be said in mainstream discussion about Africans, Jews, other Orientals, or Asians (xii)

This is not to ignore the fact that provocations, troubling incidents and the acts of terror have been reported from Islamic countries such as Iran, Afghanistan, Sudan, Libya etc during the last decades. There has been a consolidation of emotions around the Islamic world, which has resulted in countless incidents of terrorism against Western and Israeli targets. However, it would be naïve and outright falsehood to trace all such acts to 'Islam'. Most of the charges boil down to irresponsible generalisations and could never be levelled against any other religious or cultural group.

Mohsin Hamid explores troubling questions connected to Islamophobia, fundamentalism, identity crisis, othering of Muslims through the life and experiences of Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. According to Hamid, the novel is " a look at America with a gaze reflecting the part of myself that remained stubbornly Pakistani" (*Discontent and its Civilisations* 36)

Changez, the protagonist, enters into a conversation with an American stranger, in a café in Lahore. The entire narrative centres around this exchange covering various aspects of his life, starting from his attachment to the West in the beginning, to his gradual withdrawal and discontent. A conflict between the Muslim world as represented by Changez and the West, which is Judeo-Christian in its faith is clearly depicted in the novel. In the course of conversation, we get glimpses of his life and his metamorphosis into a reluctant fundamentalist. Changez tells about his graduation from Princeton University and his recruitment as an analyst at Underwood Samson, an American consultancy firm. Changez is sent on an offshore assignment to Chile, where he hears about the fateful events on 9/11. On hearing the news of the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre, Changez's reaction is a smile. Changez smiles not because he, "… was pleased at the slaughter of thousands of innocents" but because of "… the fact that someone had visibly brought America to her knees" (*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* 73)

On his way back to America, he gets a taste of the changed equations at the airport security check. Unable to successfully complete his task within the stipulated time, Changez loses his job. Totally disenchanted with New York, Changez returns to Lahore and works as a university lecturer. There he voices his dissent and engages in demonstrations against the foreign policies detrimental to Pakistan, thus earning the anti-American label.

Hamid has skilfully woven the narrative technique of "dramatic monologue" into the structure of the novel. The entire narrative is in the voice of Changez, and the American remains a silent listener throughout. In true Browning style the responses and reactions of the silent listener are inferred from the narrator words. The readers get an idea of how an anti-American like Changez would react to a native of America. Hamid states the reason behind his decision to choose the format of a Pakistani telling his version to a silent American thus:

The form of the novel with the narrator and his audience both acting as characters, allowed me to mirror the mutual suspicion with which America and Pakistan (or the Muslim world) looks at one another. The Pakistani narrator wonders: Is this just a normal guy or is he a killer out to get me? The American man who is his audience wonders the same. And this allows the novel to inhabit the interior emotional world much like the exterior political world in which it will be read. The form of the novel is an invitation to the reader. If the reader accepts, then he or she will be called upon to judge the novel's outcome and shape its ending. (bookbrowse.com)

Through the monologue of Changez, the Pakistani, and the silent American listener Hamid turns the whole power equation upside down. Even the reader is made to feel the highhandedness of American policies and attitudes through the voice of a person from the other side. Towards the end of the conversation, quite mysteriously both characters leave the cafe. There is a hint some urgency and the anticipation that something menacing is about to take place. Changez's statement, "… It seems an obvious thing to say, but you should not imagine that we Pakistani's are all potential terrorists, just as we should imagine that you Americans are all under-cover assassins" (183), is thought provoking. By denying the American listener a voice, Hamid pre-empts any attempt to refute Changez's arguments about fundamentalism, identity of the other and America's dominance in global politics. America with its superior military and economic powers has extended its supremacy and hegemony over other nations. John Ikenberry observes that what we see around is, "… a unipolar world in which the United States has no peer competitor … no state or collation could ever challenge it as a global leader, protector and enforcer" (*Liberal Leviathan* 255-256).

The American hegemony is challenged by Changez when he tells the American listener:

Your country's flag invaded New York after the attacks; it was everywhere. Small flags stuck on tooth picks featured in the shrines; stickers of flags adorned windshields and windows; large flags fluttered from buildings. They all seemed to proclaim: we are America … the mightiest civilisation the world has ever known; you have slighted us; beware our wrath" (*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* 79)

In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks , hate crimes against people of Middle Eastern descent rose in the US. Muslims were often targeted in the name of religion. Changez is a victim as he is one of only two Muslims in his professional team, "… sifted not only by well honed standardised tests but by painstakingly customised evaluations – international interviews, essays, recommendations" (4). Such bitter experiences hound him throughout his

style in New York. The basic values, beliefs and way of life of the Muslims, or the 'Other', is often perceived as problematic , resulting in an atmosphere of doubt, distrust and disrespect. This paves way to the widening chasm of the "US" vs "Them" dichotomy. Unverified assumptions, hearsays and sweeping generalisations are commonplace in depiction of Muslims in books, films, media, television series and even advertisements.

In the novel, we find Changez slowly distancing himself from his westernised, Anglophilic views consequent to the repercussions of 9/11. The novel was seen by critics and readers alike as the definitive literary response to 9/11 and a powerful indictment of Islamophobia. Reducing individuals into a purely religious entity as in Samuel Huntington's infamous 'clash of civilisations' is quite naïve. It goes without saying that humans in reality, have multiple identities, religion being just one of them. The global world is a pluri-cultural one where multiple religions exist and people find sense in myriad ways of life trusting sacred ideas of freedom, liberty, justice, equality brotherhood and integrity. Inciting hatred against any group, on the basis of their race, colour, or religion is not to be tolerated in a civilised world. Mutual trust and respect should be cultivated among the world religions to ward off evil developments like Islamophobia. At the core of any religion lies the ideas of love, peace, brotherhood and acceptance which when followed will offset Islamophobia, Hindutva or any other form of hatred.

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The Myth of Decolonization: A Postcolonial Perspective

SAHABUDDIN AHAMED

Abstract

Decolonization has been a focus of debate in the contemporary postcolonial nation states. Beginning with colonization as a response to undo it, decolonization is the process by which colonized peoples from the former colonies claim for independence from the colonial rule and assert their humanity and anti-colonial self-government. The objects of decolonization are to be empowered, emancipated, liberated, enlightened, and above all, decolonized. Though one can achieve these objects, it is not easy to decolonize one's mind in a real sense of the term due to the continuous influence of colonization felt in the inferiority complex of the colonized people and the manifestations of colonization in the forms of globalization and the exclusive and monocultural nationalistic postcolonial national states that betray the promises of decolonization. This paper is an attempt to explore the methods of achieving decolonization and the obstacles to do it and the new possibilities that review or extinguish the oppressive and dominant principles inherited from colonial domination. It examines the ways of achieving decolonization through emancipation, cross-cultural exchange, and cultural fluidity in which postcolonial subjects can construct a new sense of their own humanity, hybridized identification, and enlightened society.

Keywords: decolonization, colonization, postcolonialism, cross-culturalism, post-transformation

Introduction

Before moving to the concept of decolonization, one has to understand colonization first. Generally, colonization is the process by which colonial powers acquire distant territories, establish colonial legitimacy of domination, exploitation, and dehumanization of indigenous peoples and their lands for seeking material wealth and profit from them. This harmful process involves the control over new territories, destruction of indigenous economies, marginalization of native culture, reorganization of socio-political structures, and the denial of the very existence of colonized people's pre-colonial identity and culture in favour of the colonizer. In this dialectical process, the colonized subjects gradually develop a relationship with the colonial cultural value and simultaneously deviate from their own cultural traditions as colonial domination eradicates all indigenous cultural representations by incorporating its dominant European values into the colonized societies evident in the use of European languages, foreign curricula in educational system, Christianity, and the demonization of

indigenous religion, culture, and ethics. Herein lies the colonization of the minds of indigenous peoples and the establishment of colonial hegemony.

The problem is that even after the formal end of colonialism, decolonization, the gaining of political independence, and the creation of new postcolonial nations, postcolonial masses are not free from the influence of colonization. As Edward Said in his *Culture and Imperialism* announces that imperial past is not finished, instead it has entered the postcolonial realities and is present all cultural, social, political, ideological and economical spheres (9). This is apparent in the situations of the newly created nations that are politically, culturally, and economically dependent on the former colonial powers and mimic the orientation of exclusive and authentic nationalism and unequal power structures disseminated by European colonizers.

The impact of globalization: Rapid change and transformation in all the spheres of life, the growth and progress, the scientific, industrial, and technological advancement, transportation, information and communication technology, global media, internet, emails, social media and cyber-world, and global mobility. Globalization or Internationalization -two pictures-positive and negative: the pictures of fast changes, prosperity, development and interconnected world. exploitation, depravity, disparity and suppression. Suppression of the nationalist freedom movements of the formerly colonized nations. The shining picture of the one side of the world under the so-called globalization is painted at the cost of the other side of the world i.e. the exploitation and domination of the proletariat, colonized masses. This whole system works through the "mechanism of capitalist production and accumulation" (Marx 707). He rightly remarks that:

> It [capitalist system] establishes an accumulation of misery, corresponding with accumulation of capital. Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital. (Marx 709)

The goals of decolonization are in question as the newly independent postcolonial nations are not free from the claws of neo-colonialism. The remapping of borders and the ongoing impacts of colonial domination continue to be problematic for the postcolonial states. The anti-colonial nationalist movements that started to gain independence from the colonial powers, became a failure due to the enactment of the exclusive and homogenous nationalist ideology, the lack of representatives of the minority, subaltern and the marginalized groups of people and the exclusion of them from the society and the rapid influx of migration from the postcolonial nation to the former colonial metropolitan cities. The postcolonial nations come under the influence of neo-colonial project of globalization that paves the ways for creating the consumer markets and attracting cheap labour forces in the underdeveloped and developing postcolonial countries around the world. As a result, nationalism fails in those countries or it is the effects of ongoing neocolonial domination and exploitation that remain in the countries as so evident in the establishment of dominant nationalist ideology modelled on Eurocentric

nationalism and the countries' economic and political dependence on the European developed nations. In this context, decolonization is far from being ended and is still in process in historical, cultural, social, political, economic, linguistic, geographical and psychological terms.

Analysis

Decolonization is the social, cultural, political and historical process in which former colonies go through the intense periods of native anti-colonial resistance, independence movements, and violence and become independent, after the withdrawal of colonial rule from the colonies and obtain the status of independent nations. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines decolonization as "the process of a colony or colonies becoming independent" (393). Decolonization began with colonization. It began in Asia and Africa in the 1940s mostly. Even today it remains as an uneven process due to the experiences of economic disparity and economic dependence that most of the former colonized countries face even after their gaining of independence from colonial rule.

To resist against European colonialism by producing literature and culture based on values of European cultural and racial supremacy, to keep their native indigenous cultures firmly in their roots, to defy Euro-centric assumptions, to write or read from a colonized perspective, attempt to write back to the centre to challenge and parody hegemonic colonial discourse, to remake colonizers' culture and language forms to undermine colonial assumptions, to find their own voices and identities in the colonizer's image, to reclaim their own past which has been devalued and degraded by the Eurocentrism, and to contest the orientalist assumptions about the cultural and racial difference between West and East.

In his critical essay "Colonialist Criticism," African writer and critic Chinua Achebe responds to the exaggerated colonialist assumptions emphasized by Albert Schweitzer who proclaims: "The African is my brother, but my junior brother" (3). Achebe asserts that colonial perspectives and colonial cultural authenticity are inappropriate in time and space, no longer superior as colonized subjects are able to produce literatures and cultures in the European colonizer's language and contest European superior, authentic and universal cultural assumptions. His response is to understand African world and identity well before and to challenge the stereotypical and dehumanizing representations of Africa and Africans. In this context, he writes: "Meanwhile a new situation was slowly developing as a handful of natives began to acquire European education and then to challenge Europe's presence and position in their native land with the intellectual weapons of Europe itself" (6). For him, it is the time for the Africans to assume responsibility for their own problems and situations in their native land and resist the dominant colonialist assumptions that focus on their "moral inferiority," passivity and invisibility in uneven cultural representations.

In his essay, "The Novelist as Teacher," Achebe points out that "Today, things have changed a lot, but it would be foolish to pretend that we have fully recovered from the traumatic effects of our first confrontaticon with Europe" (58). In "The African Writer and the English Language," he celebrates cultural and linguistic complexity and plurality and

resist monolithic and binarized cultures and languages. He focuses on the relevance of using colonizer's language in the African context:

> Was it literature produced in Africa or about Africa? Could African literature be on any subject, or must it have an African theme? Should it embrace the whole continent or south of the Sahara, or just Black Africa? And then the question of language. Should it be in indigenous African languages or should it include Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Afrikaans, et cetera? (Achebe 74)

His emphasis is on the writing of national literature of Nigeria in English due to the British colonization of Nigeria, the intervention of the British colonizers in the arbitrary creation of the nation, and the unification of its tribes and languages into one country. He prefers a world language for writing, for expressing his message and his African experience through it as it functions as "a medium of international exchange" that is its great advantage to reach the Western readers (82). For him, those writers who write in English or other European language are not unpatriotic to their own countries, but "are by-products of the same process that made the new nation-states of Africa" (77). But for him, to express his African identity and experience, the English language must be "a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings" (Achebe 84). For him, to be decolonized, one has not to abandon the oppressor's language, but to write in it to respond to the distorted representations of Africa and Africans, to represent African experience, and to create the past cultural traditions. It is mainly to be done through the appropriation and nativization of the language in the new contexts. His reference to new English indicates a hybrid sensibility that is the use of the standard English and the African languages, conveying rich African literary traditions and subverting the superiority of Western cultural and linguistic traditions.

Achebe puts emphasis on the use of English to represent African identity: "Where am I to find the time to learn the half dozen or so Nigerian languages, each of which can sustain a literature? I am afraid it cannot be done. These languages will just have to develop as tributaries to feed the one central language enjoying nationwide currency. Today, for good or ill, that language is English" (78). He defends the use of the English language for some reasons, such as the impossibility to learn dozens African languages and the advantage of the African visibility provided by the English language for the literary texts by African writers. To him it is very difficult for Africans to fully abandon English language as they are familiar with it since their childhood: "Those of us who have inherited the English language may not be in a position to appreciate the value of the inheritance" (78).

In *Decolonizing the Mind*, Kenyan author and critic Ngugi wa Thiong'o draws up an opinion contrary to Achebe, stating that African writers must write in African languages in order to protect their native cultural values and sensibilities. For Thiong'o, using African languages is a way of returning to cultural roots, a way of reinventing cultural norms and traditions based on the idea of the pre-colonial past that is pure and uncontaminated that colonialism sought to devalue and destroy. It is the responsibility of the African writers to

teach normative cultural norms through African languages on behalf of their own peoples, cultures, languages and traditions. For him, using the English language of the colonizer is a way of cultural supremacy and suppression and maintenance of colonial domination, meaning that the colonizer's cultures and languages are higher, powerful, superior and authentic.

Thiongo's idea is further developed and theorized by Robert Young in the context of postcolonial translation. Young does not agree with the use of the languages of the colonizers in the former colonized nations, arguing that languages, as well as classes and nations, exists in hierarchy in the context of postcoloniality. Young points out that the notion of translation goes beyond the communication issues, concerning the transformation of native culture into the subordinate or inferior culture and the representation of native culture under the framework of orientalism without reference to its originality and the superimposition of colonial cultural values into the native culture that always cover the issues of uneven power relations, domination, duplicity, appropriation, and violence: "Translation becomes part of the process of domination, of achieving control, a violence carried out on the language, culture, and people being translated. The close links between colonization and translation begin not with acts of exchange, but of violence and appropriation, of 'deterritorialization'" (140-1).

Being highly influenced by the dialectical tradition of Marx and Hegel, Frantz Fanon in his *A Dying Colonialism* discusses the destructive impacts of colonialism on the colonized body, mind, culture, language and history that the colonized subjects are still suffering oppression, suppression, domination, degradation and inferior status paved by colonial rule, colonialist assumptions. The colonial cultural system is so deep rooted into the native cultural system that it has created different forms of enslavement and exploitation-physical, psychic, economic, cultural, and linguistic. It rots the indigenous cultural systems slowly and prevents the possibility of achieving liberation, empowerment and emancipation i.e. the restoring of dignity, humanity, faith, confidence, national pride, national identity, native cultural tradition, and political liberation. To remove the germs of infection that colonialism leaves behind for the colonized masses and nations, what is needed most is the revolution that the colonized peoples could fight them to restore their human dignity, humanity, national independence, and national unity that are degraded and devalued by colonialism, to change prejudices, to renew society, and to construct a new way of life.

In her non-fiction work, *A Small Place*, Jamaica Kincaid addresses the rots of British colonialism that infects Antigua and it's peoples' psyche are evident in government corruption, exploitation and domination of the marginalized by the ruling elite, poverty, hierarchical socio-cultural structures, unequal power structures, and economic dependence, all of which become prevalent after the independence of the country. The author expresses her resentment towards the corruption of the present-day Antiguan government, lack of better-livelihood, and the rise of neo-colonialists and neo-capitalists at the cost of the native cultural economy that are seen as products of British colonialization prevalent in the postcolonial Antigua. She presents colonization as the root-cause of all corruption and misery that are existing in the country in spite of achieving national independence:

"How you ever wondered to yourself why it is that all people like me seem to have learned from you is how to imprison and murder each other, how to govern badly, and how to take the wealth of our country and place it in Swiss bank accounts? Have you ever wondered why it is that all we seem to have learned from you is how to corrupt our societies and how to be tyrants? You will have to accept that this is mostly your fault. Let me just show you how you looked to us. You came. You took things that were not yours, and you did not even, for appearance's sake, ask first. You could have said, "May I have this, please?' and even though it would have been clear to everybody that a yes or no from us would have been of no consequence you might have looked so much better. I would have had to admit that at least you were polite. You murdered people. You imprisoned people. You robbed people. You opened your own banks and put our money in them. The banks were in your name." (Kincaid 34-5)

The process of decolonization started as weapons of anti-colonial resistance, political liberation, restoration of national identity and sovereignty, and different forms of emancipation. It aimed at killing all the rots of colonization, resisting colonial ways of living and thinking, and the change of the previous order. It is not simply an implementation of the harmless project of empowerment, liberation and emancipation of the oppressed masses by removing the colonial power from their own land, rather it is a project of complete revolution and disorder. Far from being peaceful, it is a historical and political process, as asserted by Frantz Fanon in his ground-breaking work *The Wretched of the Earth*:

Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is obviously, a program of complete disorder. But it cannot come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding. Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say that it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content. (Fanon 36)

Decolonization influences the colonized people with a hope of new identity and humanity and transform their prejudices and ignorance. It advocates an indigenous cultural system and question the legitimacy of colonial situation. It attempts to organize a decolonized society and achieve decolonized cultural autonomy. As an umbrella term, in its efforts, it aims at overthrowing the presence of colonial power, developing homogenous nationhood, elevating the live-style of the colonized peoples, uplifting the miserable and painful existence of being marginal and other, and overcoming the economic backwardness and cultural cringe.

The dangers lie in the formation of nationalism, national culture and identity when based on Western models. In this context, the actual aims of decolonization fail in the Third World countries. The efforts are made for the exclusionary, hegemonic, and authentic national identity are based on the ethics of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious separatism paved by colonialism that is contrary to the visions of the ant-colonial nationalism that are apparent in the underdeveloped countries in the postcolonial world. In *The Wretch of the Earth*, Fanon explains the hegemonic underpinnings of the newly-independent nation-states. The revival of the pre-colonial, unifying, and homogenous "national culture" is only possible through the

liberation of the nation-state brought about by the decolonization project of ant-colonial nationalist movements (233). However, the unifying complicity emerges from the moment of the birth of the nation-state. As the anti-colonial nationalist movement is a middle class-led bourgeoise movement that when the new ruling classes in the newly independent country assume power they are actually mimicking the political ideology of the former colonial rulers, enjoying all sorts of corruption and privilege, repeating the binarized, oppressive, and hierarchical socio-political structures, and denying the reality of cultural diversity in the nation, resulting in conflicts, disappointment, and disillusionment. As Fanon points out that European colonial models of nation and nationalism are behind the construction of the newly independent nations and are responsible for the unproductive, non-existence, unreality and inferior nature of national culture of the newly created nations:

> Colonial domination, because it is total and tends to oversimplify, very soon manages to disrupt in spectacular fashion the cultural life of a conquered people. This cultural obliteration is made possible by the negation of national reality, by new legal relations introduced by the occupying power, by the banishment of the natives and their customs to outlying districts by colonial society, by expropriation, and by the systematic enslaving of men and women. (236)

Strongly influenced by Marxist-Hegelian dialectic traditions, Albert Memmi talks about the same-the disastrous impacts of colonialism on the oppressed, colonized, and postcolonial subjects and the rigid sense of racial and cultural difference in the colonial and postcolonial periods in his *Decolonization and the Decolonized*. He sheds on the pessimistic picture of the new postcolonial nations where decolonized subjects' expectations of unified national cultural identity, better livelihood, equality, "freedom and prosperity" are shattered by "poverty and corruption, violence, and sometimes chaos" (3). The decolonized individuals with frustrated expectations are impelled to migrate to the developed countries. Being placed between the silence enacted by the authoritarian regimes in the country of origin and the exile in the country of settlement, they, in spite of disadvantages, express themselves and report the corruption of government and lack of opportunity in the new nation. In this context, there are the new frustrations of the decolonized immigrant subjects in the host lands along the old ones in their homelands that they are forced to face what Memmi calls the double failure of decolonization.

Heavily focusing on social and political issues related to the project of decolonization, Memmi's work reveals the failure and disillusionment of the independent nations to bring liberation and prosperity as it goes through the problems of having the continuance of colonial models and the neo-colonial relations of being economically and politically dependent on the former colonial powers. In this context, decolonization is seen as a process and in its continuity of events happening in the former colonies.

In his influential book *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon argues that the project of colonization not only destroys colonized countries' economical and political structures, but also the psychology of colonized subjects. The harmful effects of colonialism and racism are so deep

that the minds of colonized individuals are made to internalize their cultural and biological inferiority to that of the colonizer, resulting in cultural assimilation and inferiority complex. It is because of the process of colonization and colonial hegemony that view blackness and colonized culture as impure, negative and inferior while the white colonizer as superior, powerful and human. This colonial cultural supremacy is powerfully internalized by colonized subjects and incorporated into their culture, history, religion and language, causing a denial of their former black identities. Fanon asserts that the separation of colonized people from their native land, history, culture, identity, and psyche is devised by the colonial process:

> Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (Fanon 18)

To dismantle all forms of colonialism, colonized people would have to go through their anti-colonial struggles, to replace colonial powers with their self-government, to rediscover their own culture, identity, language and history, to reorganize social, political and economic structures and to rebuild the very nature of their own psychology to become subjects, human beings rather than objects of their cultures, histories and languages that colonialism sought to ravage and devalue.

Though postcolonial individuals can shape a glorious present and connect themselves with the glorious past, uncontaminated cultural roots, they cannot reclaim the pure native cultures, languages and identities and deny the existence of complex and heterogenous cultural traditions due to the admixture of native and foreign cultural elements developed through colonial counters and contemporary other cultural encounters. It would be a complete absurdity for them to promote the native monocultural identity. To come out of the colonial mindset, one has to take pride in the richness and variety of the culture and language of the colonized country and counter the Eurocentric representations that claim to be great and superior and that distort and misrepresent the native culture and history. In one word, both monolithic native tradition and Eurocentric one are to be contested in favour of cultural syncretism. This is what W.E.B. Du Bois called "double consciousness" in his influential book *The Souls of Black Folk*. He talks about how a Negro sees himself, develops his two souls "to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self" so that he is not to lose old African self nor to lose the new American self but to belong to both traditions and take advantages from both cultures and languages (9).

