indraprasth

indraprasth

indraprasth

**An International Journal of Culture and
Communication Studies**

Contents

Note from the Editors

Note from the Editors

Life constantly undergoes a process of change – so does literature. Its study must evolve too. The present issue of *Indraprasth* brings novel perspectives and nuanced perspectives to its readers: it represents a wide selection of literary and scholarly articles exploring a variety of disciplines, themes and ideas. The papers here seek new dimensions of looking at literary, social and cultural contexts that shape human lives and narratives. They become examples of how critical engagement with cultural production can not only assist us in comprehending our today(s) but can also help us in raising questions about our tomorrow(s).

Tej. N. Dhar's "Literature and the Aesthetic: From the Greek Age to Modern Age*"* critically examines the significant intersections of literature and aesthetics by focusing on mimesis in Plato-Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, Plotinus, and the mix of Plato-Horace in Sidney. Anmol Sahni in "Postcolonial Gothic: Hybridisation of Genres and the *Dak* Bungalow" discusses the emergence of Postcolonial Gothic as a genre and how it reconfigures the idea of 'monstrosity' within the identity of the colonised other. It traces the motif of the haunted house as it travelled to the Indian subcontinent with the British, and how it became a site for the cultural anxieties of the colonial experience. "Mapping the Feminine Subjectivity in Amrita Pritam's *Once There Was an Anita* and Krishna Sobti's *Damn You, Mitro!*" by Sakshi Sundaram discusses women's marital lives and their personal spaces in terms of freedom of their bodies.

Neeti Singh's "Sainthood, Patriarchy and *Saguna Bhakti* in the Verse of Andal and Mahadevi" examines the semiotics of gender and patriarchy in *Saguna Bhakti* through the works and lives of two South Indian saint poets, Shaiva and Vaishnav. The author also examines how myth, history, cultural and religious practices in a patriarchal society affect the women bhakti poets. "The Culture and Politics of Representation in Mirabai's Poetry" by Kusum Deswal explores the *Vaishnava Bhakti* movement with a focus on Mirabai's poetry. It attempts to highlight the power and control of Mira Bai on her 'self', and how she surmounted the hurdles on the path of her spiritual and mystical journey.

Manali Dogra's "Metaphorical Metamorphosis: A Critical Reading of Select Stories, Poems, and Plays" explores the ideas of non-linearity, irrationality, organic sensibilities of monuments as metaphors of love and empathy in tragic times. It examines the temporary and eternal in the transient world of reality. "The Diasporic Rainbow: An Intersectional Study of Queerness and Diaspora"

by Shivani Bhatt attempts to understand the levels at which nationalities and sexualities intersect through Suniti Namjoshi's *Conversations of Cow* and other poems. It also tries to explore the nexus of transnational, cultural, ethical levels factors that configure vis-à-vis gender, desire and sexuality. Shaival Thakkar's "Rohinton Mistry's Indo-Nostalgia in *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance* as Monochromatic Photographs of Mumbai" attempts to demonstrate the intermingling of cityscapes and characters' perspectives on Mumbai through two novels.

Abhilasha Sawlani in "Negotiating Gender: Women in Bollywood Cinema" examines three Bollywood films — *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, *Astitva*, and *Queen* — in light of Judith Butler's notions of gender as performance, open to continual refashioning. "Post-national, Global, or Local: Literary Cinematic Responses" by Naresh K. Vats examines how globalisation and post-nationalism work in the realities of today. The paper investigates today's cinema (*Newton*, *Hindi Medium*, *Barfi*, *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha, Pad Man)* as experiences of individuals who are struggling with the day-to-day realities under the light of globalisation.

Kirti Sachdeva's "From Othello's Race to Omkara's Caste: A Study of the Conflicting Political Identities in *Omkara*" highlights how a nexus between caste system and party politics plays out in the hinterlands of India, leading to an inversion of the idea of collective identity through various inclusive methods, coalitions and novel ways of flattering popular stereotypes and hierarchies. Shibangi Dash in "Radicalization of Narration in Dalit Fiction: An Analysis of Selected Works" looks into three novels namely, *Kusumabale*, *Hindu* and *Untouchable Spring* to analyse the caste system prevalent in India. Nilanjana Ray's "Writing Resistance, Building Identities: *Persepolis* and *Embroideries"* traces Marjane Satrapi's journey of writing graphic novels. The texts are further analysed in-depth, which enhances the importance and effect of graphic novels in postmodern form. Srishti Sharma in "Women as Warp and Weft of Painting through Time: A Select Study of 'Fallen Woman' Across Translational Space" presents visual-arts from 19th century and songs by Bob Marley, Bob Dylan and John Lennon using ekphrasis as a technique.

Mandavi Choudhary's "Godna and Modern Tattoo: A Transitional Narrative" studies the tradition of body art, referred to as the practice of *godna* in the particular cultural context of Mithila. Akansha Shukla's "Home and the Inner Lives of Homemakers: A Study of Women Protagonists in Select Indian English Novels" focuses on the women in Indian households through the analysis

of select Indian English novels like Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*, Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain*, and Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli*. Adiba Faiyaz's "Rethinking Relationships in the Fictional Retellings of the *Mahabharata*" takes two modern day retellings of the epic, namely, Chitra Banerjee's Devakaruni's *Palace of Illusions* and Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi". The paper scrutinizes Divakaruni's attempt to provide a feminist retelling of the epic through the point of view of Draupadi and contrasts this with the Draupadi in the text by Mahasweta Devi. Prerena Kush and Rekha's "Sita and Exile: Revisiting Ramayana in Devdutt Patnaik's *Sita: An Illustrated Retellings of the Ramayana*" traces the pattern of journey which Sita undergoes in her exile to different places. It tries to look into the transition that Sita experiences during these multiple exiles and asks if this leads to any psychological, intellectual or emotional displacement for her.

"Myth-Making and the Holy Orders: An Appraisal of the Power of Homiletics and Hermeneutics of Sacred Texts" by Obinna Ibezim looks into the myths and the myth-making process adopted by the preachers and teachers of different religions through the two activities of Hermeneutics and Homiletics. It analyses how these two processes work in the modern times to reshape the worldview through the works of Wole Soyenka, Salman Rushdie, J.R.R. Tolkein and others. "Worlds Apart: Myth, Science and Fiction in Sukanya Datta's Short Stories" by Sami Ahmad Khan delves into how Indian Science Fiction, despite being contoured by the epistemic framework(s) of science and literature, not only evolves unique strategies of engagement with mythology and folklore, but also negotiates with different kinds of scientific traditions and knowledge(s) – whether 'indigenous' or 'Western'. Mahim Sharma's "Turbulent Flow: Chaos as a Narrative Technique" elucidates 'Turbulence Flow' and 'Chaos Theory' as a narrative technique. He illuminates the emphasis of Chaos on the 'organicity of experience' and ponders upon the thought of stability and instability of variables in a narrative.

Jaishree Kapur's "Between Hammer and Pen: Variegated Hues of Gurdial Singh in his Autobiography *Kya Janu Mai Kaun*" sketches the multifaceted personality of the writer Gurdial Singh. Through the autobiography, the reader gets a glimpse of how the experiences in the writer's life and his own view of the socio-cultural phenomenon around him provided inspiration for his writing. Chetna Nassa's "Tailing the Tales of Love: Reading Rendition as an Extension of Imagery in the Select Compositions of S.D. Burman" traces the journey of poet and songwriter S. D. Burman. Through the analysis of his life as well as his poems and songs, the paper tries to arrive at what makes Burman Da's

music so universal and appealing. Hiba Ahmed's "The Curious Case of Indian Muslim: Accessing Significance of Physical Spaces in the (re)Definition of Identity" looks into the condition of contemporary Indian Muslims and their history post Babri Masjid demolition. It talks about how events led to the redefinition of the identities of Indian Muslims.

Chetna Karnani's "Sights and Sites of Communal Violence: Reading Memory through Temporality" talks about the violence that occurred during the Partition of India and the anti-Sikh Riots of 1984. It focuses on the literature written on these two events and how these writings are outcomes of silences and anxiety. Nikita Sharma's "Monological Inflictions on the Margins of Existence: Design of Madness in *The Bluest Eye*" explores 'madness' or 'insanity' as a literary trope as well as a narrative technique for writers to engage with certain pertinent socio-cultural issues which are otherwise relegated to the margins of normativity as abnormal or unspeakable. Sheena Lama's "Beyond Heteronormativity: An Interrogation of Homosocial Desire in Science Fiction" explores the many possibilities of looking at reality through Science Fiction. It analyses a single episode from *Black Mirror* to show how Science Fiction explores notions of sexuality, identity and desire beyond the orbit of normativity.

Kanika Puri's "The Muse and the Music: The Story of Love and Loss in *Agra Bazaar* and *Umrao Jaan*" ascertains how Umrao Jaan and Tanvir's Benazir grapple with the idea of love and struggle to cope with the times in which they live. Avani Bhatnagar's "Socio-Logic of the Capitalist World: A Reading of Machiavelli's *The Prince*" analyses *The Wolf of Wall Street* and *Kalyug* to corroborate how the Machiavellian model still reflects itself in the capitalist way of life today. Anup Singh Beniwal's "Interdisciplinarity as Epistemic Expansion: Contextualizing the Debate in Indian Context" locates interdisciplinarity as a pedagogical and epistemic practice within India's higher education systems. The paper delves into how a new paradigm of knowledge generation and dissemination precipitates a convergence of disciplines, which leads to its own nuanced problematics of interpretation, theory and praxis.

In addition to the above research papers this issue also has four book reviews. Ishika Tiwari reviews Amruta Patil and Devdutt Pattanaik's *Aranyaka: Book of the Forest*. Nawal Negi's review of Mahasweta Devi's *"Draupadi"* stresses upon the feminist understanding and interpretation of Devi's text. Tushar Sharma's review of *Godan* finds the novel as a realistic depiction of pre-independence India, where numerous social issues related to feudalism,

increasing capitalism, caste segregation and gender inequality, etc. intertwine. Somdatta Mandal reviews Jasbir Jain's *Interpreting Cinema: Adaptations, Intertextualities, Art Movements,* a collection of sixteen essays which explores the academic aspect of film studies.

We would like to thank the sub-editors of this issue – Srishti Sharma, Tanvi Garg, Tanuja Sharma, Saumya Sharma, Divya Khasa, Kajal Chaitanya, Jaishree Kapur and Shweta Singh – for their hard work, commitment and dedication. Without them, this issue would not have been possible. We would also like to thank the students, faculty and staff of USHSS for their support. Harshita Pandey and Ishaan Teotia deserve a special mention for proofreading the manuscript.

We hope you enjoy reading these papers – we did.

Editors, *Indraprasth*

— * —

Literature and the Aesthetic: From the Greek Age to Modern Age

Tej N. Dhar

Many critics believe that "the very notion of the aesthetic" has "fallen victim to the success of recent developments within literary theory" (Joughin and Malpas 1). Some even "assume that in order to discuss the aesthetic value of a literary text one must treat it as an autonomous object and isolate it from non-literary values and disciplines" (Singer and Dunn 3). But this thinking has started changing. In the post-theory scenario, the aesthetic is back in literary studies and has stimulated varied kinds of debates (Barry 300-302).

The contention of this essay is that human interest in aesthetics can be traced far back in time. In fact, human beings share this interest, though with more developed taste, with animals, a fact admitted by Charles Darwin (O'Hear 9). With the passage of time, human beings refined it by developing varied forms of visual arts, music, and literature. Because of this, the connection between literature and the aesthetic has spanned centuries and has been vibrant and productive; it has also been theorised with varied degrees of sophistication by philosophers and literary critics from the Greek to modern times. This essay critically examines the significant intersections of this connection by focusing on the aesthetics of mimesis in Plato and Aristotle, the blend of beauty and delight in Horace, the sublime touch of Longinus, the lofty beauties of Plotinus, the mix of Plato and Horace in Sidney, the neo-classical aesthetics of the eighteenth century, the aesthetic push of Addison and Shaftesbury, the loftiness of German expressionism and the romantic aesthetic of the English romantics, the rise and fall of aestheticism, and the varied shades of modernist aesthetics. It also demonstrates that all along, except for a brief spell of pure aestheticism in Europe, England, and America, writers have used their energies not only to create beautiful works of art but also maintained a healthy connection with human values and societal concerns.

A well-known and widely commented upon observation about Plato is that "beauty plays a central role in his thought" (Wood 35) for which the key texts are *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*. Interestingly, for both of them, and for his other major works as well, Plato chose the literary form of the dialogue that is truly poetic. Some scholars have examined the rhetorical and methodological bases for his choice of the form (Dorter 42-52). And some, like David Gallop, explain how that places Plato's work in the Greek poetic tradition: "In a culture where poetry was a long-established medium of intellectual discourse, where

public reading aloud was a normal mode of 'publication,' and where dramatic performance was competitive," Plato's choice of the dialogue allowed him to compete with the writers of his time on their own ground (54). However, Plato's concept of beauty is intimately linked with ethical and moral concerns, which is clarified in his major work on politics and power, *The Republic*. Though he recognizes the verbal, visual and other forms of art as sources of beauty, he values aesthetic pursuits and products only for their effect on human beings within an ideal political space.

Plato's views on beauty in art and its connection with the moral health of the readers are the major concerns of what Stephen Halliwell calls "the aesthetics of mimesis". Though the word mimesis occurs for the first time in the work of Aristophanes, who uses it in the sense of "dramatic impersonation" (Murray xvii), mimesis was developed into an elaborate theory of poetry by Plato, and figures in *The Republic,* in Books 3 and 10, in which he dwells on its effect on the citizens of an ideal state. A considerable divergence characterises these two books, both in the manner in which Plato conceives mimesis and the manner in which he deals with poetry. In Book 3, mimesis is equated with image-making and poetry is given considerable importance as a source of virtue. In Book 10, mimesis is used in the sense of reproduction, and poetry as a species of reproduction is debunked because it has no value. That is why commentators on Plato say that for him "poetry was extremely important and dangerous in its own right, and that he had a split attitude to it" (Annas 203).

According to Plato, mimesis is imitation by poets of the objects, events, and things, connected with the sensible world. In spite of being attractive, these do not come near the ideal world of forms. Because of this, Plato considers poets worthless imitators, whose creations are far removed from the ideal and the truthful (Plato, *The Republic* 335-341). Inbuilt in this is the view that the "philosopher comes closest to first-hand knowledge of reality: he can see the form or ideas or ideal form of things and can therefore disregard imitations" (Melberg 10), thus laying the basis of a contentious debate about the superiority of philosophers or poets, which has dominated philosophical and critical thinking for several centuries.

In another book, *Ion*, Plato argues that poets compose poetry in a state of divine frenzy, when they are out of their minds, and, therefore, far from the sobering influence of reason (Plato 4-7). Though the poets are inspired and provide pleasure by arousing emotions, these appeal only to base human instincts, and are, therefore, harmful for the moral health of human beings. Thus, both for the poverty of content of their work and its dangerous emotional impact on the readers, Plato is critical of the poets of his times. In spite of this, he still believes that poetry can have a place in his ideal commonwealth if it is written

by virtuous poets, as a source of education for the young. Plato wrote about poetry from a purely philosophical perspective, which makes his theory of poetry complex and even contradictory. What is significant though is that he raised some searching and vital questions about the connection between art, aesthetics, and values, which have dominated discussions of poetry and its value for centuries and figure in the current cultural theory of literature as well.

Aristotle built on Plato's idea of mimesis by stressing that imitation is basic to human nature, for humans understand things by comparing them and their representations, and this provides them pleasure too. His ideas on mimesis as a source of art figure mostly in the *Poetics*. The key element in this, which differentiates him from Plato, is that he does not consider imitation mere copying of the objects and things the poet sees around him. The poet actually reshapes them to increase the range of their possibilities from what they are or seem to be or ought to be. That is why he calls the poet a maker, who uses his skill to transform what he sees, and focuses on the poet's skill, *techne* as he calls it, as a means of artistic creation. Because of this, the act of imitation changes the character of the experience dealt with by the poet; it draws the admiration of the reader/spectator for its beauty as well as for the understanding that it promotes. And not just that: *techne*, in fact, improves upon nature through mimesis.

Seen specifically in the context of tragedy (Aristotle 10-19), which is at the heart of Aristotle's theory of art, the tragic poet, structures his experience in such a manner that it builds into it two kinds of rhythms, the affective and the cognitive, which culminate at the point of catharsis, where the tragic protagonist suffers a reversal in his situation. At that point, the emotions of the readers/spectators are purged, and they experience pleasure too. It is also a moment of what Aristotle calls *anagnorisis*, when the readers pass into a new awareness about the experience itself. Thus, art has affective value for the pleasure it provides and also cognitive value for the knowledge and awareness that it brings along with it. In this way, Aristotle disputes Plato's distrust of the work of poets. The arousal of emotions and their purgation, which has several layers of meaning, creates pleasure, which Aristotle clarifies in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Malcolm Heath xl). Thus, Aristotle confirms that Greek literature is both aesthetically pleasing and a source of knowledge as well.

The views of Plato and Aristotle were synthesized and elaborated by Horace in his *Ars Poetica*. He calls poets "skilled imitators," whose goal is to achieve excellence. Since he had the rich tradition of Greek poetry behind him, he urges poets either to imitate nature or the Greek masters, to achieve the desired end: "It is not enough that poems should have beauty; if they have to carry the audience with them, they should have charm as well" (Horace 101). For this, the poets need to have a firm grasp of emotions and a sound control

over the language for dramatizing them. But that is not all. They have also to make sure that their creations provide pleasure and help readers to learn from them: "The man who has managed to blend usefulness with pleasure wins everyone's approbation, for he delights his reader at the same time as he instructs him" (108). Horace, in this way, consolidates the classical mimetic aesthetics, and, along with several other poets of his time, becomes its illustrious practitioner.

While Aristotle and Horace associate beauty with the formal perfection of works of art, Longinus emphasizes that beauty in art is connected with sublimity, and elaborates that in *On the Sublime*. Going beyond prescriptive formulations regarding the creation of artworks, especially those of Horace, Longinus sees beauty in art in its power to transport, which he describes in a series of striking images. He states that for producing sublime, language has to be used in its most elevated form so that it does not merely persuade but also amaze and transport with wonder at all times and in every way. Sublime passages "exert an irresistible force and mastery" over the readers and the stroke of sublimity "scatters everything before it like a thunderbolt, and in a flash reveals the full power of the speaker" (Longinus 114). He provides details about the sources of sublime to make the writers proficient in the production of sublime. In this way, Longinus draws attention to another finer aspect of the beauty of works of art, which influenced the concept of aesthetics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Yet another dimension to beauty is provided by Plotinus, who exerted considerable influence on medieval Christian thinkers like Thomas Aquinas. Since he reads Plato's *Symposium* in his own distinctive manner, he is called a Neo-Platonist, and his ideas are contained in his six *Enneads*. Plotinus's concept of beauty, which has implications for the making of artistic works, is found in his first treatise "On Beauty," and is connected with his writings on metaphysics, psychology, and ethics. Like Plato, he believes that the world around humans is just an appearance and the reality is somewhere beyond, which is connected with the One or the Good, intellect and soul. But he differs from Plato because he does not consider the appearances imperfect images of the ideal, but emanations from the unknowable, the One, towards which one can advance from the soul and intellect.

According to Plotinus, there are various types and degrees of beauty, the lowest being physical beauty, but all of them are images of the forms eternally present in the intellect and they are capable of moving towards higher forms, whose source is the Good, which is also the source of beauty, and also the cause of delight. Thus, Plotinus considers all forms of creations emanations from the realm of forms, which are in the intellect, and in turn, emanate from the One or Good that is available only through mystical insight. For the students

of arts and literature, Plotinus deals with the implications of his theory in Ennead V, 1:

> Still the arts are not to be slighted on the ground that they create by imitation of natural objects … we must recognize that they [the arts] give no bare reproduction of the thing seen but go back to the Ideas from which nature derives, and, furthermore, that much of their work is all their own; they are holders of beauty and add where nature is lacking. Thus, Pheidias wrought the Zeus upon no model among things of sense but by apprehending what form Zeus must take if he chose to become manifest to sight. (qtd. in James Seaton 24)

Although Plotinus uses the example of sculpture to affirm that an artwork as the product of mind is not inferior but superior to the objects it may represent, it could easily be applied to literary creations as well. That is why William Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks consider Plotinus "the earliest systematic philosopher of the creative imagination" (118). Close to Plotinus' statement that artists create works that are "holders of beauty" and "add where nature is lacking" is Sir Philip Sidney's affirmation that poets improve upon nature, a view that goes back also to Aristotle. Sidney states this in forceful metaphors: "Only the poet … lifted up with the vigour of his own invention doth grow, in effect, into another nature…; her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden" (Sidney 8).

Sidney's *Defence of Poetry,* which has rightly "determined his place in the history of aesthetics" (Tatarkiewicz 297), synthesizes the ideas of almost all the Greek and Roman philosophers and critics, and is clearly reflected in his definition of poetry: "Poesy … is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word *Mimesis*, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth; to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end to teach and delight" (Sidney 9). In fact, it is because of the poet's ability to teach clearly and effectively that the poet, in his view, is superior to the historian and the philosopher. The poet is able to achieve this because teaching and learning go hand in hand with beauty that gives delight. Sidney considers the poet no less than a monarch, for "he doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way as will entice any man to enter into it" (20). Because of this, poetry is beneficial and delightful. The vibrant literature of the Renaissance—the plays of Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare, John Webster, Ben Jonson, and the poetry of Edmund Spenser and Sidney are prime examples of this.

The idea of the poet's intimate connection with nature was emphasized by all the classical critics. Longinus, in particular, stressed that "she is not given to acting in random and wholly without system. Nature is the first cause and the fundamental creative principle in all activities" (115). Later critics expounded

this idea as natural sublime, an idea that eventually became the basis of the "interdependence of theology and aesthetics which profoundly affected the neoclassical doctrine of imitation in the arts" (Battestin 1) in the eighteenth century. Traces of this are there in Thomas Burnet's *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*, which affected the work of John Dennis, who considers Nature "nothing but that Rule and Order and Harmony, which we find in the visible Creation. The Universe owes its admirable Beauty to the Proportion, Situation, and Dependence of Parts…" (qtd. in Philip Shaw 30).

This idea finds its poetic expression in Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Criticism*:

> First follow Nature, and your judgement frame
> By her just standard, which is still the same.
> Unerring NATURE, still divinely bright,
> One clear, unchang'd, and universal light. (112-13)

The passage emphasizes that "Nature is a Platonic and universal order and superior reality," "assimilates readily with man's efforts to enforce or increase that order in his own affairs," and also "resides in a state of great harmony with the idea of the classical models" (Wimsatt and Brooks 237). This explains how the search for formal perfection, of observing the principles of harmony, balance, and regularity, which approximate the art of God, rules the artistic creations of the Augustan era. In his penetrating analysis of this unique phenomenon, Battestin has shown how scholars like Leo Spitzer, A. O. Lovejoy, and Earl Wasserman have established that the "universe of Windsor Forest and the *Essay on Man* [can be] conceived in terms of the Pythagorean principle of *concordia discors* and the Platonic metaphor of the Great Chain of Being. It is a universe of exquisite harmonies and of nice correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm" (4).

The correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm has another dimension as well. The possibility of perfection in the natural and artistic world is linked with the idea of perfection in human affairs, which provides another purposeful edge to artistic creations, in which writers, writing in different genres, hit at deviations from that possible perfection. This accounts for the pervasiveness of satire in them. This is quite an evidence in the whiplashes of John Dryden, the comic irony of Henry Fielding, the gentle, playful irony of Alexander Pope, and the militant irony of Jonathan Swift.

Right from the times of the Greeks to the eighteenth century, mimesis was the controlling principle for making literary creations, though with some variants, in which the writers' aesthetic concerns were wedded to societal concerns. Since it focused on the proficiency of writers to use their skill to

make or construct works of art, M. H. Abrams calls this "construction model," which changed with the coming of the romantics, who created a new model, which he calls "contemplation model" (138), in which the focus shifts to the mind of the perceived as the source of art. In an earlier volume by him, Abrams signifies this shift by designating it by the symbols of the mirror and the lamp. In his book *The Mirror and he Lamp* (1953), he argues that:

> During the eighteenth century the dominant model of literary creation was fundamentally transformed, from that of a mirror held up to nature to that of a lamp that emits light from a singular origin or source … the work of literature is no longer conceived as simply the representation of nature: instead, what is presented is as much a view of the poet's own interior, his or her mind or heart. (Bennett 49)

Literary historians have traced the beginnings of this change right from the eighteenth century, in the work of Joseph Addison and the Earl of Shaftesbury, and its exhaustive treatment in the work of Immanuel Kant (Abrams 159-90). In his trilogy of Critiques—of Pure Reason, Practical Reason, and Judgment—Kant deals with the philosophy of science, the philosophy of moral imperative, and the philosophy of general aesthetics. Though they are interrelated, the last one, in particular, had a profound influence on literary aesthetics, because a large part of it deals with the creation of artistic forms. Wood sums it up neatly when he states that the production of artistic forms is possible through a rearrangement of nature which:

> …requires genius, the gift through which, as Kant has it, 'nature gives the rule to art.' It is his or her inborn nature even more than it is mastery of certain knowable techniques that makes the artist. In really inspired art, the artist has no awareness of the wellsprings of his or her novel ideas. Here again, as in the case of natural beauty, it is as if nature, working through the artist as the source of inspiration, has the purpose of bringing about the peculiar aesthetic feelings. Indeed, for Kant it is inspired art that sensitizes us to the beauties of nature. It is as if through the artist nature is teaching us to appreciate its own beauties….Kant thus speaks of the whole aesthetic region as exhibiting 'purposiveness without a purpose'—that is, appearing as if it had a purpose without our being able definitely to assign a real purpose, as we can in ordinary human activity…. Pleasure itself—aesthetic or otherwise—Kant understands as the sign that a purpose has been fulfilled. (127-128)

In short, the artist is inspired to produce art that sees beauty in nature, which is

both a source of education and pleasure. In his discussions of beauty, sublimity, and artistic genius, Kant establishes connections between nature, the calling of the poet, and his or her moral obligation to establish that "beauty becomes a symbol of the morally good" (Wood 143). These concerns also engage the British romantic poets, as can be seen in William Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, S. T. Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* and Percy Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* which deal with the nature of poetry, the power of imagination as a creative force, and purpose of writing.

Wordsworth writes that the "Poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner" (176). And he claims that "Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science… the poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time…. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man" (174-75).

Coleridge states that "the poet, described in *ideal* perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity," and that "GOOD sense is the BODY of poetic genius, FANCY its DRAPERY, MOTION its life, and IMAGINATION the SOUL that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole" (196-97). The main purpose of a poet's compositions, which are gracefully whole, is to give pleasure, and also to improve human knowledge and thought.

Shelley reconfirms the idea of poetry as a source of pleasure and wisdom: "Poetry is ever accompanied with pleasure: all spirits on which it falls open themselves to receive the wisdom which is mingled with its delight" (232). And then he makes bigger claims for poetry: "Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science…. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought; it is that from which all spring, and that which adorns all; and that which, if blighted, denies the fruit and the seed, and withholds from the barren world the nourishment and the succession of the scions of the tree of life" (250). The poets, in fact, are much more than writers of poems; they are also "the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society, and the inventors of the arts of life, and the teachers, who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true, that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion" (Shelley 228).

The remarkable thing about the poetry of the romantics is that their key

ideas on the creative process form the theme of many of their poems. Along with that, the poets also demonstrate their keen awareness of the social and political condition of their times. By writing about the ordinary rustics, Wordsworth released poetry from its aristocratic moorings and created a basis for the democratization of poetry. Critics have written extensively about the political and philosophical involvements of Coleridge and Shelley, as, for example, by William Kench and Peter Kitson. The poets, in short, have shown a strong awareness of the power of poetry, its concern with beauty, as well as their societal concerns.In a perceptive essay on Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*, Timothy Clark observes that Shelley not only absorbs Plato's ideas on beauty but also sees the writer's creativity as "the manifestation of social, trans-individual energies. A writer is a volcano whose work gives vent to pent-up social aspirations or frustrations…. In fact, in one of his letters, he [Shelley] describes Wordsworth and Byron as deriving the energies of composition the new springs of thought and feeling which the great events of our age have exposed to view" (152).

The Victorians carried on with the same kind of thinking, as can be seen, for example, in the writings of Matthew Arnold, though he was not like the earlier romantics. Poetry, in his view, has the power of "forming, sustaining, and delighting us, as nothing else can" (262). He is so confident about the power of poetry to move and to elevate that he considers poetry as a fit replacement for religion and philosophy. Not only that, but he also believes that "whatever was valuable in religion derived from its use of poetry. "The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry" (Seaton 35). He sets up high standards of value in criticism too, which he expounded in several of his essays.

The seriousness of poetry and its close relationship with the society of the day was temporarily eclipsed by the rise of voices in England, France, and America, that pleaded for the autonomy of art, of art's sole preoccupation with beauty. Edgar Allan Poe, in his *The Poetic Principle*, states that "beauty is the province of the poem," and beauty forms "the atmosphere and the real essence of the poem" (78-79). The contemplation of the beautiful provides "pleasure which is at once the most pure, the most elevating, and the most intense" (79). In the very opening sentence of the Preface to *The Picture of the Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde states that "the artist is the creator of beautiful things" (xiii). This view also figures prominently in his essay "The Critic as Artist." Charles Baudelaire too gave prominence to the view that writers should only be devoted to the aesthetic in art.

All three writers were quick to realize that such a view was not viable enough to last long. Poe found it quite inhibiting. He equated beauty with the idea of "supernal loveliness," and moments of such loveliness could be

experienced only by writing about the death of beautiful women. Baudelaire realized that art only for itself "was doomed to sterility" because it left out moral considerations (qtd. in Wimsatt and Brooks 480). Wilde clarified that stressing the desirability of beauty as the sole purpose of art was meant primarily to express dissatisfaction with the Philistine environment of his times (Wimsatt and Brooks 486). Except for this short-lived burst of pure aesthetics as the sole purpose of literary creations, literature continued, right from the 1890s to almost the end of World War II, reckoned by scholars as the time-span of modernism, with its engagement with aesthetic and social and moral concerns.

The most noticeable feature of modernism is what Andrjez Gasiorek calls the "aesthetics of exploration and disruption" (6) because writers of all hues and thinking—poets, novelists, and dramatists—responded to a series of changes that assumed the character of a crisis of sorts: loss of faith in religious systems, rapid changes in science and technology, the "commodification brought about by capitalism, the growth of mass culture and its influence, the invasion of bureaucracy into private life, and changing beliefs about between the sexes" (Butler 2).

The crisis generated diverse responses and led to a variety of experimental movements: German expressionism, French symbolism, Italian Futurism, Vorticism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Imagism, and many more. There were also competing activities, reflecting varied attitudes towards art, and also what Gasiorek calls "the aesthetics of anguish and despair." But all these, in their own varied ways, reflect the search by writers to find an appropriate medium for creating artistic works that were meant not only to be "intrinsically worthwhile but also indispensable to a civilised society… they wanted to urge the value of their work to the public sphere" (Gasiorek 18).

Ezra Pound put this in one of his letters: "My problem is to keep alive a certain group of advancing poets, to set the arts in their rightful place as the acknowledged guide and lamp of civilization" (qtd. in Gasiorek 18-19). It was meant to help the society to reflect on itself. All the innovations that are associated with the leading lights of modernism—Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad, D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and many others from different countries of the western world—are attempts to represent life by forms that are aesthetically appropriate, to satisfy their craving for perfection; they also embody their desire to reflect critically on the world around them and to create hope for human renewal.

Thus, it can be said that there is a clear connection between literature and the aesthetic that has lasted for centuries, and that writers' attempt to create works of art that aim at creating beauty is also intimately connected with the

quest for a better life for the humans. That makes literature a source of pleasure as well as a source of human improvement.

Note: A revised version of the paper was read in a National Seminar on "Value Awareness and Aesthetics in Literary Criticism," organised by the Department of English, Central University of Jammu in collaboration with Daya Krishna Academic Foundation, Shantiniketan, at Jammu, March 30-31, 2017.

Works Cited and Consulted

Abrams, M.H. "Art-as-such: The Sociology of Modern Aesthetics." *Doing Things with Texts: Essays in Criticism and Critical Theory*, edited by Michael Fischer, W W Norton & Company, 1991, pp. 135-158.

—. "From Addison to Kant: Modern Aesthetics and the Exemplary Art." *Doing Things with Texts: Essays in Criticism and Critical Theory*, edited by Michael Fischer, W W Norton & Company, 1991, pp. 159-190.

—. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. Oxford UP, 1953.

Annas, Julia. "Plato on the Triviality of Literature." *Aesthetics: Critical Concepts in Philosophy,* edited by James O Young, Vol I, Routledge, 2005, pp. 195-216.

Aristotle. *Poetics.* Translated by Malcolm Heath, Penguin Books, 1996.

Arnold, Matthew. "The Study of Poetry." *English Critical Texts*, edited by D J Enright and Ernst D Chickera, Oxford UP, 1975, pp. 260-285.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. 3rd ed., Viva Books, 2010.

Battestin, Martin C. *The Providence of Wit: Aspects of Form in Augustan Literature and the Arts*. Clarendon Press, 1974.

Bennett, Andrew. "Expressivity: The Romantic Theory of Authorship." *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*, edited by. Patricia Waugh. Oxford UP, 2006, pp. 48-58.

Butler, Christopher. *Modernism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2010.

Clark, Timothy. *The Theory of Inspiration: Composition as a Crisis of Subjectivity in Romantic and Post-Romantic Writing*. Manchester UP, 1997.

Coleridge, S T. "Biographia Literaria." *English Critical Texts*, edited by D J Enright and Ernst D Chickera. Oxford UP, 1975, pp. 190-224.

Dorter, Kenneth. "Plato's Use of the Dialogue Form: Skepticism and Insemination." L*iterary Form, Philosophical Content: Historical Studies of Philosophical Genres*, edited by Jonathan Lovery and Louis Groarke. Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2010, pp. 41-52.

Gallop, David. "Some Cautionary Remarks on Platonic Dialogue." *Literary Form, Philosophical Content: Historical Studies of Philosophical Genres*, edited by Jonathan Lovery and Louis Groarke. Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2010, pp. 53-62.

Gasiorek, Andrzej. *A History of Modernist Literature*. Wiley Blackwell, 2015.

Halliwell, Stephen. *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern*

Problems. Princeton UP, 2002.

Heath, Malcolm. "Introduction." *Poetics*. Translated by Malcolm Heath, Penguin Books, 1996, pp. vii-lxxxi.

Horace. "The Art of Poetry." *Classical Literary Criticism*, edited by Penelope Murray and T S Dorsch, Penguin Books, 2000, pp. 98-112.

Joughin, John H, and Simon Malpas. "The New Aestheticism: An Introduction." *The New Aestheticism*. Manchester UP, 2003, pp. 1-22.

Kench, William. "The Political Poet." *The Cambridge Companion to Shelley*, edited by Timothy Morton, Cambridge UP, 2006, pp. 123-144.

Kitson, Peter J. "Political Thinker." *The Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*, edited by Lucy Newlyn, Cambridge UP, 2006, pp. 156-169.

Longinus. "On the Sublime." *Classical Literary Criticism*, edited by Penelope Murray and T Dorsch. Penguin Books, 2000, pp. 113-166.

Melberg, Arne. *Theories of Mimesis*. Cambridge UP, 1995.

Murray, Penelope. "Introduction." *Classical Literary Criticism*. Translated by Penelope Murray and T S Dorsch, Penguin Books, 2000, pp. vii-lxix.

O'Hear, Anthony. "Evolution and Aesthetics." *The Landscape of Humanity*: *Art, Culture and Society*. Imprint Academic, 2008, pp. 6-27.

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Poetic Principle*." Essays and Reviews*. The Library of America, 1984, pp. 71-94.

Pope, Alexander. "An Essay on Criticism." *English Critical Texts*, edited by D J Enright and Ernst D Chickera, Oxford UP, 1975, pp. 111-130.

Plato. "Ion." *Classical Literary Criticism*. Translated by Penelope Murray and T S Dorsch, Penguin Books, 2000, pp. 1-14.

—. *The Republic*. Translated by Desmond Lee, Penguin Books, 2007.

Seaton, James. *Literary Criticism from Plato to Postmodernism: The Humanistic Alternative.* Cambridge UP, 2014.

Shaw, Philip. *The Sublime*. Routledge, 2006.

Shelley, Percy B. "A Defence of Poetry." *English Critical Texts*, edited by D J Enright and Ernst D Chickera, Oxford UP, 1975, pp. 225-255.

Sidney, Philip. "An Apology for Poetry." *English Critical Texts*, edited by D J Enright and Ernst D Chickera. Oxford UP, 1975, pp. 3-49.

Singer, Alan, and Allen Dunn. "Introduction." *Literary Aesthetics: A Reader*. Blackwell Publisher, 2000, pp. 3-12.

Tatarkiewicz, Wladyslaw. *History of Aesthetics*. Edited by D Petsch, vol. III, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Collins Classics, 2010.

Wimsatt K Wimsatt, and Cleanth Brooks. *Literary Criticism: A Short History*. Oxford and IBH Publishing Co., 1964.

Wood, Robert E. *Placing Aesthetics: Reflections on the Philosophic Tradition*. Ohio UP, 1999.

Wordsworth, William. "Preface to Lyrical Ballads." *English Critical Texts*, edited by D J Enright and Ernst D Chickera, Oxford UP, 1975, pp. 162-189.

—— * ——

Postcolonial Gothic: Hybridisation of Genres and the *Dak* Bungalow

Anmol Sahni

The propensity of using Gothic as a classificatory term to evoke scenes of gargoyles, dungeons, and violence emerges from a conjecture that situates the genre in Western imaginary. However, with the emergence of Postcolonial Gothic in the last few decades, Gothic has metamorphosed into a theoretical framework that lends itself to other modes of scholarship. Postcolonial Gothic contradicts the Eurocentric purity with which Gothic is usually associated. Postcolonial writers like Salman Rushdie have employed the gothic register to write about the themes of home, homelessness, and alienation, articulated in the postcolonial notion of alterity. Rushdie's use of Postcolonial Gothic, marked by its affective quality, distortion of history, and for using the logic of the phantom, blurs the line between history and fantasy, facts and myths, past and present, thus eliciting a fraught effect in its readers. In this transgression of the Gothic Self to signify the Postcolonial Other, writers have hybridised Gothic into a theoretical stance called the Postcolonial Gothic.

By using the Derridean 'Genre Theory', this paper traces theoretical affinities and divergences between Gothic and Postcolonial scholarship that led to the emergence of Postcolonial Gothic. Exposing the inherent problem of genre-making, I argue for the impossible periodisation and localisation of the Gothic. Instead, I propose that the portmanteau stance of Postcolonial Gothic emerges from an inherent inclination towards monstrosity and hybridisation that befits these genres. Lastly, in situating the Gothic outside of global North and in the South—specifically in the Indian subcontinent—I chart out how the gothic motif of the haunted house travelled to India with British colonisation. Upon reaching the Indian subcontinent, the motif of the haunted house mingled with the local folklore to create the horror stories of *dak* bungalow, the haunted house of the East. I argue that the *dak* bungalow serves as a Contact Zone and a site of power struggles between the coloniser and the colonised. This section augments Postcolonial Gothic scholarship by arguing that as a Contact Zone, *dak* bungalow was susceptible to violence and that the horror stories of the *dak* bungalow were born out of racial anxieties that were projected onto this space by its inhabitants.

Gothic Studies

Often used liberally, Gothic renders itself for varied contextual uses: it can signify a historical phenomenon, an art form, and a psychoanalytical approach

of unveiling the repressed in literary texts. Historically, the gothic novel had its heyday in early eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe, a time characterised by social and political upheaval. Despite garnering attention as a cultural phenomenon and engendering expansive critical responses, Gothic refuses easy definitions. As a genre, Gothic revels in imaginary and literary excess, even at the risk of being melodramatic.

The ambiguous endings and the use of Final Girl trope in films *The Thing* (1983) and *Alien* (1979) exemplify how Gothic affects the audience. In the final scene of *The Thing,* the surviving duo MacReady and Childs blow themselves up because of the fear that one of them could be contaminated by the Thing and its alien powers. Even the death of all characters does not offer a cathartic moment because the narrative withholds whether the Thing that killed all the characters dies or survives to pose a threat to others who might encounter it. The film is open-ended, and the final scene does not offer any catharsis; instead, it elicits horror in the audience. Besides ambiguous endings, another trope that churns in horror films is Final Girl trope, most famously portrayed by Sigourney Weaver as Ripley in the first *Alien* movie. In a 2017 interview to promote his film *Alien: Covenant,* director Ridley Scott revealed that he would have preferred an alternate ending to the film in which the alien would have murdered all the characters, including the Final Girl: Ripley. Scott's insistence on denying any relief or cathartic moment to the audience exemplifies how horror relies on uncertainty to affect the audience.

Postcolonial Studies

The postcolonial genre, such as the Self that it expresses, is a distorted one as the postcolonial identity is muddled by the historical experience of colonisation, in some cases, only to be further displaced by globalisation and migration. David Punter, in his book *The Gothic* (2004)*,* writes:

> For it could reasonably be said that the term 'postcolonial' itself has an inevitably distorting effect. In one sense this can be seen as unavoidable in that the postcolonial world itself is distorted; not, that is, in the sense of having been twisted away from some recognizable master-trajectory or severed from an imaginary origin, but in deeper senses to do with obfuscations of desire, impossible hybridity, the haunting ineradicability of paths not taken. (75)

Salman Rushdie, writing about his displacement in the essay *Imaginary Homelands* (1992)*,* beautifully describes his disintegrated selfhood. Writing with a tinge of melancholy, Rushdie does not mourn his displacement but celebrates his migrancy as a vantage point from which one can speak properly and concretely on a subject of universal significance and appeal. Commenting on

the nature of absoluteness and unity in the context of postcolonial identity, he observes in a Proustian sense that "past is a country from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity" (12).

As a writer who has been displaced from his country and even out of his language, Rushdie's experiences are doubly removed and intensified by physical dislocation. He writes:

> We are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions. Partial beings, in all the senses of that phrase. Meaning is a shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved; perhaps it is because our sense of what is the case is constructed from such inadequate materials that we defend it so fiercely, even to the death. (12)

In the tradition of other twentieth-century writers like Samuel Beckett and James Joyce, Rushdie does not consider migrancy to be a limitation but a liberation that unveils the fragmented nature of identity. In his fiction, Rushdie challenges the fixity that one associates with the transient idea of home. Rushdie argues that one cannot find home without physically and metaphorically journeying to the Self. This fragmentation of the Self is embodied in Rushdie's oeuvre of work which, like gothic novels, is marked by the distinct quality of syncretism. With a multitude of narrative registers, Rushdie's novels embody the problem of genre-making and crossing genre boundaries. Rushdie's works are hybrid in their style and genre categorisations because their narrative traverses amongst different genres, including comic, tragic, mythic, epic, and gothic.

The relationship between Home and the fragmented Self is a thematic thread that ties the Postcolonial to the Gothic. In gothic novels, this theme manifests itself in the trope of the haunted house. Writers like Salman Rushdie, writing about alienation and Otherness resulting from the loss of a home, resort to the use of the gothic register. Consider Rushdie's use of the gothic register in his essay "Step Across This Line" (2002). Meditating about the inherent human urge to cross frontiers, both physical and imaginary, Rushdie traces the evolution of life from the sea to the land, wondering what motivated the *proto creatures* to make this leap of faith. Rushdie writes:

> As we emerge from amniotic fluid, from the liquid universe of the womb, we, too, discover that we can breathe; we, too, leave behind a kind of water world to become denizens of earth and air ... we are frontier-crossing beings. We know this by the stories we tell ourselves; for we are story-telling *animals,* too. There is a story about a

mermaid, a *half-and-half creature*, who gave up her *fishy half* for the love of a man. Was that it, then? We allow ourselves to wonder. Was that the primal urge? (76)

Rushdie's description of human birth as frontier crossing is reminiscent of the monster's creation by Victor Frankenstein in his laboratory (an artificial womb) in the novel *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley. I argue that Rushdie's use of the Frankensteinian myth and repetitive description of humanity in an animalistic vocabulary displays the ease with which the gothic blends itself to the postcolonial theme of alterity.

The influence of Shelley's novel on the subsequent literary works is undeniable as writers across continents and generations have used Shelley's Frankensteinian myth when writing about alienation, Otherness, and Selfhood. Essentially, the Frankensteinian myth is about frontier crossing: the creation of the monster is the frontier crossing moment of humanity into alterity and a recognition of its own Self as opposed to the Other. The Frankensteinian myth is universal and has existed in different traditions and renditions. The mermaid crossing the water frontier for unavailed love, Satan crossing the frontier of heaven to go into the Garden of Eden, Prometheus crossing the frontier of Olympus to give fire to humankind are various examples of monstrosity and violence being unleashed upon frontier crossing. The frontier does not only exist outside in the form of borders, but the identification with a Self also creates a frontier that guards it against the Other, Rushdie writes:

> The frontier is an elusive line, visible and invisible, physical and metaphorical, amoral, and moral…. To cross a frontier is to be transformed…. At the frontier, there has always been the threat, or, for a decadent culture, even the promise of the barbarians. [Frederick Jackson] Turner [in his seminal essay *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*] characterizes the frontier as "the meeting point between savagery and civilization," … the frontier both shapes our character and tests our mettle. I hope we pass the test. (105)

This idea of a frontier being a dangerous space that is in a limbo state recurs in "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" (1996) by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen. In his thesis, Cohen postulates that the monster exists at the frontier and policies that boundary it (12). A postcolonial reading of Cohen's thesis is that the frontier is the space that is monstrous to the coloniser because it represents what is unknown, unfamiliar, and foreign. The frontier is also a space where cultural and racial anxieties are projected and manifested in the form of violence and fortification of the land and the Self.

Impossible Genre-Making

Gothic scholarship situates the birth of the gothic novel within a spatiotemporal specificity, attaching a Europeanness to the genre. However, being a monstrous genre that embodies and feeds off an imaginary excessiveness, Gothic transgresses its Law of Genre by redefining the threshold and problematising the binary of inside/outside. The paradoxical openness, combined with the encapsulating tendencies of Gothic, makes it an intriguing site for Genre Studies. It is by employing a negative aesthetic and provoking the reader with convoluted plotlines, gory scenes, and bloodshed that Gothic evokes normativity and invokes the Law of Genre.

Jacques Derrida, in "The Law of Genre" (1980) expounds on the ontology of genre to argue that in defining itself against the contamination from outside, any genre is encroached by new forms that get legitimised and naturalised by its absorption into that genre. Incorporating the dirt and outlaw in the genre upsets the Law of Genre, but it also reproduces and affirms its own laws in that act of transgression. Postcolonial Gothic and Imperial Gothic are exemplars born from the Gothic transgression into other genres.

In granting geographical appropriation, Postcolonial, like Gothic, risks drawing arbitrary boundaries. Postcolonial criticism is torn and sustained by debates about genre-making. For instance, does postcolonialism restrict itself to studying historical colonisation in the form of political dominance, or does it include studying neo-imperialism in the form of economic subjugation, like the United States unfair trade with Latin America? How can works written during colonial rule, like Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) (written while Nigeria was still colonised), be classified as Postcolonial? Does Postcolonialism enumerate the experience of economic colonisation that exists in a supposedly postcolonial world? What substrata of American literature is more postcolonial— the Native American literature written in the spirit of protest to preserve a rich cultural heritage or the canonical American works that contours the formation of American national identity in juxtaposition to England? The debatable definition and the arbitrary boundaries of the Gothic and Postcolonial open up space for hybridisation of these genres. Perhaps, the difficulty of what to include (and simultaneously exclude) in the canon of postcolonial literature makes Postcolonial genre-making difficult and open to cross-genres transgressions.

Postcolonial Gothic Studies

Two pioneering texts that have consciously or unconsciously informed the developing body of the Postcolonial Gothic criticism are Patrick Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830– 1914* (1988) and *In Frankenstein's Shadow* (1987) by Chris Baldick. However,

recent Postcolonial Gothic criticism is marked by an avant-garde approach that veers off from the spatiotemporal specificity and intertextuality of Brantlinger and Baldick, respectively. The collection of essays, *Empire and Gothic: Politics of Genres* (2003)*,* edited by Andrew Smith and William Hughes, exemplifies the intersection of Gothic and Postcolonial. The book is truly a hybridised work of Postcolonial Gothic, written by scholars from across the globe, concerning various issues, a collective project displaying the juncture of Postcolonial meeting the Gothic.

In the introduction to *Empire and Gothic,* Smith and Hughes tangentially link Gothic and Postcolonial Studies as sharing a common interest in challenging the post-Enlightenment notions of rationality. Enlightenment's obsession with racial taxonomies and hierarchies underpins colonialism as it was used by colonisers to justify colonisation. Smith and Hughes write:

> The Gothic use of non-human and ab-human figures such as vampires, ghosts and monsters of various kinds is calculated to challenge the dominant humanist discourse, and thus becomes, a literary form to which postcolonial writers are drawn, as well as constituting a literary form which can be read through postcolonial ideas. (2)

Gothic feeds on the inherent impossibilities of taxonomies to narrate stories about vampires and monsters—those beings that are on the edge or the other side of normative. Indulging in Jungian analysis, I argue that the creative urge of hybridising Gothic with Postcolonial Studies to create the portmanteau Postcolonial Gothic is a move towards Individuation. The fuzzy and ever-expanding boundaries of what truly counts as Gothic and Postcolonial texts remain debatable. However, if the Postcolonial and Gothic Self are inherently unstable, then can there be a unity achieved from fusing the two into Postcolonial Gothic? This Individuation of Postcolonial and Gothic into Postcolonial Gothic can be conceptualised as a resolution of the torn selves into a well-functioning whole: a yearning actualised by a form of hybridity and monstrosity.

Gothic Trope: The Haunted House

Having addressed Postcolonial Gothic's emergence, I now move onto the analysis of the gothic trope: the haunted house. The invocation of the haunted house evokes a spooky, ancient building set behind a scenic, European, or North American landscape whose foreboding atmosphere adds to the sublimity of the house. The eeriness of the house is brought to life by a traumatic event that forever haunts the space as a ghostly figure. This phantom embodies the trauma that mars the history of the house. The phantom feeds off the life that inhabits that space. In *The Haunting of Hill House* (2006)*,* Shirley Jackson breathes an organic life into Hill House, personifying it as an old person who consumes

and has been consumed by the trauma that it witnessed. Jackson writes "Hill House, not sane, stood by itself against its hills, holding darkness within; it had stood so for eighty years and might stand for eighty more" (1).

Like Hill House that alienates its inhabitants from the outside world, another classic example of a haunted house is the Overlook Hotel in *The Shining* (1977) by Stephen King. King describes the Overlook Hotel as a place that was inhabited by influential people. This hotel's image was marred by violent events, including murders and suicides that unfolded within its rooms. Upon their arrival at the hotel, the Torrance family is struck by the horrific beauty of the place. Like Jackson, King too describes the house as a sentient being that survives by consuming the psychic abilities of its inhabitants. In the novel, Danny possesses a supernatural gift called the shining, which we later realise is his extrasensory perception and clairvoyance. It is Danny's un-human characteristics that make him susceptible to the evil that is the hotel.

Dak Bungalow: Haunted House of the East

As a motif, the haunted house travelled to India by latching itself to the gothic culture that the British brought to India during colonial rule. It was during the British Raj that the westernised version of Gothic mingled with Eastern folklore to create the haunted house of the East: *dak* bungalow. In her book, *The Raj on the Move* (2012)*,* Rajika Bhandari archives the horror that *dak* bungalows hold within their walls. In the title of the book, Bhandari captures the movement and the travel through which the gothic sentiment reached and spread across the Indian subcontinent. In an interview, Bhandari reflects on the title of the book *The Raj on the Move.* She says, "It conveys the important role that *dak* bungalows played in forever altering how British officers and their families moved and stayed across India. These buildings gave them the opportunity to see India in a way that they had never experienced before" (26).

Historically, *dak* bungalows were established around the 1840's to serve as staging posts for the Imperial Mail service, also called the *dak*. Alongside providing the postal service, the *dak* bungalows functioned as pseudo-hotels for British officials. As government buildings, the colonial rulers banned the entry of Indians in *dak* bungalow's premises, and a fine was laid against any trespassers. However, to keep the building running, the only Indians who were allowed to enter the premises were the "servants" of the Raj, who were mainly the *Khansamah* (attendant/chef), the *durwan* (caretaker)*,* and the *dakwala* (postman).

Currently, the *dak* bungalows are falling into ruins and oblivion due to a lack of scholarly work and public interest in their cultural significance. However,

I argue that the *dak* bungalow remains a significant site to study the colonial experience. Historically, *dak* bungalows served as Contact Zones where the British learned about the Indians and vice versa. Here, I am using the concept of Contact Zone, as introduced by Mary Louise Pratt in her keynote address to the Modern Language Association titled "Arts of the Contact Zone" (1991). Pratt used the Contact zone as a phrase "to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they lived out in many parts of the world today" (15). Following Pratt's description, I view *dak* bungalows as not just a negotiating space for linguistic and cultural exchange, but also a site of horror where cultural anxieties about the Other race were projected.

Dak bungalow as a physical space was a gateway to situate the gothic in the Indian subcontinent. The limbo state of *dak* bungalow emerging from the uncertainty of cultural and racial differences makes these spaces akin to frontiers. For both the Indians and the British, these were sites or boundaries of what was unknown, unfamiliar, and foreign for them. In her essay, "The Indian Gothic," (2016) Nalini Pai writes:

> The *dak* bungalow is a haunted space for natives who come face to face with the sahib, an alien to India and therefore strange in his food, habits, beliefs, and way of life. The *dak* bungalow is thus a place where the most frightening aspects of both cultures meet. The cultural anxieties of both native and white man/woman manifest in the real incidents concerning the *dak* bungalow. This in turn is reflected in the stories written about this liminal space where both colonists and natives meet and see each other as both frightening and threatening. In these recountings, a *dak* bungalow is a place beyond civilization for the sahib, where the British man/woman stops before invading the native Indian habitat; at the same time, it is the edge of a world that is Indian for the natives. (203)

The *dak* bungalow as the haunted house is a recurring trope in the works of Rudyard Kipling. Writing in the tradition of Imperial Gothic, Kipling wrote about British colonial rule in India. Kipling's creative obsession with the *dak* bungalow is recorded by J.K. Stanford in an article called "Dak Bungalows" (1961). In the article, Stanford recalls his service in India during colonial rule and writes about his experiences of solving murder cases in the *dak* bungalows. Stanford also provides a one-liner annotated bibliography charting out all of the appearances of *dak* bungalows in Kipling's works, recording at least ten appearances. In *dak* bungalows, seeing a ghost or a phantom was commonplace, and these encounters were recorded in historical accounts and literary texts.

Alan Shaw writes in *Marching on to Laffan's Plain* (2014):

> Trying to sleep in a *dak* bungalow bedroom could be an unnerving business. Overhead was a dirty grey ceiling cloth stretched under the rafters, forming a nightly battleground for lizards, snakes and rats. A mosquito net was a necessity, if only to protect against wildlife falling from above. (3)

In his peculiar gothic register, Kipling narrates the short story "My Own True Ghost Story" (1888). He writes, "In these *dak* bungalows, ghosts are most likely to be found, and when found, they should be made a note of" (4). While these lines are voiced by the narrator of the story, Kipling is also present, expressing his creative obsession with ghosts and their abode: the *dak* bungalow. Although the *dak* bungalow might not share a gothic architectural similarity with its Western counterpart, the ghostly stories that are written about this space make it distinctively gothic. The ghosts of the dead Sahib *and Memsahib* that were spotted in the *dak* bungalows could not escape to an otherworldly realm but continued its earthbound existence haunting mortal beings with whom it once shared a physical existence. The inescapability of the ghost creates a predicament for the native as now it is forced to live alongside an apparition that reminds it of the Other.

The ghost problematises the simple binary of living/dead and Self/Other by being the embodiment of the living dead. The ghost forever lingers in the in-between space that is the *dak* bungalow, for it connects two *different* cultures. Now people fear to visit the *dak* bungalow so as not to resurrect the ghostly history that sleeps there. The horror evoked by a *dak* bungalow is not just of another race but of another state of existence: ghosts. Upon encountering a ghost, we are reminded of its absence from the real world, and that evokes the uncanny because now we are forced to negotiate our relation to this apparition. In the absence of its physicality, ghosts foreshadow our death. Perhaps this explains why people prefer to visit the colonial churches in India where the Soul abodes, but the idea of visiting the *dak* bungalow where the ghost abodes seems less appealing.

Works Cited and Consulted

Bhandari, Rajika. *The Raj on the Move: Story of the Dak Bungalow*. Roli Books, 2012, p. 26.

Brantlinger, Patrick. "Imperial Gothic: Atavism and the Occult in the British Adventure Novel, 1880–1914." *The Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830–1914*. Cornell UP, 1988, pp. 227–253.

Carpenter, John. *The Thing*. Universal Pictures, 1983.

Cohen, Jefferey Jerome. "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)." *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. U of Minnesota P, 1996, p. 12.

Derrida, Jacques, and Avital Ronell. "The Law of Genre." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1980, pp. 55-81, www.jstor.org/stable/1343176.

Jackson, Shirley. *The Haunting of Hill House*. Penguins Classics, 2006, p. 1.

Kipling, Rudyard. "My Very Own Ghost Story." *The Phantom Rickshaw and Other Eerie Tale.* A H Wheeler and Co., 1888, pp. 32–34, Internet Archive.

Kubrick, Stanley. *The Shining*. Warner Bros, 1980.

Pai, Nalini. "The Indian Gothic." *Gothic Landscapes: Changing Eras, Changing Cultures, Changing Anxieties.* Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2016, p. 203.

Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact Zone." *Profession*, 1991, pp. 33-40, www.jstor.org/stable/25595469.

Punter, David. *Postcolonial Imaginings: Fictions of a New World Order.* Rowman and Littlefield, 2000, pp. 61–63.

Punter, David and Glennis Byron. *The Gothic*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004, p. 75.

Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands*. Penguin Books, 1992, p. 12.

—. "Step Across This Line." The Tanner Lectures on Human Values Delivered at Yale University, *Connecticut,* 25 and 26 Feb 2002, pp. 76, 105.

Scott, Ridley. *Alien.* Twentieth Century-Fox Productions, 1979.

Shaw, Alan. "Marching on Laffan's Plain." *BBC*, 2014, p.3, www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peoplewar/stories/30/a317230.shtml.

Smith, Andrew, and William Hughes. "Gothic and Postcolonialism." *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of Genre.* Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2003, p. 2.

Yang, Rose Sharon, and Kathleen Healey. *Gothic Landscapes: Changing Eras, Changing Cultures, Changing Anxieties.* Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2016.