Conclusion

In the real sense of the term, to become decolonized, postcolonial subjects must choose a flexible and liminal position to uphold their sense of pride in national culture and identity based on democratic values and deconstruct the dominant colonialist perspectives at the

same time. If decolonization is meant for self-realization, then its goals are to bring liberation, promote knowledge, empathy, understanding, humanity, and development in the society, and to challenge the colonialist assumptions. There is a need of dissociation from the term when its aims are directed at narrowness or in term of binarized classification. For the sake of humanity, for being the liberated souls, for the exploration of native knowledge and creativity, for the betterment of society, and for the countercultural systems, one has to come out of the colonial mindset. What is most important is the restoration of hope, faith and confidence rather than the decolonization of the mind. To accept the contemporary postcolonial reality, one cannot deny the impacts of the colonization and its transformative nature in time and space and the possibility of equal importance of indigenous cultural traditions with the colonial metropolitan ones. Despite the loss that is brought about by the process of colonial translation that devalued the indigenous cultural systems, the use of the colonizer's language and the emergence of new conditions as a result of colonization is difficult to suppress that is seen as a gain to counter Eurocentrism and to create a transcultural contact zone. As there can be no complete rejection of colonial culture but its hegemonic perspectives. Rather than indulging in the debate over the impossible, one has to believe in something changing, productive and reasonable. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon rightly articulates that : "What matters is not to know the world but to change it" (17). Such transformation could be achieved through education, knowledge, exchange, and negotiation rather than violence, hatred, division, and separatism.

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Karapuzha

N. SREEKALA

Memories flow undulating
Along the ripples of Karapuzha
My sire's birthplace
My childhood haunt
The summer vacations spent in mirth
A rendezvous where cousins met

Vallyachan and *vallyammachi*
Played the perfect host
We learnt to swim
We sang and danced
The *puzha*, a waterway for boats
Plying between Kottayam and Alapuzha
The big boats brought big waves
That lashed against the banks
We rose with the waves
And down again only to rise once more
Days of unending celebration!
Sumptuous food we relished
The simmering clam roast,
A delicacy much favoured

Supper served early, invariably
We played *anthakshari*,
The young and the old alike
Singers and dancers many
In our extended family

It all unfolded in the front courtyard
Of Poovelil house, the ancestral home
Where the singers sang
And the dancers danced.
On starry moonlit nights,
The air resonated with sonorous music
Wafting mellifluously in the cool breeze

It all came to a standstill, a stasis
When black clouds eclipsed the sunshine
In our lives
The day my sire was brought home dead
Laid to rest on the banks of Karapuzha
With only a sand mound as monument
The ravages of time have left no trace
But the ripples of Karapuzha still caress him

The Storm Before the Calm

What is it that alters the rhythm of my heart?
What makes the mind distraught, unable to focus?
What is it that blurs my eyes when tears held back?
What makes the blooms colourless, stale and bleak?
Are they mere changing facets of a fragile mind?

A pain that pierces a thousand daggers into the core
of my heart
A pain that fails to mend hearts torn to shreds!
Agony that hurts when love fails to decipher true love!
Has love now frozen within the four walls of my heart?

The sun's peach and pink dims into darkness deep.
The ocean rumbling within me, fiercer than
Zeus's thunderbolt!
The storm before the calm that fades into nothingness!
Numbness felt when love falters like a broken promise.

The big ball of fire plunges into the western horizon
The birds recline to their cosy nests as darkness sets in.
There's renewed promise of love and light every morn.
Renewed hope, aspirations rekindled taking lofty wings!
A long wait for a new birthing in the east, bright and golden!

Vignettes of Nature

1

The cacophony caught my attention
Crows flying to and fro,
Cawing desperately
I watched curiously
The young one trying in vain
To soar up in the skies
The crow family struggles to help
The young one stand on its legs
Slowly, gently it resurrects

The cawing grows intense
A celebration of victory!
It left me ponder for a while.
The love for its own kind
Pure, abiding and healing
Love to see such love
Surge from the human heart
A heart to love, a hand to help
Boundless, limitless, a continuum

<center>2</center>

It's Spring
No dewdrops
On the blades of grass

The pre-summer showers
Brought relief
From the blistering heat
The rains bestowed freshness
On plants almost wilting;
Brought freshness and colour
To my heart and mind
A week's intermittent rains
Nature bounced back to life.

The Sun came up
Tearing the clouds apart
Scattering its golden glow
An incredible sight!

The squirrels in glee
The birds all a twitter
The huge teak tree
Shot branches all around
Homing the little winged birds

Amidst the luxuriant greenery
The kittens, three in number
Played hide and seek naively
The mamma cat lay majestically
Watching her children play.
Dropped some drools
On a platter green
They came out of their hiding
I stayed away and watched
They came prowling gently
The threesome had their fill
And resumed their innocent pranks

While I watched
The mother ate the leftovers
Customary with mothers all
A mother's love unfathomable!!

Matriarchs of Eminence: Unravelling the Political and Poetical Legacy of Women in Early History and Literature of Kashmir

BAZILA EHSAN

Abstract

Kashmir, an aesthetic abode and geographic marvel which is celebrated for its picturesque landscape, bountiful resources, and diverse cultural tapestry is equally recognized for its rich literary and scholarly contributions. Although, a large corpus of literature is dedicated to the glorious past of Kashmir, there exists a discernable gap and conspicuous dearth of the scholarly discourse about the pivotal role played by women in shaping the history of Kashmir. This lacuna serves as the impetus for the current paper which attempts to fill the gap by exploring the indomitable and pervasive presence of women in the political as well as poetical spheres of Kashmir. The political power and agency of women in early history of Kashmir can be traced from the fact that Kashmir has witnessed the exemplary leadership of not just one but four powerful women rulers (commencing with the reign of Yasovati followed by Sugandha, Didda and Kota Rani.) at a time when it was generally an inconceivable idea for women to rule or administer the state. The paper argues that although this unconventional culture of women rulership in Kashmir should have been one of the most well researched topics but unfortunately it received very little attention. Beyond Politics, the paper furthermore delves into the exploration of the domineering presence of women in the fields of art and literature. The paper argues that Kashmir has witnessed a notable proliferation of women poets and prompts the assertion that the inception of Kashmiri literature finds its roots in the exemplary poetic contribution of Lal Ded in early fourteenth century. Post the poetic reign of Lal Ded, Kashmir has continued to produce an ever-increasing number of women poets like Habba Khatoon, Rupa Bhawani, Arnimal that further solidify the poetic legacy of women in Kashmir's literary tradition. The paper therefore, endeavours to meticulously examine the multifaceted influence of women in shaping the historical, cultural and literary narrative of Kashmir across centuries.

Keywords: poetry, feminism, patriarchy, identity, hegemony, domestic subjugation, collective consciousness

Kashmir has abundant literature in its store that speaks volumes about its rich and glorious history. Blessed with a beautiful and picturesque landscape, bountiful resources, vibrant and dynamic mix of cultures and languages, Kashmir as a geographic locale has continued to maintain its rightful position and prominence among the scholarly and literary works. Apart from its captivating beauty, Kashmir is also known for its production of rich and plentiful literature. Geroge Grierson, the famous Irish linguist, in *Linguistic Survey of India* writes about Kashmir that, "from this small valley have issued master pieces of history, poetry,

romance, fable and philosophy" (241). Kashmir as such has been a prolific source of cultural as well as literary contributions. There are wide range of books that have been written about the glorious history and heritage of Kashmir, its ever-changing socio-political contexts, its vibrant customs, traditions, legends and folklores. These texts also become crucial from the perspective of gender studies. These historical, scholarly books not only provide information about the lifestyle and position of men and women in early history of Kashmir but also give insights about how they were divided into distinct social spheres of work. Gender therefore becomes and important analytical tool to examine the different positioning of men and women in society. Iqbal Kaur in her work *Gender and Literature* explores the intimate relationship between the two and argues that both gender and literature are inextricably connected with culture and society. She further argues that literature presents the most comprehensive overview of gender politics prevalent in society.

Although, a large number of books have been written about Kashmir and its history, yet there is a very small or insignificant amount of written material that specifically deals with the role of women in the history of Kashmir. Also, these historical texts are mostly authored by men, therefore, they provide rigorous information about men's role and position in society and also their unavoidable presence and participation in the matters of power, politics and economy. While on one hand, these male authored texts make the presence of men unavoidable, yet on the other hand, they render women equally invisible and absent from history. Julia Leslie reiterates the same idea about this deliberate attempt at making women absent form history. She writes that, "female voices are not available in an unmediated form but can only be recovered through their patriarchal structuring" (160). The implicit prejudice in the depiction of women in history books is because the project of portrayal of women has been completely in the hands of men due to which women have mostly been represented as occupying the peripheral positions and performing the minor, secondary roles. In the same context of gender bias, Devika Rangachari in her book *Invisible Women Visible Histories* opines that "the perspective on women is confined to the context of the household, building on assumptions of their insignificance/passivity. The social position is usually seen in terms of their inclusion/ exclusion from public processes and spaces" (17). There has been a constant and deliberate effort to sideline women with the aim to keep them out of the spotlight. There are multiple examples that can be cited to represent how the voluminous books written about Kashmir's history shed no light on the active role and engagement of women in the socio-political affairs. For example, M.A Stein's otherwise very impressive translation of *Rajtaringini* soon becomes a disappointment when in the preface of his translated work, he ignores to mention the names of the famous women rulers or queens of Kashmir. Likewise, in the book *Social Life in Northern India,* B N Sharma devotes an entire section to the customs and rituals of marriage in relation to women but there is no assessment of their position, agency and power in society.

The political power and agency of women in early history of Kashmir can be traced from the fact that Kashmir has witnessed the unique rulership of not one but four prominent and powerful women rulers. This unconventional practice of women leadership in early and

medieval history of Kashmir prevailed during the time when the concept of female rulership was not widely acceptable in the broader global context. Kashmir, on the contrary saw the zenith of matriarchal power and eminence before the onset of patriarchal regime. The remarkable presence of four women rulers in Kashmir's early history rightly commenced with the reign of Yasovati, followed by Sugandha, Didda and Kota Rani. This rich legacy of female rulership in the arena of power and politics is particularly commendable and noteworthy. Devika Rangachari contends that women in Kashmiri history were crucial in two ways "as sovereign rulers in their own right and as forces behind the throne" (83). This reiterates the idea that women in Kashmir were not restricted merely to the four walls of domestic spheres but took an active participation in the other social and political affairs. ""Women appear as rulers, advisers, court participants, donors, builders and in a range of other prominent roles in Kashmir" (17). Women, therefore played an active role in politics either directly as queens or indirectly as important underlying influencers. In order to navigate the legacy of women rulership in Kashmir, it is important to take recourse to some of the fundamental books dealing with history of Kashmir. Kalhana's *Rajtaringini*, for example offers a sequential account of kings and queens in the early history of Kashmir. Kalhana's representation of women rulers is comparatively less prejudiced and more objective as he projects women as politically significant and historically relevant. Kalhana presents a chronological order of the first four rulers of Kashmir as; Gonanda I, Damodara I, Yasovati I, Gonanda II. The presence of a woman ruler, Yasovati, among the first four rulers of Kashmir is particularly remarkable. Yasovati (from Gonda dynasty), the sovereign queen of Kashmir was also the first woman ruler who rose to political power and prominence. With Yasovati's ascension to throne and her powerful reign, she also paved way for many other women to dream of leadership and sovereignty. Yasovati is not only significant from a political point of view but also from a feminist point of view. It can be argued that it is precisely with Yasovati's rise to power and politics that marks the beginning of the idea of women empowerment in Kashmir. After the reign of Yasovati, Kashmir saw the succession of multiple women rulers like; Sugandha (from Utpala Dynasty) who ruled during 904-6 AD and Didda (from Yasakara Dynasty) who ruled during 981-1003 AD. The second queen who features in list of women rulers in Kashmir after Yasovati is Sugandha whose reign is more substantial and verifiable from the historical point of view. She is especially known for her brave and gallant act of protecting herself from turning into a Sati. Sugandha was politically so sharp and clever that she decided to hide the news of her husband's death in order to safeguard herself from the ordained death. Kalhana describes Sugandha as an ambitious and strategic ruler who disrupted and subverted the feminine stereotypes due to her politically sharp bent of mind.

The next in line after Sugandha is Didda, who earned for herself the titles like "Woman Monarch of Kashmir" and "Catherine of Kashmir". Didda is a famous queen of Kashmir who is symbolic of pinnacle of female power in the early medieval history Kashmir. Apart from her political rulership, she is the first queen of Kashmir who had her name minted and inscribed on coins. Didda is also different from the rest of queens in the sense that she was handicapped yet her physical impairment or incapacities did not confine or prevent her

seeking a powerful position for herself. Kalhana in *Rajtaringini* refers to Didda as, "footless and lame" which depicts her deformity in foot due to which was unable to walk. Kalhana while praising Didda makes the following comment, "The Lame Queen whom no one had thought capable of stepping over a Cow's footprint got over the ocean like host of her enemies just as Hanuman got over the ocean" (226). Other than the unwavering courage and strength, Didda is also famous for her unquenchable thirst for power. With the use of brutal political strategy, Didda planned to get her grandson killed to secure the throne for herself after which she continued to rule for around twenty years as a sovereign ruler from 980-1003 CE. Didda's rulership in Kashmir garnered a lot of reactions and criticism, especially from the male writers. For example, U.N Ghoshal in *The Dynastic Chronicles of Kashmir* referred to Didda as, "cruel, indulgent, with a strong touch of feminine inconsistency" (323). In the same vein, S.C Banerjee in *Cultural Heritage of Kashmir* described Didda as "monstrous queen". While Didda managed to secure her prominent place rightfully in the history of Kashmir, Kota Rani subsequently was listed as the last woman ruler that belonged to Hindu Lohra dynasty of Kashmir. She ended up marrying King Rinchen who had killed her father (Ramachandra), after which she was rightfully crowned as Kashmir's queen. However, her reign briefly spanned between 1338-39 AD and her subsequent decline also marked the decline of women rulership in Kashmir. It can therefore be summed up that Kashmir's rich legacy of women rulers in early and medieval history is unconventional and noteworthy. These powerful women rulers as such refused to be mere passive subjects and instead chose to ascend the thrones themselves to take the charge of politics and governance in their own hands. These women rulers also defied the established norm of male rulership that had perpetuated the idea that only men were capable of political leadership and authority. However, what is particularly noteworthy, is that although this unconventional culture of women rulership in Kashmir should have been the most well researched topics but unfortunately it received very little attention. This is particularly because of the lack or the less availability of the primary and secondary sources of information about the female rulership in the history of Kashmir.

The women in Kashmir left their indelible mark not only in the arena of politics but also in the literary and poetic arenas. Apart from their domineering presence in politics, they have been equally dominant in the fields of art and literature. There is an unavoidable presence of women poets in the literary history of Kashmir. The roots of Kashmiri literature are found in the poetic verses of Lal Ded who is revered and acclaimed as the first woman poet of Kashmir. She laid the foundation stone of Kashmiri poetry right in the fourteenth century. Although, Lal Ded's life (1320-13920) is mostly weaved in myths and legends, yet she has continued to remain alive through her poetic verses, known as "vakhs" which bare an authentic stamp of her poetic genius. Lad Ded through her vakhs preached mankind the lessons of humanity, spirituality, peace, and communal harmony. For her unconventional poetical brilliance, Lal Ded gathered huge appreciation and acclamation from various scholars and literary critics. J Lal Kaul, for example, exalts Lal Ded as "the maker of modern Kashmiri language as well as literature" and also argues that her poetry has been a "significant landmark

in the linguistic transition from old to modern Kashmiri" (61). Neerja Matto in her book *The Mystic and the Lyric* compares Lal Ded with Shakespeare for having created a "literature that enriched her native tongue" (31). P. N Razdan goes further deep to discuss the enormous contribution of Lal Ded in the field of Kashmiri language and literature. He contends that, "Lalleshwari is credited with laying the reinforced concrete basis of the language (Kashmiri) by her dexterous coinage of apt idioms and proverbs to infuse life and dynamism into it from its very infancy. The language, thus enriched and ornamented by lively idiom pregnant proverb, depth of philosophical thought and message of social welfare and peace, became the main vehicle of communication of ideas among the Kashmiri people. Her cryptic, terse sayings still continue to enliven scholarly discussion and resolve social problems" (7). Lal Ded through her vakhs (quatrain form of poetry) is said to have started the feminist discourse in Kashmir long back in fourteenth century. Her vakhs illustrates how poetry can be used as a strong medium to articulate yearnings of the inner self. Through poetry, Lal Ded also broke the social taboos and gender norms that confined women entirely in the subservient roles of a dutiful wife and selfless mother. She managed to break through the narrow confinements of gender and delves deeper into the realms of subjectivity and individuality. Neerja Mattoo writes that Lal Ded "came to the forefront as a prophetess, a moral guide, and the originator of practical wisdom . . . her work reveals that she conversed and discussed with the most learned scholars (all men) of her time on an equal footing, without any trace of gender inequality, or the so-called womanly reserve" (69).

After witnessing the poetic reign of Lal Ded, Kashmir has continued to produce an ever-increasing number of women poets like Habba Khatoon, Rupa Bhawani, Arnimal and so on. These women poets in Kashmir have been recognized as the trailblazers of Kashmiri literary tradition. It is precisely the unique and melodious poetry of Kashmiri women in early history that has kindled the fire of literary imagination of Kashmir. Habba Khatoon is second in line after Lal Ded to have taken the rich poetic legacy forward in the sixteenth century Kashmir. Born in 1554 in Chandahar, Pampore (land of saffron), Habba famously came to be known as "Nightingale of Kashmir" and "Great Queen of Song". Kachru revered Habba as "the most musical lyricist of Kashmir" (26). Like Lal Ded, Habba too invented her own poetic form famously known as 'vatsun form". Apart from her unique form of poetic invention, she also showed her excellence in the musical composition. "Habba Khatoon has not only contributed to Kashmiri literature and poetry but has also made her contribution to Kashmiri music called as Rast-e-Kashmir", writes Majrooh Rashid. Other than this, Habba is also credited to have invented love lyric, popularly known as 'lol' lyric in the poetic genre of Kashmiri literature. Habba's lol lyric is composed of six to ten lines, with each stanza ending with a poetic refrain. Her love lyrics are exemplary for being endowed with melody, spontaneity and chiseled diction. Habba is famous for her captivating songs that delve into themes of love and longing, pain and separation, merry and misery. These songs of Habba received so much love and acceptance from local folks that they came to be seeped in the local vocabulary or colloquial language of Kashmir. Her chiseled choice of words and poetic songs revibrate and resound in woman's celebratory occasions particularly in marriage ceremonies of Kashmir.

Her poetic verses are especially sung as farewell songs in order to bid farewell to the bride leaving her parental home behind. Her poems are so intimately woven in the fabric of love and excruciating pain and sorrow of a woman's life that every Kashmiri woman finds an allegiance and relevance with Habba's poetic voice. Her songs therefore become a uniting force for all the women who are divided by distinct forms of domestic or societal forms of oppression. Her poetry becomes a representation of the violence and domestic oppression that women experienced back in sixteenth century of Kashmir. She mirrored the women's victimized and subjugated state of existence under an inherently patriarchal structure of Kashmir. Her poetry unveiled the tortured psyche of an abandoned wife, and abused daughter-in-law which exposed the ugly and distressing reality of unhappy marriages, domestic servitude and unequal status of women in the institute of marriage. Habba apart from depicting the torture and misery that women faced due to domestic violence or marital oppression also depicted the sociopolitical milieu of sixteen century Kashmir which was particularly known for political bickering and upheaval. Habba Khatoon besides being a strong feminist voice of sixteen century Kashmir is also credited to have ignited the cult of Romanticism in Kashmiri poetry. Her poetry abounds in the rich imagery of idyllic, country life, matching the true essence of romanticism. Habba in her romantic poetry takes delight in the mesmerizing and beautiful landscape of Kashmir. Her poetry abounds with the vivid imagery of its rivers and lakes, lush green meadows and pastures, pine trees and orchards, and snow-clad mountains glimmering and dazzling under the changing hues of bright sun.

The rich legacy of poetry left behind by Lal Ded and Habba Khatoon was subsequently followed by Rupa Bhawani in seventeenth century. Rupa Bhawani is said to be born in the year 1625 in Kashmir's Brahmin family at Safa Kadal, Srinagar. She ardently followed the life as well as poetic style of Lal Ded. She too left behind her husband's home and like Lal Ded started wandering on the streets like an ascetic to sing the songs of spirituality and mysticism. Rupa like Lal Ded refused to live a miserable life of an oppressed wife and instead sought her liberation by freeing herself from the abusive marital bond. Rupa chose to lead a spiritual life and pondered over the existential and philosophical questions that took her far away from the façade and superficiality of life full of bogus rituals and unnecessary pomp and show. Through her mystical tendencies, like Lal Ded she aspired to achieve mental and spiritual peace amidst the external chaos and anarchy. Apart from her search for internal peace, Rupa Bhawani further experimented with Lal Ded's vakh form of poetry which was later further expanded by Rets Ded in nineteenth century. Both Rupa Bhawani and Rets Ded vehemently followed Lalla in her philosophy of mysticism and Shaivism. Following the unconventional path of Lal Ded, Habba Khatoon, and Rupa Bhawani, the next major woman poet in the history of Kashmiri poetry is Arnimal, who belonged to an era of eighteenth-century Kashmir. While Rupa Bhawani and Rets Ded followed the literary and philosophical style of Lal Ded, Arnimal on the other hand followed the poetic style of Habba Khatoon. Arnimal through the means of poetry articulated the suffering of Kashmiri women in eighteenth century. Her poetry like Habbas' poetry represented the predicament of women in Kashmir who reeled under silence and misery perpetuated by patriarchal hegemony. Neerja Matto

described both Habba Khatoon and Arnimal as the "original feminists in that they foreground women's issues and expose the cruelties they suffer" (85). Therefore, Arnimal like Habba Khatoon raised in her poetry some fundamental concerns about women and their victimized positions in society that elevated both of these women poets on the feminist pedestal of Kashmir.

Arnimal further experimented and expanded the 'vatsun' form of poetry invented originally by Habba Khatoon. Arnimal who is said to be born in 1737 AD in Pattan village of Kashmir, lived during the Afghan rulership in Kashmir. Her poetry mirrors the suppression of masses that was imposed under the powerful regime of patriarchy as well as feudalism which was in full swing during the Afghan rule in Kashmir. Through her strong poetic voice, Arnimal addressed the issues of domestic violence and marital abuse long before these ideas came finally found their rightful place in Western feminist discourse. To sum up, the feminist voice in Kashmir began with the poetic voice of Lal Ded in fourteenth century, followed by Habba Khatoon in sixteenth century, Rupa Bhawani in seventeenth century and Arnimal in eighteenth century. Kashmir, therefore has continued to witness the poetic reign and supremacy of women century after century. It can therefore, be argued that the inception of feminism in Kashmir finds its roots in women's poetic voices as every epoch in Kashmir bears the witness of the emergence of an inevitable female voice. The indomitable poetic and political voices of women in Kashmir together pay a beautiful tribute to feminine strength, intellect and ever enduring legacy of Feminism and feminist discourse in the valley of Kashmir. This ever-flourishing feminist literary acumen not only highlights the cultural and historical richness of Kashmir but also continues to act as a beacon of hope and inspiration for future generations to contribute more on the ever-growing dialogue on the concept of gender equality and intellectual emancipation of women.