—— ✳ ——

Mapping the Feminine Subjectivity in Amrita Pritam's *Once There Was an Anita* and Krishna Sobti's *Damn You, Mitro!*

Sakshi Sundaram

Amrita Pritam (1919-2005) and Krishna Sobti (1925-2015) are two stalwarts, who, through their acute sensibilities as unafraid authors, have garnered widespread accolades not only in their respective languages, Punjabi and Hindi, but also world over: a fact attested by the continual demand for English translations of their works. While Pritam was the first woman author ever to receive the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1956, Sobti was the first woman author to receive the same in 1980 for her writings in Hindi. Further, while Pritam received Jnanpith Award (country's highest literary award) in 1981, Sobti received hers in 2017. However, most importantly, owing to their roots in undivided Punjab and subsequent immigration to post-Partition India, both of them share a similar socio-cultural and historical background, which gets reflected in their writings as well. The following paper is, therefore, an attempt to compare *Once There Was an Anita*[1] by Amrita Pritam and *Damn You, Mitro!* by Krishna Sobti, to map the respective feminine subjectivities of the eponymous heroines, Anita and Mitro. The paper will deliberate upon the ways in which the heroines negotiate the patriarchal restrictions within the confines of their traditional marital lives and the manner in which they exercise their will as well as fulfill their sexual desires within the same space. It will also discuss the pertinent issues under three subsections viz. a general discussion on marital house versus the privacy of the room, *Once There Was an Anita* and *Damn You, Mitro!*

In its theme and artistic vision out of all of Pritam's works, *Once There Was an Anita* resonates strongly with Sobti's *Damn You, Mitro!* and provides a fertile ground for comparative analysis. To illustrate briefly, Anita belongs to an upper-middle-class household and becomes financially independent, Mitro, on the other hand, is her direct foil. She is uneducated, loud, boisterous, and mostly lives a cloistered life in a lower-middle-class joint family. However, standing at the juncture of love, marriage, and patriarchy, both Anita and Mitro face similar dilemmas and carve out distinct but similar spaces for themselves in their respective claustrophobic familial setup. The resulting selves that emerge out of the individual experiences of Anita and Mitro take monumental personal decisions for their own sake and serve as strong examples of female subjectivity that resists, subverts and overturns patriarchal injunctions vis-à-vis marriage and wifely conduct.

Marital House versus "A Room of Their Own"

Most Indians perceive marriage as a sacred bond between two heterosexual individuals which is blessed by both god and their elders. In effect, such a socio-religious conception determines the amount of space and familial care that women can legitimately ask for without harming the smooth functioning of the patriarchal families. Although the socio-political history of the Hindu marriage is quite complex,[2] the paper will limit itself to the most basic understanding of marriage as a contractual obligation between two families which marginalises a woman's desires and individuality as both insignificant and inconvenient. Thus, women's role gets reduced to playing the role of primary caregivers and nurturers besides being the reproductive medium through which the legal male heirs would be born. Further, to eliminate the perceived threat of the contamination of the patrilineal bloodlines, the patriarchies strictly regulate and contain women's sexuality and freedom and often with violent consequences, like abandonment, physical and sexual violence, honour-killing et al.

In both of the chosen texts—*Once There Was an Anita* and *Damn You, Mitro!*—within the space of marriage, there is a severe lack of the desired mental, emotional and physical companionship which causes the eponymous heroines to seek them outside of their respective marriages. Such sexual and emotional adventures by women are often sidelined in masculine assertions of identity and instead become moral yardsticks to condemn women. Thus, the need for carving their personal space is the driving force for both Anita and Mitro to assert their feminine subjectivities and exercise a degree of independence, however little. The female protagonists determine and control their thoughts and actions to posit themselves as independent agents. But their marital houses function more like claustrophobic prison-houses than as actual spaces of nurture and comfort where they suffer isolation and humiliation, albeit to different degrees. At the core of the feelings of claustrophobia is intense dissatisfaction with their respective husbands and their marital status as ordinary wives with repressed sexual and emotional desires.

Therefore, the families of Anita and Mitro coerce and attempt to neutralise their threatening presence through the effective use of surveillance and the fear of punishment. According to Michel Foucault, surveillance aka "panopticism" is an effective means to "discipline" the prisoners who in turn begin to self-regulate their behaviours ("Panopticism" 5-6). Therefore, patriarchal societies mainly exercise power and control via the monitoring of women's everyday activities and punishment of deviant individuals. In such cultures, the power-wielding patriarchs regulate the sexuality of its women by employing other female members as vanguards. As a result, women either participate in

their subjugation or those of other women. Yet, in these novellas, the patriarchal logic and machinations fail to arrest the feminine expressions and transgressions to full effect. Anita can still withdraw from the overbearing familial spaces and record her most profound secrets in her diary, whereas Mitro uses her abusive and innuendo-laden speech as a counter-effect to the patriarchal discourse. In another book, *The History of Sexuality* (1978)*,* Foucault opines that:

> If sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is [writing or] speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places [herself or] himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; [s]he upsets established law; [s]he somehow anticipates the coming freedom. (6)

Therefore, the very act of recording or writing down and speaking about sex or sexual desires destabilises the patriarchal authority, which primarily functions by silencing the sexual desires of married women. And this is where the idea of a private room again re-assumes importance. A "room" is a space-within-a-space, that is, private space within a marital space, with its connotations of personal and psychological freedom. But it can also function as a malleable concept where privacy and self-contentment can enlarge or diminish the resulting spatial conception in different points of time. It means that free of any permanent anchors, the room can exist in mind as a sense of belonging as well as a physical space which when shut off from the rest of the household transmutes into a female haven. Ergo, in the present conception, free from familial panopticism, a woman can take out time for herself; express her fears and desires, and take it away to another brick-and-mortar house. This idea of room is derived from Virginia Woolf's seminal essay "A Room of One's Own" where she emphatically proclaims that a woman can only write if she has a distinct source of income and an available private space for writing.

Interestingly, what Woolf mentioned in a specific context of women's writings has surpassed its original intent and has become a rallying cry for female independence and empowerment the world over. And it is this modern sense of the room, as an enabler of female autonomy and empowerment, which is applied in the paper to understand the predicament and subversion of the eponymous heroines. To this effect, empowerment is understood not only in terms of economic self-sustenance but also an ability to manipulate, control and dominate the same power structures that were erstwhile disempowering them.

Once There Was an Anita

On the face of it, one may read *Once There Was an Anita* as a tale of caution where a married woman's transgression of finding love outside of her

prescribed marital space results in her lonely death (by brain haemorrhage). Within such an understanding, Anita steps over her normative boundaries and seeks passion, not once, but twice–with Sagar, a writer and later with Iqbal, a painter, despite her husband Rampal being a "good man." However, within the space of marriage, Anita feels intellectual, emotional and physical incompatibility with Rampal and along with her growing attraction towards Sagar, she cannot pretend to lie to her husband anymore. Besides, she is already miserable that her marital status is a significant hindrance to her love with another man whom she already considers as the father of her child, Rashmi. While Rashmi is Rampal's biological son, yet, Anita claims that since she was thinking about Sagar, when she conceived him thus, Rashmi is Sagar's son. In actuality, there is no real or actual sexual union between Anita and Sagar. Their one-time hotel liaison ends up with both of them hesitating in the end. Yet, Anita fashions a new matriarchal genealogy wherein the reality of the biological father does not matter, but the mother's recognition of the supposed father does. This is inadvertently a strong feminist stance on her part. Inadvertent because given her inferior status as a wife, she can only flail against her husband and her marital status to a limited extent. At the end of the day, her husband can still exercise his control over his legally wedded wife and "his" biological son, as he does when she confesses to him. Yet, it does not deter Anita from leaving her marital house and starting a new life with Iqbal as his live-in partner. This living and loving arrangement too proves temporary, owing to Iqbal's boredom with her, and acts as the final nail in her coffin, literally and figuratively. Thus, the tragedy of Anita is that of a rebellious married woman whose life-long search for unfettered and ecstatic romantic love is doomed since the beginning of her journey. Hence, it is not enough that as a woman, she feels a severe lack and suffocation in her loveless marriage but she must also pay a steep price for daring to disturb the status quo, that too on the double. First, Rampal forcibly separates her from Rashmi; and second, she remains lonely even after sacrificing her entire life in search of her true love, Sagar. Thus, Anita's desire for emotional, sexual, and intellectual companionship with Sagar causes a sense of acute loneliness for her in her marital house, aka Rampal's house.

Nonetheless, Anita's "honesty" and "feminine integrity," to borrow Revti Saran Sharma's words, make her realise that going back to the marital fold is not an option for her especially after she has crossed the marital boundary and spent a few hours with Sagar in a hotel room. In Sharma's views "Amrita [Pritam], by no standard, advocated immorality. On the contrary, she insists upon the highest standard of moral purity: that a man and woman should be totally honest to each other; that their emotional lives should be of a 24-carat purity" (127). Thus, as one of the numerous "fictional autobiographies"[3] of Pritam, *Once There Was an Anita* shares the all-familiar[4] plot by Pritam where

the female protagonist is torn between what her heart desires and what her beloved/society desires of her. In other words, what is "honest?" and what is "dishonest?" in a man-woman relationship. In this novella too, Anita faces the dilemma between choosing to live with her son but in a marriage-of-convenience with Rampal, or, to move out of the house and seek true love outside her marriage.

Consequently, the inherent duality of her condition causes a split in Anita's psyche and her self-perception. She begins to imagine the simultaneous existence of two women in one-body which are sometimes at war and sometimes at peace with each other:

> The one who was known as Anita was the daughter of Dharam Prakash Anand, the wife of Rampal Sachdev, whose religious identity was that of a Hindu, whose nationality was Indian, and who was subject to myriad rules and regulations. But the other one was simply a flesh and blood woman, the daughter of the earth who was eagerly waiting for her lover, none other than the sky himself. For this second Anita, her faith was love, her home was the entire world, and her wanderlust was the only covenant that mattered. (My translation) (Pritam 176)

Even the 1971 English translation of the novella, titled "Two Faces of Eve," very well captures the idea of the split-self of a married woman who is role playing herself as an automaton in a loveless marriage versus that of a psychologically trapped lover who wants to break free to unite with her beloved. According to Soma Banerjee, "… the split personality [of Anita] …. acts as a superb defense mechanism in a merciless, tense world. … [It] depicts the agony of the woman who must generate a clone within herself to voice her secret desire" (43). She further states that "The duality of Anita the person was created by the conflicting persona of the wife and the woman within her" (43). Thus, one can see that the unequal and un-companionate marriage of Anita and Rampal turns her into a stranger unto herself.

As a result, the split-psyche also prevents Anita from feeling a sense of attachment with any object of her marital house for they are all owned by her husband Rampal (Pritam 208). But Rampal is not the good benign husband as he is projected in the novella. For instance, to punish Anita for her marital transgression, he forcibly sends away Rashmi to the hostel and prohibits his school from allowing the mother-son duo to meet (209). Rampal not only asserts his patriarchal and patrilineal right over his "biological" son to separate him from his mother's "corrupting" influence but also makes Anita realise that as the father and the husband, he can and will take adverse measures to protect his familial interests, that is, to keep "his" son with himself.

27

Further, not solely content with this, Rampal employs Shanti, a female widowed-relative of his, to "take care" of Anita, that is, to keep an eye on her in his absence. However, Shanti's presence has another ulterior motive. Instead of giving her proper medicines, Shanti administers her some kind of slow poison or anaesthesia to make her feel lethargic and bed-ridden all the time (Pritam 213-214). In this case, the surveillance is coupled with the actual punishment of immobility to arrest Anita's efforts of meeting her son or leaving the marital house. It is also highly probable that it was a surreptitious ploy to murder her for her sexual and moral deviance (of loving another man) when she was already married to Rampal. Unlike Sardarilal of *Damn You, Mitro!*, Rampal does not physically abuse Anita, but he does play mind-games with her and formulates a ploy to murder or immobilise her. Irrespective of the reasons, the "poisoning-plot" remains a profoundly misogynistic episode at the heart of this novella and shows that the marital house can also be a place of actual bodily harm for a woman.

As opposed to all of this, in quiet afternoons, away from the prying eyes of her in-laws, Anita claims her conjugal bedroom as her safe space. She transforms it into a place of reverie and imagination where she can dismantle the split between her two selves. In this remodelled room, she is not Rampal's wife but Anita, a composite and desiring woman in her own right. Here, she can smoke cigarette butts left by Sagar and imagine his hot breath on her lips (Pritam 182-183); weave sexual fantasies about him (185), and celebrate his birthday in secret (188). Here, she also succeeds in breaking the boundaries of marital and motherly boundaries by transferring her obsession for Sagar on her son Rashmi in a classic example of Reverse-Oedipus or Jocasta Complex, where the mother is sexually fixated on her male child. Pritam was well versed with the psychoanalytic theories of both Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung (Pritam Interview by Jha 194). Hence, it is no mere accident that her female character Anita conflates her son with her lover. Anita's psychological and sexual repression in her marital life manifests in turgid dreams, split psyche and sexual transference. Thus, her first act of feeding her infant in postpartum tiredness is highly potent with its sensuality and sets the mood for the rest of the narrative until Rashmi is sent away:

> Before dying, I want to touch each and every part of this child's body. I want to smell his odour, drink his breath from his mouth, and I want him to suck my breasts with his little lips . . . He looks just like Sagar–same face, same forehead, same eyes, same lips . . . (angrily) what kind of a mother am I? I want to suckle my child not because I am his mother, but because he reminds me of Sagar. (My translation) (Pritam 186)

28

Here, one can see that Anita's first memory of suckling her son Rashmi is her most potent erotic experience. Therefore, it does not matter if Sagar is in the same room with her or a different city, Anita can and does feel pleasure by imagining him and creating fantasies in her head via her son in her transformed private room. Here she can also write erotic love poems and myriad letters to Sagar in her personal diary, which she eventually burns at the onset of her labour pains (192-193). Similarly, with Iqbal, Anita manages to possess an entire home to herself for the first time in her life and embarks on a new career, that is, of a writer. Akin to Edna Pontellier's trajectory in Kate Chopin's seminal work *The Awakening*, the room gets transported to Anita's new house, now home, and also expands to encompass the entire flat where she is living. Again, reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own," Anita now has money as an individual woman author and a room to relive her life in a loving relationship as an equal. And as far as infidelity is concerned, it is always debatable whether infidelity can be measured only in terms of actual sexual transgression or, could it be psychological and emotional as well, as Pritam wonders in her poem "Hand-reading."

> The line of faithfulness
>
> I don't know how to define it
>
> How to tell
>
> What limits are
>
> How far thought should be free to stray
>
> And at what point the danger lies.
>
> How much nearness of other's lip
>
> How much intimacy of talk
>
> How much warmth of hands
>
> Goes with the notion of faithfulness? (5-15)

Ergo, Anita's guilt over her mental infidelity is as much about "honesty" and "integrity" as it is about the indefinability of the concept of faithfulness or faithlessness itself.

Damn You, Mitro!

Sobti's Samitrawanti aka Mitro of *Damn You, Mitro!* is the fiery middle daughter-in-law of the Gurudas-Dhanwanti clan who upsets the patriarchal order and balance of her marital house by virtue of being the daughter of a notorious prostitute, named Balo (72). Implicit in her ill-famed inheritance is Mitro's lack of sexual decorum, wifely-impropriety, the tact of innuendo-laden speech, and earthy sarcasm. The much-discussed central episode of *Damn*

You, Mitro! where the eponymous heroine pulls apart her shalwar-kurta and exposes her naked body to her sister-in-law while lovingly admiring her breasts and physical beauty, is a progressive take on a married woman's sexuality. Since its publication in 1967, the text has provided a historic literary space to the tabooed subject of a married woman's unfulfilled sexual desires (Chanana 169). Mitro is not only bold and confident about her own body, but she is also self-aware of her seductive charms that awaken the desires of other men.

Thus, unlike Anita, Mitro does not care about abstract ideas of love and infidelity. In the latter's view, motherhood and sexual gratification are the primary basis of a happy marital life. That is why Mitro openly castigates her husband's lack of virility as the reason for her childlessness and her sexual-dissatisfaction in their marriage and thereby unhinging the patriarchal control over her. According to Raji Narasimhan, "This fruition of child-bearing, of motherhood, is not written for Mitro. Not only is she making no secret of it, [but] she is [also] absolving herself as the reason for this not-to-be. She thereby puts the man in the dock" (178). Yet, when the real opportunity arises to have sex outside the marital boundary, Mitro chooses her marital life over and above her sexual wish-fulfilment. Scared by her mother's (Balo's) lonely fate, Mitro rushes back to the comforting embrace of her once-abusive husband, Sardarilal (Sobti 131). Her return does come as a considerable shock to the readers, but it makes sense in the context of her marriage to Sardarilal.

In *Damn You, Mitro!* Mitro's primary identity is either being the "Middle One" (the middle daughter-in-law) or as Sardari's wife, both of which denote her as a property of her husband and by association, his household. But, all that Mitro ever desires is to become a mother and is very much steeped into the milieu of patriarchal society against which she speaks out. Thus, she turns the masochistic domestic violence upon herself and uses it to get even with her younger sister-in-law Phoolawanti (179). Therefore, the only times Mitro can exercise her personal freedom is when she is challenging Sardari's authority (Sobti 54); giving away her personal wealth (87); caressing her own body in the privacy of her bedroom (60); in her caustic speech against Phoolawanti (Sobti 81). Also, while Anita can still claim a degree of financial independence owing to her job, Mitro only has her "streedhan" in the name of economic self-independence and that too she willingly parts away with to alleviate her affinal family's financial distress (87). Streedhan are those gifts/jewellery that are bestowed by the bride's natal and marital family upon her wedding and seen as her rightful property (Agnes 14-18).

Apart from Mitro's mother-in-law Dhanwanti and elder sister-in-law Suhagwanti, there is a lack of support by other family members. That is why even though she enjoys their female company, she can sense and pre-empt

their incoming moral-policing tirade and adjusts her behaviour accordingly (62, 79). For Mitro, everything is a form of entertainment as far as these two are concerned. She knowingly drives them to the tethers of their patience but does not disrespect them, which makes her different from Phoolawanti, who does both. And in turn, to contain/channel over-brimming and threatening sexual desires, Dhanwanti and Phoolawanti train Mitro into observing the propriety and decorum associated with being the daughter-in-law of a respectable middle-class family. For instance, Dhanwanti advises Mitro to not argue with her husband when he is in a temper and to accept what he demands of her (54). In this particular case, the mother-in-law asks her insubordinate daughter-in-law to "lower her eyes" as a mark of patriarchal deference and shame to her son's authority as the latter's husband-supreme. While Dhanwanti does berate her son for indulging in the domestic abuse of his wife and eventually manages to stop him, yet this particular instance depicts that the women-of-the-household can intervene only so much. At the end of the day, if it comes to that, a husband can physically, emotionally and sexually abuse his wife without impunity. But, Mitro refuses to cower down and continues to rattle her man with her bold look:

> Like a mad woman, with dishevelled hair, the Middle One was trying to extract her hand from Sardarilal's grip. And Sardarilal, clad only in a loincloth, was slapping her on the face, and all over the torso. [...] Sardarilal didn't heed her [Dhanwanti]. He hit his wife once again, saying, "Will you drop your eyes or not?" But the Middle One of her daughters-in-law didn't do anything of that sort. She kept challenging her man with her brown eyes, straight and sharp. (54)

The inherent violence of this brutal wife-beating episode right at the outset of the novella, contextualises Mitro's defiance and revolt within the systemic patriarchal oppression in her marital house. Further, the family also screens people/outsiders who can come in contact with her. When Banwarilal casts aspersions on Mitro's character, Dhanwanti protests by saying that, "It's a packed house. Can anyone escape our eyes?" (108). Meaning, since it is a house full of people, any unknown paramours of Mitro could not have entered or left the premises without their knowledge. This idea of a "packed house" which observes and screens the outsiders again lends a sense of "panopticism" to the entire setting, where every entry and exit is carefully watched over by other family members. Similarly, in the famous clothes-shedding episode, Suhagwanti admonishes Mitro for gloating about her voluptuous body:

> "You strayed one! Once dead, you'll never know whether you had ever lived! You take so much pride in this daily dissolving body! Woe to you! Every home has such swarthy, brimming women. They too

have limbs and organs like you. The same two breasts too. Are you the only one blessed with these female organs?" (60).

The elder daughter-in-law propagates the patriarchal idea that a woman's body and beauty is to be consumed by her lawfully wedded husband. In the absence of which a wife should practice temperance and abstention as the woman's body will, in any case, deteriorate in the near future. Suhagwanti uses the Hindu philosophy of "death as the great equaliser," but she is herself the second-wife of her husband Banwarilal and younger in age than Mitro, thus, incapable of understanding Mitro's angst and insecurities. While there is no mention of Banwari's first wife, it is quite apparent that in patriarchal societies the rules of monogamy apply differently to men, they can always take a young mistress or practice polygamy (if legally allowed) or marry a younger woman whenever they want to. On the other hand, a wife is socially and morally expected to remain faithful to her husband under any or all circumstances, including domestic and psychological violence. That is why society frowns upon and castigates women who have experienced marital separation, divorce, or widowhood as their respective statuses in effect signify unfettered sexual energy that is now loose of husband-ly moorings and free to trample around in societies as femme-fatales. That is to say that the unchecked and overflowing female sexuality threatens to break the dam of life-long patriarchal conditioning and social injunctions against unbridled female sexual-hyperactivity.

Interestingly, in Balo's house, a brothel, the identity of a child's father is irrelevant. A brothel can then be seen as a matrilineal space where only the mother's identity is of any importance. Additionally, there is also a distinct source of income from owning the use and control of one's body the way a woman wants to, albeit under economic or pimping pressure. As opposed to this, a marital space is a legally and socially approved site of ensuring a patronymic inheritance where infidelity is akin to a criminal and punishable offence. Mitro, in her thoughts, rightly points out that when the husband plants the "seeds" [sperm], it is legitimate, but when it is someone else's, then it is a sin (101). The preceding family gathering scene heightens the same morality versus immorality debate by convening to judge and punish Mitro's wanton behaviour if she is guilty of the accusations (73-74).

Rekha has aptly referred to this scene as a family "court scene" where the patriarch Gurudas acts as a judge and Mitro is put in the dock for her "transgressive sexuality" ("Renegotiating" 178). In contrast, other family members—Sardarilal, Banwarilal and Dhanwanti—stand as spectators and accusers (179). But here too Mitro stumps her in-laws with her wit which cannot be deciphered by them (179). When asked whether the allegations of infidelity made against her by her husband are true or false, Mitro replies that

"it's both true as well as false!" (Sobti 74). In her book, Rekha elaborates on this scene by stating that, "Her [Mitro's] witty rebuttal, that the allegations levelled against her are both true and false at the same time, renders the patriarchal sexual discourse doubtful and unhinges its power and gender configurations" (*Gender, Space* 95). Similarly, in *Once There Was an Anita* when Rampal wishes to know if there is another man in her life, Anita enigmatically replies that "Yes there is and there isn't" (Pritam 208).

Thus, the inability of the patriarchal discourse to decipher both Mitro's and Anita's enigmatic one-liners lend them the power to triumph over the restrictive marital norms by failing to bracket them. Additionally, there is also the realm of dreams and imagination, where irrespective of her marital status, Mitro can "relish" Nayamat Rai's embrace and sexual overtures and that too in her conjugal bedroom (Sobti 62). Just like Anita, Mitro in her transformed private room can shed her clothes and fondle her breasts in front of Suhagwanti (60) or dream sleazy dreams about Nayamat Rai, a police inspector (62). In both of these novellas, the mental infidelity on the part of the married protagonists either occurs unconsciously when they dream or, consciously when they weave sexual fantasies around other men who are not their legally-wedded husbands, both in the privacy of their bedrooms. The only difference lies in their attitude towards it. While Anita feels guilty about cheating her husband mentally and emotionally (Pritam 187-188); Mitro, on the other hand, seeks thrill from her dream (Sobti 62). Thus, the forbidden desires of real-life get accomplished in the realm of mind and here lies the potential of feminine subversion.

Moreover, when Mitro is sent back to her mother's house by her in-laws to neutralise her destabilising presence in the marital fold, she readily seizes the opportunity to move out of the claustrophobic environment of her affinal home into the sexually free environs of her mother's brothel. Her seductive gait through the street (122) and innuendo-laden speech with her mother (123-123) enliven her senses once again and empower her as a desirable woman. It shows that her marital-house, despite having supportive female characters, is dull and deadening. But this does not mean that all is better at her natal house either. When Mitro is about to indulge in sexual dalliance with her mother's former client, Balo stops her and laments her own lonely fate: "Your mother's days are gone, dear one! Who is there in the name of a friend and dear one now?" (130). This lesson in isolation-in-old-age acts as an eye-opener for Mitro who realises the security that her marital house offers irrespective of the domestic abuse. Ergo, her final physical and mental reunion with Sardarilal also takes place in a room whose door she locks from the inside to keep her devilish mother outside (130). Mitro claims this small space as a private room for them in Balo's brothel and wins Sardari's confidence both as a wife and as a temptress (131) which

attests to the fact that the concept of "room" as a dynamic space can be carried over to other actual spatial areas as well.

Conclusion

While Anita's quest for her true love never materialises with either Sagar or Iqbal, it still gives her the courage to walk out of her loveless marriage with Rampal. In contrast, Mitro gains a new-found appreciation of her husband and her married life which is also reciprocated by Sardarilal. The rebellion against the system, however, localised, is radical in its own right and worth appreciating. Neither Anita commits suicide nor does Mitro "relinquish her desires" (Rekha, *Gender* 95) and yet, in the course of the narrative, at various junctures, they upset the patriarchal project of creating a division between their desiring-minds and thinking-bodies by being impenetrable to the former's logic. Also, they "restructure their social [and personal] priorities" irrespective of the social and cultural diktats to find their self-worth (Rekha, *Gender* 95). Hence, their actions and voices create inherent contradictions and challenge the readers to grapple with their preconceived notions regarding female oppression and female emancipation.

Endnotes

1. The page citation for *Once There Was an Anita* belongs to its authorised Hindi translation "Ek Thi Anita" from the new compendium *Kaili, Kamini Aur Anita* in 2011. I have translated the relevant lines myself.

2. For a nuanced discussion on the changing contours of Indian family and women's role within that in the Pre and Post-Independence era, please refer to Eleanor Newbigin's article "A Post-Colonial Patriarchy? Representing Family in the Indian Nation-State" (2010).

3. Pritam has discussed this novella in detail by focussing on the similarities between her own life and the story of the text in her autobiography *The Revenue Stamp*.

4. Please see Revti Saran Sharma's article "The Search for Feminine Integrity: The Course of Amrita Pritam's Fiction" (1968) where he critically analyses the common strands of Pritam's fiction vis-à-vis man-woman relationship in *Aerial*, *Once There Was an Anita*, *Village Number 36*, *Earth, Sea and Shells* et al.

Works Cited and Consulted

Agnes, Flavia. "Law and Gender Inequality: The Politics of Women's Rights in India." *Women and Law in India*. Oxford UP, 2004, pp. 14-18.

Banerjee, Soma. "The Tale of a Cleft Soul: Duality of Women in the Novels of Amrita Pritam." *Indian Women Novelists: Set III,* vol. 7, edited by R. K. Dhawan, Prestige Books, 1995, pp. 33-45.

Chanana, Kuhu. "An Exploration of the Repressive Module of Sexuality in Modern Indian Women Writers: Namita Gokhale, Krishna Sobti and Ismat

Chugtai." *Indian Literature*, vol. 49, no. 6, 2005, pp. 162–176. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23346308. Accessed 10 May 2020.

Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening, and Selected Short Stories*. *Gutenberg.org,* 2018, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/160/160-h/160-h.htm. Accessed 5 May 2020.

Dutt, Nirupama. "A Total Commitment to Writing." *The Tribune*, 25 Nov. 2001, www.tribuneindia.com/2001/20011125/herworld. Accessed 3 May 2020.

Foucault, Michel. "'Panopticism' from 'Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison.'" *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2008, pp. 1–12. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25594995. Accessed 3 May 2020.

—. *The History of Sexuality*. Translated by Robert Hurley. Pantheon Books, 1978, p. 6.

Garg, Mridula. "Metaphors of Womanhood in Indian Literature." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1991, pp. 407–424. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/40644725. Accessed 10 May 2020.

Govind, Nikhil. "Mitro Marjani Turns 50." *The Hindu,* 4 Aug.2016, https://www.thehindu.com/features/magazine/nikhil-govind-on-krishna-sobtis-book-mitro-marjani-that-turns-50/article8396652.ece. Accessed 8 March 2020.

Narasimhan, Raji. "Mitro Beyond the Pale of English: A Deep Reading of Mitro Marjânî." *Indian Literature: Sahitya Akademi's Bimonthly Journal,* vol. 61, no. 3, 2018, pp. 178-186.

Newbigin, Eleanor. "A Post-Colonial Patriarchy? Representing Family in the Indian Nation-State." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2010, pp. 121–144., doi:10.1017/S0026749X09990096.

Pritam, Amrita. *Ek Thi Anita*. *Kaili, Kamini Aur Anita*. Rajpal & Sons, 2011, pp. 176, 182-183, 185, 186, 187-188, 208, 209, 213-214

—. "Hand Reading." *Black Rose*. Translated by Charles Brasch, Nagmani, 1967, pp. 5-15.

—. *The Revenue Stamp: An Autobiography*. Vikas Publishing, 2015.

—. *Two Faces of Eve*. Hind Pocket Books, 1971, p. 43.

Pritam, Amrita, and Rama Jha. "An Interview with Amrita Pritam." *Indian Literature*, vol. 25, no. 5, 1982, pp. 183–195. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23331122. Accessed 10 May 2020.

Rekha. *Gender, Space and Creative Imagination: The Poetics and Politics of Women's Writing*. Primus Books, 2015, p. 95.

—. "Renegotiating Gendered Space: A Reading of Krishna Sobti's Fiction." *Indian Literature*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2009, pp. 163–191. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23340331. Accessed 10 May 2020.

Sharma, Revti Saran. "The Search for Feminine Integrity: The Course of Amrita Pritam's Fiction." *Mahfil*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1968, pp. 119–131. JSTOR,www.jstor.org/stable/40874276. Accessed 8 May 2020.

Sobti, Krishna, and R.S. Yadav. *Mitro Marjani (Damn You, Mitro!)*. *Indian Literature*, vol. 22, no. 4, 1979, pp. 50–131. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23330047. Accessed 8 May 2020.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*. Oxford UP, 2015.