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Diaspora and Life Narratives: A Conceptual Understanding

ANAGHA E. & SAJAUDEEN NIJAMODEEN CHAPPARBAN

Anagha E.

Abstract

Life narratives as powerful genres used extensively to bring diasporic experience to public sphere. The unrecorded pasts and forgotten memories of diaspora are intertwined with the memory and history of migrants in both homeland and host land. These stories addressed several pertinent issues, including the paths of movement, the process of remembering, identity formation, a sense of belonging, cultural differences-related challenges with adapting, etc. This article attempts to give a conceptual understanding of diasporic life narratives by examining how life stories and "memories" are incorporated into the politics of identity construction in the diaspora.

Keywords: life stories, diaspora, memory, identity

Introduction

As M.H. Ilias observed, each individual collective narrative has immense potential to provide alternative historical narratives (Ilias 84). The migrant narratives often explored various shades of 'new belonging' which eventually bought an alternative way of seeing the world. Life narratives have been used as a prominent tool in understanding migration and diaspora over the last several years. Migration studies was previously primarily dominated by positivist scientific methods that reduced the experiences of migrants to a set of abstract variables and presumptions. However, the "narrative turn" in social sciences started in the 1980s, and this led to a shift in the field from objective and formulaic methods to methodological approaches that capture how migrants make sense of their lived experiences. Approaches to narrative inquiry have frequently been useful in understanding social realities through the stories that have been told. Studying contemporary migrants is made easier by the life narrative approach, which highlights the lives that are intertwined with the politics, histories, and social cultures found in transnational texts. The phrase "sociological imagination" is used by sociologist C. Wright Mills to make the claim that "neither the history of a society nor the life of an individual can be understood without understanding both" (qtd. In Adur and Narayan 259). The primary argument made by Mill is that a person's life story can provide light on larger sociohistorical facts. He contends that greater structural forces and human activity are intricately intertwined and that it is our responsibility as researchers to recognize the connections between the social and the individual. Diaspora being a complex phenomenon has been understood better through the lived experiences of the migrants and acts as a tool for social imagination.

Using life narratives as a methodological tool, helped to understand the diversity and multiplicity of identities within the larger context of diaspora. Semi-structured in-depth conversations and biographical interviews were crucial in documenting these accounts. The use of life narrative interviews has opened up new avenues for researching the transnational lives of migrants.

Sajaudeen Nijamodeen Chapparban

Conceptual Framework for Understanding Diaspora

The elements and theories that define diasporas went through an evolution over the years. Since the dawn of time, human beings have been moving from one region to another. The question is why every movement didn't create diasporas and few resulted in self-defining themselves as diasporas. The meanings and definitions of diaspora got modified 'in translation' evolving through various defining characteristics. Diaspora is a subjective condition marked by the possibilities of long histories of displacement and genealogies of dispossession. It is to be understood within the long histories of loss and dislocation.

The common diaspora characteristics you can find in all these cases are victimhood, the sense of displacement, nationhood, and cultural belongingness to the homeland (Stevenson 675). The classical meaning of diaspora slowly and systematically got extended and thereby the centre of diasporic experience from victimhood. According to Baumann, since the mid-1970s, the term 'diaspora' has been used as a subdomain in the broader area of African Studies to refer to the long-established "black communities" that exist outside of Africa (322).

Owing to the widespread use of the term, Robin Cohen categorized diasporic discourses into four distinct phases in a global setting, starting in the second half of the 20th century. In the first phase, the term's meaning is confined to the traditional Jewish notion, generally capitalized as Diaspora. The second phase, which started in the 80s, started referring to a variety of groups of individuals including immigrants, expellees expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities (Cohen 21). The third phase, which started in the mid-1990s, has witnessed the proliferation of newly emerged diasporas, studied in the background of postmodern readings. It fundamentally rearranged the ideas of diaspora and deconstructed two key pillars: the ethnic/religious community and the homeland. The fourth stage occurs in the 21st century, where social constructionist criticisms are acknowledged and largely accepted, while there is a risk that the notion will lose its analytical and descriptive power. However, ideas of home, affinities for one's own country, and the complexity and deterritorialization of identities continue to be potent discourses. The fundamental characteristics, ideal forms, and shared traits of the diaspora change during various stages (62).

Benedict Anderson, Robin Cohen, and William Safran have incorporated traditional concepts of diaspora within the framework of a strong collective identity that emphasises roots and a strong connection to the ancestral country, drawing on the exile and dispersion of Jews. After

the classical definitions, the postmodern diaspora appeared, where the conceptualisation denotes "a condition rather than a group." Supported by a wide range of academics, including Pnina Werbner, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, James Clifford, Avtar Brah, Homi Bhabha, and Gloria Anzaldüa, this interpretation contends that fluid, hybrid, and syncretic identities have replaced rigid, static conceptions of identity. Even though grasping ideas of diaspora requires understanding certain essential facets of the Jewish experience, the meanings and connotations have changed in the contemporary context.

There are several significant political and theoretical challenges challenges faced by the discipline in the recent times. Timothy Brennan has claimed that the obsession with the "hybrid" cultures of diasporic communities tends to hide the fact that, in many cases, these people themselves do not wish to be diasporic (674). Brennan analyses the diaspora boom as a phenomenon of the Western intellectual market. According to Brennan, there is little chance of improving analytical and critical clarity by focusing on nebulous ideas like "subject formation" and "cosmopolitanism" rather than political issues like citizenship and the nation-state as a vehicle of political power. Critics such as Kim Butler have voiced concerns with the term "diaspora" becoming devalued metaphorically. It is becoming more and more difficult to maintain diaspora as a "distinct category" of cultural and historical analysis because it is now more widely used to describe a "majority condition in global capitalism (qtd. In Baronian et. al 10)."

The 'Narrative Turn' in Diaspora Studies

Researching migration and diaspora definitely requires the use of narratives. Narratives *of/by* migrants and narratives *about* migrants are the two broader categories we have. The lived experiences of the migrants were highlighted in a greater corpus of literature that concentrated on these two categories and took the shape of fictional depictions, life stories, and oral and written narratives. Many academics who study migration and diaspora have written extensively about many facets of mobility and transnationality during the past few decades. Starting with the history of migration, the stories raised important issues that can have a significant impact on patterns and trends in migration. These include historical and colonial linkages, nation-state formation, globalization, cultural hybridity, sustainable development, xenophobic populism, cross-border socioeconomic and political challenges, etc.

The diverse life experiences of the migrants, which folded together the feelings of suffering, happiness, struggle, obstacles, deprivation, and accomplishments, offered a unique perspective on the cross-cultural reality of pluralism and multiculturalism. Both mainstream and non-mainstream diasporic narratives dealt with themes such as accumulation, cultural identity, the feeling of 'otherness', deterritorialization, nostalgia, ethnicity, displacement, and alienation. The other cultural narratives including cinema, theatre, music, photography, etc. also engaged on various diasporic issues. In addition to analyzing how stories of homelands and diasporas are created and represented in movies, books, and social media, the South Asian diaspora studies also explore how these narratives are disseminated, accepted, and challenged in light

of contemporary political changes in South Asia. In the early stages of the history of diasporic narratives, national narratives predominated. A number of nationalistic works of literature that saw nation and national identity as crucial in determining diasporic experiences arose during the Colonial and Postcolonial eras. The literature of that century did a great job of capturing the interplay between people, nation, and the intricacies involved in the construction of ideologies. Nation and diaspora are two closely related concepts studied from various disciplinary perspectives. The German philosopher Gottfried Herder saw nations as organic, self-contained entities emerging from the collective experience of a group of people owning a distinct history, language, culture, and tradition. He believed that a country's ability to survive and thrive depended on its ability to preserve its cultural legacy.

The idea of national literature as a whole as well as homogenous cultural identities were criticised by the transnational social formations and identities associated with modern migration. Theorists like Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, and Homi Bhabha discussed a variety of topics, including transnationalism, transculturalism, hybridity, nomadism, cultural fusion, and how the prevailing rhetoric of the diaspora runs against the development of nationalist ideologies and identity formations. Nationalist narratives are been criticized for not seeing culture as a hybrid formation, instead settling them in specific fixed locations. According to Bhabha, in post-colonial contexts, there exist nation-space ambiguous formations on the periphery of national spaces that are anti-essentialist and anti-nationalist, and they open the door for the emergence of a new transnational culture. These spaces are liminal, interstitial, and hybrid, antithetic to national spaces (Simatei 57). Bhabha argued that the nation is an "impossible unity" composed of myriad actions and forces. Attempting to secure this unity will result in coercion both in terms of inclusion and exclusion.

Writers looked at the diasporic situation as a creative hotbed where literary production finds its efficient manifestation. Being the most powerful and quickly expanding diasporic communities in terms of politics, culture, and economy, the South Asian diaspora produces a large body of literature that depicts processes of homemaking, diasporization, and cultural preservation. Diasporic narratives are mostly represented through fictional and nonfictional writings including biography, life writings, novels, short stories, memoirs, etc. The traditional academic diaspora was unable to address the social loss of the diaspora and instead concentrated on decisions and results that were dependent on socio-political-economic factors. These moments are reconstructed through diasporic narratives that emphasize the experiences of self-creation and displacement (Hajratwala 303). South Asian diasporic literature is a rich field that has gained popularity worldwide.

Life Stories- The Narrative Study of Lives

Human beings collect and organize their memories in the form of narratives, which are culturally transmitted and perceived through individual mastery. The narratives are produced in a multitude of forms, through a variety of genres representing all times, all paces, and all societies beginning from the history of mankind. The act of narration is therefore an unconscious and widespread spoken activity, which includes different text types. The concept

of 'narrative' has emerged in the Humanities, particularly in literary studies in the first decades of the 20th century. The narrative analysis traces its history back to the time of Russian formalists who have theoretically studied different devices, patterns, and tools to analyze literary texts. They along with the Czech Structuralists started applying linguistic parameters to understand the underlying structures of folktales going back to the 1920s (Boswell et al. 4). Several post-formalists further developed the theory including the New Critics and German Hermeneutics. The theory formation and analysis of narratives evolved significantly after the field of Narratology was established. Narratology focuses on the understanding of the art of narration and has close affiliation with modern linguistics and comparative studies.

Scholars in history have explored the relationship between life and story, which has given substantial fuel to the narrative turn. Life story, as a narrative form emerged from oral history, life history, and other ethnographic approaches (Atkinson 3). The life history approach has been used for a long time in Anthropological research as well as in folklore studies where the researcher's description of what was said is intimated to a first-person narrative. They used life stories to understand cultural similarities and variations. Life story is an approach used to understand not only individual lives separately, but also to explore how they interact with the larger community, putting them together in a story form.

Tracing back to history, Sigmond Freud first used life narratives while applying his psychoanalytic theories to individuals. After Freud, many other psychologists, and social scientists, used life narratives to study and understand personality development including Gordon Allport, Erikson, Henry Murray, Sabrin, Bruner, etc. Many of them identified narrative as the most important 'metaphor' for discovering the meanings of life. Bamberg writes,

> The ability to conceive of life as an integrated narrative forms the cornerstone for what Erikson (1950) called "ego identity." The underlying assumption here is that life begins to co-jell into building blocks that, when placed in the right order, cohere: important moments tie into important events, events into episodes, and episodes into a life story (136).

Life stories take many forms including autobiographies, biographies, journals, letters, memoirs, interviews, photo, and video diaries, etc., and are denoted by several terms like life histories, life stories, and documents of life. Oral histories, life narratives, etc. Moving across the continents, cultures, and disciplines, life stories explore the social sources of constructing lives (Plummer 8). Plummer distinguishes three different types of life stories: the naturalistic, the researched, and the recursive. The first one refers to the stories told by a person about his everyday life and spaces, while the second type is specifically designed for research, usually in the field of social sciences. The researched life stories don't occur naturally in everyday life, rather emerged and interrogated out of subjects using special tools. The researcher here intended to collect oral histories, and sociological and psychological life histories, which are not a part of everyday life (4). The final type is recursive life stories or reflexive life stories which took a postmodern turn in its way of storytelling and mode of writing. This approach provides insight into something that needs to be understood in a particular story context, whether it is a life, cycle, or culture (8).

Life stories arrange life events in a coherent order and become one of the best methods for the researcher to understand one's life from an inner perspective. Well, it is quite interesting to observe Plummer explaining how life stories and 'memories' become a part of the politics of the ethnographic project. The stories are built inside the power circuit where certain dominant voices are heard, and the rest are silenced. The question raises what type of stories are allowed to be told and why some stories stop being told. The socio-political conditions decide which are the dominant narratives and which are told in the limit.

Exploring Diasporic Identity through Life Narratives

Diaspora literature functions as a political act, a memory site, and a discursive space. The writers in this genre take on the role of advocates for this conversation. The discourse addressed multiple levels of conflicts and contradictions around collective and individual identities (Hussain 10). According to Maver, diasporic writers use their ". . . medium to broker, affiliate, and translate their places, peoples, cultures and languages to work through the ethical, political and affective ambivalence of diasporic identities" (Pandey ix). The question of being and belonging is brought to the realm of diaspora research by transnational scholars by combining the questions of assimilation, acculturation, and integration of diaspora people in the host societies while maintaining their ties with the homeland (Naujoks 2). Migrants create identities that cross social and physical barriers by utilising their political, social, and intellectual resources. This constitution of identities has long been a major concern of post-colonial studies.

Life writing is already connected with subjective experience and individual/collective memory. It is always crucial to note that while individual and collective memory can intersect in the process of identity creation in the diaspora, they are not always appropriate for each other. Individual and collective memories are combined in the act of remembering in literary expressions to determine the construction of identity. A different related body of research examines the roles that collective memories—which Anderson 1991 defined as social constructs at the centre of the creation of "imagined communities"—have played in the formation and negotiation of unique political identities in receiving societies. In Diaspora, *Memory and Identity: A Search for Home*, a book edited by Vijay Agnew, contributor Ann Hua claims that memory can trigger "identity formation, the rewriting of home and belonging, nostalgia, mourning and a sense of loss frequently found in diaspora, exile and immigrant narratives" (Hua 200). Theorists like Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy used the concept of diaspora to challenge the fixed notions of identity. They reframed the traditional models of the formation of immigrant identity by claiming that 'cultural identity' is not an essence, rather a 'positioning' and thereby politically motivated. Any notion of acculturation or the construction of immigrant identity must be placed within a historical framework, entwined with a particular political perspective, and predicated on negotiation, displacement, and conflict, according to the concept of the diasporic condition. The present conversation about the politics of migrant identities is becoming more and more narrative in nature.

Life writing in diaspora is already connected with subjective experience and individual/ collective memory. The information included in them can also be obtained for social or personal reasons, or for both at once. According to Bruner, memories often become 'our best stories' as we start to believe whatever we tell we come to believe them as true. Plummer says this version of memory fits well with the current interest in storytelling. Narrative memory focuses on the narratives told by the people recollecting from their past and where "highly selective stories dredged from the past somehow seem to have taken on a life of their own" (Plummer 13). It is crucial to keep in mind that collective narrative memories in the case of life stories can only emerge if there is an appropriate social framework because "no memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections" (Halbwachs 43). As a result, the memories migrants remained hidden for a long time.

In the last few decades, diasporic life stories have become more significant in the context of modern global literature, portraying "migrant hood" as a figure of pain and survival. The narratives took a political turn by addressing issues of human rights and vulnerabilities as the discipline began to include many more groups under its broader definition. In the area of refugee studies, life stories are frequently employed as a tool of activism. Storytelling, as a remembrance, recall, and witness act, becomes a potent act in the public domain to challenge the prevailing dominant migratory discourses. Additionally, studies on migrants problematize individual identities while moving towards more inclusive discussions of authorship. The majority of these autobiographical life stories are typically written by two people, one of whom narrates the story orally and the other of whom does the English translation. Since the second author is not immediately feeling the grief and loss or pain, it becomes more difficult for them to translate. It is also a challenging assignment for the narrator because they have to repeatedly travel to memories in order to finish the story. Sometimes these memories are traumatic and life stories can reveal these changes in the meaning of trauma at various stages of a migrant's life. It is apparent, too, that traumatic events never happen in a social vacuum. They are connected to the social context in which they take place. In many if not most cases, they are related to the norms of society and to what is spoken about and what is kept silent in public. Life stories include an exposition of the relation between the private and the collective context. They can thus give a better understanding of both the personal trauma, as it is viewed within a social context, and of the social milieu, as reflected in the individual's life.

Conclusion

Life stories set in a diasporic setting are ultimately meant to evoke strong emotions in readers. Diasporic narratives examine the various ways in which the diaspora remembers and considers the lost nation, as well as how it views its own ancestry, history, culture, and present political disputes. Expatriate writers are often lost in thought with elements of nostalgia as they put themselves in a new place and culture, which leads to a sense of loss and alienation. Postcolonial Diasporas, including Indian Diaspora, have been extensively documented in literature, highlighting sociocultural traits, psychological components, traumas,

nostalgia, and hybridized identities, leading to theorization. Life narratives provide a unique perspective on migration, recognizing diverse spaces across countries and overcoming "methodological nationalism". They offer a unique method to understand the complexity and dynamism of migration phenomena. It is crucial to keep in mind that collective narrative memories in the case of life stories can only emerge if there is an appropriate social framework because "no memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections" (Halbwachs 43). As a result, the memories migrants remained hidden for a long time.

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Intertwining Socio-Cultural Vistas: An Exegesis of Thrity Umrigar's *The Space Between Us*.

G. VIJAYARENGANAYAKI & T.S. RAMESH

G. Vijayarenganayaki

Abstract

The novel *The Space Between Us* intricately delves into the profound ramifications of Bhima's shattered expectations for Maya's professional trajectory in the wake of her illicit pregnancy. Maya's emotional odyssey is characterized by an intense sense of seclusion and an abiding dread of societal censure. Serabai presents the option of abortion as a plausible panacea, thereby amplifying Maya's emotional anguish and ensnaring her in an ethical quagmire. The repercussions of Maya's decision to undergo the termination of her pregnancy reverberate the PTSD. A transformative juncture transpires as Bhima introduces surf therapy as an avenue to convalescence. She undergoes an epiphany that Viraf is the progenitor of Maya's unborn child. This revelation confers an additional stratum of intricacy, questioning trust, betrayal, and clandestine liaisons.

Keywords: societal censure, ethical quagmire, epiphany, betrayal

Thrity Umrigar's *The Space Between Us* meticulously explores the profound and far-reaching consequences that Maya's illicit pregnancy inflicts upon Bhima, leaving an indelible mark on her emotional well-being. Bhima's perception of Maya as a catalyst for moral deterioration and a disruptor of established societal norms magnifies the clash between deeply entrenched cultural and social conventions. In traditional societies, pregnancies occurring beyond the bounds of wedlock or outside of sanctioned marital unions bear the weight of severe reproach, being regarded as violations of the foundational principles and ethical codes that govern the collective. "Bhima had been facing a crisis in her life. Her granddaughter, Maya, has been carrying a baby even when she is unmarried. Bhima feels that the shame of carrying a child by an unmarried girl which is a taboo in the Indian society" (Manto 230).

Bhima, unquestionably influenced by deeply ingrained traditional values, perceives Maya's actions as an ominous force that not only imperils the very fabric of moral rectitude but also poses a grave threat to the preservation of cherished cultural traditions. The inquiry into Maya's future prospects and the potential adversities accentuates the paramount significance attributed to societal standing. It underscores the pivotal role of women as custodians of morality and guardians of familial honour. "Bhima had allowed 'a freckle of hope' to enter through Maya, who she believed could alter its course. She dreamed of a future for her

granddaughter that would be different from hers, her mother's, and her grandmother's" (Chowdhury 171).

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Bhima's social anxiety disorder and its impact on her emotional well-being cannot be divorced from the environment in which she resides. The slum she calls home becomes a poignant symbol of disgust, exacerbating her condition and restricting her access to basic necessities such as a clean and sanitary restroom. The deplorable state of the environment, characterized by filth and the presence of excrement scattered along the roads, further compounds Bhima's anxiety, leading her to avoid utilizing the available facilities. "The open drains with their dank, pungent smell, the dark rows of slanting hutments, the gaunt, open-mouthed men who lounge around in drunken stupors— all of it looks worse in the clear light of the new day"(8)

Bhima's palpable apprehension regarding the reaction of the slum dwellers upon discovering Maya's pregnancy serves as a poignant barometer of the prevalent social dynamics within the community. It serves as a telling manifestation of an environment replete with a propensity for social censure, insidious gossip, and the lurking specter of malicious intent. "No need for anyone in the basti to know their family problems. They will know about the disgrace Maya has brought upon herself soon enough, and then they will attack her like vultures" (12). Bhima finds herself grappled with an overwhelming fear of being subjected to public scrutiny, condemnation, and far-reaching repercussions. Her unequivocal condemnation of Maya as a hypocrite and a languid signifies a reproachful stance directed towards her failure to fulfill her personal obligations and responsibilities.

Serabai's vexation concerning Bhima's belated arrival to work serves as a manifestation of her staunch adherence to the principles of punctuality and propriety. It highlights her reverence for societal expectations surrounding timeliness and appropriate conduct. Viraf's feelings of insecurity and subsequent resorting to derogatory and satirical remarks directed at Dinaz's diligent efforts and intellectual acumen expose the influence of prevailing societal power dynamics and deep-rooted gender biases. His disparaging comments exemplify the manifestation of anxieties stemming from a perceived threat to his own power. His reduction of her promotion to a mere consequence of her physical beauty accentuates the societal inclination towards the objectification and devaluation of women based solely on their appearance. This perspective epitomizes cultural norms that prioritize superficial attractiveness over competence and intellectual prowess. "He not only lays the new features that the modern woman will have to adopt in order to be labelled successful but also subjugates Dinaz's achievement to the mercy of her boss. Viraf by presenting a different sketch of femininity frees Dinaz from the traditional restrictive role of women only to make her the captive of alternative femininity constructed by patriarchy" (Jain 176).

Serabai's unwavering willingness to extend her support to Bhima in her arduous journey serves as a poignant testament to the significance of community cohesion and the unwavering

bonds of solidarity. "In this turbulent time, Sera employs the tools of empathy and sympathy to ensure the regulation of existing socio-economic structures of power. She gives Bhima the knowledge of the world which is otherwise alien to her. This knowledge, in turn, gives Bhima the temporary power to see and understand the world in a different way" (Jain 178). Bhima's choice to resort to the act of blackmail, albeit driven by her desperate quest to unearth the identity of the child's father, gives rise to profound ethical quandaries. It lays bare the inherent risks of power differentials and the utilization of coercion as a means to achieve personal objectives within interpersonal relationships.

Bhima embarked upon a strenuous journey propelled by an unwavering resolve to unravel the perplexing question surrounding the paternity of Maya's child. Driven by her deep-rooted commitment to securing a promising future for her offspring, Bhima resorted to measures of coercion and blackmail, seeking to uncover the truth hidden within Maya's heart. In the midst of this impassioned pursuit, Bhima's path led her to Ashok Malhotra, a figure whose involvement would prove instrumental in untangling the enigma. Motivated by an unyielding determination to safeguard Maya's future, Bhima mustered the courage to confront Ashok within the confines of his college, aiming to persuade him to fulfill his responsibilities by embracing matrimonial ties with Maya.

The critical encounter took a distressing turn, plunging Bhima into the depths of psychological humiliation and anguish at the hands of an insensitive clerk. Through the clerk's offensive remarks, a disconcerting reality unfolded, exposing the pervasive abuse of power and insidious class discrimination that afflict the proletarian stratum of society. "Umrigar's novel provides an opportunity to read the complex machinations of class differentiated patriarchal oppression and capitalist exploitation, particularly as they operate between women of upper and lower classes while exploring both the limits and possibilities of solidarity in spite of these forces" (Chowdhury 168). Maya's failure to experience guilt and her subsequent condemnation of Bhima for allegedly tarnishing her reputation within the college sheds light on the societal implications of such clashes between generations and the potential consequences of diverging values. "Her—the humiliation and the exhaustion, the cheated, helpless outrage of having been lied to by her grandchild and, now, her horror at her own uncontrolled behaviour". (40)

Serabai's poignant encounter, fraught with boredom and disconcerting emotions in the presence of her mother-in-law, unveils a profound socio-cultural tapestry, offering illumination on the intricate interplay of gender roles, entrenched traditions, and the prevailing power dynamics within the domestic sphere. Her introspective recollections of the anguish endured during her secluded menstruation cycles, coupled with Banu's damning accusation of polluting the sanctity of the space merely by her presence, poignantly exemplify the pervasive influence of deep-seated cultural beliefs intertwining menstruation with notions of impurity and contamination. During her menstrual cycle, Sera is quarantined in her bedroom by Banu to maintain the purity and cleanliness of the Dubash family home. During the cycle, Sera is forbidden to make physical contact with her mother-in-law" (Chowdhury 170). These beliefs,

ingrained in societal consciousness, perpetuate the marginalization and subjugation of women. Feroz's unyielding insistence on obedience to his mother's commands illuminates the intricate power dynamics that permeate the household.

Maya finds herself bereft of the indispensable mentorship and guidance required to navigate the intricate labyrinth of challenges entwined with her pregnancy. Instead of assuming the nurturing mantle of a mentor, Bhima assumes a passive role as a mere conduit for relaying Serabai's ideas. However, this dynamic yields far-reaching repercussions, as Maya is subjected to the piercing sting of her grandmother's words, plunging her into the depths of profound offense. Meanwhile, her yearning for sustenance remains unfulfilled, besieged by an overwhelming sense of desolation and stagnation within the recesses of her mind, resulting in the depletion of her physical and psychological reservoirs. Maya's desire to transform into a bird and escape represents a longing for freedom from the oppressive shackles of guilt and societal scrutiny. This evokes contemplation on the societal structures that impose constraints on individual agency." I feel like a prisoner, but then I ask myself, Who is my jailer? I am my own jailer. I don't know which is darker, Ma-ma—this room with no electricity or the veil of shame that hangs over me." (55).

Bhima yearns for the comforting presence of her husband, Gopal, seeking his guidance and support in the challenges she faces. Their marital union had thrived, blessed with the joys of parenthood through their two children, Amit and Pooja. "He was very happy marrying Bhima and promised her a life of a queen. He also kept his promise firm for fifteen years but after fifteen years of immense love, Gopal transformed into an agonizing husband"(Jain 177). Gopal's journey towards alcohol as a means of solace is a manifestation of the profound emotional and psychological distress resulting from the life-altering accident. The accident, which robs him of his physical abilities, shatters his sense of identity, leaving him grappling with a profound loss and a disrupted sense of self. The pain and disorientation he experiences lead him down a treacherous path toward addiction, which further exacerbates the fractures within their familial unit.

Bhima's act of thrashing Gopal in the spirit emporium serves as a potent catalyst, igniting a conflagration of shame and wounded pride that resonates deeply within his being. Gopal's decision to write a letter, insisting on his separation from Bhima along with their son Amit, is a poignant manifestation of the turmoil he experiences. He insists on living a peaceful life in his village and apologizes for burdening her with his act. "She is a dejected, abandoned old lady who is rejected by her husband Gopal. The deserted lady can still recall the green days spent with her husband; can still remind the way she was cheated. Gopal disappears strangely with their son Amit" (Rai 13).

Serabai finds a sense of accomplishment within her failed marriage, deriving solace from the unwavering dedication of her daughter, Dinaz, in assisting others. Dinaz assumes the role of a problem solver within her mother's kitchen, showcasing her invaluable contribution and becoming a shining gem that emerges from the imperfect union of her parents.

Viraf's ardent yearning to extricate himself from shame and alleviate the burdensome weight of stress propels him to fervently advocate for abortion as a potential panacea. "Even as he plans for the birth of his child with his wife Dinaz, Viraf tries to erase all traces of his other baby growing inside Maya" (Chowdhury 172). This exemplifies the staggering magnitude of societal judgment and individual measures to escape from oppressive grasp. Viraf's self-consideration and controlling nature manifest in his ordering Dinaz to cease discussing Bhima, as it disrupts his breakfast. This illustrates the power dynamics and gender expectations that can permeate interpersonal relationships.

Bhima's countenance reflects a profound sense of shock as she grapples with Viraf's disconcerting eagerness and his use of passive-aggressive words to address Maya's pregnancy. A wave of confusion washes over her, leaving her torn between gratitude for Viraf's assistance in arranging a physician for an abortion and a growing irritation at his underlying resentment towards Maya's situation. Within the depths of her mind, an inferno of fury engulfs her, a product of her overwhelming powerlessness in the face of these circumstances. Her hope in the present generation wanes, worn down by a relentless cycle of deceit and death. Gopal's betrayal through abandonment, the departure of Pooja and Raju in the form of death, and Maya's devaluation collectively dismantle her spirit

Maya, in her decision to undergo an abortion, stipulates that Serabai must accompany Bhima to the hospital. Bhima makes this request, seeking support and companionship. Serabai initially experiences a sense of irritation, yet she reluctantly accepts the offer, feigning gratitude towards Bhima. In this complex situation, Serabai reflects upon her role as the sole source of solace and comfort in her own unsuccessful marital life. However, Feroz's animosity becomes evident as anger engulfs his forehead, leading him to physically attack Serabai with a brass candle holder, leaving behind visible bruises. Bhima's oil massage offers respite, aiding in the healing process. "Both women are survivors of troubled marriages and hopeful for the future of their pro The two women share a close bond, as evidenced through such events as when Bhima soothes Sera after beatings by her husband, Feroz, and the latter makes sure to arrange for medical care for Bhima's husband after a terrible accident in the factory where he works". (Chowdhury 166)

Induced abortion often engenders fear and can lead to the development of psychological disorders among women. Maya finds herself overwhelmed by terror in anticipation of the abortion procedure and experiences trauma in the aftermath. Despite the knowledge that the foetus is a symbol of shame, Maya maintains a profound emotional connection with it. This inner conflict fuels her anger towards Serabai, whom she perceives as the catalyst for the termination of her baby. Maya's fiery words ignite the temper of Serabai, yet she displays remarkable forbearance. Instead of criticizing Maya for her outburst, Serabai undertakes the task of elucidating the necessity behind the decision, balancing her role as Dinaz's biological mother with her unwavering maternal devotion towards Maya. "The cruel irony in the situation is that Maya wants to implicate the unwitting Sera in the murder of the baby whose father is none other than her own son-in-law" (Chowdhury 172).

Abortion, as a medical procedure, carries the potential to inflict both physical and psychological pain upon women. Maya, despite successfully navigating the challenges of the Post Abortion Triad, finds herself ensnared in the grips of Post Abortion Stress. The lingering sense of loss and guilt over the terminated pregnancy continues to haunt her for an extended period of two months. In an effort to facilitate Maya's healing, the idea of surf therapy emerges within the depths of Bhima's mind. The mere mention of an outing to the beach, filled with the promise of rejuvenation, elicits a vibrant gleam in Maya's eyes. Bhima chastises herself for leading a mechanized existence, finally recognizing the need for a more holistic approach to life. Maya finds solace in the gentle whispers of the waves, as their susurration works to alleviate her stress and gradually restore her to a state of former happiness. "Together the two women laughed at the seashore as Maya heals and Bhima reconstitutes herself. (Chowdhury 186). Bhima takes it upon herself to elucidate the painful truth surrounding Pooja and Raju's demise, attributing their deaths to AIDS.

The presence of Serabai, Dinaz, and Viraf, provides the result for the suspense regarding Maya's pregnancy. Viraf exhibits visible discomfort in facing Maya, arousing suspicion in Bhima's mind regarding his potential paternity of Maya's child. In Bhima's eyes, Maya's revelation incites a sense of betrayal, leading her to curse her granddaughter for dismantling the very fabric of their loving family. Maya, consumed by anger unveils the truth, confessing her as the fallen victim to Viraf's seduction during her caretaking duties for Banubai. This revelation highlights power dynamics, manipulation, and the disregard for emotional well-being.

Viraf, driven by a perceived threat to his own safety, deems Bhima's presence within their household as jeopardizing. In a calculated move, he resolves to expel her from their residence, accusing her of theft by claiming she pilfered 700 rupees from the cupboard. This accusation serves as a means to justify his decision and tarnish Bhima's reputation. She accuses him as betrayer and traitor. "There was a lot of anger inside Bhima which she never reveal before, but ultimately she feels compelled to take stand against Viraf and Dubash family and speaks out" (Negi 265). Serabai's subsequent decision to drive Bhima out of her house leaves her feeling helpless and overwhelmed. As Bhima is forced to leave, thoughts of survival without employment cloud her mind, intensifying her sense of vulnerability. Amidst these tumultuous emotions, Bhima experiences a conflicting sense of pride in her granddaughter, who has managed to inflict a curse upon Serabai's family by making her confront the death of the foetus.

In search of solace and respite from the deception and insults she has endured, Bhima's feet guide her to the beach, recognizing it as a potential sanctuary. She encounters a balloon seller and purchases a bunch of balloons. Standing upon a slippery rock, with the waves gently caressing her feet, she releases the balloons into the sky, symbolically representing the burst of stress. In this cathartic act, Serabai's mind begins to empty of anger and grief, creating space for a newfound sense of hope.

Thrity has exposed the strength of a woman through this character. Betrayed, stabbed, and trashed by many losses Bhima stands more courageous and strong. Her bond with ocean shows her fighting spirit and her emotional strength is her let go spirit which carries away the hot air filled balloons to the heights and chills and lightens the soul. Bhima is projected as a person, who goes to the nature as a child moves to the mother when in pain and trouble. Thrity has brilliantly defined the strength of nature through the thoughts of Bhima. The sea was unspoiled and eternal and seemingly beyond human claim. (Bharathy 1594)

Despite losing her means of survival, Serabai's inner being feels untethered from the darkness that surrounds her. She perceives Maya as the very essence of her existence, holding onto the belief that her granddaughter represents a source of light and optimism for the future. "Though Bhima feels sad and pensive, she also feels dignified and courageous" (Bharathy 1594).

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Investigating Transhumans in Anil Menon's *The Beast with Nine Billion Feet*

MAHIMA & AMRITA

Mahima

Abstract

This paper aims to uncover the themes, basic concepts and findings thereof that are utilized in science fiction to describe gene- altering and mutation. The effects of newly evolving humanism instrumenting science and technology, produce unrealistic yet extraordinary results showcased in science fiction which are usually far reaching, more powerful, with expansion in physical as well as mental powers. Indeed, this genre uses the transhuman as an excuse to explore the effects of such hypothetical abilities and powers and, its subsequent interactions with the rest of humanity. Anil Menon, a computer scientist by education, an editor of books on evolutionary algorithm, is certainly an Indian writer of such speculative science fiction. His novel "Anil Menon's The Beast with Nine Billion Feet", set in 2040, A.D. Pune, speaks of a scientific experiment, impacting identity and psychology of human beings; projecting the effects of trans-human in the digital-obsessed society.

Keywords: Indian science fiction, evolution, bio-technology, genetic engineering, transhuman

Introduction

> "But, you know, I feel more fellowship with the defeated than with saints.
> Heroism and sanctity don't really appeal to me, I imagine.
> What interests me is being a man."
>
> — Albert Camus, *The Plague*

The modern world is progressing rapidly towards scientific advancement and warfare. Interestingly, *Humanism*, a term first used by Cicero to describe liberal education gained metonymic extension with anthropocentric emphasis by 20th Century with *secular* humanism (J. Maritain,1973), *socialist* humanism (Bynner,1984), *pragmatic* humanism (Schiller, 2011), *digital* humanism (Christian Fuchs, 2022) and so on... As a further development in modern doctrine and techniques, centrality of human experience is undeniable which compels us to unravel the concept of Transhumanism which embraces genetic engineering, cryonics, A.I. and nanotechnology. According to Mercer (2014), transhumanism is "a philosophical movement that advocates for the transformation of the human condition by developing and making widely available sophisticated technologies to greatly enhance human intellect and physiology" (310). A more conceited definition draws a remarkable corollary to Darwin's

theory of human evolution, by stating that a more perfect humanity will emerge with the help of advanced technologies which shall get rid of most of the present human limitations and problems of body: "Wherever natural evolution has reached its limit, artificial evolution will start, controlled by the people themselves. (Steemit, 2019). In other words, it is not out of place to state that today we have revolutionized our ability to engineer biology and create living systems with novel functions. Besides, most of the transhumanists also believe that in future, human 'consciousness' shall be free from the limitations of physical shell. The recent developments in A.I., certainly, is exemplifying it.

In this pretext, the most popular literary genre of modern times, fiction is not lagging behind in dealing with themes of transhumanism — novels in science fiction that encompass many different styles and sub-genres. Though the word *transhuman* was used by Dante Alighieri (2003) in the *Divine Comedy* (1312), this term 'transhumanism' was popularised in 1957 by Julian Huxley in his essay. This concept snowballed with some acclaimed works like Isaac Asimov's *I Robot* (1950), Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), Anne McCaffrey's *Dragon Riders of Pern* (1967), Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1975), Elizabeth Moon's *Remanent Population* (1996), Chaterjee's *Signal Red* (2007), Priya's *Clone* (2019), Divya's *Machinehood* (2021) etc. In this galaxy of science fiction writers, Anil Menon also carved a niche by becoming a celebrated name. A computer scientist, an author of speculative fiction, and an editor of books on evolutionary algorithms, Anil Menon represents science fiction through his short stories, children's fiction, anthology as well as novels such as *Invisible Hand* (2007), *Vermillion* (2007), *The Beast with Nine Billion Feet* (2009), *No More* (Hoot Magzine, 2011) and *Breaking the Bow: Speculative Fiction Inspired by the Ramayana* (2011).

This paper, therefore, tries to investigate the trepidation, the utter chaos resulting from unchecked, accelerated growth of science, bringing about multiple challenges to human race at large as well as threats and opportunities of transhumanism. It also tries to empirically unwind the moral issues faced by young adults who are groping in the dark to find their real identity in postmodern ethically turbid times.

II

The Beast with Nine Billion Feet

A novel consisting of 21 Chapters printed on 267 pages (Zubaan Books), *The Beast with Nine Billion Feet* was published in 2009. The novel was shortlisted for the 2010 Vodafone Crossword Book Award and 2010 Parallax prize. Opening with the chapter 'A Girl Named Tara' and ending with 'Zal' each chapter has been given a title. Space and time dimensions of this novel expands the theme of rapid expansion of technology and digital applications that has been characterized as the "4th Industrial Revolution" incessantly changing the way we live, work, and learn : the fusion and amplification of emerging breakthroughs in artificial

intelligence, automation and robotics, and multiplied by the far-reaching connectivity between billions of people with mobile and other digital devices that offer unprecedented access to data and knowledge (Manns, 2017). Therefore, the time winding crown of the novel is notched in the near future i.e. 2040 A.D. Pune. The theme of eugenics and transhumanism described in this novel inarguably transcends geographical boundaries and echo many universal themes of Hollywood movies. Paul. M. Russell (2013), current editor of *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction* and the general editor of *SF Storyworlds* (Gylphi Press) states " Menon's future is neither one of shock (dystopia) nor awe (utopia) but something in-between, both pragmatic and experiential, a lived reality that his characters already inhabit and to which we are invited."

The plot unfolds around the thirteen-year-old Tara, a dark complexion girl who loves to go to school, and her seventeen-year-old brother Aditya (Adi), whose father Sivan has been a celebrated geneticist, who is now legally culpable and absconding. Although Tara is very conscious about her looks yet she is struggling to overcome issues of parental abandonment, negligible friends, growing body weight and also to get a role in a school drama being organised on annual day: " Kauva Tara. She understood why Mrs. Jhunjhunwalla had been reluctant to cast her as Juliet" (Ch.1). Nonetheless, Tara's sharp wit finds comfort in books and she remains positive. "She ate her lunch– six idlis and coconut chutney– eyes half- closed, chewing methodically, enjoying every bite and despising herself for enjoying it so much..." (Ch.1,1); she also forges a strong bond with Aunt Sita, her aging guardian with a "childlike face" who had once worked as a life-insurance agent. Adi, on the contrary, is an introvert who does not do well in school "he'd sneaked out via the back, using the stairs that led from the first-floor terrace…" for "his job at BodZ." (Ch.1, 3). Although Adi has dyslexia yet he carries an inborn gift for genetic engineering and design. Adi is, virtual reality game addict a boy of solitary joys like parkour which is rooted in military obstacle course (that includes flipping, running, swinging, jumping, quadrupedal movements, plyometrics etc.) instead of the conventional socializing with fellow human beings. So, Aditya longs to escape the restrictive environment of Pune for the icebound faraway Nurth, an island near North Pole where he wishes to rise to his true potential by contributing in cutting edge genetic engineering projects.

Sivan, their father, is sketched a demigod, who turned into a social activist by running a campaign against the genetically modified seeds which he himself once helped to create as a brilliant scientist. Sivan is hiding from law, labelled as a terrorist because he has been voicing for farmers' rights to seed stock with open licensing and intellectual property. Interestingly, the father and son do not share a palpable relationship. It is clearly evident when Sivan is instrumental in confiscating a genetically 'tweaked' bird that Adi has been caring for. This escalates a series of events that finally reveal unpleasant facts about Sivan's past and forces Adi to confront the truth about his own origins, seasoned with his resentment for his father. His sister Tara is also seen torn between the two of them. However, Tara's steadfast loyalty and resolute ethical stand paves a path of rescue for them. Finally, resulting a political tide, things roll in favour of Sivan and he is restored to the status of a folk hero.

The anti-Sivan in essence is Vispala, an enigmatic older woman and veteran genetic scientist also known as Mandira. Mandira aggressively voices the interests of the multinationals seeking to dominate the Indian market for profit. She seeks to transform the world with unrestricted use of genetic engineering but finds herself fettered by Sivan's Dharma Protocols, a set of laws designed to check misuse of genetic modification, possible contamination of natural stock and abuse of 'tweaked' birds and animals. Mandira's standpoint: why tampering with humanity and nature could not be compelling if it brings a chance to transcend disease, hunger and death, is certainly as captivating as Sivan's argument for free life. Mandira also has lab-born transhuman children Ria and Francis, who are a product of genetic engineering. Socially speaking, as compared to Sivan-Bhau's children, Ria and Francis represent those high status, privileged class of children who live in a palatial house with a personal swimming pool and also a car/hover powered by artificial intelligence. Their life reminds of a fairy tale in which all desires and dreams easily come true (because of the elevated social status of their mother who is seemingly extremely beautiful, clever, and caring). Both Ria and Francis become mysterious friends of Tara when they first meet while Tara is examining a weird tree which is said to be a living fossil: "The boy was the first to smile: 'Hello. I'm Francis' and 'My name's Razia,' said the girl, smiling. 'But everyone calls me Ria. How do you do?'" (Ch.1, 9). Mandira also wants to control Adi by becoming a shadowy mentor and thralls him by promising a better life if he can only finish high school and stay out of trouble until he turns eighteen.

Besides, some minor characters like DSP Pranay, a policeman, who helps Adi when he gets into trouble (since Pranay's own father and Sivan together started a revolt against the use of genetically altered grains) and who brings out the positive attributes of Sivan before Adi; Chitra, who is a cosmetic boutique owner on Luxmi Road and Aunt Sita's friend, wanting to give Tara a melanin touch-up: "Sita, I've decided to give my favourite teenager a makeover. It's my birthday gift. Oh, you're quite welcome, Tara-darling.; Mr. Lachit Barua, a lawyer who assures, Sivan-bhau's sister will never be without friends. but finds it is not possible to sell the Shangri-la residence without Sivan's approval" (Ch.1, 5-6); Mali, an angular man with Lennon glasses, a Gandhi cap, pierced eyebrows, a smear of sacred ash on his forehead who is a colleague of Sivan and Vispala, and called a "toy maker" (76) , and Yeshwant, a well- trimmed goatee and a Lennon visor on him, is the owner of BodZ: "BodZ was huge: it had four levels, a mile-long running track that wound its way around the atrium's kidney-shaped all-synthetic garden, three sauna rooms, two cafés, apparel stores, hang-out rooms, study rooms, exercise rooms, entertainment rooms" (Ch.2,17) and which had illusion pods run by Godzilla supercomputers all are sketched by the pen of the novelist.

The locale of the novel is high-tech Pune offering liquid computers even to kids to work with, illusion pods and intelligent cars to travel and smart houses which talks to their inhabitants. Cross reference to Matheran, Mumbai-Pune parkway, Appa Balvant Chowk, Shaniwarwada all familiar names to maximum Indians indeed add the Indian tempering flavours to the story. Nonetheless, it is a digital-addicted society where reality gets reinvented in the history class at

schools; using molecular cosmetology where *genomic protein analysis, figure out all the epidermal weaknesses*" (Ch.1, 6) is an everyday affair; uses visors for communications, where lenses can sense perfume; hovers are emotional machines with flexi- skins, which can zoom-in to specific areas and analyse skin texture plus compose poetry; on top of it, incubating and developing transhuman characters especially Ria, Francis and Adi cantilever the desire to become more strong, freaky yet powerful with human enhancements and eugenics. The aforesaid resonates Prof. Nicholas Agar's view that "transhumanists are not marginalized, technology obsessed Trekkies. They present their view about where we should be headed with a keen awareness of how we might get there." (Agar, 2007). Hence, power plays, need for control and genetic code for life itself becomes central themes of the novel.

The narrative technique is of third person narration. Moreover, thought-processes, dialogues and conversation mark differences in ideology which are often woven into the very fabric of family relations. Menon's linguistic choice of words work as navigation keys for any reader to read the text like: "That was just fine with Tara. A bit of quiet was what she needed on this day, Monday, horrid school-day, Snake-and-Mongoose day" (Ch.1, 1). However, the author's see-saw use of high prose and colloquialism, sometimes meddle with a neat reading for an average reader. To cite an example of a multi-clause sentence: "… this boy playing parkour, jumping over small obstacles, vaulting over large ones, weaving around lamp posts, slicing through intersections, his braids spiralling outwards, orbiting his intent face and then collapsing, as a black onyx chain with red Tibetan beads rises and falls on his chest covered only by a T-shirt, its ragged trim almost chic, …Green and Glory." (Ch.2, 14) and "Aunty-ji, relaaaax. I'm fine. I just needed some fresh air. She changed the topic. You had a call from Lawyer Barua." (Ch.3, 27). Nonetheless, keeping the element of suspense hitched till the end of the novel makes the reading of this scientific fiction enjoyable.

III

Tenets of Transhumanism in *The Beast with Nine Billion Feet*

i) Biotechnological Enhancement : The concept of biotechnology goes back to domestication of animals, cultivation of the plants, bodily enhancements and/or "improvements" to these through breeding, artificial selection of genes and hybridization. Therefore, modifying living organisms like crops, livestock for human purposes as well as pharmaceuticals, fall under the wide ranging ambit of various procedures of biotechnology.