— * —

Sainthood, Patriarchy and Saguna Bhakti in the Verse of Andal and Mahadevi

Neeti Singh

Saguna Bhakti is a path to salvation that begins with worshipful attachment to a personified, mythic God deified through a ceremonial of emotion, devotion and care rituals, the sustenance of which demands exacting codes of purity, discipline and hygiene from the initiate devotee. *Sa-guna* means that with (physical) attributes; Saguna Bhakti, therefore, means the bhakti or devotion of a god with (physical) attributes. The literal practice of Saguna Bhakti involves the chanting of scriptures, devotional singing/dancing and elaborate systems of upkeep and care of the deity and temple. Swathed in the sweet fragrance of incense, scores of lamps, drums, bells, singing and cymbals, Saguna Bhakti we can say is full of rituals that are elaborate and beautiful. It is a system that is *sringara rasa pradhan* – a system that is primarily aesthetic and embraces the delight of ceremonial worship: the beautiful ornaments and crisp silk clothes for the gods after their ritual morning baths in milk, honey, rose water and turmeric; the resplendent fragrant garlands, the brilliant tilak-marks made from guggal, vermillion, sandalwood or saffron. These (Vaishnav or Shaiva) Gods and Goddesses (manifestations of Shakti) are fashioned from rock or precious metals like gold, silver, brass or copper. They sit in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple in an atmosphere of divine euphoria - fortified with scores of ghee-fed lamps, water-honey-milk, lotus and other sacred flowers and various sweet rituals of organic upkeep. The Hindu temple gods are allocated fixed hours of waking and sleep/rest (a bit like the Greek gods and the rituals that surround them). The atmosphere during the morning and evening *aarti* (prayer service) is charged, resplendent and electric – it is like the blossoming of several hearts, touched by the fervour of devotion and devotional singing, they burst into divine joy and celebration. The beautiful energies of the Saguna Bhakti ritual facilitate devotional fervour and at the same time provide hope and succour to the ordinary human who then connects instantly.

God in the Vaishnava temple was usually one of the several forms of Vishnu (Krishna, Rama, Balarama, Balaji etc.) along with his goddess consort Laxmi (or her counterparts like Radha, Rukmini). The worship rituals of a Vishnu temple were usually more elaborate and pretty compared to those of a Shiva temple. The Shiva temple, considering Shiva is regarded as the primal yogi – ascetic, primal and Spartan - bore a simpler and sublime aspect which had a magnificence of its own. More often than a full idol of Shiva, the temple

would have in its central region, the sculpture of an oblong phallus/*linga* in black stone pointing upwards; it is shown emerging from the floor from a symbolic vulva/ *yoni* – all of which is placed in a square section of framed and slightly depressed floor. Over the linga-yoni hangs a pot with a tiny hole, suspended from the ceiling and dripping milk-water upon the divine linga. Women, especially young women, ritually fasting and praying for a good husband, visit the Shiva temple on Mondays in white clothes and bathe the linga in a combination of milk and water. While the colour white is believed to be a favourite with Shiva (Mahadev, Mahayogi Bholenaath), the colour that is most pleasing to Lord Vishnu is magenta/deep pink or blue even. The two gods have their choice of specific flowers and fruits too, besides an elaborate matrix of myth, legendary fact, and pilgrimage sites as context.

Yet another aspect – a third aspect that completes the Saguna bhakti grid, is the worship of the goddess as the sacred Gaia principle – the primal Shakti/ Devi or Prakriti in the form of Laxmi, Durga, Kali, Saraswati and scores of her counterparts; the goddess is worshipped alone or as consort to the gods, in temples across India. The Shakti/Devi theology has flourished as an autonomous tradition since ancient times and is said to have climaxed with the publication of *Devi Mahatmya* – a significant text central to the Shakti theology. This particular text, according to Prof. C. Mackenzie Brown, posits Maha-Shakti as supreme and immanent almost like a parallel counterpoint to the idea of the one male God. Later, however, worship of the goddess tends to fuse with the Vaishnav/ Shaiva Bhakti Marg where Shakti/Prakriti is perceived as consort and complimentary dyadic energy to the male God.

The confluence of the Shiv-Shakti principle, at some point, led to the founding and establishment of the esoteric and highly scientific practice of Tantra. Swami Vivekanand's Guru Shri Ramkrishna Parmahansa is known for his *Devi sadhana* and rigorous two-year long practise of tantra, this however is not within the ambit of this paper. I, therefore, must acknowledge the Goddess and move on towards a reading of the poetic compositions of two 'goddess' like women bhakti saints – Andal and Mahadevi. The former belonged to the Alvar fold of Vaishnava Bhakti in ninth-century Tamilnadu and the later was a Lingayat saint – an ascetic variant of ViraShaiva bhakti that flourished in twelfth-century Karnataka.

Before I move on to perform a reading of Andal and Mahadeviakka, it is essential to note yet one more aspect of Saguna Bhakti. Bhakti was a phenomenon that emerged in the religious and cultural margins of medieval Indian society; it used the Apabhramsa dialect which was the common man's language, and from the casteless cultural margins it gradually marched to take

its place besides mainstream Hinduism and Vedic scriptures in Sanskrit. The Bhakti narrative was reformist in zeal, modernist in its ethos and as we are often led to presume, it existed in a realm that was gender-free. It was regarded as a path suitable for the spiritually inclined householder and also considered as the ordinary materialistic human's divine panacea. A majority of the male poets-saints who led the bhakti movement and composed scores of holy songs were people who either never married or if they did marry, they continued to lead parallel lives as saints and part time householders. This, however, was rarely true of women bhakti poets who were mostly pushed into marriage and underwent intense abuse and hostility in their marital homes, which they were then compelled to abandon and take to the streets. Even Bahinabai who stayed married all her life to a husband twenty-seven years older to her, is no exception. Her life was filled with physical and mental abuse at the hands of her husband who according to Hindu dharma was her lord, owner and god.

Bhakti as Resistance to Patriarchal Norm

An intrinsic feature of Saguna bhakti was that, it adopted a dyadic approach (dvaitavaad) to the idea of the divine godhead, where God/*Paramatma* was the supreme and singular male while all his devotees/*jivatmas* were his female beloveds/*gopis*. This surrender of the jivatma to the paramatma comes through as the sublime romance of the lover-beloved, who are perceived (and worshipped) as Radha-Krishna, Shiva-Parvati, Heer-Ranjha etc. through the entire bhakti (and Sufi) semiotic, where the path of emotional attachment and surrender takes the mystic to an ultimate merger with the supreme divine, which unfolds a portal to mukti/liberation from the birth-death cycle of life.

As far as the woman bhakti poet is concerned, the semiotic of conventional romance in bhakti is a subversive trap. The space of the devotional feminine where the male mystic/disciple identifies himself with the symbolic feminine is also a space where the female mystic/disciple is doubly marginalised. Lal Ded, Mahadeviakka, Mirabai, Bahinabai are examples of women-saint-poets whose bhakti for Krishna/Shiva was challenged and compromised by patriarchal social bias, as well as, by the fact of their location in the female body, in a space where their sainthood was perceived as immoral, sacrilegious and unacceptable in a woman. In the marital dynamic, a woman's ultimate god was supposed to be her husband, none other; not even God was allowed to replace him. Thus, unlike the married male sant/mystic, the married woman saint/mystic was fettered to patriarchal laws and tethered to her husband, who according to dharma was her sole master and lord.

Conceptually speaking, the woman bhakti saint of the medieval era, comes across as a resisting figure who challenged and pushed the norms of patriarchy

and social propriety. She was a wife who was also a saint-poet; she was one that was empowered with wisdom, compassion and detachment– such qualities in a woman (woman's body) were resented, feared and resisted. This is the premise of my paper which attempts to examine the gender dynamics that festered beneath the bubble of romance in which we tend to cast the struggles of our women bhakti saints. It is an objective of my paper to explore the radiant semiotics of Vaishnav and Shaiva Saguna Bhakti in the verse of Andal and Mahadevi. At the same time, the paper also examines the lives of these two women located as they were in the patriarchal matrix of social control, denial and abuse. When her parents began to look for a suitable husband for her, Andal insisted she would marry only Krishna. Mahadevi, on the other hand, was compelled to marry a local chieftain. Her husband who was entitled to full authority over the wife's body, soul and mind, resented the prospect of sharing her loyalties even with an absent God, whom he ritually worshipped. Mahadevi's divine journey is grim and strewn with the turbulence of harsh reality, comparatively Andal's is a narrative that is sensuous and dreamlike. To appreciate the esoteric-ceremonial of the Saguna, to acknowledge the rivalry and infighting between the Vishnu and Shiva cults of bhakti, and to interrogate simultaneously the nexus of bhakti-gender-patriarchy amounts to an attempt to de-construct bhakti construct. This essay performs a reading that resists, and therefore, is in some measure– a reading that is postmodernist and feminist.

Women Bhakti Poets

Women mystics of the bhakti sampradaya in medieval India, between the ninth and seventeenth centuries (including a few in the nineteenth century), provide an interesting scope for research in the interface between–women's quest for enlightenment and their encountering of patriarchal subordination, gender stereotyping and sexual abuse–which they must confront both at home and in the world outside, despite the fact that they are located within the broad normative of spiritual convention. Women Bhakti saints that are popularly known to us, translated and researched in our times, include the following: Andal (Tamilnadu, 9th c), Akka Mahadevi (Karnataka, 12th c), Janabai (Maharashtra, 13th c), Gangasati (Gujarat, 12-14th c), Lal Ded (Kashmir, 14th c), Mirabai (Rajasthan, 15th c), Bahinabai (Maharashtra, 17th c). A late entrant into the women's Bhakti matrix is Peero, a courtesan saint-poet from 19th century Punjab. M. S. Subhalakshmi, the ethereal classical singer from the south (who began life as a Devadasi), is another claimant to the fold of modern bhakti, besides the voices of scores of women-poets who have lived on the other side of memory, unknown to us. Here, I shall examine in brief the life and work of Andal and Mahadevi akka – two women poets from south India, and within their respective

contexts, I shall do a reading of gender-specific issues that surface in their writings as women in bhakti.

In medieval India, we find at the centre of Hindu religion the trinity gods – Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh (Shiva) – upholders of three cardinal life principles of creation, maintenance and dissolution. Each God of the trinity was framed within a matrix of layered narratives and sported a myriad nomenclature. Lord Vishnu, the God of restoration and preservation was the locus of the Alvar Vaishnav tradition to which Andal belonged. From a very early age, Andal began writing passionate love songs addressed to Krishna – eighth avatar of Lord Vishnu, he is regarded as supreme God Himself. Recurrent references to Krishna and several Vaishnav myths find their way into her passionate love poems in the form of dyadic references, jealous digs at Krishna's consort Radha and wife Rukmini or to Vishnu's wife Laxmi. Myth in Andal's verse is also accessed through the use of metaphor, anecdote, personification and other forms of tropes.

To make better sense of the Vaishnava Saguna Bhakti poetics, we need to keep in mind certain basics: two of Vishnu's incarnations – Rama and Krishna, that are central to the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata, often find their way into Vaishnav semiotic. Vishnu/Krishna is usually represented as blue complexioned, handsome and taut, with four arms holding the following esoteric symbols – a conchshell, a discus, a lotus flower and a mace. The layered semiotics of Vaishnav poetics also derives from indigenous subaltern myths that have been co-opted from agrarian contexts. The Vaishnav Bhakti semiotic exults in the aesthetics of feeling romance there is to it– a sense of abundance and the approach to god is that, of a love that is passionate and dyadic. Here is a quote from Chabria and Shankar's translation of Andal:

> Your great black body is cleaved
> By springing lightening. Know
> I, cracked gem, wish to be entwined with
> The glorious Lord of Vengadam this way. He holds
> Auspicious Sri Devi to his resplendent
> Chest. Go tell him to know such love
> With me, to crush my savaged heaving
> Breasts to him every single day. (Andal, lines 101)

To use a technical expression from Bharatmuni's aesthetics of the rasa theory, Vaishnav Bhakti is essentially *shringara-rasa pradhan*. Deeply imbricated in mythology, it is temple-centric and a chosen path of the well-to-do householder, who seeks to balance spiritual and material dualities. Some popularly known

names of Vishnu are – Krishna, Parashurama, Raghurai, Rama, Giridhara Gopal, Ranchod, Jagannatha and many more, with Mohini being his one and only female *swaroopa* (aspect).

Andal who wrote from within the Alvar school of Vaishnav Bhakti tradition in ninth century Tamil Nadu, graduated to the status of Goddess/special soul, early in her childhood. She was an abandoned infant who was found and adopted instantly into the family of a senior Alvar. Andal, who grew up on a diet of Krishna, perceived herself as Krishna's bride and unabashedly wrote passionate erotic verse until the moment of her disappearance at age sixteen into Krishna's idol. This unabashed tenor of Andal's stands out in her Vaishnav Bhakti poetics; it lends her voice an urgent dramatic timber, which resonates well with contemporary poetic tastes and sensibilities.

For my study of Andal's biography and her vacana writings, I have used as my primary text– Priya Chabria and Ravi Shankar's translations and notes from *Andal, The Autobiography of a Goddess* (2015). I have also referenced Devdutt Pattnaik's *7 Secrets of Vishnu* (2011) and *7 Secrets of the Goddess* (2014), besides an online essay by Padma Raghavan & Savita Narayan, titled: "Andal: The Poet and her incomparable garland of verses" from a Heritage India website. According to Chabria and Shankar, south India in the medieval ages was mired with religious conflicts. The Nayanars (Shaivites) who had secured royal patronage were busy waging battles against the dominant Buddhist and Jain religions. Also, there was infighting among the Shaiva Nayanars and the Vaishnav Alvars:

> The Nayanars and the Alvars also bitterly warred with each other, a fact not often acknowledged. During our research we came across this quixotic maxim, "The Nayanars walk and sing, the Alwars stand and sing". Tellingly the maxim means that the Nayanars, having secured royal patronage under recently re-converted Shaiva Chola Kings, were free to wander and proselytize about the Shaivite god's miracles. The Alvars were restricted to singing their lauds in their local shrines or at principal temples like Srirangam... They therefore "stood and sang." (li/lii)

Of Andal, who belonged to the frontline order of the Alvars, it is said that she was found beneath a tulsi plant by Periyalvar, who was an ardent devotee and head priest of a Vishnu temple of Vatapatrasayi at Srivilliputtur. Periyalvar was a learned man, extremely spiritual and much respected. He was fond of gardening and fondly made garlands for daily worship at the temple. On discovering the tiny infant beneath the tulsi shrub in his garden, the delighted Periyalvar (also known as Vishnuchitta) and his wife Vrajai adopted the baby

and raised her as their own; educating her and grooming her in the spiritual discipline, arts and literature of the Alvars. Periyalvar's words give us a window into how he saw this child that he had received into his life. She was for him a very *baal* (baby) Krishna, and he to her was the very mother that Yashoda had been to Krishna (symbolically, emotionally). I quote:

> I saw Him both Mighty and as The Child I play with at home, loving Him as only a mother can. I think of myself as Yashoda, God's mother – as my wife Viraja knows.
>
> …. did people begin to call me Periyalvar? After this? Or when my daughter married the Lord, and I became His father-in-law?
>
> The love of God does strange things to us. …… My body remains a man's but my touch becomes that of a proud mother as each day I plait flower garlands for Him. (171)

Kodai (or Godha) as the girl was named, was happy to be her father's companion and accompanied him on many a pilgrimage. She benefitted much from the spiritual fervour, the bhakti discourse and the singing. From an early age she had begun to compose poetry seeped in ardent devotion for Krishna. A verse by Andal:

> As dwarf, You strode the worlds with two steps – Glory to Your feet.
> As Rama, You slew the demon of arrogance – Glory to Your valour.
> As Krishna in a cradle, You shattered the cart of evil – Glory to Your fame.
> As Giri Gowardhan, You lifted a mountain for our protection – Glory to Your goodness.
> Glory to you eternally – Grace us we implore. (15)

Things changed however when her father, Vishnuchitta/Periyalvar, found one day a strand of hair in a garland meant for Vishnu's idol. Further inquiry divulged the fact that Kodai was in the habit of wearing the garlands made for Krishna, that she did it righteously as she considered herself Krishna's bride. Periyalvar was shocked to know his daughter had been adorning her hair with the garlands he used to make daily for Krishna's temple service. For a while he stopped making the garlands until one night when Lord Ranganatha himself appeared in his dream, and assured him no harm was done, that it pleased him, in fact, to wear garlands that had first been worn by Kodai his sweet devotee. This momentous event assured Peiryalvar of the piety of his daughter's actions. Hereafter, Kodai (Andal) was addressed as Sudikuduttha Nachchiyar, meaning the girl who offered God garlands first worn by her.

Andal by then had reached the marriageable age of fifteen. She was extremely beautiful, learned and well versed in the arts of devotion. Periyalvar and Viraja were keen to get her suitably married but Kodai refused to marry a mortal, she insisted she was surrendered to Krishna and would become his bride alone. Several verses composed by Andal around this time are seared with the agony of separation and an urgent desire to be possessed body and spirit by the One Krishna. In the new bloom of youth, she writes, "Drenched in love I drench/Your feet with flowers. In return/You torture/me with half-fulfilled desires that inflame me/further," (37) and more from the Andal translations by Chabria & Shankar:

> …auspicious, incandescent, virginal
>
> am I
>
> accept this
>
> fire me
>
> into the dark one who
>
> will rend
>
> my body's
>
> secret gullet
>
> as he enters me. (36)

A marriage ceremony with the Lord was then arranged. The wedding procession was grand and abundantly arranged, even the reigning Pandya king was there with his queen and entourage. It is said that on entering the temple, Kodai in her bridal finery ran towards the idol of Krishna in the sanctum sanctorum, and instantly vanished–merged with His idol. She was aged 16; ever since her merger with Andavan (Vishnu) she is known as Andal. Andal means she that reigns. Once again, I quote Periyalvar:

> Kodai never looked more luminous than on her poochudal ceremony, adorned with garlands of buds, full-blown flowers and the rarest blooms I could gather. Butterflies fluttered around her, bees hummed around her… as our girl swooned. Kodai looked like a curved petal aflame. In a flash, like a wound half-remembered I understood where my daughter was heading: it was to be a solitary, painful and effulgent path. Kodai was becoming Andal. (174)

Andal is known to be the youngest woman saint-poet of the Alvar Vaishnav tradition of Tamil Nadu. The Alvars along with the Nayanmars– their Siva-worshipping counterparts, were the earliest and the initial most proponents of the Bhakti movement, which emerged as an antidote to the exclusive systems

of Brahmin ritual and as a Hindu strategy to stall the exodus of lower caste Hindus into Jain/Buddhist orders. From a distance of ten centuries when we look back today, the twin aspect of the Bhakti project, with Vaishnav Alvars on one hand and Shaiva Nayanmars on the other, seems like a macro sized, consolidated attempt of foresighted Hindu (Brahmin and Shudra) saints, to stem the exodus of lower caste Hindus into other religions; that the Alvars and Nayanmars were partners in the attempt is however incidental. The reality according to Padma Raghavan and Savita Narayan, is much different and rarely been acknowledged. Fact is that, there was much infighting and rivalry among the Alvars and the Nayanmars who competed against each other in the fray, along with other Jain and Buddhist rivals. Fortunately, for posterity, they both ended up expanding the limits of Hinduism by taking the Hindu icons to the margins of society, spearheading the construction of indigenous schools of parallel spirituality and alternate canons of sacred prose/poetry, which later merged with temple scriptures that were mainstream.

Thus, the Alvars and the Nayanars ushered mass movements of people from the margins to the centre – they were instrumental in birthing the Hindu alternative to temple worship, which eventually led to the opening up of temple doors to the masses, who until then had been kept outside the temple's precincts. As a result, they forged an alternate/parallel line of worship as Bhakti. In a bid to bring God to the poor man's hut they composed devotional songs in the local language, which over a period of time grew into a significant corpus and took their place in temples alongside the Vedic scriptures in Sanskrit.

As rain sews earth and sky in jewel chains

my need for him strings upwards from my wet

body. Am I to be an aromatic desert leaf

that dies in the fertile season? Ask him this, go. (109)

*

potent and frail

killer and victim

this is us

I bleed

staunch

my wound

hear my prayer

fill my being

with your being. (147)

*

Andal's Krishna bhakti–the metaphor of pining, passion and demanding fierceness, is reminiscent of the legendary love play of Radha-Krishna, so erotically described by Jayadev in his *Gita Govinda*. According to Patnaik, "The idea of Radha flourished primarily in the Gangetic plains. But it arose in the eastern areas of Odisha, Bengal and Assam, which were prominent centres of Tantra and Kali worship…. Radha's fierce love for Krishna would feature prominently in the devotional movement of Chaitanya to the extent that even men started identifying themselves with Radha, considering Krishna to be the only true, complete and perfect man" (70-71).

From Andal the Alvar saint of the ninth-century Tamil Nadu, we move forward in time to the Kali-like aspect of Mahadevi akka, a Lingayat saint poet located in twelfth-century Karnataka. A glaring commonality between the two lies in the fact that, they were both surrendered from an early age to the divine Lord; both were mystics, poets and beautiful women. Mahadevi was often referred to as Akka – elder sister; she was initiated to Shiva bhakti by a passing ascetic at the age of ten, and eventually by twenty-six, she had enrolled into the ascetic order of the Lingayats, who worshipped Lord Shiva and lived on the outskirts of human society. The Lingayats (ascetics who wore the *linga* as a threaded pendant) were a variant of the ViraShaiva path that surfaced in Karnataka in the tenth-century. The Lingayat saints, in their approach to Shiva bhakti seem to locate themselves closer to the nirguna/meditative aspect of Shaivism. In Mahadevi akka we have the narrative of not the householder-saint, but the aspect of one who has given up the world, family, household and marriage to live the life of a celibate, in single-minded pursuit of enlightenment and *mukti*. In Mahadevi, we have the rare woman yogi who chose eventually to withdraw to the forests near Srisailam, Telangana, and live an ascetic life of severe trials and penance, in a cave in the mountains located on the banks of river Krishna. From what we know today of the Akka Mahadevi caves, the tiger reserve and the forests that surround it, also considering the fact that she wore no clothes, her life choices and circumstances were harsh to the extreme.

Shiva himself was a great wandering yogi–a Mahayogi, Adi Yogi, or often known as, Mahadev – the greatest of all Gods. Mythical lore connects Shiva–the primal Yogi, with severe penance and ascetic practise, classical music and dance and with the subversive esoteric of tantra and dark cosmology – profound, scientific metaphysics of honing and accessing latent potential of the human body. The science of Tantra regards the human body as a powerful microcosmic

unit, which can be brought to a state of alignment with the macrocosmic realms and their frequencies, in such a way as to awaken the body microcosm to its highest potential (which occasions the rising of the kundalini), and thereby, orchestrate its opening like a chalice that begins to receive the divine elixir and resonates to the hum of celestial harmonies, striking with the hemisphere–a sublime eternal song. Christ, who is said to have walked on water, was obviously an evolved yogi–attuned to the finest of celestial laws and harmonies.

Mahadevi's quest and life-path, even the manner of its unfolding, resonates intensely with the energies and quintessential persona of Lord Shiva, whom she addresses in her vacanas as Cenna Mallikarjua – sweet Lord white as Jasmine. The whiteness of the Lord, however, does not fit in with our general perception of Shiva – Mahadev, Bholenath, Kaal Bhairav. Although mythology presents Shiva as blue throated/*Neelkanth* with fair skin, his entire body is generally painted in shades of blue (not white). Mostly, the images show him sitting cross legged with a crescent moon adorning his lustrous hair, and sometimes in his tresses flow waters of the falling Ganges; a cobra snake garlands his neck, he wears a garment fashioned from tiger skin, and has besides him a *trishul* (a staff with a three-pronged blade attached to it), a *dumroo* (small percussion instrument), a conchshell and an earthern vessel. These symbols however find scarce mention in her later work, as her spiritual quest takes her beyond the Saguna semiotic and into the forest-realms of the formless Nirguna.

Mahadeviakka is a voice that has baked in the ordinary family grill and churned in the mill of societal pressure. The pains and rigours of life are rarely mentioned in her poems. Her general disillusionment with the world can perhaps be traced in the tone of fatigue and dejection, that we sometimes find in her poems which express her deep desire for a total merger with the divine. As a poet, she comes across as a brilliant mystic who wrote poetry of the spiritual quest and was brilliantly imagistic. Mahadevi's poems are like brief conversations with Shiva as *Mallikarjuna*; she weaves into her poetic inscapes striking images from nature, from the landscapes and natural phenomenon, that she sees around her. I quote from A. K. Ramanujan's translations of her vacanas in *Speaking of Shiva*:

> You are like milk
>
> In water: I cannot tell
>
> What comes before,
>
> What after;
>
> Which is the master,
>
> Which the slave;

> What's big,
>
> What's small. (115)

It is said that at age ten, an unknown travelling Sadhu initiated Mahadeviakka to Shiva bhakti. That moment of initiation, she grew up to consider as the real moment of her birth and soon after she betrothed herself to lord Shiva, who sat in the Udutadi temple in the form of *Mallikarjuna.* According to Ramanujan, the name *Mallikarjuna* translates as 'the Lord (Arjuna) white as 'Jasmine' or as 'Arjuna, Lord of goddess Mallika'; and '*Cenna*' means dear, lovely and beautiful. So Mahadevi fell in love with *Cennamallikarjuna*; she composed vacanas addressed to Him, and took his name for a signature in all the songs that she she wrote. The God-path, which took Andal to marriage and a merger with Krishna's (Kannan's) idol in the Thiruvarangam Ranganathswamy temple, that same path drove Mahadeviakka to abandon home and marriage and travel to the Lingayat academy in Kalyan; and from there later, to the Srisailam forests, mountain and there a deep cave, where she is said to have meditated and finally disappeared from. Here are a few vacanas, Ramanujan's translations, which reflect the harsh struggle and sublime tenor of Mahadevi's inscape.

> If sparks fly
>
> I shall think my thirst and hunger quelled.
>
> If the skies tear down
>
> I shall think them pouring for my bath.
>
> If a hillside slide on me
>
> I shall think it flower for my hair.
>
> O lord white as jasmine, if my head falls from my shoulders
>
> I shall think it your offering. (120)
>
> *

In her growing up years, she appears to have had no special claims to social privilege or protection, except that she had lustrous tresses and was exceptionally beautiful; so much so that Kaushika, who was the king or chieftain of the land, fell madly in love with her. He wooed her and chased her, and harassed her parents with profuse declarations of love and subtle intimidation. Scared for her parent's wellbeing, the young Mahadevi at last relented and they were married. The lusty king was a non-believer, which made the odds even steeper. Finally, when conjugal life became unbearable, Mahadevi abandoned home, family and city, and walked all the way to the Lingayat headquarters in Kalyana, where, after much discourse with Allama Prabhu and Basavanna, she was accepted into the Lingayat fold as an ascetic initiate. Around this time, she

came to be addressed as akka– elder sister, which henceforth was used with her name as an appendage. Mahadeviakka flourished in the stress-free environs and plunged herself in devotion. The following vacana of hers is replete with joy and has all the features of Saguna Bhakti. It also reveals the degree of the poet's surrender and detachment from the world, as she moves in it internally awakened and lit.

> Locks of shining hair
>
> A crown of diamonds
>
> Small beautiful teeth
>
> And eyes in a laughing face
>
> that light up fourteen worlds –
>
> I saw His glory,
>
> and seeing, I quell today
>
> the famine in my eyes.
>
> I saw the haughty Master
>
> for whom men, all men,
>
> are but women, wives.
>
> I saw the Great One
>
> who plays at love
>
> with Sakti,
>
> original to the world,
>
> I saw His stance
>
> and began to live. (120)
>
> *

Concluding his introduction to Mahadeviakka, Ramanujan says, "Like other bhaktas, her struggle was with her condition, as body, as woman, as social being tyrannized by social roles, as a human confined to a place and time. Through these shackles she bursts, defiant in her quest for ecstasy" (113-114). And one wonders, if Mahadeviakka's struggle to unshackle herself from societal pulls and norms can be equated with the struggle of her male saint-colleagues. Was it not more difficult for women bhaktas to hold ontheir own path of God? Mahadevi who had given up her clothes and used only her long tresses was also harassed at times by unwanted male attention and abuse; note the vacana where she refers to the body as 'dirt'. "My body is dirt, / my spirit is space:/ which shall I grab, O Lord? How/and what/shall I think of you?" (116). In

Mahadevi's context gender sexuality seems to become a liability, causing her distress and some confusion. How then must she think of Mallikarjuna, who in spiritual parlance is, the only "Master for whom men, all men are but women, wives"; he that is "the Great One/ who plays at love/ with Shakti, original to the world."

How is it, one wonders, that among male saints from Saguna and Nirguna Bhakti, none (almost none other than Jnaneshvar) were inspired to leave their marital home, while a lot of women bhaktas– such as Mahadevi, Lal Ded, Mirabai– were harassed into crossing the threshold of their marriage and home, in order to pursue their spiritual calling. Research into women ascetics in India indicates that theoretically women (like Shudras) in Vedic culture, and later in the Bhakti tradition, were allowed to take to asceticism, but the ascetic's life was regarded as unnatural and unsuitable for the female gender. Even socially, the scene was quite complex: widows or women who wished to remain unmarried were often suspected of using asceticism as a ploy to escape the normative life. Another aspect was the concept of *stridharma*, which perceived marriage, wifehood and motherhood as a woman's prime and ultimate goal, and was prescribed by authoritative texts like *Manusmriti* and the *Dharmashastra.* The concept of *stri-dharma,* in turn, was attached to the idea of woman as container and upholder of family and clan honour. Layered in metaphoric meanings, the woman subject and by extension the woman-saint, inhabited a space that symbolised dehumanization, which continuously challenged her human needs and aspect.

Conclusion

The ascetic life for women was also a ticket to freedom from the trappings of gender roles and emotional stereotypes; especially for women like Andal and Mahadevi, who were inclined to a life that was outside the socio-cultural trappings of mortal convention. For instance, in the Alvar Bhakti tradition, Andal was the first woman bhakta who wrote so unselfconsciously love poems addressed to Lord Krishna– her spiritual master and betrothed. Andal's is a poetics of erotic, irreverence and virile passion, and longing for union with Krishna, where her own female body becomes a site for yoga with the *param-atma* on levels that are carnal, subtle and divine. What saves her, a woman, from social derision is the fact that she is located in the bhakti convention of dyadic love, which symbolises the Divine-devotee connection as Shiva-Shakti, Purush-Prakriti, Radha-Krishna, man-woman, lover-beloved, husband-wife.