In the opening chapter of the novel, we come across, a "fifteen meters tall, magnificent example of the Monkey Puzzle tree" (Aruacaria Aruacana) which was spotted by Tara. The tree had "stiff, flat, dark-green leaves tipped with sharp spines" and the "branches were L-shaped with the long-part of the 'L' pointing upwards". So, it looked like someone with "a really bad spike haircut." Interestingly, there were "no birds nestling in the branches, no busy squirrels, no monkeys and certainly no Cheshire cats". Nonetheless, Tara loved it and thought this tree was "kind of beautiful". (Ch.1, 8)

On the other hand, Mali's interest in neurobiology makes him grow tiny trees branched, rooted, leaf-canopied and perfect in every detail a *miniature*

rainforest …on an area the size of a large plate. One of the bonsai trees made mewling sounds. (Ch.6, 77).

Similarly, a tweaked red Parrot with "solemn round eyes" was spotted by Adi when his visor's proximity sensor saved him from a speeding truck carrying livestock:

> *It was wagging its head side to side, as if keeping time to some private song. It was neither forlorn nor bedraggled. Its neck feathers were arranged in layered ripples, like a child's charcoal drawing of the sea. The primary feathers were a greenish- blue streaked with delicate lines of white and grey. The tail was a deep reddish- saffron. It proved beyond doubt that the parrot had been genetically engineered. Tweaked. Vermillion was not a parrot colour. This was a designer bird.* (Ch.2, 15).

These excerpts from the novel exhibit , an echo of Miranda's speech in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Act V, Scene - I :

> "O wonder!
> How many goodly creatures are there here!
> How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
> That has such people in 't." (203–206)

ii) Genetic Engineering:

The synthetic life described in the novel unravels further in the "Shark project" in the man-made island of Lahu done by 'posse'. The posse consisted of a group of seven experts viz. Adi, Balthazar, Charity, Leo, Phuntarick, Prudence and Gnu. Adi, at seventeen, was the youngest. The posse had worked on five biotech ventures, however, the last project to modify epaulette sharks was actually Adi's first:

> *Adi checked the time: 5.55…The Shark project was done, the tech had been sold, the handshakes had been handed out, the posse had been disbanded, and his friends would soon go their separate ways. He wanted to say goodbye. He needed to say goodbye.* (Ch.2, 16)

<div align="center">and</div>

> *He had designed the sharks, after all. It had been known for some time that sharks rarely got sick. They were even immune to most types of cancer.* (21)

> Dr. Hafiz is found appreciating Adi to the extent that he says, *Vispala was right: the point of a quest is to find Galahad, not the grail. She's thrilled with her Galahad…Anyway. Kudos, bhai. Khoob, bahut khoob.* (25)

iii) Human Augmentation:

> Medical or technological advancements which seek to extend and expand human capabilities, can be understood as human augmentation. Tara surprisingly finds out about human

augmentation when she bungled Sanskrit test but Franscis and Ria do not worry about any test because: "Exactly," said Ria. *I copy all the answers from Francis. He knows the crap cold. And my link helps out too.* Tara wonders if the duo knows telepathy but Ria and Francis simultaneously tapped their heads and say "No, silly. Nothing like that." Ria nodded vaguely. "It's complicated..." *We have advanced links. Lens implants. They're like contact lens. We can connect to all sorts of information nests. Very useful in Geography class. Mother told us not to tell anyone.* (Ch 5, 59). Ria, reluctantly, even shares with Tara that there is some sort of ultrasound technology fitted in their eye-lens for audio:"Norris-Pompei focusing," said Francis. *The lenses transmit sound only to your ears.* Tara is amazed and responds *Wow! Eyes that whisper!* (Ch 5, 59)

Besides, Mandira looks so ever-young. Her kids too can't appreciate Aunt Sita who is old and haggard viz. *How can she bear to look so wrecked?* Ria shuddered. *I'll kill myself at the first wrinkle. Mother says old age is a disease.* (64) Moreover, Ria who is of same age as Tara, is certainly beautiful with her Parsi-fair skin, her confident gaze, her impulsiveness, her features and curves, her gestures, yet both Francis and Ria "had no navels." (Ch.5, 65)

iv) Virtual Reality and Mind Uploading:

For transhumanists, mind uploading offers a pathway to one of transhumanism's main objectives — living forever — by way of digital immortality. Eternally existing in a simulation means that uploaded minds would be able to contribute to the physical world even after death or be regenerated as a carbon copy.

True to the spirit of SF, Menon showcase virtual reality and mind upload in the beginning of the novel (Ch. 2), wherein Adi usually is seen hijacking an "Illusion pod" which is a sophisticated version of the high-demand motion simulators. "The pod consisted of an exoskeleton — astronaut-type suit… It was surprisingly easy to fool the simpleminded human body into thinking it was rambling, revolving, roaming, rolling, rocking, roving, running, rushing — in short, romping in an alter space, alter time." (Ch.2, 19). Adi ditches to give an immune shot to "Godzilla" and entered the pod like getting into a helicopter cockpit, slid into the suit and reached for the bottle of digital paint:

> The gel was a major advance over the old-fashioned Virtual Reality data gloves. He slathered his hands with the gel. The trillions of special molecules in the gel drew their energy from his body heat; it felt like dipping his hands into ice-cold water…Using a version of International Sign language, Adi provided the destination coordinates and gave the command to start. (Ch.2,19)

Though instructions to the pod's controls could be given in several ways, Adi prefers to use gesture-based commands; sign language feels much faster to me than tapping on a keyboard; it was also much more reliable; hands usually work no matter what (19).

Adi meets his friends virtually on the beach of Lahu though his brain knows that he is strapped in one of Bodz's Illusion pods. Adi wonders why can't he do this all his life? Friends, work and play. This was it. This was happiness (24). However, Adi becomes badly disoriented moving from virtual reality to actual reality as:

The sudden shift from Lahu to Pune had jumbled his mind. He saw Yeshwant's feet resting on a piece of Lahu's gravel beach. Adi's mind took things very literally. For a few minutes after exiting an Illusion, it existed in a fugue state, mixing and merging pieces of different worlds. (Ch.4, 41)

v) Use of A.I.

A computer software and/or robot which can function as an intelligent human being is called Artificial Intelligence (A.I.). Menon exhibits an A.I. controlled "House" in the novel which regulates the thermostat, solar-power, security alarms and communications. In the opening chapter, a House announces that a Mr. Lachit Barua wants to speak to Aunt Sita regarding a legal matter and did Tara want to take the call instead? Tara told the House she didn't. (6).

On the other hand, when Tara tries to enter Ria's house by dodging the motion sensors, face-recognition technology and being painfully aware that all sorts of devices were scrutinizing her:

The House finally figured out what this object was (Object/Human, Name/Tara, Attribute/female) and who was most likely to be interested in this 10 human (Object/Razia, Object/Francis): "Good evening... Ms Tara... Your friends... Ria... and... Francis... are working upstairs. I have informed them that you are here, but they appear to be offline. Please make yourself comfortable. (Ch.16, 209)

vi) Life Extension:

The transhumanist movement is a progression towards the idea that we should merge with machines and re-invent, re-make ourselves to achieve higher ideals. This thought is summed up by Mark O'Connell in *To Be a Machine* (2017) that 'we can and should eradicate ageing as a cause of death; that we can and should use technology to augment our bodies and our minds'.

Both Ria and Francis have been re-invented as humans called "novae" which means "the new ones". Tara wants to guess that Nurth, their birth place, is at the arctic circle but Ria says:

No, Nurth is short for New Earth. And mind you, it's not your typical artificial island. Nurth's like a moon colony; most of it is covered up because the weather is so extreme. (Ch.7, 86)

Besides, Vispala while talking to Adi, divulge the reason for the Season project, run to help human beings achieve immortality and increase their life span by half a century:

How else could I show you, Adi? You're young. So of course you're immortal. You'll never get old, wither, or die. A great biologist you might be, but the heart that beats in your chest is only seventeen. What does it know of decrepitude, old age, death? (Ch.17, 214)

Vispala feels that humans suffer since their bodies become decrepit and that nine billion lives will 'snuff out'. She says: "We call it 'aging,' as if Time is the enemy." (214). Vispala also talks of her next project to prompt Adi. She gives him two proofs *Nutricola*: a jelly fish, multicellular animal which "starts out as polyp fixed to the ocean floor… grew younger as it aged" (216) and second is Shivan himself and in turn, his own son Aditya.

Conclusion

Menon has justifiably unveiled the dichotomy of the moral and the ethical principles *vis-a-vis* transhumanism. Tara's belief that 'cheating' is 'bogus' and like 'standing at the finish line of a race and claiming you've won when you haven't even run the race' seems to echo the disadvantages of A.I, its emotionless nature and resulting quest for authentic identity for humans. Contrarily, transhumanism stems from humans playing God to overcome the possibility of error, creating unbiased, automated machines and becoming self-aware. The novel seems to be a warning regarding unchecked, polysemous growth of science, which certainly is bound to bring multiple challenges to human race and threats of world wars. Certainly, one may like to ask Menon: 'Does recent firing of CEO Sam Atman, the figurehead of ChatGPT , A.I., reverberate of *A Beast with Nine Million Feet*? '

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Orality and Ecology: The Environmentalism of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow*

AMIT KUMAR SONI

Abstract

The article approaches the oral design of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's latest novel, *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) from an ecological perspective. It is divided into two parts of which the first undertakes to interpret the connection between 'orature' and ecology. The second part attempts to highlight those illustrations of orality which are likely to offer alternative visions of reimagining planetarity and concerns with the exploration of the 'green' shades of ethics and politics in Ngugi 's narrative masterpiece.

Keywords: orality, ecology, corporonialism, neocolonialism, environmental justice, postcolonial

Orality and Ecology

Recent scholarship on the cross-pollination of ecocriticism, indigenous studies and postcolonial studies has paved a way for the ecocentric interpretations of indigenous lifeways, foodways, agricultural practices and art forms such as the oral literatures, songs, dances and cave paintings. (Sone 2014; Moolla 2016; Monani and Adamson 2017; Mwangi 2019) The ecocritical analyses of precolonial indigenous cultural traditions emerging from the postcolonial world also indict European colonization and the forces of neocolonialism for displacing native/local ecologies and for destroying the colonized environments on an unprecedented scale. However, some ecocritics of indigenous and native traditions such as Joni Adamson (2014, 175) also warn against essentialist readings which tend to romanticize uncritically everything that existed in these cultures before the advent of colonial invasions.

The 'orature' provides tools and strategies of resistance to fight for environmental justice and at the same time, functions as indigenous knowledge system for ecological rebalancing. The 'ecostories' and some ceremonial activities that derive from our ancestral cultures, are effective in suggesting us the 'ecosophical' (Guattari 1989a, 2000b) ways to revive our lost connections with the immediate environments. The unison of nature-culture in our cognitive activities is what is necessary for engaging with the questions of socio-ecological justice. Orality for Ngugi is not a thing of and about the past but "is a dynamic living presence in all cultures," (*Globalectics* 2016, 81) registering the dynamics of change in time and space. It includes what once existed as well as what continues to be created. Ngugi uses oral knowledge

for the present and the future purposes. His portrait of the oral worldview provides the starting point for analysing the ecological imagination of *Wizard of the Crow* (2006). The aesthetics of "Orature", as Ngugi 's understanding of the term suggests, seems so finely attuned to the formulation of "the environmental imagination of the global." He argues that orature in its totality which includes literature, music, dance, community rituals, riddles, proverbs, legends, myths and songs presents a circular whole in which all events and forms of life are interconnected just like the net of Hindu Lord Indra as conceptualised by Mahayana Buddhism.

Commenting upon the role of an African writer-teacher in the peoples' struggles against "international monopoly capitalism" (*Writers in Politics* 30) and "the local pro-foreigner *comprador* class" (31), Ngugi wa Thiong'o foregrounds the need to "insist upon the primacy and centrality of African literature" and states that, "[c]entral to this is the oral literature of our people, including their contemporary compositions." (30) He blames colonialism and eurocentric discourses for alienating the African people from their environments and consequently, from their traditional cultures. Ngugi contends that African oral literatures are repositories of indigenous knowledge, lifeways, worldviews, and struggles for survival and self-determination. That is why, for him, orality or orature becomes not just a choice but a compulsion to build an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist critique and to rewrite the Kenyan and to an extent, the African history of resistance against foreign rule. Embedded in these oral traditions are didactic tales, songs, myths, proverbs and eclectic fables that embody layers of environmental wisdom for sustainable inhabitation. The oral tales and songs weave a fusion of the natural and the cultural landscape, establishing an intertwined existence of all life forms on earth. Moreover, the oral art forms such as folktales, rituals, dances and songs highlight the often-neglected dialogue between human, more-than-human and nature.

Wizard of the Crow also draws upon the non-anthropocentric narrative framework of the oral literatures since it reflects upon the life of plants, birds, flies, forests and rivers, while affirming "the co-constitutive materiality of human corporeality and nonhuman nature." (Alaimo and Hekman 9). Ngugi seems to suggest that orature has a role to play in dealing with "the crisis of culture" which has led the world to "environmental crisis" (Ghosh 2017, 12), pushing the earth community into the age of the "Anthropocene." (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000) He emphasizes the need to revive the "language of nature" as found in orature which delivers the environmental message that human survival depends upon the wellbeing of the ecosystems. In the chapter, "The Oral Native and The Writing Master: Orature, Orality, and Cyborality", Ngugi elaborates upon the relationship between orality and ecology,

> Nature in orature manifests itself as a web of connections of mutual dependence … This web of connections reflects the language of nature; the various aspects of nature are in active communications within themselves, for instance, in each biological unit between and within cells. But they are also in active communication with other entities, for instance the rain circle of water, vapor, clouds, rain, rivers, lakes, and seas, the subject of poetry and song. It is seen in the interaction between bees and butterflies with flowers, a process that

enables fertilization between plants. Eliminate all bees and butterflies, and famine descends to threaten human life. Everywhere one looks in nature is a web of connections, even among the seemingly unconnected. (77)

Ngugi writes, "The story is all-pervasive in orature." (*Globalectics* 2016, 79) Therefore, the storytelling becomes the most adapted form of orality particularly in African literature. Its potential for ecological activism and conservation is being widely explored through an interdisciplinary reading of indigenous studies, postcolonial theory and ecology. (Sone 2014; Moolla 2016; Adamson and Monani 2017; Nanson 2021, 49-65) The use of indigenous language and storytelling technique was, for Ngugi , the first step towards the appropriation of the novel form in the oral traditions of Africa. (*Decolonizing the Mind* 83) James Ogude considers Ngugi 's infusion of oral designs with written forms of literary creation in his later novels not, "as a rupture but a continuation and a more radical development towards a syncretic use of both Gikuyu and Western modes of creation." (Ogude 87) His increased use of orature and a complete adoption of Gikuyu language as a medium of writing had bearings in the first place on his anti-imperial politics as a 'writer in politics.' Literature, especially African literature, is for Ngugi a weapon or a tool for social and political activism against colonization and oppression in all its forms. Postcolonial literature, for Ngugi , is purely a political act which grows out of a merger between politics and aesthetics – the two being inseparable. He writes in his groundbreaking classic non-fiction of postcolonial criticism *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), "In search of the image that would capture the reality of a neo-colony that was Kenya under both Kenyatta and Moi, I once again fell on the oral tradition." (80)

The Ecopedagogy of *Wizard*'s Orality

As a postcolonial novel, *Wizard of the Crow* manifests the most extensive use of oral framework among Ngugi 's novels and plays. James Ogude discovers that, "Ngugi deploys a number of putative oral narrative strategies and the most outstanding of these elements include, among others, the use of traditional seers or prophets or singer-musicians; the use of the journey or quest motif, rumour and gossip and fantastic and biblical allusions." (95) Like the main characters of *Matigari* and *Devil on the Cross*, Kam)t), the protagonist of *Wizard of the Crow* too walks over the thin line, "that divided the real and the unreal in human lives." (*Wizard of the Crow* 757, hereafter WOC) When Ngugi tells the story of Kam)t)'s adventures and his quest for life's meaning as the witch-doctor, he is not just reproducing the oral narrative of a traditional holy seer but mediates through his characterization a comprehensive analysis of the global situation of marginalisation and disempowerment of the subaltern people and nations in the postcolonial world on account of economic globalization, militarization, political corruption and abuse of power by the postcolonial regimes. As a character inspired and modelled upon *Agikuyu* folktales and music performance of the *Giccandi* players, Kam)t) shows awareness of indigenous cosmovision when he encourages his patients to reconnect with the world of nature and spirits. The oral framework helps Ngugi draw the cartographies of environmental degradation that has been continuing at a rapid scale since the inception of

European colonization of Africa. The incorporation of arresting oral stories and songs of colonial encounters and of native struggles for sustainability provide the basis for a literary reconstruction of "slow violence." (Nixon 2011) The blocks of oral history enable the writer deal with the visuals of slow violence which, "remain imperceptible to the senses, either because they are geographically remote, too vast or too minute in scale, or are played out across a time span that exceeds the instance of observation or even the physiological life of the human observer" (Nixon 2011, 15). By using the popular mythology, the novel evokes chronotopic images of persistent exploitation of natural environment and common citizens through the phases of colonialism, post-colonialism, neo-colonialism and "corporonialism" along the lines of popular resistance and unabated optimism.

The protagonist of the novel named Kam)t) who later becomes Wizard of the Crow transmigrates into the bird-self of a crow. His metamorphosis into a crow has resonance with some characters of Gikuyu folklores. The inclusion of orature in the novelistic framework of *Wizard of the Crow* consists of both political and aesthetic significance. As part of narrative technique, the magical realist element of the traditional folktales enables the writer present a global image of abused nature and culture. Once taken over his crow self, Kam)t) takes wings to survey the landscape of Aburiria from above. The sky view of Aburiria from all the four directions frames a set of pictures that shows significant marks of environmental inequality and social injustices.

> Everywhere people were hungry, thirsty and in rags. In most towns, shelters made out of cardboard, scrap metal, old tires, and plastic were home to hundreds of children and adults. He found it ironic that, as in Eldares, these shacks stood side by side with mansions of tile, stone, glass, and concrete. Similarly, in the environs of cities and towns huge plantations of coffee, tea, cocoa, cotton, sisal, and rubber shared borders with exhausted strips of land cultivated by peasants. Cows with udders full with milk grazed on lush lands as scrawny others ambled on thorny and stony grounds. (WOC 39)

The novel as a 'postcolonial epic' (Roy 2018) is interwoven with a series of tales between the tellers and the listeners. Ngugi creates an illusion of oral performance in *Wizard of the Crow* by reinventing the traditional backgrounds of community gatherings and resorting to the oral convention of the group reception of art by "simulat[ing] the art of the oral storyteller in writing." Simon Gikandi observes that storytelling in the novel's best parts, "makes the reader forget that this is a written story." (156–57) The constable A.G. plays the role of a storyteller who recounts the mysterious powers and life of the eponymous hero. He tells the stories at the fireside, at the crossroads, at the community centres and at the bars and the pubs where people assemble in crowds. This is how Ngugi reconstructs the dialogical space of the novel into an indigenized oral performance and shows how audience stayed spell bound and lost in the tales while forgetting their hunger and work. A.G. went on telling the stories just like a "travelling bard" of the oral traditions (WOC 570) about the adventures of the Wizard of the Crow whom he labelled as "the being that animates all things." (570) He also recounts tales about the Ruler and "a secret garden with dollar producing plants." (570)

In such stories and talks, writes Ngugi , "the real and the marvellous flowed out of each other." (570) Thus, we have many stories within one larger story which is the novel, narrated by a third person omniscient narrator who describes the actions and the deeds of the main characters as well as the events taking place in a fictitious country of Aburiria. However, the novel includes multiple narrative voices to present a broader picture of the neocolonial situation and the popular resistance in Aburiria. The orature in Ngugi 's novels has the purpose of reaching out to the targeted audience who are the poor and the marginal underclasses of peasants, workers and the unemployed or underpaid youth. James Ogude views that Ngugi , "attaches great value to the story and to how the same narrative could be rendered persuasively in the postcolonial narratives originally written in Gikuyu. Thus, elements that are traditionally considered central to the novel form, such as credibility of character and complexity of plot structure, are inevitably subordinated to the dominant discourse in his narratives – the absurd drama of the postcolonial state in Kenya." (108) What Ogude remarks in context of Ngugi 's use of storytelling in *Matigari* and *Devil on the Cross* is also true of his latest novel *Wizard of the Crow*, however, here the novelist moves beyond the postcolonial situation of Kenya to comment upon the socio-environmental impacts of neoliberal capitalism.

Wizard of the Crow seems to endorse the tenets of ecological spiritualism and asceticism. The novel produces an environmental culture that is critical of pursuit of excessive material wealth, and advocates for a sustained human engagement with "degrowth" and equitable distribution of environmental resources. Kam)t)'s university education, his knowledge of medicinal value of the plants and herbs, his methods of treatment as a witch doctor and his hatred towards illegitimate unearned wealth and accumulation of capital – as he buries the three bags full of money somewhere in the prairie rather than buying luxuries of life – all of this encourage us to practice sustainable living, economic morality and acknowledge the nonhuman agency. In his ecocritical analysis of *Wizard of the Crow*, Brady Smith finds "Kam)t)'s decision to bury the money [is] entirely in keeping with the political-ecological thought implicit in his actions throughout the rest of the text." (WOC 172) He further argues that Kam)t)'s "insistence that "the earth shall be my bank" (WOC 172) is suggestive of the need for linking closely the country's economy with its ecology.

Besides images of environmental degradation and visions of ecological rejuvenation, the novel's green imagination is significantly informed by the ideals of economic morality and the people's movement against the developmental goals of a neo-colonized totalitarian regime. Interrogating into the relationship between "money, morality and ecology" that pervades most of the narrative action, Brady Smith discovers,

> Kam)t), Nyaw)ra, and the figures arrayed around them always endorse the values of sobriety and thrift, the regime against which they struggle is everywhere associated with sloth, avarice, and unearned economic gains. These dueling but nonetheless deeply interrelated accounts of money and morality are significant in themselves for the way they become the poles between which the novel's political-ecological imagination always turns. (Smith 172)

Kam)t) is portrayed as a child of nature who loves to be surrounded with trees, plants, bushes, rocks and birds. His love for nature takes him closer to the image of the "Ecological Indian." Kam)t)'s interest in plants and all living things dates back to his childhood which guided him to opt for herbology, the study of the medicinal properties of plants" (WOC 57) at an Indian university in Chennai. He tells Tajirika, the owner of Eldares Modern Construction and Real Estate, about his intention in furthering research in the medicinal properties of the plants and herbs of Aburiria if he had enough financial backing. Having wandered jobless in the streets of Eldares for several weeks, Kam)t) accidently takes up the role of a wizard in order to escape the police arrest. He and Nyaw)ra begin to live together somewhere at the outskirt of the town of Santalucia where they both have opened a clinic in the name of the Wizard of the Crow to treat people's illness by using herbal medicines and power of divination. Moreover, the shrine of the Wizard becomes a site of covert operations and strategic preparations for the Movement of the Voice of the People of which Nyaw)ra is a leading member. The Wizard's cabin is also their hideout from the State agencies. Another field of academic study which interested Kam)t) in India was the Eastern religions. The narrator informs about Kam)t)'s attitudes to nature and his knowledge of the medicinal value of plants. Kam)t) displays environmental consciousness which makes him sensitive to his natural environment.

> It always refreshed him to be among plants and trees, and now the stench trapped in his bag seemed to have vanished. His eyes roamed, and before he knew it his curiosity had been aroused by the abundant multiplicity of plants. He soon found himself among them, searching out those he thought had medicinal properties. Whatever he picked he put into his bag, oblivious of how much time was passing. By now he knew that he was not looking for medicinal roots and leaves for their own sake but because there was a patient outside Nyawira's house waiting for a cure. (WOC 131)

The novel's rejection of Kam)t)'s Thoreauvian pilgrimage to the Edenic landscape is an implicit critique of the deep ecology's hermetic call to develop a biocentric vision which bypasses the threats of environmental inequality, social injustices and ecological imperialism. Nyawira questions Kam)t), "If you found a grown man taking food from a child by force, would you just stand there and watch the drama?" (WOC 209) Ngugi emphasises that environmentalist thought and action must include the "disposable people" along with the nonhumans and the biota. His environmental vision in the novel derives from the planetary consciousness that stresses the interconnectedness of all living and non-living material forms. Kam)t), the witch-doctor of the wounded souls and bodies, preaches his clients that,

> All life is one and it flows like a river or the waters of the sea. Plants, humans, animals down to the creatures that crawl, all draw their share from the one indivisible river of life, just as they all draw breath from the air. (WOC 274)

Amazed by the Wizard of the Crow's method of treating the pained souls and bodies which is compiled as "*The Grace of the Seven Herbs*" (WOC 361), Kaniuru contemplates,

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This witch doctor was endlessly amazing: hmmm, talking about the care of animals and plants and even insects? How funny! A witch doctor who cares about life all around him? A modern witch doctor, an environmentally conscious witch doctor, he said and yawned, returning to bed. (WOC 361)

Wizard of the Crow, unlike Ngugi 's earlier novels, exhibits the more explicit form of environmental literacy that forms a central part of its overall pedagogical framework. He presents an ecocentric vision that is derived from the ancient religions of India, China and Africa "which calls for attention to shared vulnerabilities across species and the cultivation of an ethics of flourishing for various life forms." (Iheka & Newell 9) Ngugi draws upon the Gikuyu folklore and the tradition of Indian healers in his characterization of Kam)t), the Wizard of the Crow. Kam)t) is endowed with the supernatural power of transforming himself into a crow like a shaman and floats in the sky. The characterisation of Kam)t) positively responds to the posthumanist concern of 'literary' anthropocentrism. Kam)t), in this sense, stands for multispecies justice in whose characterisation the species lines become blurred. He tells Nyawira about the,

Indian healers of the western Ghat hills, places like Kottakkal, Ernakulum—siddhar healers especially. A siddhar is a poet, a seer, a soother of souls, and an expert in herbs. It is said that he has the power to come out of his body and enter those of other beings, even animals, and stay there for some time before returning to his own." (WOC 267)

In the above passage, the novel invites the reader to reimagine the relationship between human and nonhuman world by blurring the borders between them. Ngugi highlights how the world of nonhumans and that of humans interpenetrate with each other in such a way which problematizes anthropocentrism and acknowledges the agentic powers of the nonhuman species. Kam)t) stresses the need to build harmony with nature to cure the ills of humanity. He views that, "Nature is the source of all cure. But we have to be humble and wiling to learn from it." (WOC 267) Nyawira asks Kam)t) to apply his acquired knowledge of herbs, environmental philosophy and eastern spiritualism — theorised as "the Seven Herbs of Grace" (WOC 370) — "to confront the real and the concrete in the struggles against the dictatorship." (WOC 268) Kam)t) reveals before Nyawira that as soon as he entered the world of nature in the prairie, the unbearable stench of urban life was replaced with the refreshing scent of flowers and plants. Kam)t)'s recognition of the more-than-human world – as he feels spellbound by the presence of insects, birds and grasshoppers (WOC 67) – counters the centrality of humans in our cosmos. The world of the Wizard includes all life forms that are interconnected. In this regard, the novel attempts to resist the anthropocentric narrative impulse of Ngugi 's previous novels in which the world of animals, plants and birds find little space in the development of the anti-colonial/neocolonial politics.

Conclusion

The novel ends with a "critical utopic vision" which emphasises the need to create a more dynamic space for popular resistance that is capable of tackling the emergent threats of

global capitalism and neo-imperial politics. Ngugi 's message in the novel is clear that any efforts towards raising planetary consciousness must address the questions of power, capital, race, class, and gender which significantly determine the "implement[ation] of technocratic forms of 'planetary management' that reinforce boundaries between rich and poor, the 'developed global north and the 'developing global south." (Huggan & Tiffin 81)

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Delineation of Maori Culture and Identity in Patricia Grace's *Tu*

Y. GETZIE ARATHANA MARY

Abstract

This article explains how the award-winning novel *Tu*, written by Patricia Grace, portrays the culture and identity of the Maori, the indigenous people of Aotearoa, New Zealand. Patricia Grace is a writer from New Zealand who has a key role in the growth and popularity of Mâori fiction. She is the foundation of the development of Maori fiction. All her artworks have received recognition for their depiction of overall Mâori culture and Mâori diversity, and in particular contributed and gave voice to her Maori culture and defined Mâori identity to the wider public. The novel *TU* has mostly been examined in regard to its cultural, political, and social (traumatic) elements in the local setting of Aotearoa, New Zealand; these include the themes of Mâori sovereignty, national identity, and Pâkehâ-Mâori interactions. The main objectives of the article is to focus on the phenomenal portrayal of Maori Culture such as Haka, Manaakitanga and Customs like Marae, Club for Mâori as well as the search for identity in the novel *TU*.

Keywords: Maori culture, identity, New Zealand, Maori literature, war, Haka, Manaakitanga, Whenua, cultural customs

Introduction

Mâori culture, also known as Mâoritanga, refers to the traditional customs, cultural practices and beliefs of the Mâori people who are native to New Zealand. Its roots are in Eastern Polynesian culture, where it continues to exist even today. Owing to a large diaspora and the widespread representation of Mâori elements in popular culture, Mâori culture is not just unique to New Zealand but also prevalent globally. Patricia Grace is one of New Zealand's most prominent and celebrated Maori fiction writers. As one of the foremost twentieth-century New Zealand writers, Patricia Grace is frequently referred to as the first Mâori woman to have published six novels and seven short story collections, as well as a number of books for children and a work of nonfiction.

TU (2004) is Patricia's sixth novel, in which she visits the often terrifying and complex world faced by the Mâori Battalion in Italy during the Second World War. The title character, Tu is given the name of the Maori god of war, Tumatauenga. This novel received the Deutz Medal for Fiction, and Montana Award for Fiction at the 2005 Montana New Zealand Book Awards. It also won the 2005 New Zealand Booksellers Choice Award. Patricia Grace has

taken the war experiences of her father and other relatives, and ventured into a new territory, by writing about the world of war and soldiers. The outcome is a novel of great authenticity and high drama, from one of New Zealand's finest story tellers. In her view, the Maori community has a "strong emotional bond with te whenua (the land), as their turangawaewae (their home). Thus, the land is seen as the place of cultural and familial roots; it is the ground on which Mâori identity is founded and located.

Depiction of Maori Culture

Grace describes the actual struggles of New Zealand's 28th Battalion during the Second World War in *Tu*. The 28th Mâori Battalion drew from a long and rich history of Mâori warrior tradition. The goal of raising male children from birth to adulthood was to prepare them to be warriors. The following generation of warriors learned the Tûmatauenga (god of battle) fighting traditions from seasoned warriors. Young Mâori men learned how to thrust, that is, trying to stab and parry, that is, to avoid getting stabbed with the taiaha, an elongated wooden weapon, in the whare maire (school of weapons) and on the para whakawai (training ground) in a manner similar to how Mâori soldiers learned to use the bayonet, a knife that is fixed to the end of the gun with remarkable efficacy. The affective relationship with food, the sense of 'family', the enjoyment of singing as an emotional and communal experience and giving importance to the war are the major cultural features of Maori people who live in New Zealand.

Like most of the Maori, Tu's family pays a very high tribute to the war in the novel. Following the deaths of his older brothers, Rangi and Pita, on the battlefields, Tu is the only surviving male member. By extricating himself from his confining Pâkehâ institution, Tu is able to prove his abilities in battle where he believes the real men are.Tu wishes to express his independence and assert his own identity among fellow Mâori in the Battalion. There were several reasons for young Mâori troops to enlist in the Second World War. It seems that a major motivation for joining the Battalion is to continue Mâori warrior traditions, which give soldiers a chance to show off their fighting skills and prowess in combat.

Haka-

In Mâori culture, the haka is often called a "war cry" or "war challenge." the haka was traditionally performed by men before going to war. The cry itself was intended to increase their own spirits and ask God for assistance in winning, while the angry facial expressions were intended to frighten the opponents. The celebrations such as weddings, funerals, and birthdays are examples of occasions for haka. It is occasionally used as a symbol of tribal identity. Traditionally, the Mâori people of New Zealand performed haka to display a tribe's pride, strength and unity but it's also a customary way to celebrate, entertain and to welcome.

" We did some of our club items including haka " Utaina",
and there were two or three solos".(18)

The above lines taken from the novel *TU* refers to the song called "Utaina" that was sung by the troop of Mâori soldiers. The protagonist of the novel with his crew left New Zealand for the war. When they were four hundred miles away from New Zealand the Mâori boys in the crew prepared for the concert by singing "Utaina" haka which shows their Maori tradition of welcoming, and the beginning a journey. "Utaina" is one of the famous hakas of Maori people in which the song describes the "Waka" or Maori canoe and how visiting tribes called "Manuhiri" were welcomed by "Tangata Whenua" (the hosting tribe). This cultural practice of haka is vividly portrayed in the novel.

Another important concept of Mâori Culture is the "Marae". Marae (meeting grounds) are the focal point of Mâori communities throughout Aotearoa. A marae is a fenced-in complex of carved buildings and grounds that belong to a particular iwi (tribe), hapû (sub-tribe) or whânau (family). Mâori see their marae as their tûrangawaewae - their place to stand and belong.

> There was great excitement last night when our mud- caked bedraggled Te Rau Aroha arrived. What a noise when we saw it limping towards us. There were shouts and cheers and we all broke into a loud haka of welcome: 'Toia Mai, The Waka'-'Drag forth the canoe, drag it forth'. There were several haka.(68)

These lines indicate the importance of Marae to a Mâori. These lines are spoken by Tu when he is travelling from Italy to New Zealand during the war. When he and his Mâori crew saw the "Te Rau Aroha" that is a Marae in southern New Zealand they were eager to reach a Marae and they sang their haka of welcome such as ' Toiamai, Te Waka'. Patricia Grace has given great importance to Haka and Marae in the novel, where in every part of the journey to war many funeral hakas like 'Aue Ihu', ' piko Nei te Matenga', as well as the Mâori version of 'Abide with me' has been sung by Maori soldiers.

Manaakitanga

Manaakitanga is one of the most significant concepts to Mâori people as it secures the strength of their whânau (families) and communities. Manakitanga means to extend aroha (love and compassion) to others. It is found in acts such as helping a loved one, encouraging one another or even supporting a complete stranger.

> At certain times of the year we'd be on the lookout for weaners to take home and fatten, so people wouldn't go hungry at Christmas. I thought of this, thought of the backhome people as we filled our stomachs.(65)

These lines show the evidence of Manaakitanga in the novel where Tu remembers his uncle Willy and Ju when the battalion soldiers received their food and clothing in the battlefield of Lucera in Italy. Tu's uncles were generous and they provided food and clothing for the needy people. He could feel the Manaakitanga even in the camp at war.

The club called " Ngati Poneke club" has a vital role in the concept of Manaakitanga. Around 1929 a group of Mâori people in Wellington formed an organisation for welfare and

relief work. They contributed money and service each week to assist other Mâori suffering from the effects of economic depression. These people, of diverse tribal origins, called themselves the Ngati Poneke Young Maori Club.Ngati Poneke was also created for the purpose of keeping young people off the streets and to ignite their interest in Mâori culture.

> A home away from home for our people coming to the city' , he said, ' so our people can keep their customs and traditions, practise the songs and dance and arts of the Mâori, learn from each other and be comfort to each other in a new and different world.(42)

This line is spoken by Fred who accompanied Tu's father in France. He wanted to invite Tu's mother " Ma" and his brother " Pita" to join the new club in Wellington. After the death of Tu's father his mother wanted to move to Wellington along with her sons and daughters to get the support from Tu's uncle. There she happened to join the Ngati Poneke club for Mâori people where "Ma" and "Pita" got the secured feeling of home in the new place called Wellington.

Escaping to War in Search of Identity

One major factor that appears to have attracted Mâori men is to join the army to get more opportunities of adventure and a chance to leave the rural lifestyle. Grace seems to imply that some Mâori warriors willingly went for warfare, but in the process, they lost their identity.

" Off I ran, out of the iron gates and away to war"(17), says Tu who wanted to join as a Mâori soldier in the war. Tu made his identity known by enlisting in the Mâori Battalion. The main reason he enlisted in the war is to escape from his school because according to him school is only a prison. And as a seventeen year old boy who runs in the school boy races, all he wanted was to become a soldier. He had found his whânau(family) here in the battlefield. He aspired to get respect and establish his worth among them. Identity has both literal representations and metaphorical representation. Literal representation , such as Rangi's loving nature and carefree character, and metaphorical representation, as in Tu's reference to the 28th Mâori Battalion as his other whânau(family).

Identity themes continue in Grace's *TU*. The identity and the culture of Mâori and Pâkehâ play a prominent role in the novel. Mâori culture is the culture of the Mâori people of New Zealand and it forms an idiosyncratic part of New Zealand culture. The Pakeha culture is mainly derived from the British settlers who colonised New Zealand. Pita felt lost in the city. He had difficulty relating to a Pâkehâ woman who admired him. It is possible that his decision to join the 28th Mâori Battalion could remove him from these issues. Going to war may have been his way of finding out where he belonged. In an altered world he could find his identity, whether he is a Mâori or Pâkehâ. When Tu was in Italy he could perceive affinities between the Maori and Italian cultures which strengthen his sense of belongingness and make him reappraise his own heritage, defining a new direction in his life after his return to home. Characters like Tu and Pita searched for their identity in the war. Tu happened to prove his identity as a Mâori soldier in the battle by surviving the war.

Conclusion

Powerful concepts such as Haka and Manaakitanga in the novel are clearly based on a Mâori perspective relevant to the customs and perceptions of the people. Cultural knowledge is the ability to connect an individual with his identity by understanding the essential components of his culture. A sequence of events leads to the development of cultural identity. A person first learns about a culture by being fully engaged in its norms, values, and practices. Second, based on their position in the community, the individual identifies himself as a part of that culture. Thirdly, people form bonds with neighbours, intimate acquaintances, coworkers, and direct relatives. Understanding oneself and other people's identities is a lifelong process that begins at birth and is influenced by the attitudes and beliefs that are prominent in the community and the home. In *TU*, Patricia Grace, has succeeded in accurately representing her Mâori identity and culture as an essential part of the novel's artistic design and ethos.

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A Marxist's Critique of Marxism: Retracing the Theory and Praxis of Antonio Gramsci

SEETHA VIJAYAKUMAR

Abstract

This paper aims to revisit the theory and praxis of the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci. The legacy of Gramsci is everlasting and his ideas are most relevant than ever. Along with involving in the revision and development of Marxism, he has contributed to some of the finest concepts to understand the syntax of any hegemonic society. Gramsci's chief contribution to Marxism is the idea that the assignment of both cultural as well as intellectual components is decisive for the proletariat or subaltern in its struggle to become a central class in society. This paper tries to understand the most significant elements of Gramsci's philosophy of praxis like 'cultural hegemony' and 'counter-Hegemony' 'subaltern' and 'organic intellectuals' in detail. And in doing so, the paper attempts to explain the contemporary relevance of Gramsci's Marxism

Keywords: Gramsci, Marxism, economic determinism, subaltern, counter hegemony, organic intellectuals

Introduction

Antonio Francesco Gramsci was an Italian Marxist who was imprisoned for 11 years by Benito Mussolini's fascist regime beginning in 1926. He was a knowledgeable political theorist and an active member of the communist party. "We must stop this brain working for twenty years," the prosecutor claimed during Gramsci's trial. Gramsci was a Marxist philosopher and social theorist who, unlike most orthodox Marxist thinkers, felt that economic interests constitute merely "one aspect" of the social system's whole structure. Karl Marx, on the other hand, stated that ideology is a set of beliefs and values that emerges from economic interests. These economic interests are personal, but they also express the ruling class' views, which are forced on other classes and reflected across society. *The Prison Notebooks* is a series of articles created between 1929 and 1935 in a maximum security prison. *The Prison Notebooks*, which contain about 30 notebooks and 3,000 pages of history, are regarded as a very original contribution to sociopolitical thought from the twentieth century.

Gramsci emphasises the topic of praxis, a philosophy that is actively engaged in a culture's political existence, in the *Prison Notebooks*. Hegemony, according to Antonio Gramsci, is the leadership of a group over socially 'inferior' groups on a "cultural, moral, and ideological" level.

He elaborated his concept of hegemony in his *Prison Notebooks*. This concept is considered a critique of what he refers to as "mechanical historical materialism," which is a deterministic economist's understanding of history. But at the same time, he considered the fundamental importance of the economy or economism of Marxism. So as a Marxist his position is to revamp the economic basis of Marxism and lead it to accommodate a significant perspective that otherwise was left out. It is a position that involves both critique and embrace of the finer spirit of Marxism.

Historical Materialism and the Question of Economic Determinism

Historical materialism, a Marxian interpretation of history, is frequently chastised for its massive observations of the economic and material spheres of society. According to Karl Marx, the material conditions of history were shaped by how they changed over time. As a result, history should be examined solely through the conflicts between those in power and those who are subjugated by them. Marxist theory states that society is divided into two parts: the base (or substructure) and the superstructure (or superstructure). The term "superstructure" refers to all other aspects of civilization. The base indicates the productive forces, as well as the resources that enable society to continue functioning. The superstructure of society is made up of people's culture, ideas, and identities. Social institutions, political systems, and the state are also included (or government). The superstructure, or cultural world, comes primarily from the base, or economic realm, according to Karl Marx, and it symbolises the ruling class' aspirations. Marx generally disagrees with the libertarian free will claim, which holds that a human actor is capable of acting and making decisions independently of outside forces. Economic determinism, on the other hand, asserts that economic forces shape, define, and determine all political, social, cultural, and intellectual components of any human civilisation. It prioritises the 'material' over all other ways of comprehending human relationships and conflicts. The bourgeoisie and the proletariat are the two contending economic classes in most societies. Due to their control over wealth, the bourgeoisies have complete power over everything and the proletarians have little or no say in any political or social issues. Marx elevated economics to the forefront of any civilization's shaping forces. As a result, economic determinism claimed that the unique economic structures and interactions in place shaped or influenced society. In *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy's Preface* Karl Marx argued that the broad dynamics of social, political, and intellectual life are influenced by the way that material life is produced. Men's consciousness does not govern their lives; rather, their social environment shapes them.(1977) Historical materialism focuses not on any particular 'individual' or his contribution to the rearing of society but on the material conditions which formulate or make it possible for individuals to behave or react in a certain way.

This historical perspective represents a paradigm shift from standard historical interpretation, and it asserts that "history makes the man" just as much as" man makes history." He proposes a material model of history instead of the earlier ideal

individual paradigm. Two essential tenets of the Marxist historical materialism worldview are economic determinism and dialectical materialism.

According to dialectical materialism, material change is the driving force behind historical development and the source from which the "Ideal" world emerges. According to Marx, the dialectical process inevitably involves material alterations to the economic substructure. This superstructure, which includes production, labour division, and technology, has sway over the political, legal, social, cultural, psychological, and religious facets of human civilization. By focusing on the quantity of material change rather than ideal development, Marx emphasised that human beings are products of general economic conditions, which give the basis for our nourishment, both materially and psychologically. The social implications of the economic substructure are extensive, affecting both those who produce and those who consume it. Marx emphasises that the range of options is already determined by the material conditions of the history of our environment, and that whatever final decision we make from these is influenced in some way by our "bias" towards it, which is engendered by our values, beliefs, and perspectives, all of which are determined by material conditions. Marx does not deny that humans have and can make decisions. Thus, rather than being a purely mechanical perspective on human life, economic determinism is a disciplined approach to comprehend the essential qualifications of possibilities and choices, which questionably shape the basis of history itself. (Estelio Iglesias, 2014)

The Concept of Cultural Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, which exposes the' domination' perpetuated through intellectual or cultural means, is one of his most important contributions. Hegemony was first articulated as a system of class alliance in Gramsci's *Notes on the Southern Question* (1926), in which a" hegemonic class" exerted political leadership over " subaltern classes" by" winning them over." Though Gramsci's translated writings lack a precise definition of cultural hegemony, his often-quoted definition of hegemony as "the 'spontaneous' 'consent' given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the womb" comes closest. (Gramsci, ed. and trans. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith 1971, 12)

Hegemony, or consensual hegemony, is defined by Gramsci as a situation in which a core class controls the political, intellectual, and moral spheres of society within a hegemonic framework that is based on a common worldview or "organic ideology." This role requires putting into practise a process of intellectual and moral reform that "transforms" the prior ideological environment and "redefines" hegemonic institutions and structures on an ethical, political, and economic level. This shift and redefinition is accomplished by re-articulating ideological ideas into a new worldview, which then serves as the unifying foundation for a new "collective will." Indeed, this new world view, which combines classes into a new

hegemonic bloc, is the new organic ideology of the new hegemonic class and system. (Ramos. Jr, 1982)

Political society and civil society were the two pillars of Karl Marx's superstructure. The school system, the media, and the church all support the cultural hegemony. The mechanisms that help to establish cultural hegemony are referred to as civil society. Political society refers to the organized/ repressive/ visible force of society, such as the police and military, whereas civil society refers to the consensus-building elements that support cultural hegemony, such as the church, media, and educational system. Hegemony is achieved through social institutions rather than through the use of force or the exercise of authority. Those in power exercise cultural hegemony without resorting to 'force,' yet it has a substantial impact on the values, norms, beliefs, expectations, worldview, and behaviour of the rest of society. These societal cultural or ideological institutions serve as a rudimentary foundation that socialises people into the dominant social group's standards, values, and beliefs. What's more remarkable is how 'peaceful' ideological and cultural tactics are used to sustain this 'hegemony.' As a result, Gramsci concluded that the domination of capitalism was about more than the class structure and the exploitation of workers.

Who is a Subaltern?

The first time Gramsci brought up the idea of the subaltern was in his essay "Notes on Italian History," which later appeared in his best-known book, *Prison Notebooks*, which was written between 1929 and 1935. Gramsci used the term "subaltern classes" to describe any "low rank" individual or group of individuals in a society who are subject to the hegemony of a ruling elite class and are thus denied the fundamental right to actively participate in the development of local history and culture. The only groups Gramsci had in mind at the time were the workers and peasants who were victimised and discriminated against by Benito Mussolini, the head of the National Fascist Party, and his agents. Gramsci developed an interest in the study of subaltern consciousness and culture as a means of amplifying their voices rather than relying on the state's historical narrative, which is ultimately the history of the ruling and dominant classes. In this work, Gramsci envisions putting into practise the fact that is justified as follows: "The subaltern classes by definition are not unified and cannot unite until they can become a "State": their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society and thereby with the history of States and groups of States". (Gramsci, 1971)

Due to their adherence to the authority of the ruling groups, even when they disobeyed the established order, Gramsci argues that the history of the subaltern groups lacks any discernible unity and appears to be in its episodic fullness. Because of this terrible state of affairs, they have no access to the tools they could use to restrict and manage their representation, and as a result, they have no access to the social and cultural institutions of their state. Despite the fact that it takes a long time, Gramsci argued that the only way to obtain liberation was through a "permanent" triumph, which implies the abolition of the master/slave pattern. This disintegration will occur within Gramsci's theoretical framework,

with non-elite groups' subordinated consciousness being liberated from the ruling class's cultural hegemony. Gramsci set himself apart from earlier Marxist thinkers who firmly predicted the extinction of the peasantry in the face of the class-conscious proletariat generated by the post-industrial capitalism's conditions. By proposing unique and ground-breaking theories regarding the crucial role of the peasantry as a distinct category within the subaltern division, Gramsci distinguished himself from earlier founders of the Marxist school.