On the other hand, Mahadeviakka's efforts are even more stunning and man-like. In an effort to draw closer to the experience of God, she chose to drop her clothes along with feelings of shame, vanity and pride and stayed in

the nude, in a cave till the end of her life. The ascetic's life, can we say, that although it hugely challenged the concerned women, it also brought them freedom and an independence of will? That from being dehumanised as symbols of family shame and family honour, they were able to posit resistance and recover their lost identities and selfhood, which itself was commendable and courageous to say the least.

Mahadevi, the Lingayat, who was surrendered to her Lord Mallika-Arjuna as beloved and master seems to write from a state of anxiety, sometimes even with ambiguity towards her own body. Her body in one vacana is likened to an abandoned carcass– as a thing that has been used and discarded by the Lord, and therefore, now it is of little consequence if someone else invades it. The ordeals of Mahadevi's vagrant life, her conscious choice to walk a path of severe austerities seem to take her beyond the limits of detachment and body consciousness.

Andal, on the other hand, locates her bhakti in the sacred body space that is virgin and a gift for Krishna her betrothed. Andal longs for a divine union, both physical and spiritual; for her the body with all its passion and sweat is fit sacred site for lovemaking with only her Lord, with whom she unabashedly craves for a union that is sexual and yet, sacred and divine at the same time. In contrast to Andal's firm stance–as bride to lord Krishna, which is backed by repeated entreaties to Krishna to take her "flower body", mind and soul in complete carnal abandon, the tenor of Mahadevi-akka's vacana compositions oscillates between her *Cenna* lord, sometimes as legitimate husband and sometimes illicit lover. Also, the turn of her phrase is more ascetic and celibate. It must also be considered here that, Andal in a meteoric lifespan of sixteen years had lived a life of privilege and intense Krishna bhakti from early infancy. Her foster parents were sensitive and nurturing people, who provided her with stable education and a climate of spiritual abundance. Of particular significance was the shaping presence of her father Periyalvar, who himself was a senior Alvar, and had introduced Andal to the depths of Krishna leela and bhakti; so, when Andal rebelled against the very idea of a mortal husband her wishes were honoured. Whereas, Mahadevi, who came from an ordinary background, buckled under the chieftain Kaushaki's pressure and in a bid to save her parents from further threats and harassment, agreed to a marriage. Later, when marriage to the lusty Kaushaki became insufferable, she had only one option and that was to take to the roads and live on her feet.

Considering the Hindu normative for women as a class was that, they were incapable of independent thinking and therefore, in need of male protection, guidance and domination. I would like to recall Ramanujan's thoughtful but passing comment, where he likens Mahadeviakka's struggles to those of "other

bhaktas," and yet at the same time mentions the specifics of her struggle "as body, as woman, [and] as social being tyrannized by social roles, as a human confined to a place and time" (113-114). One is grateful to Ramanujan for acknowledging (even in passing) the uniqueness of the bhakti context for the women bhakta. It needs to be reiterated here (with emphasis however) that, Bhakti for women who were perceived more as symbols of dharma and honour, was a path ridden with severe social stigma, issues of marital and familial rejection, and psychological and emotional abuse, which amounted to severe physical, mental and existential stress. With reference to women poets who were saintly beings, these are daunting contexts that deserve due acknowledgement and evaluation in bhakti scholarship.

As women saint-poets, who were intensely honest, pure and sublime of spirit–Andal and Mahadeviakka have earned a place among the frontrunners of the bhakti matrix. Embedded in the convention of the sacred, from beyond the gender normative, they unwittingly speak to us as spirited torch-bearers of the resisting feminist.

Note: As I understand from my readings of the philosophical writings and devotional songs of Abhinavagupta (980-1020 AD) the great poet and expert on tantric practise and theory, Tantra is an esoteric system– a scientific method and approach to the realisation of enlightenment; it coordinates and accesses elements of the human microcosm (mind, body and spirit) in all their entirety, to systematically orchestrate the attainment of liberation from dyadic dualities through union/yoga of the body/ Shakti with the spiritual element that is essentially defined as male Shiva/ Bhairav – and thereby, through sexual-spiritual union to touch the eternal, macrocosmic Divine that exists in an ever sustained state of dissolution and bliss.

Works Cited and Consulted

Chabria, Priya & Ravi Shankar. Translators & Editors. *Andal: The Autobiography of a Goddess.* Zubaan, 2015.

Menon, Ramesh. Tr. *The Devi Bhagvatam Retold*, Rupa & Co., 2006.

Pattanaik, Devdutt. *7 Secrets of Vishnu*, Westland ltd., 2011.

—, *7 Secrets of the Goddess*, Westland ltd., 2014.

Raghavan, Padma & Savita Narayan. 'Andal: The poet and her incomparable garland of verses', *Heritage India*, https://heritage-india.com/andal-poet-incomparable-garland- verses/.

Ramanujan, A K. "Introduction" and Translations, *Speaking of Siva*. Penguin Books Ltd., 1973.

—— * ——

The Culture and Politics of Representation in Mirabai's Poetry

Kusum Deswal

The politics of representation revolves around issues of power and control over self and its representations. The act of conscious representation of 'other' in writings/creations of bhakti poets is associated with the practices of caste domination within the context of bhakti poetry in medieval ages. The oppressed or marginalised acquire some of the strategies of the oppressor while speaking about or against their marginality or while exploiting the ambiguity of their status within or without the power centres. The issue of the politics of representation in Mirabai's poetry is part of a much larger debate on relations of power to the Bhakti movement. This movement was revolutionary in its nature. This was an era of forming a personal relationship with God, which sprang from the yearning for compassion that everyone experienced after the Vedic period was over. The Bhakti movement first began in South India and later reached North India and other parts of the country. The movement redefined India socially, culturally and religiously, and was also seen as the reaction of masses towards the excesses of Sanskrit traditions and the asceticism of Buddhism and Jainism. For women embracing this change was easier as they could easily consider god as their son, friend, or husband. Prior to this, women were never independent and they did not have access to anything beyond their homes.

The emerging bhakti poets, like Mirabai, destabilised the deep rooted and prejudiced social practices like *sati pratha.* She conformed to the oral narrative form in her poetry but explicitly situated her creations as the poetry of resistance against biased social practices, and also, as the poetry of devotion. The main focus of this paper shall be on understanding how Mirabai represented herself in her verses. Mirabai's poetry is largely subjective. Mirabai had already defied the societal norms, so she did not have to imagine Krishna's relationship with *Gopis*. Her poetry is an expression of her own love relationship with Krishna. Mirabai was born in 1498 A.D. (1555 *Vikram Samwat*) at Kudaki (Chokadi) near Merta. Mirabai is one of the most popular legendary figures of early Hindi and Gujarati literature. One cannot undermine the significance of her songs when they are alive after half a millennium amongst millions of people of all castes and classes in Northern and Western India. Her poetry was heart-felt. Mirabai's work has been translated in English several times most notably by A.J. Alston (1980), Hawley and Juergensmeyer (1988), Shama Futehally (1994), Robert Bly and Jane Hirshfield (2004), and Andrew Schelling (1993).

Bhakti and Culture

It is important to understand the concept of bhakti in those times. Most of the theories on bhakti associate it with a particular religion or cult and also a specific doctrine. Bhakti is understood as monotheism, based on the devotion to a personal God, where there was a consciousness of the difference between God and humans. It is based on the idea that bhakti is different from the path of *jnana* and that they are opposites of each other. Krishna Sharma in her book *Bhakti and the Bhakti movement: A New Perspective* refers to the academic work of H.C Raychadhuri's *Materials for the Study of the Early History of the Vaishnava Sect* and emphasises that bhakti is largely identified with Vaishnavism. Many academicians described bhakti from the perspective of Vaishnavas and they had substantial material on the same. Referring to Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* Krishna Sharma observes that:

> The word bhakti is derived from *Bhaj* by adding the suffix *ktin*(ti). Bhaj can be used in any of the following meanings: to partake, to engage in, to turn and resort to, to pursue, to declare for, to practice or cultivate, to prefer or choose, to serve and honour, to love and adore. The suffix *ktin* is usually added to a verb to form an action or agent noun. Thus bhakti (+ *ti*) can mean participation as well as recourse, experience as well as practice, reverence as well as love and adoration….According to the rules of Panini, bhakti indicates a *bhava* or condition. In the relevant sutra in the *Ashtadhyayi*, he uses the word in the sense of excessive fondness and devotion, and illustrates its meaning with different objects and personalities. (Sharma 40)

It is equally relevant to focus on the concept of culture in India. Culture represents the values of a nation; beliefs and outlook towards life of its inhabitants. Culture is manifest in the ideologies of the life of a nation. In India, ideologies are deeply influenced by religion and thus they influence our culture. All forms of music, dance, and paintings are largely religious in flavour and deeply embedded in folk culture. The Bhakti movement also intensified the urge to build temples as an expression of devotion. The temples were the centre of religious fervour and social congregation. Many temples still disseminate religious and cultural values by engaging people in discourses. Temples provided the stage for the evolution of collective dance and music. The biggest contribution of the Bhakti movement to the Indian culture was the composition of the songs and poetry which were intertwined with folk music and group singing. The bhakti songs were full of passions, heartfelt emotions and sentiments thereby, enhancing its cultural value. Most of the *sant* poets belonged to the lower strata of society like *kumbis*, tailors, potters, carpenters, gardeners and barbers.

For many *sants* like Akka Mahadevi, Andal and Mira Bai the main goal of bhakti was to attain salvation through self-surrender to God. The Bhakti movement popularised more because it offered an equal status to all *bhakts*. Therefore, the meekest from the orthodox sections of the society became a part of it.

Life and works of Mira Bai

Mirabai was married to Bhoja Raj in 1516 and the couple did not have any child. She was the grand-daughter of Rao Duda. Hermann Goetz opines that Mirabai must have attained the age of 65 or 67 years. He asserts that she could not have died before A.D. 1563 or 1565. This can be corroborated by the legends connecting her with Akbar, Man Singh, Birbal, Tansen and Tulsidas. Her association with Akbar and others has been considered as unhistorical because many scholars believed that she died in A.D. 1546. There is evidence of her disappearance but not her death, and therefore, one can argue that she lived much longer (Goetz).

The Bhakti movement was at its zenith between the fifteenth and seventeenth century. The faith of *sant* poets in the efficacy of *bhakti bhava* (devotional love) over other forms of oneness with God became the creed. They practiced to surrender to the will of God and learnt to sacrifice everything that they owned. They believed that the best mortification made their souls humble. Kabir and Mirabai are the most popular *sant* poets from North India. The Western interest in Mirabai's poetry began when Britishers colonised India in the mid-eighteenth century. Mirabai's poetic creations are conventionally known as "*Padavali*". The word *Padavali* means a series of *padas*. *Pada* was a short song providing an instruction on spiritualism. Since it was composed in simple rhythms, therefore it enabled an easy adaptation for singing purposes. The melody or *raga* was specified and usually had a *dhruvak* or refrain in the opening line or second line (Alston 27). Mirabai's songs have survived more than five hundred years through the itinerant singers who memorised them and sang them sometimes after making some alterations and additions to them. Everyone accepts that Mirabai's songs have been altered by the singers who sang them often. Her songs have come to us in various dialects which carried the linguistic fervour of the singers who sang them. Many a times they sang different versions of the songs which were altered by individuals to suit their own likings or the taste of the audience. Acharya Chaturvedi's *Padavali* which is a 2008 edition includes 201 *padas*.

Mirabai was not a revolutionary and she never condemned any social or religious practices. Her poetry does not focus upon the social order like Kabir.

She only followed Vaishnavism or particularly Krishnaism. Her poetry emerges from her own mystical experiences with her Lord Krishna. *Madhurya bhawa* is predominant in her poetry. Women poets conforming to *madhur rasa* tradition, considered their personal God as their husband, and surrendered to their respective God completely. That is primarily the reason Mirabai considered Giridhari Lal as her husband. Mirabai considered herself as a reincarnation of *gopi* Lalita. There are various such references in her verses –*meri unki preet purani* (Chaturvedi, verse 20); *purabjanam ko kol* (verse 22); *purabjanam ko kant* (verse 124). Her life story was deliberately muddled up by many writers. Acharya Chaturvedi avers that she was presented as the wife of Rana Kumbha by many writers due to the politics of her times. Krishna P. Bahadur opines that few incidents of her life survived as they were in consonance with the *Vaishnava* sect. For instance, her short verbal spat with Jiv Gosain in Vrindavan. Similarly, her terms with Tulsidas pleased the followers of Lord Ram as they wanted to demean the Krishna devotees. Many incidents of her life were narrated from the perspective of the lower middle class with whom she mingled. As the middle class without understanding the political angle of her life kept reiterating the same for the regular quarrels in their household. Mirabai has survived despite all the varied interpolations and distortions of her life story.

Despite the limitation of the reach of vernacular languages used by Mirabai for expression, her creations have been translated and re-interpreted by reputed translators and scholars across nations. Mirabai composed *sagun* poetry. Mirabai composed many *bhajans* and couplets which express her devotion to Giridhar (Krishna) as the upholder of the mountain. According to Hinduism, five types of emotions comprise bhakti–*shanta, dasya, sakhiya, vatsalya and madhurya*. There are many *padas* of Mirabai that have been identified as comprising the *madhurya bhava* or *viraha vedana.* Schelling has done an in-depth analysis of her *padas* in the light of eroticism. Her poetry abounds with themes of love, devotion and spiritual illumination. She created a corpus of poetry which was based on emotions, sentiments and pure devotion. Like the Sanskrit poets of the early period, Mirabai presented *shringar rasa* (based on passions) sentiment in her poetry besides *Madhurya Bhawa* and *Viraha Vedna* (dwelling on pangs of separation from her beloved). In many of her creations it is evident that the body indulges in physical pleasure whereas divinity is attained by the enlightened soul. Her condensed efforts and her calibrated enquiry during her spiritual journey make her life an exceptional saga of struggle and determination to reach the divine. The elements of *shringar rasa* and *madhurya bhava* bring sublimity to her poetry. The simple rhythm and repeated refrain in her songs encouraged millions to sing her songs and relate with her intense longing for the divine. To quote a few lines:

Maim giradhar rang rachi saiyam mai giridhar rang rachi
Pacaramaga chola pahera sakhi mai
Jhira mita khelan jati
Vajhir mitmai milyo sawaro,
Khola mili tana gati.
Jinaka piya pardes basata haim,
Likham likham bhejat pati,
Mera piya mere hiya basta hai,
Na kahu mai jati.
(Mira said to her companion:
My heart is steeped
In Krsna's love,
I wore a robe of five colours
And went to play hide and seek,
I saw my Dark Lover there
and gave him my body for keeps.
Others send letters to declare
Their love: but my Lover's in my heart
What need I have to go anywhere?) (Bahadur 45)

Mirabai's verses have both spontaneity and instinctiveness in the rhythm and melody. Royal households trained the princesses in playing musical instruments. Krishna P. Bahadur opines that "Mirabai did not deliberately choose her words to create an effect, rather her poetry was so spontaneous outpouring of her heart, and achieved perfection because of her artless and deep emotions" (31). Mirabai as a royal princess must have learnt music and perhaps dance also. That seems to be the reason that she knew different *ragas* and sang *bhajans* perfectly. Mirabai used colloquial language for singing *bhajans*. Her efforts were not in the direction of exhibiting her poetic talents or appeasing others. She sang for her Giridhar Lal and also for her self-attainment. Most of her poems are in Western Rajasthani (the dialect spoken in Mewat) where she was born and brought up. There are also traces of Braj (a dialect of Hindi in and around Vrindavan) and Gujarati as she spent considerable time in Vrindavan. Mirabai's interest in combining the classical and traditional with the vernacular made her poetry sublime. Mirabai described in simple language the concept of righteousness, philosophy and salvation/liberation. It is through the allegorical constructs that the masses understand the idea of salvation as propagated by different schools of philosophy and also in Mirabai's poetry.

Mirabai's songs were influenced by folk culture and her popularity has made her songs immortal. Mira's popularity can be ascertained by the fact that a comic series named *Amar Chitra Katha* has been written portraying her as an ideal wife. The story focuses on her *dharm* and bhakti. These comics play a very crucial role as they become the markers of popular culture. The various depictions of Mirabai in movies, stories, folktales, plays and movies emphasize upon the idea of her radical bhakti as she placed her love for the divine above her duties as a wife and a daughter-in-law. Mirabai was a true aficionado of Lord Krishna. The language of Mirabai's verses is orchestrated with apt use of words, similes and metaphors that depict her reverence for Lord Krishna. Metaphorical expressions become profoundly significant when they are correctly interpreted. It is also possible that Mirabai used Braj with other languages because metaphors require continuous word-play. Her language is flavored with local vocabulary. The meaning of all such words can be traced contextually. A reader is guided by the intentions and tone of the poet within a historical and social context. The authenticity of the verses of Mirabai and many other poets who used vernacular language has been challenged due to lack of historical evidence and the controversies associated with the vernacular literature. Acharya Parshuram Chaturvedi explains that Mirabai used at least fifteen types of metre or *chhand* in her poetry: *Saar chhand, Sarsi chhand, Vishnu pada, Doha chhand, Upmanchhand, Smaansavavya, Shobhanchhand, Tatankchhand, Kundalchhand,* etc. (Chaturvedi 53-55). Krishna Sharma referring to Giridhar explains that Mirabai's narratives are the meaningful observations on the society and culture of those days. They are also the representations of the ideologies that were influential in defining the historical processes. Historians have always viewed language as a political device. In her book she quotes the historian Muzaffar Alam, who believed that the Mughals deliberately promoted Persian as the court language while use of Braj in the imperial court was also a political consideration. Braj was an expression of authority, grace, morals, stories of the sword and Brahmanical traditions.

Mirabai often danced in the temples before the idol of Krishna. Her in-laws and many others thought that she was besmirching the honour of the Sisodia Rajputs. They overlooked the fact that dance was an act of devotion in both mythology and religion. Lord Shiva is known to perform *Tandava* whereas Krishna is popular for his *ras-leela* with *gopis*. Hence, her dance cannot be considered as an outrageous act. Mirabai's passion matched with the intense emotions of Chaitanya who also danced while singing. Kabir and Raidas are not close to her in this kind of devotion. In one of her verses, she speaks of the *rangamahal* (the part of the palace which was for the sensual enjoyment): "*virahana baithya mranga mahala mam*" (Bahadur 105). She renounced the

life of a princess, family comforts and honour to become a true devotee. She broke all the Rajput social codes, wandered on the roads and mingled with people from every social strata. Rana Sanga was her father-in-law who engaged in war with Mughals. It is believed that she defied the norms of upper-class Rajputs and that agitated Rana Sanga. Legend holds that once he pulled the dagger and ran to kill her. He suddenly encountered hundreds of Mira in that room and he did not know which one to kill. There are hundreds of such legendary tales of Mirabai.

Mirabai's spiritual inclination in her poetry did not match with most of the poets of her day like Jai Dev (court poet of North East) or with the poets belonging to the Vallabh school from Braj. She also did not belong to the *Nirgunsants* of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Punjab. She belonged to the *Sagun sants* of Vaishnava sect. Mirabai established a personal relationship with her *Giridhar Nagar,* which was not the case with other *sagun sants.* They were similar to Mirabai only in the acceptance of temple-worship, chanting His name and a faith that devotion will eventually culminate in dissolution in the deity. Chanting of names was an essential aspect of Mirabai's spiritual *sadhana.* She always believed that Lord was limitless and thus viewed him as "*Hari avinasi,*" based on the principle of the indestructible, *mirake prabhu hariawinasi* (Bahadur, verse 75). If God is presented in the human form like Krishna, then a devotee like Mirabai could certainly establish an intimate relationship by perceiving herself as a *Gopi* (cow herding girls famous for their unconditional love for Krishna). This certainly demanded an intense passion of a devotee like Mirabai and a woman's tender heart. Mirabai was purely devoted to her Giridhari Lal like a Hindu wife to Krishna. She constantly refers to Ram and Shyam (Krishna) in her verses. Both are believed to be Vishnu's incarnations, so it is the same whether she addresses Ram or Krishna. She reiterates that those who devote many hours to sleep and useless tasks; they are deluded. They can never get rid from the cycle of birth and death and consequently, they can never attain *moksh.* Whereas she is sure of her way of renunciation which is chanting the name of Ram and surrendering to Krishna:

> *ramana mana leta*
> *apa hi apa pujya kai re,*
> *phule ang nasamata….*
> *dasi mira lala giridhara,*
> *sahajakara bairaga* (106)
> (yet you will not chant Rama's name
> You have built dams
> of vanity all around you….

> Mira says, O Krsna,
> I'm your slave,
> show me the way to
> renunciation.) (Bahadur 107-108)

She lived her life with this constant belief that she was married to Krishna. In one of her verses, she refers to her marriage to Krishna in her dream, "*mai mhane sapne mam parinayam dinanatha*" and refers to her nuptial bed in another verse, "*piya se jsuhage*" (Bahadur, verse 60). Mirabai's poetry combined the devotion to God with a realisation of one's final identity with God. Mirabai is constantly aware of the presence of Krishna in her heart (*dar salahyam sukha – rasi*, Alston, verse 194). All her actions of dancing and singing were her acts of worship of the omnipresent Krishna. Although, it is also true that as long as one is alive God is both present and absent. Whenever Mirabai sensed the distance between her and her beloved Krishna her heart ached, which results in the poetry full of her *viraha-vedna.* Eventually, there is not much difference in the worshippers of *sagun* and *nirgun* poets. Mirabai's poetry is certainly a reflection upon the significant aspects of her life. She never feared punishment by her royal family. She was always determined in the goal of pursuit of her beloved Krishna and she was undeterred by the obstacles that came in her way. She was not interested in understanding anything other than her love and devotion for Krishna. Her soul embraced bhakti of Krishna and all her poetry emerged from her urge to profess her love and yearning for Krishna. The only means of fulfilment for her was surrender and complete devotion to God. Her feelings are evident in the following verse:

> *Mira hari ke haath bikini,*
> *Janama Janama Kidasi*
> (I am sold to Krsna
> I'm his slave
> I have pledged my love to him
> life after life
> and I am united
> with him always.) (56)

Conclusion

The legend of Mirabai was told and retold again and again, thus the narrative was also rephrased, whenever it resurfaced in different languages worldwide. Mirabai was understood by various people at various times according

to their individual perspective and purpose. For instance, Andrew Schelling finds her poetry erotic as well as devotional. His emphasis on eroticism in her poetry seems to be a bit exaggerated. But it is relevant in understanding the Western perspective. Acharya Parsuram Chaturvedi and other scholars lament the distortions that have arisen in many available verses. Purohit Hari Narayan claimed that he collected nearly 500 *padas* or verses in handwritten, oral and printed form as the original creations of Mirabai. He also claimed that the *padas* have extensive history associated with them. Almost all renowned scholars accepted less than two fifty *padas* or verses as Mirabai's original creations. Mirabai's *padas* are filled with theological preachings where she emphasised that worshipping and connecting with Krishna is the soul's means of salvation. There are *padas* that underscore *shringarras* as she focuses upon her sensuous body and struggles to contain her desires. It is evident from all resources and references available that Mirabai was a *sagun sant,* who was an ardent Krishna devotee. She viewed Krishna as her husband like Andal. Mirabai chose the absolute and the eternal God for her eternal love. Like Radha, Mirabai also desired Krishna and did not shy away due to the notions of abstinence for women. She repeatedly referred to Krishna as '*Avinasi*' based on the principle of indestructibility. She always believed that she belonged to her Giridhari Lal, and her only purpose in life was to unite with Him. According to Mirabai, only Krishna could help anyone attain *moksh* (salvation). Hence, she completely surrendered herself to Krishna in order to fulfill her aim of salvation/dissolution or emancipation.

Acharya Parsuram Chaturvedi, A. J. Alston, Robert Bly and Jane Hirshfield opine that there is no other woman poet of Mirabai's calibre who existed before her. According to A.J. Alston, Mirabai cannot be classified with any other *sant* poet except *sant* Gyaneshwar (Alston 26). The desire to unite with His identity is equally pertinent in Gyaneshwar and Mirabai's poetry, and it is evident in Mirabai's *pada*: *Koi kachukahe mana laga, aisi preet lagai manamohana, Jyumsona mem suhaga* (Bahadur 87). Mirabai is primarily identified as a *bhaktin*; secondarily as a poetess. Most of the scholars opine that her poetry reflects her personal life. She was completely devoted to her Giridhari Lal since her early childhood. Her passion and devotion for Krishna increased after she lost her husband and father. Mirabai was initially repressed in a patriarchal society but she gradually emerged as an archetype of a strong woman in complete control of her own life. This is evident in her poetry. She became a precedent for women who want to stand up on their own by transcending all the boundaries of physicality, gender and societal norms.

Works Cited and Consulted

Alston, A. J, translator. *The Devotional Poems of Mira Bai*. By Mirabai. Motilal Banarsidass, 1980.

Amar Chitra Katha: Mirabai. Amar Chitra Katha Private Ltd., 1972.

Bly, Robert and Jane Hirshfield. *Mirabai*: Ecstatic Poems. Aleph Classics, 2004.

Bahadur, Krishna P, translator. *Mira Bai and Her Padas*. By Mirabai. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2002.

Chaturvedi, Parshuram, editor. *Mirabaiki Padawali*. Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. By Mirabai. Allahabad. 22nd ed., 2008.

Chand, Tara. *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*. Read Books, 2006.

Farmer, Herbert H. *Revelation and Religion*. Harpers and Brothers, 1954.

Goetz, Hermann. *Mirabai Her Life and Times*, edited by K.M. Munshi and R.R. Diwakar. Bhavan's Book University, Kindle ed., 2013.

Iraqi, Shahabuddin. *Bhakti Movement in Medieval India: Social and Political Perspectives*. Manohar Publishers, 2009.

Majumdar, R.C. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*. vol. iv, 1957.

Mulchandani, Sandhya. *For the Love of God: Women Poet Saints of the Bhakti Movement*. Penguin Books, 2019.

Schelling, Andrew. *Love and the turning Seasons: India's Poetry of Spiritual and Erotic Longing*. Aleph Classics, 2018.

Schelling, Andrew, translator. *For the Love of the Dark One: Songs of Mirabai*. By Mirabai. Kindle ed., Hohm Press, 1998.

Sharma, Munshi Ram. *Bhakti ka Vikas*, 1958.

Sharma, Krishna. *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement: A New Perspective*.

Munshiram Manoharla Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1987.

Sharma, Sandhya. *Literature, Culture and History in Mughal North India 1550-1800*. Primus Books, 2011.

Spivak, Gayatri, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994.

—— * ——

Metaphorical Metamorphosis: A Critical Reading of Select Stories, Poems and Plays

Manali Dogra

> One moral, at least, may be drawn,
>
> to wit, that all.
>
> our school text-books lie.
>
> What they call History
>
> is nothing to vaunt of,
>
> being made, as it is,
>
> by the criminal in us:
>
> goodness is timeless.
>
> —Auden, "From Archaeology" 60-67

The inexplicable is termed as redundant in human history, while literature serves one with the chance of restoring it, as we question what lies in the world beyond. The word 'Rose' automatically creates visual imagery of a red flower signifying beauty and love; whereas 'night' shall always form a dark, terrible image of crime and danger. The word 'archaeology' is symbolic of the dead, the archaic. However, the paper is an attempt to explore its different nuances, of how any structure can be much more than the literal, or become a vantage point for the elevated feeling, the efficacy of tragic gaiety through the past, present and for the generations to come.

We indeed live in a world of facts that may not believe in envisioning the colours of music or hearing the music of colours, but a metaphor serves as a tool in conceiving such concepts that lead us to these inexplicables. It becomes monumental when it pushes itself to abstraction in pursuit of the inexperienced, the unattained, and the sublime. Auden, in his poem "Archaeology", conveys the same idea of how all that one has read about history and monuments of archaeology holds no significance if one does not learn anything from its past. Man shall continue to bear the mundane, untouched by the superior forces of sublimity and least aware of living life in a manner which Yeats terms as "tragic gaiety."

Sublimity is always veiled in abstraction, and any monument/monumental structure is sustained by its 'jaali work' (carved geometric patterns on perforated stone usually found in Indo-Islamic architecture) that works as a veil in the path of sublimity. It perfuses the message that this veil of obscurity and abstraction

63

is lifted in the very moment, when one enters into a dialogue through perforation contours of beautifully engraved '*jaalis*' (intricate yet airy patterns), and renders himself to the understanding of tragic gaiety. The monument of metaphor remains unaltered, indoctrinated by human experience leading itself to a further destination, into an array of infinite expressions.

Metaphor becomes an autonomous entity that evolves with time, and should not be restricted as a secondary use of language. Embarking the topological transformations of words and sentences into an enduring state of the journey, metaphors of love in the empathetic narrative amidst the inevitable tragic times mark the core of the essential and eternal journey of metaphors that make them monument, rather monumental. The literal metaphor is supposed to focus on the discourse of human life, where the discourse evolves the human to celebrate his tragic being. The paper aims to explore these metaphors of love and tragedy that are beyond the artifice of eternity and surpass their verbal manifestations.