Counter Hegemony and the Role of Organic Intellectuals

Antonio Gramsci (1995) coined the term "counter-hegemony" to describe how people produce ideas and speech to undermine hegemony's prevailing assumptions, beliefs, and established patterns of behaviour. The process of questioning the existing quo and the normative order of political and economic relations, with the ultimate objective of establishing human liberty, is known as counter-hegemony. The involvement of organic intellectuals, national-popular leaders, and organisers from the ranks of the subaltern groups who attempt to disrupt the status quo by presenting alternative ways of perceiving the world is a vital component in the process of counter-hegemony. (Aronowitz, 2009)

The function of intellectuals in society is also crucial. The goal was to turn philosophy into "critical consciousness," both in its specialised form as academia and in its daily form (Gramsci 1967, 58). Not just professors and artists, or "organisers of culture," but also authority with "technical" or "directive" functions in society are included in Gramsci's description of "intellectuals." He has received a lot of praise—and rightfully so—for significantly contributing to the Marxist understanding of the role of intellectuals. Traditional and organic intellectuals were the two categories of intellectuals that Gramsci distinguished. The first group was what he referred to as the "traditional intellectuals"; historically, these were thought to be thinkers who were connected to one mode of production and needed to be assimilated by thinkers who were connected to a rising class and a new style of production. As a result, feudal intellectuals (clerics, scholars, and artists) had to be integrated and re-functioned in accordance with the new practises and needs of the capitalist mode of production. (Gramsci 1998, 10-11) Traditional intellectuals are people who have connections to history and earlier thinkers; they are less directly linked to their society's economic structure and, in reality, perceive themselves as having no social class foundation and adhering to no particular political vocabulary or class discourse. Organic intellectuals, on the other hand, are more closely linked to their society's economic structure since "any social organisation that emerges in the accomplishment of an essential job of economic production" produces its organic intellectual. "In the economic field, as well as on the social and political levels," the organic intellectual "gives his class homogeneity and consciousness of its purpose." (Cammett, 1967)

The major roles of organic intellectuals are:-

1. Promote unity within his class and knowledge of its economic, social, and political responsibilities.

2. To create and spread organic ideology; to create a "system of solidarity" that will endure as long as the progressive class remains "progressive."

3. To gain consent, they primarily aim to change and influence culture, morals, and political goals. Political parties, famous magazines, public relations, advertising, and possibly even think tanks used to be places where organic thinkers could be found.

4. Assimilation of the traditional intellectuals' positional conflict.

5. A mixture of technical work (skilled worker) and technical science (humanities); will lead to the working class developing higher consciousness.

Conclusion- Is Gramsci Relevant today?

Antonio Gramsci proposed a humanistic notion of Marxism that transcends traditional materialism. T. J. Jackson Lears makes it clear:- Gramsci's work has almost always been described as an attempt to soften the rigidities of orthodox Marxism. Although the characterization is fair, it gives the idea that Gramsci's work is exclusively of interest to self-described Marxist academics. Historians from a range of intellectual backgrounds can be inspired by Gramsci to think in new ways. The concept of cultural hegemony can help intellectual historians understand how ideas reinforce or undermine existing social structures, as well as social historians reconcile the apparent contradiction between dominant groups' power and the relative cultural autonomy of the subordinate groups they victimise by clarifying the political functions of cultural symbols. So, in addition to reviving the Marxist tradition, Gramsci's work offers a theoretical framework and vocabulary for comprehending the historiographical issues that have materialised with particular vigour in the previous fifteen years. (569) Gramsci's idea of fascism resonates deeply with the contemporary times when far-right parties are rising in many parts of the world through democratic means and are on a mission to remould societies. This radical turn of history was unexpected at the beginning of the century. Western thinkers had long predicted the death of fascism and communism and celebrated the triumph of liberal democracy.

There are parallels with Gramsci's Italy. In the early 1920s, when fascists were rising, Gramsci found it a superstructure problem. The liberal democratic centrists were still active in Italy. The communists and socialists had popular and cadre support. Moreover, the Turin factory council movement was not overpowered. So Gramsci thought that fascism would ultimately be defeated and proletarian politics would triumph as liberals thought of liberal democracy at the turn of the 20th century. But Gramsci's views would evolve after the fascists took over Italy and imprisoned him. Most of his writings were done during his decade-long imprisonment. In those writings, Gramsci assesses fascism as a mass movement that can revolutionise society through"war attrition". It is a long process.

Gramsci's idea of fascism has three key components—Caesarism, war of attrition, and passive revolution. Caesarism means the ability of dormant political ideology to make a political intervention emphatically and attain hegemony. This can be seen in the case of

contemporary India where Hindutva which was seen as an extremist ideology throughout the first four decades of independent India became the hegemonic political idea of today. But fascism would want to elevate this hegemony to domination, which means existing institutions would be subverted. This is a long process, which Gramsci calls the 'war of attrition. Again, the contemporary discussions on the ruling parties capturing institutions in countries such as India, Turkey, and Hungary can be seen as examples of war attrition. Thirdly, this Caesarism and war of attrition could lead to a passive revolution where societies could be remoulded. "Fascism is a movement that the bourgeoisie imagined should be a simple "instrument" of reaction in its hands," Gramsci concluded, "but once summoned up and released, it is worse than the devil, no longer allowing itself to be controlled." The way to counter the rise of fascism is to build counter-hegemony to fascism's hegemony and stop the fascists from attaining domination. To conclude, Gramsci's contribution to Marxist theory is manifold; with concepts such as "subaltern," "organic intellectuals," "cultural hegemony," etc. Antonio Gramsci gave Marxist theory a new theoretical basis. Most crucially, new ideas have given Marxism greater credibility and significance in today's capitalist-fascist world.

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Literature of Commitment and Activism: Locating Arundhati Roy in the Context of Globalization

DENNY JOSEPH

Abstract

Arundhati Roy, who has authored two novels, a few screenplays and a number of essays, is a representative figure in the genre of the literature of activism and commitment. Commitment is perceived as an idea/l that is antithetical to the spirit (if any) of postmodernity which coexists with, and is a characteristic of, postcolonial period. Further, postmodernity is fostered by globalization. Roy, as an author and an activist, is a 'committed postmodern,' and a contradiction of this kind is integral to Roy's works. This paper attempts to address what qualifies Roy both as a postcolonial and as a postmodern in terms of her commitment to society and activism in the backdrop of globalization.

Keywords: activism, commitment, globalization, postcoloniality, postmodernity

To zoom in on Roy's commitment and activism, it is imperative to briefly explore the contexts of her writings which are largely defined by postmodernity, post colonialism and globalization. This exploration can serve as a springboard that can launch this critical enquiry into Roy's world of activism and commitment. Though there is no unanimity regarding the perspectives on globalization, postmodernity and postcolonialism among theorists and social thinkers, representative viewpoints maybe discussed here for the purpose of locating Roy.

Globalization has been accepted as an indomitable reality, and McNamee says: "Globalization is the environment in which we live. We've got one world. Get used to it. Make most of it. Debating globalization? It's like asking the fish to debate the merits of living in the sea" (qtd. in Gopinath 8). Activists round the world have developed a new sensibility whereby they integrate the sense of commitment and activism in spite of the all-engulfing dimensions of globalization and Roy is a prominent figure among them. *The Human Development Report* of the United Nation's Development Programme (UNDP) clearly unveils the darker side of globalization:

> Globalization expands the opportunities for unprecedented human advance for some but shrinks those opportunities for others and erodes human security. It is integrating economy, culture and governance but fragmenting societies. Driven by commercial market forces, globalization in this era seeks to promote economic efficiency, generate growth and yield profits. But it misses out on the goals of equity, poverty eradication and enhanced human security. (qtd. in Doshi 360)

Roy also shares a postcolonial consciousness in her writings. She is involved in the decolonization project like many other postcolonial intellectuals. "Fifty years after independence, India is still struggling with the legacy of colonialism, still flinching from the cultural insult (and ....) we are still caught up in the business of 'disproving' the white world's definition of us," says Arundhati Roy in her *Power Politics* (73-74).

In fiction as well as nonfiction, the margins and their concerns are voiced by Roy, though she may be accused of it in the light of the politics of representation. Hers is an uninhibited voice raised against all sorts of oppression and marginalization of the rural poor in the name of development and progress. Roy's activism is not confined to literary techniques or thematic choices of her fiction. The clarity of her observations is noticeable in her interviews where Roy, in her characteristically fiery style, explores the world we inhabit with passion and conviction and reveals the terrible imbalances and injustices that have gripped the world. She analyses the challenges of democracy, examines the exploitation the 'third world' undergoes in the present global scenario and the war on terror, and expresses optimism regarding resistance movements growing round the world. In the fourteen interviews with Roy by seven interviewers that span from 2001 to 2008, compiled in *The Shape of the Beast* she talks extensively about various issues such as the unjust stance of the Supreme Court of India in terms of issues of rehabilitation of people affected by dams like Sardar Sarovar, the menace of American imperialism, Maoist insurgency, Narmada Bachao Andolan and Kashmir.

The conversations, covering almost a decade, bring out the evolution and growth of Roy's political and literary activism. She succeeds in breaking many illusions that most of us take for granted. Questioned about her passion for social issues she answers:

> When people try to dismiss the big public question as being emotional, it is a strategy to avoid debate. Why should we be scared of being angry? Why should we be scared of our feelings, if they are based on facts? The whole framework of reason versus passion is ridiculous, because often passion is based on reason. Passion is not always unreasonable. Anger is based on reason. They're not two different things. I feel it's very important to defend that. To defend the space for feelings, for emotions, for passion. (98)

Roy believes it when she says that "Even in the most uneventful of our lives, we are called upon to choose our battles…" (*The Ministry* 28). She cannot dissociate herself from battling injustice. Originality and novelty are not her claims and she is not ashamed of it, because her mission is different. In an interview with David Barsamian, she answers Ramachandra Guha's criticism that she is 'unoriginal,' reading from her "End of Imagination":

> There can be nothing more humiliating for a writer of fiction to have to do than to re-state a case that has, over the years, already been made by other people… and made passionately, eloquently and knowledgeably. But I am prepared to grovel. To humiliate myself abjectly, because in the circumstances, silence would be indefensible… (*The Shape* 18)

What one should admire is her willingness to humble herself for a cause, in an age when many public intellectuals are mere initial enthusiasts who go after novelty to prove their

critical acumen. Roy takes upon herself the task of getting answers to the queries she has raised. Roy raises her voice against the tendency of intellectuals to compartmentalize 'specialized knowledge' and keep it out of public gaze. She states that it is pointless to talk 'truth to power,' because power knows the truth very much. What intellectuals should do is to talk truth to the public and make them realize what is happening to them, because "power knows the truth just as well, if not better, than the powerless know the truth" (76). Roy agrees with Barsamian that any sense of commitment has become unfashionable with many contemporary intellectuals that they no more hold any ideas but only 'notions' and that there are no talks but only 'discourses' (108).

She also questions governments keeping their contracts with multinationals as secret documents. No government has the power to make binding decisions on the public without its consent. In policy making and project designing, the people who are affected by them are not consulted. A major reason she proposes is caste. She details that more than 60 percent of the people displaced by dams are the Dalits and adivasis, whereas adivasis account for only 8 percent and Dalits about 15 percent of our population (6). This is denial of democracy. She demands transparency in government businesses, and accuses that even Left political parties, when they come to power, evince Rightist tendencies (48).

She lashes at the academic dishonesty of excluding the use of the first person in writings. Roy justifies her insistence on the use of the first person in her criticisms and comments, saying that she scorns the idea of 'representation.' She is not speaking on behalf of anybody but airs her views and ideas as a responsible person. This sense of responsibility is something that Roy frequently refers to as the motivation for her social criticism and political activism. She holds the view that everyone is in one way or other responsible for all the occurrences in the world: "There's no innocence and there isn't any sense in which any of us is perfect or not invested in the system. If I put money in a bank it's going to fund the bombs and the dams. When I pay tax, I'm investing in projects I disagree with. I am not a completely blameless person campaigning for the good of mankind" (49).

But many of her questions are worth pondering. She wonders if nonviolent means of protests are not heeded, then how one could blame the Maoists or Naxalites. About hunger strikes she says: "I've always felt that it's ironic that hunger strikes are used as a political weapon in a land where most people go hungry anyway" (222). The book also provides us with a glimpse into the private life of Roy. Political writing is no easy task, and she is anxious like any other writer.

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak says: "The subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with "woman" as a pious item. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual has a circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish" (308). Roy upholds this moral duty of the activists and draws the world's attention to the oppressed voices in society. Roy foresees the need for a revolution, and that is why she avers in her *God of Small Things* that "Things can change in a day"

(164, 192,202). But the revolution required to transform society is not an easy affair. "Revolution is not a dinner party. Revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence, in which one class overthrows another" (280).

Roy is a postmodern in her fictional techniques but more of a postcolonial in her essays. It does not mean that the two cannot go together. They do work together, but there are certain areas wherein they reveal contradictory tendencies, though both these sensibilities were fostered and cherished by the same life situations and historical events. Postmodernism, as Jean Francois Lyotard comments, evinces a distrust of meta-narratives. It renounces essentialism and is totally against generalizing claims. It harbors no trust that any particular ideology or value system can be better than the others or can better the lot of the society. It even disqualifies the power of nations as agents of containment, value systems, political ideologies, religious doctrines etc. It is difficult to be committed to a cause and dedicate one's energy and time for it when the entity at fault is a national government or a wealthy multinational which can deploy all its oppressive machinery against the criticizer, and it is this social scenario that makes Roy's case significant.

There is no disparity in terms of her views and concerns in her fiction and non-fiction. Actually her non-fictions take forward the issues already brought out by her fictions more powerfully. Her commitment to the distressed and the downtrodden remain the same, and her voice is as shrill as it ever was in her fictions. For her "fiction and nonfiction are only different techniques of storytelling" (*The Ordinary Person's Guide* 3). In other words, Roy's activism is no less in her fiction and she deserves to be called an activist for that too. She makes it clearer:

> I don't see a great difference between *The God of Small Things* and my nonfiction. In fact, I keep saying, fiction is the truest thing there ever was. Today's world of specialization is bizarre. Specialists and experts end up serving the links between things, isolating them, actually creating barriers that prevent ordinary people from understanding what's happening to them. I try to do the opposite: to create links, to join the dots, to tell politics like a story, to communicate it, to make it real (*The Checkbook* 10).

Roy wonders in her *Power Politics*:

> Why am I called a 'writer activist' and why – even when it's used approvingly, admiringly-does that term make me flinch? I am called a writer-activist because after writing *The God of Small Things* I wrote three political essays: 'The End of Imagination', about India's nuclear tests, 'The Greater Common Good', about Bog Dams and the 'development' debate, and 'Power Politics: The Reincarnation of Rumpelstiltskin', about the privatization and corporatization of essential infrastructure like water and electricity.… Now, I've been wondering why it should be that the person who wrote The *God of Small Things* is called a writer, and the person who wrote the political essays is called an activist? (10-11).

Roy's activism has raised many eyebrows and criticisms were galore. There are many writers and activists taking side in favour of her activism and against it. Anil Nair, Ramachandra

Guha, B. G. Verghese and others. belong to the latter group. Nair believes that a writer of fiction should contain one's exercises to the world of literature alone, and Guha feels that Roy actually is not qualified enough to take up such tasks. The multiple identities a single human subject shares seems to be a sign of indiscipline for Anil Nair. For him, a writer should only write; activism is not the writer's forte. Therefore, he vehemently criticizes Roy for being a 'writer-activist'. He conveniently forgets great writer-activists like Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, EMS and the other familiar figures in the category who did not differentiate between their activism and commitment. Actually Anil Nair's problem is not Roy being a writer and activist. It is that Roy is a writer of fiction and at the same time a committed activist. His discontent springs from the basic belief that writing about something and responding to it outside the medium of writing is unbecoming of writers, which is an essentialist principle that postmodernity cannot but challenge. In a review of Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* made for *The Hindu*, Tabish Khair suspects Roy's political goals, and cautions that the "unwary reader" may be "swept into a pre-determined location" (par. 12). There is nothing surprising in the observation as for Roy, fiction is just another extension of her activism. In *Power Politics* Roy writes:

> In circumstances like these, the term 'writer-activist' as a professional description makes me flinch doubly. First, because it is strategically positioned to diminish both writers and activists. It seeks to reduce the scope, the range, the sweep of what a writer can be... And conversely, it suggests that the activist occupies the coarser, cruder end of intellectual spectrum... But the more fundamental problem I have with the term is that professionalizing the whole business of protest, putting a label on it, has the effect of containing the problem and suggesting that it's up to the professionals- activists and writer-activists to deal with... One is involved because one is a human being. Writing about just happens to be the most effective thing I can do (23-24).

Roy is postmodern in her techniques in *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, and is closer to the postcolonial sensibility in her course of activism. Postcolonialism is always conscious of the binary divide that still underlies the discourses of power in the everyday events of the world. The East-West polarization is a predominant concern for postcolonial theory. Roy evinces postcolonial sensibility in her opposition towards the US playing the super cop among the world nations and its assuming power to intervene in any geographical territory to serve its own interests. Her comments during an interview with David Barsamian is interesting:

> David Barsamian: There's a lot of talk about terrorism. In fact it has become almost an obsession for the media in the United States. But there's a very narrow definition of terrorism.
>
> Roy: yes. It completely ignores the economic terrorism unleashed by neoliberalism, which devastates the lives of millions of people, depriving them of water, food, electricity. Denying them medicine. Denying them education. Terrorism is the logical extension of this business of the free market. Terrorism is the privatization of war. Terrorists are the free marketers

of war- people who believe that it isn't only the state that can wage war, but private parties as well. [. . .] Osama Bin Laden and George Bush are both terrorists. They are both building international networks that perpetrate terror and devastate people's lives. Bush with Pentagon, the WTO, the IMF, and the world Bank. Bin Laden with Al Qaeda (*The Checkbook* 74).

In spite of the charges leveled against her for "corrupting public morality" or for having "lowered the dignity of the court", she has only intensified her criticisms of modern day oppressors and their coteries for their atrocities against weaker sections of the society, and has stood up for the right to dissent. Her objective is the globalization of dissent. Roy's activism is equally powerful both in writing and in strike-fronts. Through her interventions she has proved that the negative values of globalization can be countered if one possesses a clear will and conviction. Roy is in the forefront to question the veracity of the claims of globalization. Literature of commitment is a major genre in world literature, but it is on the wane with the advent of globalization and postmodern sensibilities. Roy's interventions in society through her writings and activism prove that it is not impossible to be committed to a social cause these days though it is difficult.

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Exploring Cultural Phenomenology in Ruskin Bond's *The Kitemaker*

JESTILA MATHEW & S.J. KALA

Jestila Mathew

Abstract

Cultural phenomenology is a combination of the elements of phenomenology and cultural studies which helps in understanding how individuals, experience and make sense of a cultural phenomenon. It highlights the first-person perspective of experience, to analyse how culture shapes and influences the human lived experiences. This research paper traces the cultural elements with reference to Ruskin Bond's "The Kitemaker" that shapes and moulds the characters' lived experiences. The objective of the study is to unveil the influences of cultural elements on people's perception, identity formation and social dynamics of everyday experiences through the story.

Keywords: cultural phenomenology, lived experience, identity formation, cultural context

Phenomenology originated as a movement in philosophy during nineteenth century. It mainly deals with the essences of objects, or phenomena as reflected in the human consciousness. It can also be defined as the study of structures of conscious experience from the first-person perspective. Phenomenology acknowledges the way people understand and make sense of the outside world which is influenced by subjective experiences. It highlights the value of the lived experience and the reality that awareness is always located within a particular context that is impacted by cultural, historical, and personal variables. Though the concept of phenomenology came into being and developed through the contributions of several key philosophers. According to Dermot Moran, an Irish Philosopher, "Edmund Husserl is considered as the father of phenomenology" (Moran 60). Husserl presented "an organised and rigorous science of philosophy" (Farber 22), says Marvin Farber, an American philosopher for studying consciousness and experience.

Robert Sokolowski, an American Philosopher opines that, "Consciousness is essentially consciousness "of" something or other" (9). He notes that consciousness is fundamentally, the awareness that is directed towards an object, experience, or concept, inherently characterised by its intentional nature. Phenomenology in the later years continued to evolve and adapt to contemporary contexts and phenomenological insights are applied in various fields of studies including, sociology, cognitive science, and culture.

Cultural phenomenology built upon the foundational principles of phenomenology, incorporating a cultural lens to analyse the complexities of human experiences within specific

cultural contexts. It thereby studies, the cultural factors significantly shape individuals' perception, interpretation, and engagement with the world. While phenomenology generally aims to uncover the universal structures of consciousness, cultural phenomenology underlines that experiences are also culturally embedded. A noted American philosopher, Lester Embree, opines that "cultural life and cultural practices always concretely include types of awareness, such as perception, recollection and representational awareness, but they also concretely include positionality of all three already mentioned…." (Embree 17). He states that cultural phenomenology emphasises on the intrinsic intertwining of awareness with the individual's positionality within the broader cultural context.

S.J. Kala

Phenomenology plays a vibrant role in literature. Literature and phenomenology are both concerned about describing basic human experience and becomes the source of all meaning in the lived experiences. An experience may be delightful in right away, despite the fact that every encounter may be dynamic, vivid, and fascinating. People adopt different ways of relating their personal experiences with that of the others. The various elements that influence human experiences are also reflected in literature. Literature, in its many forms, serves as a means of capturing and conveying human experiences, reflecting the complexity and diversity of one's lived realities. Literature, be it a work of fiction, poetry, or non-fiction, has the power to explore and illuminate the diverse range of human experiences, providing readers with insights from different perspectives. Neeta Audichya, professor, Carrer Point University, India, writes that "the impact of Indian culture on Indian Literature can be seen in various forms, including poetry, drama and prose. Indian literature is a reflection of the country's cultural diversity and it is a testament to the richness and vibrancy of Indian culture" (1252). Cultural phenomenology in literature examines how cultural experiences and perceptions shape and are reflected in literary works, highlighting the deep connection between cultural contexts and literary expression.

Indian literary writers have significantly enriched literature by chronicling and imparting their diverse experiences through their prolific contributions. Some of the well-known and celebrated authors included R.K Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Anita Desai, Khushwant Singh and Ruskin Bond. Their literary contributions played a pivotal role in illuminating and capturing the diverse aspects of human experiences. Ruskin Bond, a renowned writer, is considered to be a living icon of writing among Indian literary writers. His novels and short stories which are deeply rooted in his personal experiences and observations have created a delightful world which has captivated the readers of all the time. Bond has authored over 500 short stories, essays and novels, and more than 50 books for children. Besides, Bond has penned more than a hundred books in his literary career. Some of the famous books are *The Blue Umbrella*, *A Flight of Pigeons*, *The Room on the Roof*, *A handful of Nuts*, and *Rusty the Boy from the Hills*.

In 1992, Ruskin received the Sahitya Akademi Award for his literary contributions to India, especially for his collection of short stories, *Our Trees still Grow in Dehra*. He has

also received the PadmaShri Award, India's fourth highest civilian honour in 1999 for his contribution to Children's Literature. Later in 2014 he was conferred Padma Bhushan, the third highest Civilian Award. His contribution to literature still continues with his latest publication of *Growing up with Ghosts* in 2018. "The Kitemaker" is regarded as one of Ruskin Bond's notable and productive works.