Monument and Movement

Any comprehensive approach needs a complex absorption praxis to respond to the multivariate architectonics, spectrums, echoes, and to put it more simply, abstractions. Metaphors of love and tragedy are abstract figures buried in the explorable layers of literature. They urge one to celebrate the uncelebrated, the tragic, and the appalling. Shakespeare's "The lunatic, the lover and the poet are of imagination all compact" in the fleeting world of reality is a revisit to the eternal longing of decrypting the encrypted message of love adorned by the touch of tragedy. In the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Theseus says,

> THESEUS. Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
>
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.
>
> The lunatic, the lover and the poet
>
> Are of imagination all compact. (Shakespeare 5.1 5-8)

Like a lover soaked in mourning melodies of life, the monument of metaphor is never static; it is a unifying structural design that is in an eternal state of movement, a *Raahro* (passer-by) to guide not only a selected few but everybody around. It becomes a directional note for the unknown path. Metaphor, along with its inexhaustibility, carries within the historical sense that coalesces unified memory in the abstract perspective. Because of its incapacity to be the expression in concrete form, the metaphor becomes the symbolic self for the modus of abstraction. The historical sense of a metaphor becomes a monument when the memory becomes a receptacle of significant moments of life. The acceptance of nothingness, a meaningless modern world, was acknowledged and anticipated by the modern poets as well.

Yeats, in his poems, *Sailing to Byzantium* and *Byzantium*, talked about a journey to the mythical city of Byzantium, one that emerges out as a response to the chaotic world. At the same time, it implies the upsurging requirement of a new golden age. Conjured by the poet in the mythical land of Byzantium, the "golden bird" in the utopian land of 'Byzantium', embroidered and flushed in gold work, beholds within the power to absorb one into its chasm of sublimity.

It epitomises the creation of artwork as a union of art in eternity. Just like the 'Grecian Urn', it becomes a timeless and immortal metaphorical manifestation. In the poem, Keats immortalised the wedding procession of the Grecian Urn and hence the idea of love. Therefore, the metaphor becomes the living force of celebration of the unrequited love of the lovers, "the foster-child of silence and slow time" (Keats, line 2) stretches the historicity of the Grecian Urn and re-establishes it as a monumental entity. The moving procession moves metaphorically and yet remains immortalised on the urn. The verse of Keats gives it a movement and therefore, the energised space of urn shows an unseen progression.

Artifice of Eternity

Hamlet typifies to be a tragic hero, and his tragedy becomes an essential expression of life; as it questions what really is eternal. Art in various forms is perceived to be eternal; however, the 'artifice' of eternity is an essential expression of life, that becomes a thread of the past. The concept of thread as a metaphor is very interesting to be understood.

Each thread in itself is a monument, a unit of interlocked expressions of the past. Formed by continuous spinning and twisting of a filament, the thread is as eternal as the monument; for it never really loses its essence, even after being snapped or left stranded. It further makes one wonder about what thread did the artisans put in the making of the monument that it stands tall till date as an eternal body? When Kabir or any Sufi Saint fabricates his argument about the body as a fine piece of cloth, he does not solely indicate our physical body, but the very 'being' of existence in the life granted to one. Subtly performed to perfection in its mastery of the warp and weft, the cloth is interlaced with intricate work and craftsmanship. It has been worn by the sages, the saints and the common man, but each one of them has been able to defile it by misuse of what can be put as; 'thought, word, and deed'. The cloth, just like the monument, beholds a message to be learnt, that of love and humanity. It is only in the participation of humanity as a collective being that one shall be able to reach closer in the attainment of the spiritually sublime.

The warp and weft of the monument have been weaved with subtle messages in the innumerable stories that each stone upholds, in the mourning

melodies that serve to be incantations that can rejuvenate the dead. In the contemporary times, and even for generations to come, it is for one and all to understand that what really is eternal, is not the physical cloth, the tangible body, the beauty and grandeur of the majestic monument; but is the essence of each. "Goodness is timeless" (Auden, line 70), and one ought to not fall prey to their own world of illusions by forgetting the very essence of our existence.

Love as a metaphor is a symbolic dimension to life that has no singular approach to be constrained by the given set of words. When Chandradhar Sharma 'Guleri' narrated his short story "Usne Kaha Tha", he consolidated the different strings of tragedy in his writing. A soldier's plight when the nation was at war, the fragmented stories of individuals at that time, a scenario exhibiting the chaos and the violent time of the country, yet possessing a tale of love that survives in such extremities. He deliberately weaves in his story, a character like Lehna Singh, who is portrayed sheltering Subedar and his son for reasons unknown to the readers. Initially, it occurs to be a tale of the nation at war; however, it is only at the end that we realise the tragedy of his life. For each time he asked the little girl "*teri kudmai ho gayi?*" (Guleri, 11), he would expect a "*dhatt*" in return; only for his little world to be later on shattered by learning that she had been engaged. For now, just like love, as we know is never for the self; it always has an external referent, which the girl became for him. Lehna Singh devoted his life to an encounter of childhood that cast an impression so deep, that in the very moment his time travel collapsed inward. Such metaphors of love and tragedy stay frozen in space and time.

The monument of metaphor is not the apprehension of information retained, rather, it is the felt experience; a representation not of the literal, but an emphatic blend of reality amidst the tragic times that narrates the essence of the unheard, the unsung, and the unseen passages of life. For generations to come, the notion of tragic gaiety shall be redefined from time to time, but its efficacy shall always be deemed as a sublime experience in the face of tragedy. The message to pass on to the future generation is the legacy that has been surviving in the howling storms of lamentation through the different eras. We are shown the channels through which we mitigate what Yeats encrypts as the essential "melody" of the contemporary human race.

Tragic Gaiety and Monument

Hamlet's inaction, his power play of words and language, along with his ability to introspect, contemplate, and understand his internal philosophical banter, should not be taken as a tragedy. Yeats understands the complex notion of tragedy and the existence of gaiety in his character, that he brings out the concept of tragic gaiety. But tragedy as a non-enclosed entity does not limit

itself to the mere process of lamentation. It evolves, "All things fall and are built again, and those that build them again are gay" (Yeats, "Lapis Lazuli" 34-35).

The metaphorical renditioning of a structure is essentially what makes it a monument. The physical entity or space of any structure employs metaphorical devices such as colours, composition, symmetry, patterns etc., in order to become a monument of substance where there lies more reality than meets the eye. The study of the shape and form of a monument becomes synonymous in deciphering the architectonics of a metaphor. The semi-precious stones embedded in the inlay work of a monument do not embellish the deathbed of the ruler, rather, the sombre, subtle, pastel, yet mesmerising beauty of the colours and texture speak volume about the history, and what one needs to learn from the past.

> Consume my heart away; sick with desire
>
> And fastened it to a dying animal
>
> It knows not what it is; and gather me
>
> Into the artifice of eternity. (Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium" lines 21-24)

The gathering of one's heart into the "artifice of eternity" is itself a journey that one embarks through multivariate domains. The participation in the dialogic play between the visitor and any monumental structure becomes a stochastic process, for it knows not what fate has in store for the participant. It imparts the eternal tunes of mourning melodies blended with the joyous confluence of gaiety in tragedy. The entry gate of the monument is a determinable point, but the embarked journey from there on is not.

One knows not how the participation shall result in a changed being, a changed personality. Rather, the whole experience profuses the dissipation of the material self. Bulleh Shah conveys the same idea of losing oneself in something so profound that eventually only the divine knows about the real self, the truth.

> *Avval aakhir aap nu jaana*
>
> *Na koi dooja hor pehchaana*
>
> *Maethon hor na koi siyaana*
>
> *Bulla! shah khadda hai kaun*
>
> *Bulla! ki jaana mai kaun* (Shah, lines 7-11)

The non-linear verse of Bulleh Shah portrays the complexity of the known yet unknown self of one which negotiates with the immersed state of one's being. In the discord of time, there lies an essential need to maintain the accord of

humanity. It is in the process of questioning our own existence, our identity; that we break free from the social clutches of the society. An interaction with the monumental allows one to witness the same. It is to be believed that there indeed lies an endpoint to this journey of romance, but that point of arrival is nothing to vaunt of, or look forward to. It is unattainable. This nothingness may as well be everything, wherein the seamless void; the presence of the sublime can be felt. The metaphorical metamorphosis arrives at no given point; it flows into a chasm evolving human and its sensibilities. The shift is temporal as influenced by the spatio-temporal turbulences, but it pushes the metaphor into an array of expressions, leaving behind a residue from the abstract to concrete form. These metaphors shall be dug in and extrapolated in historical narratives, in musical renditions, in poetic harmony, and in the architectonics of any monumental art form. It is also to be observed that the metamorphosis of metaphors is perpetually in a state of 'becoming' rather than forming a singular entity of 'being'. It evolves.

As Locke's understanding of the *tabula rasa* conveys, the human mind runs passively; that a child is born in a blank state, with no preconceived notions on which the empirical realities and experiences of an individual carve impressions throughout one's life. If this philosophical extension is to be believed, the role of fine arts becomes all the more important in the development of any character in human life. The acceptance of form over shape, irrationality of rationality, coexistence of gaiety and tragedy decipher sublimity in the poetic harmony and inherent music that resides in these eternal metaphors of love and tragedy that reflect, contemplate, and explore into oneself the impact of such a sublime encounter.

The trembling forces of stress and violence have been prevailing in humankind for eras, a glimpse of which is evident in the chaos, war phobia, and the violence embedded in society. However, it has been felt that fine arts like music, paintings, and poetry have been bestowing solace on the clouds of tragedy banking over the horizon. It becomes an impending reaction to seek solace through these mediums in the imminent times of tragedy. The device employed to hold on to the essence of human civilisation, is that of a metaphor and its manifestations. The monumental metaphors become a harmonic expression in the heterogeneous world, and waver between the world of the possible and the potential, serving to be a matrix in understanding the complex nuances of life.

Artifice, when technically defined, can signify skills that produce an uninterrupted imaginary experience that is meant to appropriate reality. It becomes the point of *imaginaire* (elevated imagination), the gap between the concept and the fact. What really is eternal in the garb of artwork is the tradition of love and empathy. The metaphors of love and tragedy fused in these mediums surpass

their verbal manifestation and become a metaphysical modification of human sensibilities, which seem to perfuse the message of love and humanity with an element of inexhaustibility. What a monument is to architecture, the metaphor becomes for literature.

Works Cited and Consulted

Auden, W. H. *Auden: Poems*. Edited by Edward Mendelson, Everyman's Library, 1995.

Faiz, Faiz Ahmed. *True Subject: Selected Poems of Faiz Ahmed Faiz*. Princeton UP, 2016.

Frost, Robert. *Robert Frost Poems*. Pan Macmillan India, 2002.

Guleri, Chandradhar Sharma. "Usne Kaha Tha". Shiksha Bharti, 2017, p. 11.

Keats, John. *Keats: Poems*. David Campbell, 1994.

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. "A Psalm of Life by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow."

Poetry Foundation, www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44644/a-psalm-of-life.

Neruda, Pablo. *Twenty Love Poems: and a Song of Despair*. Penguin Books, 1993.

Peck, Lucy. *Fatehpur Sikri: Revisiting Akbar's Masterpiece*. Lustre Press, 2014.

Rezavi, Syed Ali Nadeem. *Fatehpur Sikri Revisited*. Oxford UP, 2013.

Shah, Bulleh. *Bulleh Shah: Selected Poems*. Translated by Paul Smith, Createspace Independent Pub, 2012, pp. 7-11.

Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1996. pp. 5-8.

Wordsworth, William. *The Collected Poetry of William Wordsworth: With an Introduction and Bibliography*. Wordsworth Ed., 1994.

Yeats, W. B. *The Collected Works in Verse and Prose of William Butler Yeats*. Shakespeare Head Press, 1908.

— * —

The Diasporic Rainbow: An Intersectional Study of Queerness and Diaspora

Shivani Bhatt

As nationalities and sexualities intersect, the leeway to establish a stable identity vis-à-vis both space and orientation becomes problematic. If one is to talk from a highly pluralistic point of view, in today's scenario of the growing intolerance making the very air people breathe choked with opaqueness, it becomes imperative for a nation with its citizens enjoying equality, to not just be tolerant of the heterogeneity, but more importantly, know how to respect its diversity. The debates over nationality and what constitutes national or the antithesis of it, have been at the forefront, contemporarily. This paper seeks to delve into the multiple levels at which nationalities and sexualities intersect and how we understand this intersection in the context of the Indian subcontinent. This particular section seeks to draw on the concept of Queer Diasporas and calls into question the umbrella terms of sexuality and nationality that challenge the very premise of such a unique space of junction. Meg Wesling substantiates on the position of a queer subject in conjunction with Nation and the Diasporic population using the following analogy:

> Queerness constitutes a mobile resistance to the boundaries and limits imposed by gender, and that resistance is the same as the migrant's movement through national and cultural borders. Put simply, the analogy is this: queerness disrupts gender normativity like globalization disrupts national sovereignty (31).

The question that arises is whether the deviation in sexuality and ethnicity and that of global integration is central to the understanding of a hybridised identity? In the discourse on queerness and diasporic identity, there is an overarching understanding on the concept of hybridity. To arrive at the obvious end of a "displaced identity" of the diasporic queer, the tear that these dissidents face further complicates the intermixing of identities. The interstice then, the 'in-betweenness' is not the feeling of 'best of both the worlds' but is restricting when it hampers a sense of belongingness, referring back to a glorious past, the history, memory, heritage, culture, ethnicity; but above all an individuality wrought with obscurities.

The kernel of any diasporic study is the concept of dispersal or scattering from the native to the host or the push factors like migration or displacement. In the context of the diasporic queer, one can see the dislocation resulting from migration for the queer communities in their diasporic dispersal as not always

one of enforced enslavement or transportation, but a voluntary means of occupying the urban queer domains in expectation of greater freedom and less stringent sodomy and other laws. A further extension to the concept of the space of queer diasporic identity is ushered by Anne-Marie Fortier in her work, where she talks about the two broad levels of the relationship between diaspora and queerness, the first "[that of] the creation of queer spaces within ethnically defined diasporas" and/or "the transnational and multicultural network of connections of queer cultures and 'communities'" (183)

The gay/lesbian subcultures of the Third World in their conjunction with ethnicity and dispersion have expanded and added to the granular details of the Queer theory, especially in the context of the Indian subcontinent. The distinction, likewise, occurs on multiple levels: the queer diasporas across the globe are vastly different and are stratified on the grounds of race, gender, class, ethnicity. There is marginalisation further when the first world notions of a Queer space render the "brown" and/or Third world dispersed queers invisible.

To arrive exclusively at a South Asian context, writer and gay rights activist R. Raja Rao, expressed the decidedly complex problems of the South Asian in the West, particularly North America. In his essay, "Dangling Men; Nowhere Women: The Identity Crisis of South Asian Queers" he talks about how majority of South Asian queers identify as "less and less as Asian-Americans, and more and more as gay" (352). The stigmatisation with the gay identity leads them to ensconce in their diasporic identity which has the semblance of more acceptance than the native identity with its orthodoxy and non-acceptance. Furthermore, Rao talks about the inconveniences of South Asian queers to have an identity with reference to space, sex, desire and identity as being doubly marginalised; unlike the queers all over the world. The South Asian queer partners are not only ostracised by the heterosexism's prevalence deeming them "strange" at the macrocosmic level, but also by their families at the microcosmic one (354). Furthermore, in the essay he puts forth an important point "South Asian immigrant family, with the father as head, is hetero patriarchal", he sites examples from movies like *Purab or Paschim* (1970), *Dilwale Dulhanian Le Jaengey* (2000), *Pardes* (1997) amongst that exemplify the immigrant families their pseudo notions of clinging back and retaining their roots that ultimately asphyxiates the possibility of any queer individuation on the celluloid. It becomes practically impossible for the LGBTQ communities to lead openly gay lives, to openly be accepted by their kith and kin, to openly be displaying the eroticised side of their relationship much like a heterosexual couple overtly. The inherent patriarchal bent of these households and its obsession with upholding these 'morals', 'cultures' etc is evident even after a displacement to a more urban space. The veneer of accustoming oneself to the newness makes them more susceptible to an

instability in identity. The heteropatriarchy is so deeply entrenched in the value systems of the society, that any deviation to these rigidified structures destabilises the entire foundation on which it rests. The "Third sex" (a term coined by Magnus Hirschfeld*)* is subjugated by the structures of patriarchy, and heterosexuality only to maintain and reinforce these structures of power. Hence, it becomes a circuitous loop and the marginalisation only empowers the heteronormativity of patriarchy and heterosexuality.

II

This section deals with the anxieties and transformations of the South Asian queer, their sense of dispersal from the origins, the crisis in identity ensuing from language crisis problematised further by desire and sexuality through some of their works. In the 1990s, for the first time the predicament of such writers was compiled in a book, *A Lotus of Another Colour: An Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience* (1993). The lines from Ian Iqbal Rashid's poem "Another Country" encapsulates the essence of the entire collection as a case against the mainstream White dominant queer culture:

> My Beauty is branded into the colour of my skin,
> my strands of hair thick as snakes, damp with the lushness of all the tropics.
> My humble penis cheated by the imperial wealth yours.
> Hari's corporal punishment, mine corporeal:
> Yet this is also a part of my desire.
> Even stroking myself against your absence
> I must close my eyes and think of England. (lines 27-34)

Taken from Rashid's first collection, *Black Market White Boyfriends and Other Acts of Elision* (1991), this piece of poetry is intricately woven around the poet persona mirroring the characters from the television series of the *Jewel in the Crown* (1984). The metaphor so deployed of the skin colour tanned by the tropics, replete with sexual imagery, this poem on dual levels both colonial and sexual - is about exploitation. The non-Euro-American queer communities, their quandary as expressed by the "humble penis" – not just highlights a sense of the subjugated desire of Hari, quintessentially the 'brown/tanned' queer as against the White, but at another level the phrase symbolises the highly masculine notion of a queer identity. It is not just the inherent masculinity of the "patri-lineal" descent of sexuality at large but in a country like India where it is a taboo for heterosexual women to express their sexuality in public domains, it is virtually impossible for lesbian women to do so.

Customs being as they are in India, it is not unusual to have a same sex friend, a *yaar* or a *saheli*, who becomes your soul mate, at least platonically.

So, our parents did not suspect that we had any sort of romantic involvement. Because of our budding adolescence and the usual context for adolescence being a heterosexual one, it was passed about that we must be whoring with boys (qtd. in Naheed Islam 79).

In "Finding Community", the contributor, Meera and her lesbian relationship with her partner, Bijli results in their relocation from Pune to San Francisco via London. Migration became a vehicle to transport oneself to a different sexual context. Meera, having migrated to an urban sphere is appalled by the "cultural differences" and overawed by Kate, the epitome of the White, selfish, ultra-capitalist, she dumps Meera. Is the distinction between race and ethnicity blurred by their lesbianism? It is a serious blow to what the introduction to the collection itself says, by Rakesh Ratti speaks on behalf of all the compilers stating, "once some of us (South Asians) entered the lesbian and gay subculture of the West, our feeling of isolation did not fade as we had assumed it would, it only changed face…In our burgeoning gay and lesbian world, we were still anomalies" (8).

The compilation poses forth a strong case against the hegemony of the White queer in the subcultures of queer communities worldwide. It debunks the purely nascent claims of the West claiming that homosexuality or "queerness" was a colonial import by the non-Euro-American countries. In their book *Same Sex Love* (2000), Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai trace through the ancient Indian architecture, sculpture and literature that how texts like Kamasutra with chapters on homosexual positions and homoerotic sculptures at Konark are a glaring testimony to the homosexual tolerance that the West dismisses.

Suniti Namjoshi's *Conversations of Cow* (1985)

Unlike the writers of *A Lotus of Another Colour*, Suniti Namjoshi, is a role model of the larger queer immigrant writing. For her, South Asianness has taken a backseat in making her writing to take the front one. Namjoshi is the first South Asian Indian writer to talk about her lesbian sexuality quite openly, challenging not only patriarchy but also inherent heterosexuality, racial discrimination within the elitist, First World dominant western feminist and lesbian discourses. Born and brought up in India, Suniti Namjoshi lived in America, Canada, and finally settled in England. Her feminist parodic idiom, "the situatedness of a marginalized Indian Hindu in the racist social set up" is to be found in her fictional as well as poetic works (Singh).

Her most important exegesis of identity occurs in *Conversations of Cow* (1985), here like other works she is making an alternate universe with fables and animal protagonists anthropomorphically bringing to light how natural homoeroticism becomes when tales are woven and depicted via animals.

Namjoshi claims that sexual identity is not an Indian cultural phenomenon: "In India I was inescapably my grandfather's granddaughter, one member of a particular family located for hundreds of years in a particular region, with a particular place in a particular system" (Namjoshi 14). She alludes to the 'openness' of the Western cultural theories (owing) to help shape her lesbian identity. Thus, it is not the Indian cultural experience but her migration to the West which has fostered her sense of an openly lesbian erudite identity.

"It's all right… identity is fluid. Haven't you heard of transmigration?" (32). This statement in a nutshell brings forth the idea of Namjoshi's idea of the fluidity or the flux in identity. Through the creation of a mythical universe, she deconstructs the fixity of the stereotypical representations of women. In her *Conversations of Cow*, Namjoshi uniquely visualises the myth of the sacred cow, Kamdhenu, to effectively combine eastern as well as western points of view in arriving at a cultural hybridity, akin to an Indian diaspora living in west, alongside a subtle examination of a pervasively compelling heterosexuality as a lesbian writer. The central character of *Conversations of Cow* is Bhadravati, a Brahmin cow, described as a 'goddess of a thousand faces' and with 'a thousand manifestations' who develops a friendship with Suniti, a lesbian separatist who teaches English Literature in Canada and is the narrator of the novel.

Both of them are 'non-white', 'lesbian', 'woman' immigrants in Canada, together sharing the torn of multiple marginalities. Bhadravati, makes Suniti visit her friends, a self-sustained community of the lesbian cows in the countryside much like the subculture communities of the gay/lesbians or to take the larger term under the awning of the LGBTQ. In the words of critic Bindu Singh,

> The novella is an account of Suniti setting out for a voyage of quest to come to terms with her own identity as a lesbian in a heteronormative patriarchal society and the 'Cow' Bhadravati, at sometimes 'baddy' and at other times an anonymous B becomes her guide or Guru to help her, assist her and together they explore the multiple identities that Suniti is forced to adopt or live with. (6)

Bindu Singh's positioning of the novella as a quest for a lesbian in a hetero-patriarchal set up and an unnamed B as the guide or Guru can be seen at one level as a "western allegorical quest narrative" and at another, in the context of an Indian spiritual narrative. The cow in Namjoshi's fable then has a Goddess, a woman and an animal, which is normal in the Indian context not just because the cow is a scared animal, is the mother-figure, but also the concept of re-births where one may be reborn in a different yoni (different lifespan) as a bird, brute or beast. Further, many Gods have an animal vehicle, some Gods take an

animal form and most animals are worshipped, but it appears outrageously ludicrous in a Western context. While Namjoshi, with her Western education, is disconcerted by identities that fluctuate, the cow is comfortable both as an Indian lesbian and a White heterosexual man. Namjoshi, by evoking the Hindu idea that all living beings are manifestations of the divine makes the cow a symbol for disbanding cultural differences, like those of gender, race, nationality and sexuality. She uses the mother-figure of the cow then to subvert the mythical categories assigned to a cow, by this she "de-mythologizes the cow to an ordinary level to speak of lesbian identity in a fabulist mode" (8). The cow for her becomes a sort of metaphor for lesbian identity which is neither male nor female. Hence, by using cows in a displaced lesbian community in Canada she makes a parallel of her own sense of identity crisis as a lesbian writer of Indian origin.

Furthermore, Namjoshi's ability to deploy Magical realism in this narrative takes its masterstroke with the metamorphosis of Bhadravati into a white male 'Bud' to let a choice open for Suniti to choose either male or female role. However, Suniti shuns both of them expressing her contempt for both gender and sexual role playing. Evidently this is core to Namjoshi's style of writing- her works often articulate that 'gender' must not be confused with biological sex, leading to Judith Butler's notion of "performance/performativity". Butler argues in *Gender Trouble* that the ostensibly natural categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, are in fact, culturally constructed and gender, along with sex and sexuality is essentially performative in nature. Like Butler, for Namjoshi too, 7sex and gender are performative. She shows this through Bhadravati's transformation into a 'large white man' and a complete change in her behaviour and body–performances symbolising the merely performative aspects of both gender and sex as not being essentially or naturally occurring. Namjoshi through her fabulist work explicates on the fluidity of not only sex and gender, but the fluidity of transmigration. She skilfully combines both the aspects of transmigration and deviant sexualities to arrive at the conclusion that rigidities at the spatial and the sexual level in the society are a schema for the larger operation of heteropatriarchy.

The paper talked about the need for understanding the vicissitudes of the Third Sex at transnational, cultural and ethical levels. The contemporary discourses and awareness of Queer sexuality makes one question how the ability and the lack thereof, to respect human beings for who they are essentially. There is a compelling need, therefore, to dispel the ascriptions that the accident of birth obtrudes on an individual. Especially, in a country like India which works on the principle of 'Unity in Diversity', we need to be a salad bowl of diversity not a melting pot of homogeneity.

Works Cited and Consulted

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1999, https://tinyurl.com/yywonws4.

Dasgupta, Das Shamita. *A Patchwork Shawl: Chronicles of South Asian Women in America.* Rutgers UP, 2002.

Fortier, Anne-Marie. "Queer Diaspora". *Handbook of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Edited by Steven Seidman, SAGE Publications, 2002, pp. 183-198.

Islam, Naheed. "Naming desire, shaping identity: Tracing the experiences of Indian lesbians in the United States." *A patchwork shawl: Chronicles of South Asian women in America* (1998). pp. 72-96.

Namjoshi, Suniti. *The Conversations of Cow.* The Woman's Press, 1985, pp. 14, 32.

Rao, Raja R. "Dangling Men; Nowhere Women: The Identity Crisis of South Asian Queers." *In Diaspora: Theories, Histories, Texts*, by Makarand R. Paranjape, India Log Publications, 2001. Pp 350-357

Rashid, Ian Iqbal. *Black Markets, White Boyfriends, and Other Acts of Elision*. Mawenzi House Publishers, 1991.

Ratti, Rakesh. *A Lotus of Another Colour: An Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience.* Alyson Publication Inc, 1993.

Richardson, Diane and Steven Seidman, Editors. *Handbook of Lesbian and Gay Studies.* SAGE Publications, 2002, https://tinyurl.com/y435q6kg.

Singh, Bindu. "Suniti Namjoshi's The Conservations of Cow: A Critical Perspective." *A Scholar,* vol. I, issue I, p. 6, http://www.researchscholar.co.in/member/bindu-singh-1.pdf.

Vanita, Ruth, and Saleem Kidwai, Editors. *Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History*. Palgrave, 2006. DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-62183-5.

Wesling, Meg. "Why Queer Diaspora?" *Feminist Review,* vol 90, 2008, pp. 30–47, https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.2008.35.

— * —

Rohinton Mistry's Indo-Nostalgia in *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance* as Monochromatic Photographs of Mumbai

Shaival Thakkar

> If we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge… that we will create fictions, not actual cities or villages but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, India of the mind.

—Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*

This paper, through a three-part argument, will demonstrate that the author constructs the fictional Mumbai in *Such a Long Journey* (1991) and *A Fine Balance* (1995) through the intermingling of cityscapes, character perspectives on Mumbai, and the author's own experience of Mumbai as a lived space. It will also show how these descriptions of Indo-Nostalgia take on the qualities of monochromatic photographs.Extensive research work has been done by Mistry scholars on many aspects of his work. His creative corpus has been analysed as diasporic discourse (Bharucha) and as diasporic consciousness (Negi). Representation in *Such a Long Journey* and spaces of city and nation in *A Fine Balance* (Morey), morality in *A Fine Balance* (Mani), politics, the local and the universal in his fiction (Bhautoo-Dewnarain), theme and technique in *Such a Long Journey* (Hemalatha) and the technique of neorealism in his fiction (Takhar) too have been examined. However, there has been almost no work done exclusively on Mistry's nostalgic depiction of the city of Mumbai, especially in the two novels, *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance* together.

One essay that comes close to the trajectory of this paper is "Mistry's Bombay: Harmony in Disparity" (2012). This article discusses Mistry's portrayal of the city of Bombay as a unique locale in India and endorses his fiction's success in representing a multi-ethnic and secular India. The author takes examples from all four Mistry books, compares the Mumbai of Mistry's childhood to the London of Dickens' childhood and thus forms conclusions about the image of Mumbai in Mistry's fiction (Elmadda). However, Elmadda's article focuses more on *Tales from Firozsha Baagh* (1987) and *Family Matters* (2001). The article generally examines Mumbai in Mistry's works without using any literary theory to probe deeper and it reads more like a feature article rather than a rigorously researched article. This research paper too will investigate the portrayal of Mumbai; however, it will also question its aesthetics and ask: How does Rohinton Mistry's writing evoke Indo-nostalgia in *Such a Long*

Journey and *A Fine Balance*? As its critical framework, this research paper will consult Henri Lefebvre's concept of lived space from the book *The Production of Space* (1974) and Susan Sontag's theory on photography from her book *On Photography* (1977). It will also refer to the semiotic aspect of constructionist approach to representation as theorised in Stuart Hall's essay "The Work of Representation" (1997).

Cityscapes

Mumbai consists of seven islands which were at first inhabited by fishing communities. From the second century BCE to the ninth century CE, the islands were ruled by many indigenous dynasties. In the mid-sixteenth century, Mumbai was a part of the Mughal Empire but later came under the control of the Portuguese. During the seventeenth century, the islands came under the possession of the British Empire, which in turn leased them to the British East India Company. In the eighteenth century, the Marathas conquered parts of Mumbai from the Portuguese but were later on defeated by the British who by then had complete control over the entire city. Mumbai became the capital of the Bombay Presidency area. In 1947, when India achieved independence, the Bombay Presidency was restructured into Bombay State. In 1960, Bombay State was separated into Gujarat and Maharashtra on a linguistic basis whereby Mumbai became the capital of Maharashtra.

In *A Fine Balance*, throughout the novel, Mumbai is only poetically referred to with a geographical metonym; City by the Sea. In the novel, Mumbai is constructed with signifiers such as the overcrowded Mumbai local train, the Vishram Vegetarian Hotel, the Indian courthouse, Dina Dalal's flat, the Bombay Rent Act, and informal housing and slums. These signifiers are all either generic or fictional in nature. However, they succeed in signifying the city of Mumbai, although it is never explicitly mentioned by its name, nor are any places within the city name-checked. Mumbai is not the only centre, yet it is central to the narrative. It can be said that Mistry is attempting a panoramic shot of India which contains Mumbai along with the village, the town and the hills as they represent India as well. Mumbai is shown to be a place of greater goodness, urbanity, opportunity, progress, and hope where overwhelming rural issues like casteism, violence, poverty, and unemployment can be contained.