"The Kitemaker" by Ruskin Bond, is a poignant exploration of the protagonist's intricate connection with cultural practices and the vivid experiences of rural Indian life. The narrative explores into the protagonist's embodied experiences as a skilled kitemaker, highlighting his concrete engagement with materials, tools, and the art of crafting intricate kites. As the protagonist navigates the detailed social dynamics during the annual kite-flying festival, cultural norms become intense, shaping the characters' interactions and fostering a sense of communal unity. The story highlights the interaction between individual subjectivity and the broader cultural influences that define the protagonist's identity and experiences. The narrative captures the intergenerational transmission of cultural values, as the protagonist imparts the art of kitemaking to his grandson, reinforcing the continuity of tradition. The rural Indian setting, the symbolic significance of kite-making, and characters' interactions represent the cultural phenomena in Kitemaker.

An American sociologist, Ann Swidler expresses that "culture provides resources for constructing organized strategies of action. Particular cultural resources can be integrated, however into quite different strategies of action" (281). In cultural phenomenology, the diverse display of cultural resources available to individuals enable the construction of varied strategies of action, illustrating how specific cultural elements can be assimilated into distinct approaches for interpreting the world. Dietmar Gorlitz, a Belgium psychologist opines that "culture is generally defined a human made environment" (Gorlitz 263) which comprises material and non-material products that are transmitted from one generation to the next. The crucial core of culture lies in the finer ideas, which are transmitted within a group. Objects such as artworks, handicrafts, diets, clothing, resources and equipment are regarded as important factors that put emphasis upon the culture. "The Kitemaker" deals the handicraft work of a group that are kitemaking. The research on Cultural Phenomenology in "Kitemaker" seeks to unravel the individual subjectivity of human experiences and broader cultural influences. The primary objectives encompass a comprehensive exploration of how cultural factors shape characters' perceptions, behaviours, and experiences in the rural Indian context depicted in the story.

The article probes into the cultural factors, including, cultural context, cultural norms and values, cultural traditions, symbols and rituals, language and communication, environmental influences, and there by cultural identity unearths that is embedded in the narrative. These factors serve as a universal and foundational influence on characters' lived experiences. Furthermore, the research endeavours to illuminate the role of cultural identity in shaping characters' lives, with a particular focus on how individuals negotiate a sense of self within the cultural framework presented by Ruskin Bond.

As cultural phenomenology acknowledges the diversity of human experiences across different societies, histories, and worldviews. It also allows people to explore how their cultural beliefs, practices, and identities shape them. Moreover, cultural context enriches phenomenological inquiry by highlighting the interconnectedness between individuals and their socio-cultural environments, offering insights into the complex interaction between subjective experiences and broader societal influences.

"The Kitemaker" is set in an Indian cultural setting, and the cultural context provides the backdrop against which the characters live. In the story, the protagonist, the kite maker, operates within the context of an Indian community, where cultural norms and practices influence his identity and interactions with others. The kitemaker has been a renowned person before the independence period. Later, in the post-independence period, he lost his job and so his life also stooped down. The scene, where the boy runs along through cobblestoned path to his grandfather in a back courtyard, reflects the cultural context of the setting, that is an unknown, interior village. The use of cobbled stones and the back courtyard suggest a traditional architectural style common in pre-independent India.

Socio-cultural norms have greater influence in shaping the structure of the society. In the "Kitemaker", Bond recounts the strong bond between the nawabs and talented artisans, through the kitemaker's reminiscences. The cultural practice of appreciating, praising, rewarding and patronising good artists, poets and artisans, made art and life go hand in hand with happiness filled in every one's lives. On the other hand, when the system of nawabs destroyed after independence, the taste for art declined as the nawabs themselves became penniless and were not able to patronise the artisans. This gradually led to the decline of art and artists lost their livelihood and lived a mechanical life. Moreover, art united the people together. This is represented through the kitemaker's words. "Everyone had heard of the 'Dragon Kite' that Mehmood had built, and word went round that it possessed supernatural powers" (Bond 121). The gathering of a large crowd to witness the first public launching of the 'Dragon Kite' in the presence of the nawab reflects the unity of the community where the story is set. The presence of the nawab reflects how with patronising art thrived, specially making and flying kites.

Cultural norms and values serve as the next foundational elements in cultural phenomenology, influencing how individuals perceive, interpret, and derive meaning from the lived experiences. These shared expectations and collective beliefs guide individuals in shaping their identities, constructing social interactions, and defining the significance of events within their cultural context. Tom A steffen, a Professor of Intercultural studies at Biola University, California addresses that "The framing symbols and stories in one's social environment, for better or for worse, define personality within the broader communal context. They help socialise an individual by enabling expression of thoughts, feelings, and intentions through culturally – shared symbols and patterns of shared thought" (478). He states that cultural norms and symbols, embedded within one's cultural and social environment, not only shape personality within the broader communal context but also serve as foundational

tools for individuals to express their thoughts, feelings, and intentions through shared patterns of thought and culturally significant symbols.

The exploration of cultural phenomenology involves a deep examination of how individuals navigate their worlds based on in-built norms and values, shedding light on the intricate relationship between cultural elements and the subjective interpretations of lived experiences. The kitemaker in the story is an example of subjective interpretation. Being a witness to the pre- and post-independent periods of India, he interprets the life of people then and now. He juxtaposes that in the post independent period people were stuck in an industrial environment, where they did not have time to enjoy or look at anything aesthetically. They rather stamped over the aesthetic things and thereby their happiness also diminished. This is demonstrated in the story as "there was time, then, to spend an idle hour with a gay, dancing strip of paper. Now everyone hurried, in a heat of hope, and delicate things like kites and daydreams were trampled underfoot" (Bond 120). The mention of a time when people had leisure to spend on "an idle hour with a gay, dancing strip of paper" reflects the environment where individuals had the luxury of engaging in simple, pleasurable activities. However, the following statement, refers to the cultural shift where individuals are caught up in an ambitious lifestyle.

In the realm of cultural phenomenology, cultural traditions stand as pillars that uphold the rich tapestry of human experience. These traditions, when passed down through generations, encapsulate the collective wisdom, values, and practices of a society and provides a framework for individuals to navigate and make sense of their world. Embedded within cultural traditions are rituals, ceremonies, myths, and customs that imbue life with meaning and significance, shaping perceptions, behaviours, and interactions. Cultural phenomenologists look at these traditions as not merely static artifacts of the past but living, but as evolving entities that continuously inform and enrich human experiences. They opine that traditions serve as fountains of collective memory, fostering a sense of continuity and belonging while also offering opportunities for creativity, adaptation, and innovation. They also define it as a broader socio-cultural force that illustrates how humans both shape and are shaped by the cultural landscapes they inhabit. Thus, it is observed that cultural traditions emerge as essential threads woven into the fabric of human existence and experience.

The "Kitemaker" touches upon the cultural tradition of kite-making. Cultural phenomenology helps to explore how these traditions become integral to the characters' lived experiences. As the social environment changes, the culture also changes. This is shown through the materials used in kite-making. The contrast in the usage of material indicates the decrease in aestheticism as well as professionalism. The grandson of the kitemaker uses the kite made of cheap paper and it does not fly. Whereas, looking at the sorrowful face of his grandson, the kitemaker, the grandfather, then uses the traditional method of making a kite using bamboo. The kite made with much love, involvement and artistry pleases the grandson. This is expressed as "He had just finished making a new kite from bamboo, paper and thin silk, and it lay in the sun, firming up. It was a pale pink kite, with a small green tail. The old man handed it to Ali, and the boy raised himself on his toes and kissed his grandfather's

hollowed-out cheek" (Bond 119,120). The act of making a new kite from bamboo, paper, and thin silk reflects a cultural tradition associated with kite-making. Kite-flying is another popular tradition in various cultures, and the process of crafting kites from specific materials, such as bamboo and silk, may be deeply rooted in local customs and practices. This act also signifies how passing down the traditional practises can retain and create a positive culture. This incident is also an emotional moment that reflects cultural values and traditions related to family, bonding, and the transmission of skills.

Cultural symbols and rituals serve as powerful channels through which phenomenology, the study of human experience, draws insight. Symbols, ranging from flags to religious icons, and rituals, such as ceremonies and festivals, are laden with cultural meaning and significance. These elements form the fabric of social life, shaping individuals' perceptions, behaviours, and interactions within their cultural context. In phenomenology, cultural symbols and rituals offer windows into the collective consciousness of a society, illuminating shared values, beliefs, and identities.

The exploration of symbolic and ritualistic elements enriches human understanding of the characters' lived experiences within their cultural context. In the story the old man recollects the "… time when grown men flew kites, and great battles were fought, the kites swerving and swooping in the sky, tangling with each other until the string of one was severed. Then the defeated but liberated kite would float away into the blue unknown" (Bond 120). The image of defeated kites floating away into the "blue unknown" after their strings are detached suggests a symbolic representation of freedom and liberation. In cultural contexts where kite-flying is a significant tradition, the act of releasing a kite into the sky can be associated with a sense of liberation and freedom. The kite's journey into the unknown skies becomes a metaphor for breaking free from earthly constraints.

The story also abounds with other symbolic expressions. The various shapes of the kites carry indepth meaning. For example, the dragon kite was considered as a symbol of evil and when it flew in to the sky, people thought the evil surrounding their place was taken away. "Then the wind came from the right direction, and the Dragon Kite soared into the sky, wriggling its way higher and higher, the sun still glinting in its devil eyes" (Bond 121). Symbols and rituals frequently carry emotional significance within a cultural context. In the "Kitemaker" story, the emotions associated with kite-flying, the communal gathering, and the belief in the supernatural powers of the 'Dragon Kite' contribute to the characters' lived experiences.

The musical kite, formed in the shape of a violin is an example of the artistic nature of the people as well as the love between the rich and the poor. The musical kite is also a symbolic representation of happiness as it vibrates with music, that is relished by everyone inspite of their differences. It is reflected in the story as "He presented to the nawab a musical kite, one that made a sound like a violin when it rose into the air" (121). In this passage, the act of presenting a musical kite to the nawab holds cultural symbolism, emphasizing the significance

of craftsmanship and creativity within the context of kite-making. The musical kite, producing a sound akin to a violin, becomes a symbol of artistic innovation and cultural pride. This gesture suggests a blending of traditional craftsmanship with a touch of creativity, reflecting the cultural value placed on skilful artistry. The presentation of such a unique and musical kite to the nawab not only symbolizes the kitemaker's talent but also underscores the cultural importance of artistic expression and the fusion of tradition with innovation in the context of kite-making.

Cultural phenomenology is also concerned with the generational divide and its effects. It is observed that old and young people are always considered as contrast to one another, but cultural phenomenology highlights that both are the same but the external forces shape them in different ways. The comparison of the grandfather and the grandson is reflected in the story as "…Mehmood was like the banyan, his hands gnarled and twisted like the roots of the ancient tree. Ali was like the young mimosa planted at the end of the courtyard. In two years, both he and the tree would acquire the strength and confidence of their early youth" (Bond 123). In this, the author employs cultural symbolism by comparing Mehmood to the banyan tree and Ali to the young mimosa, drawing parallels between the characteristics of the characters and the qualities attributed to these trees within cultural contexts. The banyan, with its gnarled and twisted roots, symbolizes Mehmood's aged and experienced nature, suggesting wisdom and endurance associated with older generations. On the other hand, the young mimosa represents Ali's youthful vitality and the potential for growth and strength. This cultural symbolism serves to convey not only the physical attributes but also the cultural roles and qualities assigned to individuals within the narrative, providing a deep understanding of the characters' identities and their places within the cultural fabric.

Environmental influences play a crucial role in cultural phenomenology by shaping the context within which human experiences unfold. The physical surroundings, including natural landscapes, built environments, and socio-economic conditions, profoundly impact individuals' perceptions, behaviours, and interactions. The environmental influence also provides a lens through which one can explore the dynamic interplay between human agency and the affordances of the physical and social environment, enriching our understanding of the complexities of human existence within the broader context of ecological systems. The examples of the cultural factor of environmental influences, particularly represent the presence of the ancient banyan tree and the reference to the abandoned mosque as, "there was but one tree in the street known as Gali Ram Nath- an ancient banyan that had grown through the cracks of an abandoned mosque- and little Ali's kite was caught in its branches" (Bond 119). The mention of "Gali Ram Nath," an ancient banyan tree, and its growth through the cracks of an abandoned mosque, highlights the environmental characteristics of the street..

The fact that the tree has grown through the cracks of an abandoned mosque adds a layer of historical and cultural significance to the environmental setting. This shows the religious unity of Hindus and Muslims before the independence period. The changes in the buildings and streets of the village pinpoints the mechanical mind set of people. It is reflected

in the words, "moreover, there were not many open spaces left for the flying of kites. The city had swallowed up the open grassland that had stretched from the old fort's walls to the river bank" (Bond 120). These lines not only denote the urbanisation and loss of natural resources but also the narrowmindedness and the lack of mindfulness resources in the people.

Cultural identity serves as a fundamental aspect in phenomenology, offering a lens through which to understand the intricacies of human experience. Rooted in shared customs, beliefs, and values, cultural identity shapes individuals' perceptions, interpretations, and expressions of their lived realities. Cultural Phenomenology seeks to explore subjective experiences as they are situated within the cultural contexts of individuals, acknowledging the profound influence of cultural identity on the construction of meaning and the formation of personal and collective narratives. By examining how cultural identity informs individuals' sense of self, relationships, and existential concerns, researchers gain insights into the diverse ways in which human beings navigate their social and cultural worlds. Moreover, cultural identity provides a framework for understanding the dynamic interaction between individual subjectivity and broader socio-cultural forces, enriching human understanding of the complexities of human existence within diverse cultural landscapes. A German Author, Christian Tewes orates that "culture not only guides our interactions and our access to and interpretations of the world we live in but also changes its material composition" (8). He addresses that cultural identity not only shapes human interactions and perceptions of the world around but also transforms its material fabric, reflecting the dynamic connectedness between cultural influences and material manifestations.

The story, "The Kitemaker" also explores how cultural identity is constructed and expressed, emphasizing the intricate link between the protagonist's sense of self and his cultural background. The protagonist's identity as a kite maker is deeply entwined with his cultural identity. His role in preserving the art of kite-making reflects a personal and cultural legacy as we see in the story, "Mehmood the kitemaker, had in the prime of his life been well known throughout the city. Some of his more elaborate kites once sold for as much as three or four rupees each" (Bond 120). Mehmood's craft is not only a personal skill but also a recognised and valued contribution to the cultural fabric of the city. The price attached to his kites reflects the cultural significance placed on the artistry and craftsmanship of kite-making, elevating Mehmood's identity within the community. The exchange of currency for his kites not only highlights their tangible value but also emphasises the cultural importance assigned to traditional crafts and skilled artisans within the societal framework.

The dialogue between grandfather and the grandson reflects their identity of knowing proper mastery of kite-flying as a valuable skill, as says, "You have yet to learn how to fly a kite properly, my child. And I am too old to teach you, that's the pity of it. But you shall have another" (Bond 119). The acknowledgment of age-related limitations in teaching reinforces the intergenerational transfer of cultural knowledge and the significance placed on traditional practices within the cultural identity of the characters. The contrast between the diminishing popularity of kites among adults and children's preference for cinema reveals a shift in

cultural preferences, highlighting the changing landscape that influences the preservation of traditional practices are evident in the story, "His kite shop was gone, the premises long since sold to a junk dealer, but he still made kites, for his own amusement and for the benefit of his grandson, Ali. Not many people bought kites these days. Adults disdained them, and children preferred to spend their money at the cinema" (Bond 120). The persistence of the old kitemaker in creating kites despite the decline in commercial success underscores the importance of cultural practices and identity, as he continues the traditional craft for personal fulfilment and to pass on the cultural legacy to his grandson.

The exploration of cultural phenomenology in Ruskin Bond's "Kitemaker" sheds light on how cultural factors intricately shape the lived experiences of the characters. The narrative, framed by the cultural context, traditions, and symbols associated with kite-making, reveals the profound impact of cultural norms, values, and shifts on individual perceptions. The characters' interactions with kites, their crafting, and the evolving cultural landscape provide a rich tapestry for understanding the complex interplay between culture and personal experiences. Having delved into cultural phenomenology in "Kitemaker" also opens avenues for further study from historical, psychological, and sociological perspectives.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Anagha E.: Research Scholar at the Centre for Diaspora Studies at Central University of Gujarat. She is a Visiting Faculty at Department of English, Gujarat Vidyapith, Sadra. She did her post-graduation in English and Comparative Literature from Central University of Kerala. Her publications and research areas include Diaspora Literature, Gender, Race and Sexuality in Global Migration, Immigration and Exclusion, Displacement, and Labour Migration and Ethnic Studies.

Amit Kumar Soni: Asstt. Professor, Department of English, Kamala Nehru College, University of Delhi.

Amrita: Department of English, B.P.S Women's University, Sonipat.

Ancy Elezabath John: Assistant professor, Department of English, Christian College, Chengannur, Kerala.

Anej Somaraj: Assosiate Professor, Department of English, Christian College, Chengannur, Kerala.

Anne Placid: Associate Professor, PG Dept of English, Govt College Tripunithura, Kerala.

Bazila Ehsan: Research Scholar in the Department of English at Central University of Kashmir. She hails from the city of Srinagar, Kashmir. She has completed her MPhil in English and is currently pursuing PhD in the field of Gender Studies.

Binu K.D.: Assistant Professor of English in Government Women's College Malappuram, is a research guide in Maharaja's College Ernakulam. His research is on Dalit Studies. He has done a UGC minor research project on the history of Malayalam Dalit Literature and has edited a book on Malayalam Dalit writings. He has published more than a dozen articles in National and International journals.

Chander Mohan: research scholar at Gurukul Kangri Haridwar (Uttarakhand). He completed his M.Phil. degree from Central University Garhwal in 2019.

Chapparban Sajaudeen: Assistant Professor at Centre for Diaspora Studies, Central University of Gujarat. His area of interest includes Contemporary English Literature/s (Diaspora Writings), Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory, Migration, Diaspora, and Refugee Studies.

Denny Joseph: Assistant Professor & Head, PG Department of English, Govt. College Mananthavady, Wayanad, Kerala.

D. Murali Manohar: Professor of English, Department of English, University of Hyderabad. He has published books and research articles in reputed journals in India and abroad. He has 6 full length books and 12 edited books to his credit. His areas of research interest are Indian English Literature, English Language Teaching and Dalit Literature.

G. Vijayarenganayaki: Ph.D. Research Scholar (Full-Time), PG & Research Department of English, National College (Autonomous), affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu.

Jestila Mathew: Research Scholar currently pursuing PhD in English at Fatima College Madurai, affiliated to Madurai Kamraj University. Dr. S. J. Kala is an Associate Professor of English and Dean of Research at Fatima college, Madurai. She is an academician with more than 25 years of teaching experience.

Kanchan: Assistant Professor,Centre for Distance and Online Education, Punjabi University Patiala, Punjab, India.

M. Ramakrishnan: Assistant Professor of Folklore, Dept. of Anthropology & Tribal Studies, Central University of Jharkhand, Cheri-Manatu, Ranchi.

Mahima: Department of English, B.P.S Women's University, Sonipat.

N. Sreekala: Foremerly Professor of English, Sree Narayana College, Chempazhathi, Thiruvananthapuram. A highly acclaimed poet, she has published three books of poems in English.

Prabha Varma: an outstanding and highly acclaimed Malayalam poet and a versatile, bi-lingual literary writer. He has published a dozen volumes of poems including the award winning "Souparnika" and "Shyama Madhavam" (verse novel). He received the Saraswathy Award for 2024 for his narrative poem "Roudra Satwikam". He is also a reputed media person and is presently the Media Avisor to the Chief Minister of Kerala, and Executive Member of the Sahithya Academy.

Prachi Behrani: Ph.D. Scholar, Amity Institute of English Studies and Research, Amity University, Sector 125- Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

S. J. Kala: Associate Professor of English, Fatima College, Madurai, Tamil Nadu..

Sahabuddin Ahamed: Assistant Professor (Guest Faculty) of English at Pandit Sundarlal Sharma (Open) University Chhattisgarh, Bilaspur, India. He obtained his M.A. in English in 2016 and Ph.D in English in 2024 from Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya (A Central University), Chhattisgarh, India. He graduated with honours in English in 2014 from Dumkal College Basantapur affiliated to the University of Kalyani. He was a Guest Lecturer in English at Dumkal College Basantapur, West Bengal. His research areas focus on postcolonial theory, cultural studies, Indian literature in English, and gender studies. He has published more than a dozen academic papers in national and international journals and edited books. He has also published poems in journals, anthologies, and magazines.

Sajaudeen Nijamodeen Chapparban: Assistant Professor in the Centre for Diaspora Studies at the Central University of Gujarat. He is an alumnus of the Centre for Comparative Literature at the University of Hyderabad. Dr. Sajaudeen has also held roles as a visiting research Fellow at the Centre for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Illinois,

Urbana-Champaign, IL, USA (June 2022), and as a Summer Institute fellow at Schusterman Center's Summer Institute fellowship for Israel Studies at Brandeis University, USA (June-July 2022). Presently, he is a Visiting Fellow at the University of Religion and Denomination, Iran. His academic interests extend to contemporary issues concerning international migrants, minorities, refugees, citizenship, and nationalism in South Asia. Additionally, he is actively involved in teaching South Asian History, the History of the Indian, Jewish, and Muslim Diaspora, Comparative Diaspora Studies, Contemporary English Literature, and Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory and Interdisciplinary studies.

Saumya Sharma: Assistant Professor (Linguistics) at the EFL University, Lucknow Campus and has been a guest faculty at IIT Kanpur where she taught Communication Skills and Composition for a year. Her recent publications include *Common Errors in Everyday English* (OUP 2017), *Language, Gender and Ideology*: *Constructions of Femininity for Marriage* (Routledge 2018) and *Discourse and Psychology*: *An Introduction* (Routledge 2020). Her research interests include exploring the discourse, gender and psychology interface in linguistics and literary texts, teaching of vocabulary and critical pedagogy.

Seetha Vijayakumar: Assistant Professor of English at N.S.S College Pandalam, Kerala University. She was awarded a PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi for her doctoral thesis titled Kannagi's Transformations: Silappadikaram's Multilayered Schemata of Performance. She translated Sylvia Plath's Belljar and Pablo Neruda's Love Poems into Malayalam in 2016 and 2022 respectively. Apart from Performance traditions, her research interests include Translation Studies, Literary Theory and Gender Studies.

Shalini Pallavi: Research Scholar, Dept. of Anthropology & Tribal Studies, Central University of Jharkhand, Cheri-Manatu, Ranchi.

Shrawan K. Sharma: Professor of English, Director, Centre for Canadian Studies, Dean, Faculty of Humanities. Aesthetics: Indian and Western. Modern Literature in English (Indian and Canadian) British Poetry Editor: *The Vedic Path*, A Quarterly Journal of Vedic, Indological and Scientific Research. Associate Editor: ANSU Journal of Arts and Humanities (AJHA), a publication of the Faculty of Arts, Anambra State University, Nigeria.

Stancilaus S.: Teaches in the Department of English, FMN College, Kollam. Pursuing Doctoral Research on Postcolonial Theory.

T.S. Ramesh: Associate Professor in English, National College (Autonomous), Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu.

Vinaya Kumari: Professor, Amity Institute of English Studies and Research, Amity University, Sector, 125- Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

Y. Getzie Arathana Mary: Ph.D Scholar (full time), Bishop Appasamy College of Arts and Science, 129 Race Course, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

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Associate Editor Manoj S.
msree50@gmail.com

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