Mumbai's cityscapes are in deep focus in the novel *Such a Long Journey*. Parsis in Mumbai live in Parsi colonies such as Dadar Parsee colony, Cursow Baug, Rustom Baugh, Malcolm Baug, Tata blocks in Bandra and Khodadad building. Mistry constructs a Parsi locale in the novel by making his Parsi characters the residents of Khodadad building who are an array of odd, interesting and endearing characters which keep the readers engaged. The

majority of the protagonist Gustad Noble's life, his domestic trials and triumphs all take place in Khodadad building.

One South Mumbai market included in the novel is Chor Bazaar. In an intriguing letter by his friend Major Jimmy Billimoria, Gustad is requested to go to Chor Bazaar and collect a parcel from there. He has no choice but to go there as he wants to help his friend. Gustad has a childhood association with Chor Bazaar too as he nostalgically remembers going there as a child with his father to buy a Meccano set. The letter had instructed him to look through *Othello* in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. As he is reading the line 'Put money in thy purse' underlined in red, he is handed a parcel. On opening the parcel at home, he sees that it contains 10 lakh rupees (*SLJ* 91-92, 99-106).

The novel also features Crawford Market, which is one of South Mumbai's most famous markets. Gustad Noble and his family had a long association with Crawford Market. His father used to go to Crawford market with a servant to buy mutton, always arriving and leaving in a taxi. However, Gustad was not as affluent as his father. He could only afford to buy beef or chicken and travelled in buses. He always thought of the Crawford Market as dirty, smelly and overcrowded. Besides, his grandmother had told him as a child to beware of the butcher's knife. This too had coloured his perception of the Crawford Market. During his college days, Gustad's college friend Malcolm Saldhana had taken him to the Crawford Market and taught him how to buy the best quality beef from there at affordable rates. Gustad re-visits the Crawford Market as a family man as well because he has to buy chicken for his daughter who is ill and has been advised to drink chicken soup (*SLJ* 18, 20-26, 219). When the researcher visited the Crawford Market in Mumbai in 2014, he found it to be such a busy and crowded place that it was more of a transactional space than a space that one can be nostalgic about. However, most likely the Crawford Market of the 1970s was a less-peopled, slower and a quieter place which Mistry has captured in his novel.

The Towers of Silence, which Gustad visits on two occasions, both for funerals, is an aspect of Mumbai which makes Gustad reflective, nostalgic about his parents and grandparents and philosophical about life's journeys (*SLJ* 254). Mistry shows the last rites and rituals as a profoundly spiritual experience. Stuart Hall, while talking about the constructionist approach to representation explains that the process of representation applies to things found in the material world, however, "we also form concepts of rather obscure and abstract things, which we can't in any simple way see, feel or touch" (17). It is a well-known fact that non-Parsis are not allowed to enter the Towers of Silence. By choosing the Towers of Silence as one of the signifiers which constructs Mumbai in the novel, Mistry represents something "we have never seen, and possibly can't or

won't ever see" (Hall 17) and makes known how the Parsi funeral rites take place. Correspondingly, Susan Sontag in *On Photography* reflects, "…photography's program of realism… implies… the belief that reality is hidden. And, being hidden, is something to be unveiled. Whatever the camera records is a disclosure– whether it is imperceptible, fleeting…or simply the elliptical way of seeing" (94). Mistry's descriptions of the Towers of Silence, like a photograph, reveal something which is unseen and give his readers an exposure to an aspect of India that they are probably unacquainted with.

The Basilica of Our Lady of the Mount, more commonly known as Mount Mary Church, is a Roman Catholic Basilica located in Bandra. It is said that those who sincerely pray at the Mount Mary Church often get their wishes fulfilled. Wax figures of the Virgin Mary, along with an assortment of candles shaped like hands, feet and various other parts of the body are sold at kiosks. The sick and the suffering choose a candle or wax figure that corresponds to their ailment and light it in Church, with the pious hope that Mother Mary will consider their appeals for help.

Gustad's college friend Malcolm Saldanha takes him to Mount Mary Church. There Gustad buys four candles and appropriate wax statues: A girl's torso for curing Roshan's illness, a full body of wax to cure Dinshawji's cancer, a boy's head to make Sohrab change his mind and a wax leg to help Gustad improve his hip which limps sometimes (*SLJ* 227). Mistry in his novels also name-checks several places which are quintessentially Mumbai such as Lamington Road, Flora Fountain, Bandra, Dadar station, Chaupatty, Marine Drive, Carnac Road, Sleater Road, and the Hanging Gardens.

Mistry encodes the novelistic space of Mumbai by encrypting Khodadad building as a dramatic residential place for eccentric Parsis, Crawford Market as a nostalgic space which reminds the protagonist of his family's collapse from affluence to middle-class and Chor Bazaar as an intriguing, detective-esque space infused with a bit of childhood nostalgia. In addition, the Towers of Silence and Mount Mary Church are encoded as spiritual cityscapes; the former is largely encrypted as a space of loss and philosophical reflections while the latter is encoded as a space for hope and prayer.

Character Perspectives on Mumbai

An important aspect of Mumbai in *Such a Long Journey* is the Mumbai of nostalgia for the past; of childhood and youth. Like the Crawford Market in Mumbai, thoughts about the loss of his father's bookstore makes Gustad Noble reminisce about his family's former prosperity.

The smell of old books and bindings, learning, and wisdom floated out. On

the top shelf, at the rear, were E. Cobham Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* and the two volumes of Barrère and Leland's *Dictionary of Slang, Jargon & Cant*, the 1897 edition. Like the furniture, Gustad had rescued these from his father's bankrupt bookstore. Reaching in, he pulled out Brewer's Dictionary and opened it at random. He held it up to his nose and closed his eyes. The rich, timeless fragrance rose from the precious pages, soothing his uneasy, confused spirit. He shut the book, tenderly stroking its spine with the back of his fingers, and replaced it on the shelf. (*SLJ* 53)

It was in 1995 that the city's name changed from Bombay to Mumbai. However, *Such a Long Journey* was published in 1991. In spite of being published four years before the name change, the novel shows awareness of the political changes taking place in the city. Gustad Noble's friend and co-worker, Dinshawji expresses his anger at the loss of his personal history as the names of the streets have been changed by Shiv Sena. He says:

> Names are so important. I grew up on Lamington Road. But it has disappeared; in its place is Dadasaheb Bhadkhamkar Marg. My school was on Carnac Road. Now suddenly it's on Lokmanya Tilak Marg... And one fine day the name changes. So what happens to the life I have lived? Was I living the wrong life, with all the wrong names? Will I get a second chance to live it all again, with these new names? Tell me what happens to my life. Rubbed out, just like that? Tell me! (*SLJ* 74)

The writer T. J. S. George's thoughts in his article "Nostalgia over the Glory Days of Bombay" (2012), are evocative of those of the character Dinshawji, when he says:

> No city arouses nostalgic sadness as much as Mumbai does. Other cities might have changed names, like Kolkata, or grown beyond recognition, like Bangalore, to the chagrin of old timers. Bombay not only changed its name; it lost its character, its élan, the creativity and cosmopolitanism that made it the urbs prima in Indies in the first two decades of Independence. Mumbai was built over the dead soul of Bombay. (George)

In *A Fine Balance*, the character Dina Dalal's parents pass away, one after the other, leaving her brother and his wife in charge of her life. The city becomes a refuge for Dina whose domestic life has become very stifling:

> Dina preferred to spend as much time out of the house as possible. Her resources for her outings were limited to what she could squeeze from the shopping money…The savings were sufficient to pay for bus fares. Dina went to parks, wandered in museums and markets,

> visited cinemas… Dina noticed in the lobby a young man…They stood close together, watching the fine needles of rain slanting in the light of the streetlamp…It was hard to let go when the bus came. (*AFB* 29-34)

Sontag discusses the typical subjects in photographs, "Photographs show people being so irrefutably there and a specific age in their lives; group together people and things which a moment later have already disbanded, changed, continued along the course of their independent destinies" (54-55). Photographs and descriptions both have strong narrative powers, and both have the ability to elicit nostalgia in a reader. It is an engrossing intersection of words and photography when Mistry uses a school photograph to recount how it triggers nostalgia in Dina Dalal and her school friend Zenobia:

> All that evening, they enjoyed the pleasure of reminiscing, laughing at the follies and tragedies of their past. Very often there was a little sadness in their laughter, for these memories were of their youth...They calculated how old they would have been in the sixth standard, when they had started French, and the French teacher, who they had nicknamed Mademoiselle Bouledogue, began terrorizing their lives three times a week. (*AFB* 202)

Their nostalgic contemplations continue when Zenobia brings their class photo of 1949 to Dina Dalal next evening. With the help of the photograph Dina recollects Aban Sodawallah as the girl with a beauty spot for which the girls used to tease her and later the girls tried to imitate the beauty spot themselves. Most girls lost touch after school and went their own ways in life. Some went to college, some joined work and some were not allowed to go to college as it was seen as a bad influence for soon-to-be wives and mothers (*AFB* 203-204). Dina Dalal fondly recalls the pleasures of her short-lived freedom and romance in the early Mumbai as a young woman, with her paying guest Maneck, before disproportionate migration took its toll on the island city:

> ...those enchanted evenings of musical recitals, and emerging with Rustom from the concert hall into the fragrant night when the streets were quiet – yes, she said, in those days the city was still beautiful, the footpaths were clean, not yet taken over by pavement-dwellers, and yes, the stars were visible in the sky in those days, when Rustom and she walked along the sea, listening to the endless exchange of the waves, or in the Hanging Gardens, among the whispering trees, planning their wedding and their lives, planning and plotting in full ignorance of destiny's plan for them. (*AFB* 336)

Like the meaning encoded in the novels through different cityscapes, the

perspectives of the characters on Mumbai by Gustad Noble, Dinshawji and Dina Dalal also become signifiers which construct Mumbai. In *Such a Long Journey*, the perspectives of characters construct the rueful city of a middle-class Parsi man longing for a more comfortable past and a veteran citizen who is anguished at the politics which is hastily reconceiving his much-loved city. On the other hand, the nostalgia in *A Fine Balance* is that of a woman, Dina Dalal, whose agency is limited to begin with because of her gender. However, she cherishes Mumbai in fragments and relishes the little refuge, friendships, girlhood memories, freedom, romance and splendour that the city afforded her.

Mistry further constructs Mumbai as a nostalgic space by using artefacts, places and sensory perceptions. It is the description of artefacts such as old books, furniture, movie posters and school photographs; places such as roads, parks, museums, markets, public libraries, old reading rooms, music rooms in library, concert and recital spaces in the city, and sensory perceptions such as smell of old books and the sound of familiar street names which evokes nostalgia in the reader when she reads them.

Mumbai as Author's Lived Space

Henri Lefebvre's conceptualisation of the spatial triad: perceived space, conceived space, and lived space from *The Production of Space* (1974) has been very influential in understanding spatiality. He believed that "space should be seen as the site of ongoing interactions of social relations" (Zhang 219). Fictionalisation of Mumbai in a novel can be understood as a "representational space" which is defined as "space… directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users', but also of some artists and… a few writers and philosophers, who *describe*…" (Lefebvre 39). Angela Lambert's article "Touched with Fire" (2002) for *The Guardian* reveals how his fictional Mumbai was influenced by England as a representational space in the books he read:

> From this early reading he got the impression of an England that both mirrored and glamourised the reality; a country where confident, laughing children shared exciting adventures with a bouncy, barking dog while their elder sisters flirted languidly over tea on the lawn and their parents conducted wars of attrition with servants and tradesmen. Mistry knows this innocent sunlit England never really existed, but just as the Bombay of his novels is a literary construct, so was that England: part wishful thinking, part imagination and part truth. (Lambert)

While describing the characteristics of representational spaces, Lefebvre says, "Representational space is alive: it speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or: square, church, graveyard" (42).

Rohinton Mistry's younger brother Cyrus Mistry, a writer and playwright in *The Guardian* article corroborates the veracity of his fictional Mumbai as a representational space, "To the extent that Rohinton's novels are about Parsees, he is chronicling a vanishing world. His picture is accurate" (Lambert).

Representational spaces describe not only space but also time. Lefebvre states that a representational space, "embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations, and thus immediately implies time. Consequently, it may be qualified in various ways: it may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic" (42). While elaborating on the time-period aspect of his representational spaces, Mistry says:

> I would say my Bombay is rooted in fact, but I'm writing about a city that has disappeared. In 1975, when I left, its population was less than half what it is today, and that transforms a city in unimaginable ways. If I'd never left I would have adjusted and learned the mechanisms for coping, as the other 14 million inhabitants have. Today when I go back I feel like a marathon runner who's no longer in training. (Lambert)

Lived space can be understood as "a space of pure subjectivity, of human experiences, of people's sense-making, imagination, and feeling – that is, their local knowledge– of the organisational space as they encounter it" (Zhang 221). Mistry, partly, traces the epistemology of his fictional Mumbai back to his experience of Mumbai as a lived space: "Part of the tragedy of the educated middle classes in Bombay was this yearning for something unattainable that came from what they had read. Would that sense of a future elsewhere have been avoided if we had concentrated on an Indian literary canon? I don't know" (Lambert).

Mistry's Indo-Nostalgia as Monochromatic Photographs of Mumbai

In her book, *On Photography*, Susan Sontag talks about photographs as a captured experience, photographs as reality in miniature and about photograph's function of documenting beauty and truth (2, 79, 87). About the role of the photographer she says, "From the start, photographers...set themselves the task of recording a disappearing world..." (59). It is a known fact that the Parsi population in India and the world over is declining. Due to this, a community with a unique identity and culture is vanishing gradually. Mistry, in his descriptions of his Mumbai, shares the same concerns as many photographers. Mistry states "when the Parsis have disappeared from the face of earth, his writing will preserve a record of how they lived, to some extent" (qtd. in Bharucha 59).

Although both photography and novelistic descriptions are different

mediums, they can be both used effectively as tools for story-telling. Both can also be said to have a language of their own. "Any sound, word, image or object which functions as a sign, and is organised with other signs into a system which is capable of carrying and expressing meaning is…a language" (Hall 19). The basic structure of a sentence in English consists of subject-verb-object. Similarly, the basic structure of the language of photography is based on elements such as "light, time, composition, object and subject" (Rogers 7).

Rohinton Mistry's Indo-Nostalgic descriptions in *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance* lend themselves to comparison with monochromatic photographs of Mumbai because like monochrome images they are suggestive of time-periods, places, people, relationships, artefacts, experiences and emotions that are gone or are in the process of fading away. Susan Sontag says, "When we are nostalgic, we take pictures…photographs actively promote nostalgia. Photography is an elegiac art, a twilight art. Most subjects photographed are, just by the virtue of being photographed, touched with pathos" (11). Resembling photographs, Mistry's descriptions too have a melancholic quality about them and his writing when he recalls the past resonates with pathos. Mistry's descriptions of Mumbai are aesthetically suggestive of monochrome photography as they, identical to monochrome photography, are exceptionally artistic, very well crafted, make the reader experience a heightened state of emotion and create an intimacy between the reader and the city as well as characters.

Such a Long Journey is set in the background of the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 and *A Fine Balance* has as its background The Emergency period of 1975-77. The political tracks in both these novels have been acclaimed for their realistic representations. However, it is the characters, their relationships with each other as well as the city, and the emotions they experienced during those times which render the characters as well-rounded figures who in turn bring alive the political realities of those times.

"With the removal of color you reveal the essence of things" and "end up in a reality that is more real and closer to what we essentially experience" (Tjintjelaar). Like a black and white photographer, Mistry is also known for his minimalist writing style, which makes his work very relatable for his readers and communicates his messages directly without any verbiage or superfluousness.

A photographer may choose to have a career exclusively in black and white photography. Similarly, Mistry by always making the creative choice of only writing about the city of Mumbai and that too the bygone Mumbai (his fictional oeuvre covers the time-span from 1971 to circa 2002), he can be equated to a monochrome photographer who finds it more imperative to

document a certain place and time, rather than the contemporary Mumbai or modern-day Canada. In *The Guardian* article, Bruce Westwood, Mistry's Canadian literary agent says, "Rohinton has been a Canadian citizen and resident of Toronto for 27 years now. He has lived here for longer than he lived in India, but his books are still set in the Bombay of his youth, reinvented with perfect recall. At times he seems to have idealised it into a childhood paradise, like Nabokov's Russia" (Lambert).

Monochrome photographs are usually associated with the past because they originated before the invention of the colour photograph. So even now, while re-creating the past creatively in a film or a book, monochrome photography is used to achieve a retrospective effect. Mistry creates the retrospective effect masterfully in his fiction. Mistry's aesthetic achievement lies in the fact that his descriptions of Mumbai render time elastic and bring alive the past. His characters in the two novels, Gustad Noble and Dina Dalal are adults in 1970s Mumbai. Their nostalgic reveries are about their childhood and youth which happened at least two or more decades into the past. So, reading Mistry in the 21st century makes one take a profound, affectionate, wonder-filled gaze into what it would be like to be a child growing up in Mumbai circa 1949. It also makes the reader speculate about the pleasures and pains experienced by adolescents during that time period.

Although there are many authors who have written stories about Mumbai, Mistry has a signature style of writing about Mumbai. His creative choices; of writing about certain political events, the Parsi community, the time-periods in which his novels are set as well his writing style; minimalism and directness in writing, realism, contrasting of tenderness in interpersonal relationships to the harshness of the political events on people, elegiac, emotive, and haunting use of language, photographic descriptions of places, exploration of the past-life of his characters and the sporadic reappearances of that past, and documenting of the minor and major truths and splendours of the city make his work distinctive from that of other writers. Mistry's creativity and stylistics not only make his work comparable to monochromatic photographs, but he can also be equated to a photographer auteur.

The cityscapes and the character perspectives and especially nostalgia are imbued with essentialism contributing to a particular Mumbai which is part Parsi and part diasporic. Mistry, in representing Mumbai in his novels, is creating a particularised figure of the city which is constructed through the language used, cityscapes foregrounded, and perspectives of the characters regarding political events and its aftermath. Nostalgia opens up a signifying field where the performativity of the language as well as human life is acted out. Interviews

with the author and his contemporaries corroborate the fact that his fictional Mumbai is a literary construct of the 1970s Mumbai. A largely Parsi Mumbai; it is a skilful weaving together of Mumbai which is partly factual and partly imagination. This Mumbai was inspired by the books from the Western literary canon Mistry read as a child as well as by his experience of Mumbai as a lived space, up until he was in his early 20s, before he migrated to Canada.

The English novelist Graham Greene, in his introduction to the novel *The Bachelor of Arts*, appreciated R. K. Narayan's fictional Malgudi and said about him: "Narayan… wakes in me a spring of gratitude, for he has offered me a second home. Without him I could never have known what it is like to be Indian" (Greene).

One can say, with similar gratitude, that Rohinton Mistry's reflective Indo-nostalgia and longing for his childhood and adulthood provides his readers "a second home" in Mumbai and allows his reader to experience the beauty of the 1970s Mumbai through his beautiful, emotive, nostalgic and monochromatic descriptions of the city. Mistry creates a magical literary nostalgia shop in his novels which a space where his readers can engage with the literary memories and dwell in the imagined space of the 1970s Mumbai; a mental image of India; where the descriptions of places are in black-and-white, desires are in sepia, smells are ripened by time, sounds are resonant of a long-gone era and the memories are vintage.

Works Cited and Consulted

Bharucha, Nilufer. "'When Old Tracks Are Lost': Rohinton Mistry's Fiction as Diasporic Discourse." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1995, pp. 59, https://doi.org/10.1177/002198949503000206.

Dewnarain, Nandini B. "The Local and the Universal." *Rohinton Mistry: An Introduction*, Foundation Books, 6 Dec. 2006, pp. 5-39, https://doi.org/10.1017/UPO9788175968318.

—. "Politics in Mistry's Fiction." *Rohinton Mistry: An Introduction*, Foundation Books, 6 Dec. 2006, pp. 64–84, https://doi.org/10.1017/UPO9788175968318.

Elmadda, Ezzeldin. "Mistry's Bombay: Harmony in Disparity." *Contemporary Literary Review India*, vol. 1, 7 Jul. 2012, http://contemporaryliteraryreview.blogspot.in/2012/07/mistrys-bombay-harmony-in-disparity-by.html.

Furman, Adam N. "Restorative Nostalgia." *Textbin*, 22 Nov. 2010, http://www.adamnathanielfurman.com/blog.php?blog_id=174.

George, T.J.S. "Nostalgia over the Glory Days of Bombay: Even CIA Fought Its Cold War There." *TJS George - Point of View*, 13 Feb. 2012, http://tjsgeorge.blogspot.com/2012/02/nostalgia-over-glory-days-of-bombay.html.

Grand Mumbai Tours. "Chor Bazaar." *Grand Mumbai*, http://www.grandmumbai.com/mumbai-chorbazaar-tour.html. Accessed 28 Aug. 2020.

Greene, Graham. Introduction. *The Bachelor of Arts*, by R.K. Narayan, Accessed 28 Aug. 2020, http://bishnupurhighschool.weebly.com/uploads/2/6/9/3/26937489/r._k._narayan_the_bachelor_of_arts.pdf.

Hall, Stuart. "The Work of Representation." *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage Publications, 1997, pp. 17, 19.

Hemalatha, M. "Theme and Technique in Rohinton Mistry's Such a Long Journey." *The Novels of Rohinton Mistry: A Critical Study*, edited by Jaydipsinh K. Dodiya, Sarup & Sons, 2004, pp. 98–107.

Lambert, Angela. "Touched with Fire." *The Guardian*, 27 Apr. 2002, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/apr/27/fiction.books.

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Blackwell Publishers, 1974, pp. 39, 42.

Mani, K. R. S. "The Moral Dimensions in Rohinton Mistry's A Fine Balance." *Parsi Fiction*, edited by R.K. Dhawan, vol. 2, Prestige, 1 Jan. 2002, pp. 194–209.

Mistry, Rohinton. *A Fine Balance*. Faber & Faber, 1995, pp. 29-34, 202,203-204, 336.

—. *Such a Long Journey*. Faber & Faber, 1 Apr. 1991, pp. 18, 20-26, 53, 74, 91-92, 99-106, 219, 227, 254.

Morey, Peter. "Mistry's Hollow Men: Language, Lies and the Crisis of Representation in Such a Long Journey." *Rohinton Mistry*. Manchester UP, 6 Oct. 2010.

—. "Thread and Circuses: Performing in the Spaces of City and Nation in AFB." *Rohinton Mistry*. Manchester UP, 6 Oct. 2010.

Negi, Vijay. "Diasporic Consciousness in the Writings of Rohinton Mistry." *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science*, vol. 19, no. 10, 2014, pp. 79–82, www.iosrjournals.org.

Rogers, Bob. Introduction. *The Language of Photography*, 2016, pp. 6, http://www.salondesrefuses.net.

Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands*. Random House, 1991, pp.10.

Savion Travel Services Pvt. Ltd. "Crawford Market." *Mumbai Tourist Attractions*, http://www.mumbai.org.uk/crawford-market.html. Accessed 28 Aug. 2020.

—. "Mount Mary Church." *Mumbai Tourist Attractions*, http://www.mumbai.org.uk/places-of-worship-in-mumbai.html. Accessed 28 Aug. 2020.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. Rosetta Books LLC, 1977, pp. 2, 11, 54-55, 59, 79, 87, 94.

Takhar, Jeniffer. "Rohinton Mistry's Indian Neorealism: The Voice of the People." *Canadian Literature & Culture in the Postcolonial Literature and Culture Web*, http://www.postcolonialweb.org/canada/literature/mistry/takhar3.html. Accessed 28 Aug. 2020.

Tjintjelaar, Joel. "In Defense of Black and White Photography." *Black and White Vision*, 15 Apr. 2017, https://www.bwvision.com/defense-black-white-photography/.

Zhang, Zhongyuan. "What Is Lived Space?" *Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2006, pp. 219, 221.

— * —

Negotiating Gender: Women in Bollywood Cinema

Abhilasha Sawlani

> To understand gender as a historical category…is to accept that gender, understood as one way of culturally configuring a body, is open to a continual remaking.
>
> <div align="right">- Judith Butler, Undoing Gender</div>

In the introduction to her influential book *Undoing Gender* (2004), Judith Butler discusses the desire that gender and its performance attempts to fulfil. It is the desire for recognition, to be constituted as socially viable beings by conforming to gendered identities, the constitutive terms of which are defined by and originate in a sociality that has no single author. If gender is conceptualised separately from one's individual personhood and performed without one's knowledge or will, does that make the act of performance automatic or mechanical? Butler counters the determinacy of socially constituted gender norms by describing the incessant performance of gender "as a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint" (1). One may not be the author of the gender one performs but the possibility to alter restrictive and exclusionary norms lies within one's agency.

In a postmodern world, the media industry plays a significant role as a producer of meaning, discourses, ideologies, and most importantly, gendered identities and subject positions. While media representations create myths about social and gender roles, they also constitute sites for their radical reimagining. This paper aims to examine Butler's concept of gender as performance and her ideas about the potential to reconfigure gender norms in the light of three Bollywood films — *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), *Astitva* (2000), and *Queen* (2014). Through a detailed plot analysis of these films, it attempts to trace the continual reconfiguration of the category of the feminine in Bollywood cinema and its movement towards more enabling and accommodating terms.

Recognition is "a site of power by which the human is differentially produced" (Butler 2). Consequently, refusal to be recognised or rendered intelligible within the limited and exclusionary norms may impair one's sense of social belonging, but that estrangement from society is preferable to a maimed recognition. Particularly in phallogocentric societies where gender is differentially and asymmetrically produced, social acceptability is predicated on highly restrictive parameters. Thus, only particular models of femininity are deemed permissible, while femininity itself continues to be considered less desirable than masculinity. In the Indian context, one only has to consider the premium

placed on chaste, docile, and virginal women at the same time that womanhood itself continues to be demeaned — highly vitriolic and sexist jokes at the expense of women and 'womanly' behaviour still dominate a large segment of the popular culture. Consequently, one's sense of identity remains in conflict with socially determined scripts for acceptable, normative behaviour.

Even as individuals attempt to fit themselves in the mould of socially desirable identities, their multifaceted desires continue to spill across boundaries. In a 1997 essay titled "Against Proper Objects," Butler suggested that despite the discursive production of gender, desire is never fully determined, and sexuality never entirely grasped by any social regulation. Hence, the conditions of symbolic representation, which attempt to establish themselves as normative, are vulnerable to transformative re-articulation. In other words, by maintaining a critical and transformative relation to the socially constructed norms of belonging, one may articulate alternative norms and ideals that would better facilitate a livable life. The task of feminism along with the new gender movements, according to Butler, is to be about "distinguishing among the norms and conventions that permit people to breathe, to desire, to love, and to live, and those norms and conventions that restrict or eviscerate the conditions of life itself" ("Introduction" 8).

Women in Bollywood Cinema

In the Indian context, Bollywood cinema performs the crucial role as the site of reflection as well as construction and reification of normative gender roles. In general, the portrayal of female characters in Bollywood films is aimed at reinforcing rigid and patriarchally circumscribed notions of femininity. "One of the functions of narrative…is to 'seduce' women into femininity with or without their consent. The female subject is made to desire femininity" (qtd. in Burton 195). The meanings projected onto the empty signifier of femininity are historically contingent; it becomes necessary, in this context, to examine the historically changing prototypes of the feminine as represented in Bollywood cinema since its inception.

From its origin in D.G. Phalke's *Raja Harishchandra* (1913), mainstream Bollywood cinema has traversed a long way from its initial function as a pan-Indian cultural artefact meant to create the imagined cohesive community that is India to its exclusivist focus in the new millennium, even as it often engages in critiques of the contemporary socio-political framework. While earlier the nation was allegorised through the genre of melodrama as an all-inclusive community or family demanding loyalty, such binding ties ostensibly seem to be waning in the films produced in the last two decades marked by globalisation and post-liberalisation which prioritise personal aspirations over community ties.

However, individuality remains a positive characteristic in male protagonists, while women continue to bear the burden of community values and are expected to lead neatly defined, socially scripted lives. However, some recent films like *Thappad* (2020) and *Lipstick under my Burkha* (2016), catering primarily to niche, liberal audiences, have sought to reclaim the idea of individual aspiration for their women protagonists.

The post-independence rigid, Brahmanical nationalism of the middle classes led to a Sanskritisation of Bollywood cinema that had earlier allowed some space for the expression of female sexuality. A new dichotomy emerged, and the figure of the woman was used to map out the conflicting pulls of tradition and modernity. The figure of the ideal woman—chaste and docile—stood representative of tradition, a repertoire of Indian, cultural and community values restricted to the domestic sphere. This women-as-nation artefact came to be in opposition to the "demonic" and sexualised figure of the Other, representative of the Islamic and worldly (and public) modernising impulses. "…the filmic coming into being of the feminine body has usually been a complex process of distilling visible signs, by which a form is abstracted gradually, by an acute calibration of *eros* and *jouissance*, between the world and the home, into a postulate of "traditional" patriarchy or of its intimate enemy, the modern" (Basu 140, italics in original).

Such seductive and threatening impulses are embodied in the "Helen assemblage" examined by Anustup Basu in relation with the genre of the feudal family romance that denied the possibility of female desire in the "patriarchal monopoly of sexual pleasure" (145). Posited in a rigid binary against the virtuous domesticated woman, Helen becomes the 'femme fatale' through her sexualised subjectivity whose power and existence in the public domain gets continually exorcised by her ultimate death or sudden disappearance in the films in which she figures. At the same time, the "epistemological forfeiture" (150) of sexual desire in the virtuous heroine accords her dignity as well as divinity as her love for the male protagonist transcends love to become devotion. On the other hand, Helen cannot be loved, for to do so would mean abandoning feudal patriarchy's absolute nomination of the husband as a despot in opposition to the Kantian notion of the modern institution of marriage as a free association of consenting individuals and a mutual interplay of desire.

In this context of the delimitation of femininity in accordance with the demands of national consolidation, Butler's remarks in an interview conducted in 2004 become enlightening. "If the task of 'nation-building' requires an effacement of the social forms in which sexuality lives, then the 'nation' will come to require the suppression of the actual ways in which sexuality is socially organized" ("Troubling Genders" 118). Through the filmic construction of

opposing models of femininity and the socially constituted difference between the virtuous woman of the home who exists as the repertoire of traditional Indian values and the sexually promiscuous femme fatale, the conditions of livability and social recognition of women are severely restricted. The arbitrary, mutually exclusive, delimitation of the roles and spheres embodied by the heroine and the vamp served, in effect, to restrict women's ways of being and living.

A possible rearticulation of these norms appears to be underway as one examines Bollywood cinema closer to the new millennium. As demands for feudal proprieties came into conflict with the practical need for survival in the atmosphere of tremendous political and economic upheaval post-1970s, the extremes of tradition/modernity, wife/whore, private/public, and virtue/vice—the heroine/vamp dichotomy, in other words—threatened to collapse in Bollywood cinema as women characters gained relatively greater access to the public sphere.

Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge (**1995**)

Considered a universal epitome of romance, *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* (1995) has been a popular blockbuster for more than 20 years now. The characters Raj (Shahrukh Khan) and Simran (Kajol) have attained mythic significance and continue to be much appreciated by audiences. As the characters are introduced in the film, Simran is seen perpetually in the domestic space, looking out of the window longingly and dreaming and singing of her knight in shining armour. Raj, on the other hand, is a libertine who occupies the public space of thrill and adventure—playing football, swimming, driving race cars, racing with the aeroplane, and loitering with his friends at night. Similarly, Chaudhary Baldev Singh's (Amrish Puri) stroll through the London streets is in stark contrast with his domesticated wife and daughters, who hurriedly terminate their merry-making, adopting postures of feminine propriety as they sense his arrival.

Women confined to the domestic sphere are considered to be the repositories of Indian culture and *tehzeeb,* and Baldev Singh prides himself on having safeguarded this culture. As Simran's partner, Kuljeet (Paramjeet Sethi who is significantly shown hunting in the forest), is chosen by her father, the patriarchal monopoly over female sexuality becomes visible. Moreover, Simran, as a representative of Indian tradition, must ask her patriarchal custodian's permission to venture into the public sphere for a Europe tour while that permission is readily available to Raj.

As a form of subtle manipulation rather than open rebellion, women often assume conditional access to the public sphere, underscoring the fact of their respectability and performing the socially determined requirements of their gender

through sartorial gestures and a constant demonstration of a legitimate purpose. Thus, even while on the trip, Simran appears constrained and consistently exhibits a sense of purpose and respectability as evident in her distress on missing the train, mistakenly having her dress torn, when she asserts her disapproval of Raj drinking in front of a woman and her consternation at the thought of having spent the night with him. The most carefree she appears is in a state of intoxication. Transferred like a possession from one patriarch to another, as Raj too conforms to a similar constricting discourse of honour, respectability, and protection, Simran is co-opted into the very institutions that repress her and happily, she inhabits the space of a domestic, selfless, traditional, and stereotypical Indian woman faithfully observing Karvachauth.

The film, however, stages and entertains the possibility of Simran's desire symbolically through songs such as "*Mere khwabon mein*" and "*Zara sa jhoom lun main*." Such moments of transgressive articulation remain submerged under the film's eventual affirmation of more conservative and socially scripted roles for women. Thus, the free-spirited Simran transforms from an agential, desiring to be a passive object of the larger-than-life hero's attempts to secure her hand in marriage. Such a trajectory remained a characteristic trope of most Bollywood films of the time, continuing into the present. Even as the figures of the ideal woman and the vamp began to merge in films produced after the 1970s increasingly, the hedonistic and pleasure-seeking impulses were invariably eclipsed under demands of social propriety. The reproduction of traditional gender roles on screen served to secure a renewed reification of women within these well-entrenched social scripts. Consequently, the popular Hindi film has been a mise-en-scène of male fantasies and scopophilia; the male protagonist commands plot development as his gaze, aligned with the gaze and phantasies of the patriarchal spectator, shapes the representation of the female figure. To quote Laura Mulvey, "cinematic codes create a gaze, a world, and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of [male] desire" (67).

Astitva **(2000)**

The re-articulation of these cinematic codes and possible reconfiguration of constitutive terms of femininity to make them more amenable to complex female subjectivity would occur five years later in Mahesh Manjrekar's *Astitva*. Aditi (Tabu) is introduced to us as a woman comfortably ensconced in the domestic sphere and married to a man called Shrikant Pandit (Sachin Khedekar) who appears to be completely dependent on his wife for the most trivial of things. He is aptly described by his friend's wife, Meghna (Smita Jaykar), as "self-centred and pompous, a male chauvinist pig" (*Astitva* 0:21:05). His behaviour upon discovering his wife's past infidelity and the truth about his son's, Aniket's (Sunil Barve), paternity establishes him as a model of repressive,

privileged, and fragile hypermasculinity. Throughout the film, he considers Aditi his property, unabashedly reads letters addressed to her, and subscribes to the patriarchal rhetoric of women's honour being threatened in the professional public space. Aditi's suggestion that she take up a job to overcome her loneliness during his long absences, and Malhar Kamat's (Mohnish Bahl) suggestion that Aditi makes a career out of music is met with an indignant response suggesting his belief in restrictive gender norms which require men to be the breadwinners, while women may indulge in activities merely for pleasure.

As opposed to Shrikant Pandit and his brand of toxic masculinity, the film indicates the possibility of liberated femininity through the characters of Meghna and Revati (Namrata Shirodkar). Meghna is depicted as an emancipated woman with well-formed opinions about companionate marriages. Having divorced her husband after discovering his infidelity and his nonchalant attitude towards it, she continues to insist upon equal responsibility towards children to be shouldered by the spouses. She appears to be the critical feminist consciousness of the film, questioning the hypocrisy of Aniket's supposed "modern outlook" (*Astitva* 1:26:44) and insisting to Aditi that "one must, at no cost, sacrifice one's self-respect, especially not at the altar of men" (*Astitva* 1:24:03).

The distinction between the traditional heroine and the modern, free-thinking vamp is no longer tenable—the filmic narrative of *Astitva* foregrounds a more holistic paradigm of womanhood in which the characteristics of both cohere. Thus, even though Aditi has been depicted as confined to the performance of stereotypical gender roles for most of her life, the film adequately represents her as a desiring, sexualised being, thereby paving the way for a re-articulation of the constitutive terms of femininity. Her sexual identity is evident in her responses to Kamat and the sensuous picturisation of their moments of intimacy. While the camera's gaze mostly focuses on her body, thereby catering to male voyeurism, the sexual overtones of women drenched in the rain are here transferred onto the male body as Aditi gazes longingly at the drenched Malhar and initiates their liaison.

Right before embarking upon an autonomous life, she delivers a monologue which questions the asymmetrical nature of gender roles and grasps the nerve of the matter—the fragility of male ego, which is threatened by female sexuality as only a woman can establish a child's paternity. Her confident questioning of gender stereotypes merits quoting at some length:

> A man however established a libertine he may be, expects complete faith from his wife...Are men's desires different from those of women?... Who gave you the privilege to sleep with other women?... Did you ever wonder what happened to them?... Is a woman not entitled to a fulfilling sexual life? (*Astitva* 1:38:07)

As Aditi marches on towards the hope of a better future, the two men, Shrikant and Aniket, are left speechless and immobile at the threshold that the woman has now crossed; significantly, on the wall behind them appears a portrait of Krishna's *rasleela*, a typical signifier of a culture that sacralises male libertinism while limiting female sexuality. Aditi's enraged questioning of normative gender codes is influenced by women like Meghna and Revati, who enable her to chart out a course towards financial and sexual autonomy, thereby establishing a paradigm of sisterhood crucially absent from the purview of Bollywood cinema so far. At the same time, the sacred domestic space is revealed to be a site of marital rape, repressed sexuality, and violence (both physical and psychological), thereby undoing the value-laden spatial segregation between the domestic and the public. Moreover, the redefinition of gender identities, it appears, occurs simultaneously with a reconfiguration of normative social relationships; unlike the eventual affirmation of heterosexual romance in *DDLJ, Astitva* prioritises alternative kinship models premised on an enabling acceptance of each other's multifaceted identity. The film, therefore, marks a shift from "the ideological fiction of marriage and the family as the normalised and privileged domain of sexuality" to a redefinition of kinship as a site of movement "beyond patrilineality, compulsory heterosexuality, and the symbolic overdetermination of biology" (Butler, "Against Proper Objects" 14).

Queen (2014)

The 2014 movie *Queen* catalogues the Bildungsroman of a conventionally shy and reticent Rani (Kangana Ranaut) into a confident, self-sufficient, and assertive woman, who claims pleasure and risk for herself on the streets of Paris and Amsterdam. Prior to her foray in the public world, her life is portrayed as contingent upon the male figures in her life—she requires her father's permission to venture out of the domestic sphere, faces innumerable restrictions from her fiancé in the name of protection and feminine propriety and is accompanied practically everywhere by her brother Chintu (Chinmay Chandraunshuh), who becomes the symbol of the invariably male patriarchal control, despite his young age. In a brief flashback, we witness a plethora of professional, behavioural, spatial, and temporal gender stereotypes wherein the characteristically shy and modest Rani (suggestively pursuing Home Science) shows indifference towards and shirks the unsolicited advances of the engineer Vijay (Rajkummar Rao) who engages in the traditionally male role of wooing. Rani, whose limited fantasies about travelling are circumscribed to her honeymoon, suffers an inevitable shock as Vijay calls off their wedding citing the reason, "For me, it's all about travel, business, meetings…*bohot tough ho jayega tumhare liye*" (*Queen* 0:08:51).

Even as she embarks alone on her honeymoon in Paris, neglecting the

95

frowning eyebrows and the injunctions to take Chintu along, her initial forays into Parisian streets reflect emotional turmoil through the culturally conditioned need for a male guiding hand. Having braved physical threat posed by a mugger and being initiated into the world of risk-taking, Rani gains confidence. Being inadvertently drunk, she rebels against restrictive feminine propriety that restricts 'good girls' from burping, wearing certain clothes, and indulging in their desires.

Her carefree behaviour in a state of intoxication mirrors Simran's uninhibited dance to "*Zara sa jhoom lun main*" in *DDLJ*. However, unlike Simran's eventual embrace of conventional femininity, what follows in *Queen* is a series of subversions wherein Rani undercuts the restrictions that were earlier imposed on her—she becomes economically self-sufficient and exposes as baseless the culturally-induced inhibitions against ungendered spaces by sharing a room with three men. Male presence becomes more egalitarian as she assumes control by driving and making decisions, reading a map and simultaneously mapping the city spaces. A particularly powerful moment in the film captures Rani dancing wildly atop a bar counter; such dances, especially in Bollywood cinema of the 1960s and 70s, were associated with the figure of the cabaret dancer in the public space of the nightclub—a den of hedonism and unrestricted revelry. The hypersexualised figure of the cabaret dancer was invariably juxtaposed with the *sanskaari* woman of the house. Clear demarcations, however, were not always tenable; while the narrative discourse emphasised the need to maintain neat public-private distinctions, the lyrical sequences in these films unsettled such distinctions. Rachel Dwyer notes:

> film songs and their picturization provide greater opportunities for sexual display than dialogue and narrative sections of the films, with their specific images of clothes, body and body language, while the song lyrics are large to do with sexuality, ranging from romance to suggestive and overt lyrics.... (qtd. in Mankekar 419)

Rani's uninhibited and uncensored dance signals her initiation into an uninhibited subjectivity; it further marks the collapse of the socially constructed borders between masculine and feminine, active and passive, public and private, heroine and vamp. The film dramatises the desire for social acceptance of female subjectivity in all its complicated and multifaceted glory.

From the hotel-room window to the balcony to the streets of Paris, Rani's transition into a woman of the world (as was Aditi's in *Astitva*) is overseen by threatening Helen-figures. The blatant, confident, and bra-hating Vijaylaxmi (Lisa Hayden) and the unnervingly candid sex-worker Ruksar aka Roxette (Sabeeka Imam) represent the "disreputable" women of the world who enable Rani to transcend normative femininity, by offering her a glimpse of their

generous humanity and a new perspective that normalises shame. *Queen* offers a refreshing respite from the archetypal heterosexual romances by offering a striking vignette of female bonding under the Eiffel tower and a denouement that refuses to reinstate Rani's new-found freedom in the patriarchal institutions of heterosexual relationship or marriage.

Conclusion

What binds the women protagonists of these films is their struggle against restrictive social scripts. The outcome of that struggle is envisioned in widely differing ways — Simran replaces one patriarch with another, Aditi and Rani find refuge in unfettered individuality alongside supportive women allies. Notwithstanding its different outcomes, what is of significance is the struggle itself. During their finest moments, these films highlight the constructed, arbitrary nature of gender norms which fail to accommodate desire in its rich multiplicity. Intoxicated, the otherwise *sanskaari* Simran dances to the suggestive lyrics of "*Zara sa jhoom lun main*"; the usually shy Rani immerses herself in Parisian nightlife, all inhibitions forgotten; Aditi rages against the suppression of her desires under the circumscribing domain of wifehood.

In other words, these films dramatise the Butlerian idea that the constitutive terms of one's gender remain open to individual attempts at revisioning in a bid to secure a more liveable life. Adoption of a critical and transformative relation to social norms that restrict one's personhood is, according to Butler, the primary step towards the alteration of those norms. For far too long, control over the narrativisation of women's desires has rested with unsympathetic storytellers. The filmic space has remained the mise-en-scène of the desires of patriarchal directors and scriptwriters whose gazes project their own fantasies upon the empty signifier of femininity. As more women-centric films begin to involve the audiences, more women like Aditi and Rani begin to disavow repressive models of femininity in favour of more humane paradigms of womanhood. Not too long ago, Bollywood encountered its own MeToo movement even as female actors raised their voices against issues such as sexual harassment and equal pay. The need of the hour is, besides a greater representation of women in artistic as well as political circles, a sustained reconfiguration of women's representation in popular cinema and a continuous negotiation of gendered identities.

Works Cited and Consulted

Astitva. Directed by Mahesh Manjrekar, Eros Entertainment, 2000.

Basu, Anustup. "'The Face that Launched a Thousand Ships': Helen and Public Femininity in Hindi Film." *Figurations in Indian Film*, edited by Meheli Sen and Anustup Basu, Orient Blackswan Pvt. Ltd., 2014, pp. 139–157.

Bose, Brinda. "Modernity, Globality, Sexuality, and the City: A Reading of Indian Cinema." *The Global South*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2008, pp. 35–58. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40339281. Accessed 10 May 2020.

Burton, Graeme. "Approaches to Film." *Media and Society: Critical Perspectives*. Open UP, 2005, pp. 173–196.

—. "Media Texts: Features and Deconstructions." *Media and Society: Critical Perspectives*. Open UP, 2005, pp. 44–80.

Butler, Judith. "Introduction: Acting in Concert." *Undoing Gender,* Routledge, 2004, pp. 1–16.

— and Vasu Reddy. "Troubling Genders, Subverting Identities: Interview with Judith Butler." *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, no. 62, 2004, pp. 115-123. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4066688. Accessed 30 Aug. 2020.

—. "Against Proper Objects." *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, edited by Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor, Indiana UP, 1997, pp. 1–23.

Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge. Directed by Aditya Chopra, Yash Raj Films, 1995.

Doane, Mary Ann. "Woman's Stake: Filming the Female Body." *October*, vol. 17, 1981, pp. 23–36. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/778247. Accessed 10 May 2020.

Kakar, Sudhir. "The Ties That Bind: Family Relationships in the Mythology of Hindi Cinema." *India International Centre Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1981, pp. 11–21. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23001932. Accessed 10 May 2020.

Lipstick under my Burkha. Directed by Alankrita Shrivastava, Prakash Jha Productions, 2016.

Mankekar, Purnima. "Dangerous Desires: Television and Erotics in Late Twentieth-Century India." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 63, no. 2, 2004, pp. 403–431. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/4133391. Accessed 10 May 2020.

Mazumdar, Ranjani. "Desiring Women." *Bombay Cinema: An Archive of the City*, U of Minnesota P, 2007, pp. 79–109.

Mulvey, Laura. "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' inspired by 'Duel in the Sun' (King Vidor, 1946)." *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, no. 15/17, 1981, pp. 12–15. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/44111815. Accessed 10 May 2020.

—. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Palgrave, 1989, pp. 14–28.

Nandy, Ashis. "The Popular Hindi Film: Ideology and First Principles." *India International Centre Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1981, pp. 89–96. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23001938. Accessed 10 May 2020.

Queen. Directed by Vikas Bahl, Viacom18 Motion Pictures, 2014.

Thappad. Directed by Anubhav Sinha, AA Films, 2020.

—— ∗ ——

Post-National, Global, or Local: Literary Cinematic Responses

Naresh K. Vats

Today's cinema seems to be challenging the established elite cinematic discourse. Causing dents in the dominant discourse, this new cinema hints at, and also, induces change by breaking the mould and effecting reforms simultaneously. The paper attempts to approach Hindi cinema from the margins of global, national, international, post-national and popular. It primarily tells of individuals, and through them, it depicts the collective. The characters are viewed as humans complete with the elemental human nature of anxiety, love, lust, ambition, self, identity and whatnot. An individual's sense of self emerges from various factors like nationality, gender, sexuality, class, caste, religion, sect, etc. The term globalisation brings to the mind the conflict of hybridisation and homogenisation, exclusion and inclusion, global and local, and what should be the concept of nationalism.

As a critique of nationalism, post-nationalism rejects the idea of the nation as the central organising principle. It also calls into question the concept of identity by looking beyond the idea of the nation as a homogenous collective. In fact, post-national as a discourse implies going beyond, transcend and escape the boundaries of master-discourses (nationalism being the one among several others like colonialism, capitalism, feminism, etc.). Nationalism, as a master discourse, presupposes nation as a monolithic structure that does not allow space for plurality.

> Nationalism is a mode of thinking that has impacted our social, political, literary, and fictional imagination, even our deepest psychological being – our very sense of personal identity. The nation is the most resilient form of community imagined, and the devotion it elicits from followers is next only to the intensity religion evokes. (Virdi 27)

Virdi argues that nation, an important element of an individual's identity, is an abstract notion that involves several constituents like language, religion, race, geography, etc. It is argued that nationalism emerged in Europe as a potent ideology in the late 17th century arising within a specific social formation and sustained by culture, a force at once cohesive and fractious. The concept of 'nation' spread globally, and it continues as a prime player in contemporary geopolitics. Fictional and mythic representations construct nations in art and literature, spurring nationalist sentiments, while nations popularise and favour

particular myths and fantasies. In the case of India, the society accommodates various cultural units under its umbrella of the nation. This image of a unified nation is nurtured and maintained by Hindi cinema or Bollywood.

> However, a sense of unity is derived from various other factors: a state-imposed unified system of law, language, and education; the constitution; one monetary currency; and the creation of a national imaginary. The latter, I contend, is sustained in no small part by the visionary nature of Hindi cinema. (27)

Post-national comes as a counter-discourse; a local, fragmentary narrative against the totalising master narratives that tend to homogenise the national identity taking it as the natural integrating factor of a political community. Indian cinema has responded to globalisation in its own way. Instead of telling stories carrying lofty ideas and ideals, today's cinema has shifted its tone and texture in alignment with the everyday experience of individuals who are struggling with the day-to-day realities.

Newton (2017) depicts a young man's struggle to accomplish his responsibilities/duty despite the odds. *Hindi Medium* (2017) too depicts the everyday reality of India where people are busy in bettering their life according to the needs of globalisation i.e., attaining fluency in English, which is a status symbol not only in India but in the entire third world. *Dangal* (2016) shows the struggle of a man against the realities of his ambition, expectations, and traditions. Other examples are *Pad Man* (2018), *Bareilly Ki Barfi* (2017), *Toilet Ek Prem Katha* (2017), etc. The paper proposes to critically look at how globalisation and post-nationalism work in the realities of today, exploring the concepts through literature and beyond.

Post-nationalism is common men's response in the context of the mundane every day where they make simple digressions from the higher ideas like loyalty, ethics, and morality, etc., without necessarily discarding them. But this innocent tendency is manipulated/hijacked by a section of political thinkers to their advantage and is blown out of proportion so as to affect populace and academia. In order to earn political legitimacy, no efforts are spared to intellectualise and populise the discourse.

David Inglis contends in his book *Culture and Everyday Life* (2005) that 'high,' 'popular,' and 'low' cultures impact everyday life, and everyday life too can impact upon them. The nature of these cultural areas is in the present day rapidly mutating, such that it is difficult to tell that the distinctions in 'low', 'high'

and 'popular' culture have been abolished or the borders between these areas have become more permeable than before. Inglis makes his point by mentioning how, since the 1960s, images and issues from 'popular culture' (e.g., Andy Warhol's use of advertising for Campbell's soup in his art) have entered into the mainstream art world, such that there has been a blending of 'high' and 'low' elements, a situation is often taken to be quintessentially 'post-modern' in nature. He further mentions the views of Peterson and Kern in this regard:

> ... that cultural distinctions are not today as clear cut as Bourdieu made out, that classes do not necessarily have 'their own' cultures any more, and that people, on the whole, are more culturally 'omnivorous', in that they blend and mix together different sorts of cultural forms in new and eclectic ways. (108)

Everyday life is just a continuum of routine day-to-day activities spanning from getting up from sleep to calling it a day – and, of course, while sleeping too. However banal these mundane activities seem to be, every individual is unique to whom this apparent 'routineness' of daily experiences is important and special. These ordinary concerns of everyday life are made the focus of mainstream cinema and filmic discourse. Such ordinary and everyday concerns in cinema should be given sufficient academic attention.

Cinema or entertainment might possibly not have been granted the same value two decades before, but today 'Bollywood' is perhaps India's best-known international brand. Internationally people today accept the format of song-and-dance cinema, and more mainstream Indian films get shown at international venues like Cannes. Unlike even as late as the 1990s, when Indian popular cinema was for many a bastardised form of 'real' cinema (read: Western realist cinema), today Indian films are, more than ever, appreciated and enjoyed for their difference (*Flashback* 3). Rosie Thomas too comments this regard:

> Indian cinema has, throughout its long history, evolved as a form which has registered the cultural imperialism of Hollywood: the form has undergone continual change and there has been both inspiration and assimilation from Hollywood and elsewhere, but thematically and structurally, Indian cinema has remained remarkably distinctive. (Thomas 116)

Talking about Indian identity with reference to hybridity and difference Salman Rushdie, in the essay "India's Fiftieth Anniversary" (2003) says:

> Selfhood of India is so capacious, so elastic that it manages to accommodate one billion kinds of difference. It agrees with its billion selves to call all of them 'Indian'. This is a notion far more original than the old pluralist ideas of 'melting pot' or 'cultural mosaic'. It works because the individual sees his own nature writ large in the nature of the state. This is why individual Indians feel so comfortable about the strength of the national idea, why it's so easy to belong to it, in spite of all the turbulence, the corruption, the tawdriness, the disappointment of fifty overwhelming years. (Rushdie, *Step Across This Line*)

Rushdie further comments that Churchill believed India was not a nation, it is just an abstraction. John Kenneth Galbraith too described India as 'functioning anarchy'. According to Rushdie:

> Both of them, in my view, underestimated the strength of India-idea. It may be the most innovative national philosophy to have emerged in the post-colonial period. It deserves to be celebrated; because it is an idea that has enemies, within India as well as outside its frontiers, and to celebrate it is also to defend it against its foes. (Rushdie, *Step Across This Line*)

Rushdie's ideas about creative arts like writing are equally valid for cinematic representation too:

> Closed systems have always appealed to writers. This is why so much writing deals with prisons, police forces, hospitals, schools. Is the nation a close system? In this internationalized moment, can any system remain closed? Nationalism is that 'revolt against history' that seeks to close what cannot any longer be closed. To fence in what should be frontier less. Good writing assumes a frontier less nation. Writers who serve frontiers have become border guards. (Rushdie, "Notes")

I think nationalism may also be seen as a development in terms of social, political, and economic prosperity at the collective level, and sense of well-being at the individual level. Indian cinema started with the theme of mythology in 1913 and reached the individual's anguish and concerns today – from *Raja Harishchandra* (1913) and *Bhasmasur* (1914) Indian cinema has graduated to the theme of *Hindi Medium* and *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha*. It is Important to refer to Dadasahab Phalke's contribution of 125 films in 25 years. Phalke became completely blind for about six months. During the convalescence, he saw the film *Life of Christ* and got inspired to produce films in India. His first full-

length feature film, *Raja Harishchandra* (1913), which was 3,700 feet in length and ran for three quarters of an hour, was released on the 17th of May, 1913 at the Coronation Cinema. His other films were *Mohini Bhasmasur* (1913), *Satyavan Savitri* (1914), *Lanka Dahan* (1917), *Shree Krishna Janma* (1918) and *Kaliya Mardan* (1919). Till 1937 he produced 125 films with *Gangavataran* (1937) being his last film. Other producers like Imperial Film Company were making 'Arabian Nights type adventure films' 'Rajput romances', 'action films' and 'socials' (*Flashback* 8-9).

Starting off by copying Western cinema in style, technique, and spirit Bollywood has developed its own aesthetics, poetics, and grammar to delineate the nation, its people, anxieties, conflicts, and aspirations through elite narratives, to popular images, to common, vulgar, everyday depiction. This does not stop at just portrayal but takes on the everyday problems by talking about it, dragging them from taboo zones to the normal discourse, suggesting solutions, and assuring common people that they be the agents of change and that their lives are as significant as that of a superhero or a super she-ro. The directors do not suffer from moral anxiety. Cinema has moved from larger-than-life topics on to those that are related to the individual, mundane, and everyday life.

In *Bareilly Ki Barfi,* Pankaj Tripathi, Bitti's sweet shop owner father challenges the traditional image of the father of a girl (beti ka baap) by sharing cigarettes with her and by not keeping a tab on her behaviour and movements. It reminds the earlier images of Nazir Hussain as 'beti ka majboor baap' (the helpless father of a girl). The female lead Bitti Mishra (Kriti Sanon) is an outspoken, angry-young Bareilly girl who is fed up with the society and her mother, having been rejected by prospective grooms' families. She runs away from home and at the railway station comes across a novel *Bareilly Ki Barfi* which she feels is written about her; it reassures her of a boy who would value her for what she is. She is prolific, profound, and whatever the opposite of a diva is.

Newton, India's Oscar submission in the foreign-language film category, is a satire on the democratic process in India. The characters in the film Newton Kumar, Malko, Loknath, Atma Singh all have their problems, and they struggle with the everyday realities. For Newton or Atma Singh, there is no heavy rush of testosterone. *Anaarkali of Aarah (*2017) makes the statement loud and clear, "Don't dare touch a woman without her consent, be it a prostitute, someone less than a prostitute or even your wife." The protagonist is holding her own, asserting herself, commanding, scheming, and yet not trying to look divine. She

is just being herself and says "Ham koi dudh ke dhule nahi hain". The local 'item girl' fights off the harassment. 'NO means NO' genre also resonates in *Pink* (2016)*,* where the girls decide to take on the harassers.

The issues of menstrual hygiene in *Pad Man,* of open defecation and use of toilets for the sake of sanitation and self-respect in *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha* are everyday concerns. Cinema has great potential of touching the masses with its multisensory effect and vividity as compared to other modes of communication. Hence, such films play a positive social function especially in developing countries like India. In an interview about *Pad Man,* R. Balki says:

> I feel that a film's first job is to entertain. What is entertainment keeps changing from time to time. Today, people want to see things that are relevant to them… Films can choose to take whatever responsibility they want, but the primary responsibility is to entertain. The message cannot overpower the entertainment factor. (Jamkhandikar)

Nandini Ramnath explains in an article how Juhi Chaturvedi's first penning down of a taboo but very important issue of sperm donation led to the making of *Vicky Donor* (2012), and then *Piku* (2015) discussed themes of "inter-generational conflict, anxieties over ageing and death, the difficulty of taking care of ailing parents, and the necessity of handling bodily malfunctions without emotion or embarrassment" (Ramnath). The winds of change and a conscious shift towards making the everyday worthy of discussion are evident through Hindi Cinema today.

These movies look at the nation through the eyes of real individuals, whether children, youth or elderly, from a point of view that is far removed from the illusions and traditions that have blinded us, cornered to the margins of hypocrisy. The problems raised in two movies, i.e. *Pad Man* (2018) *and Toilet*: *Ek Prem Katha* (2017) may not sound real in this country (and many other rich and advanced countries in the West), but these are real problems of poor and rural areas in India and several other countries who are struggling with the basic issues like sanitation and hygiene. Other movies i.e., *Newton* (2017), *Hindi Medium* (2017), *Dangal (2016), Bareilly Ki Barfi* (2017), *Pink* (2016)*,* etc. take up the issues of representation, identity, self, and ambition which may exist across class and area. I am genuinely convinced that these issues are present all over the world in varying degrees and variants.

Toilet: Ek Prem Katha (2017) is based on the life of Anita Narre. The film talks about the issue of open defecation in India. Anita realises that they do

not have a toilet at her husband's place and decides to leave her husband's house until the toilet is made. She returned only after the toilet was built. She was later honoured with Sulabh International and awarded rupees 7 lakh. She was also honoured by the President of India. The district administration got a *pucca* toilet constructed at her in-law's place. The storyline has reference to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's *Swacch Bharat Abhiyan*. Through Anita, the film represents the misery of countless women in India's rural and slum areas. Anita was the first case in the country when any woman raised her voice for her self-respect and stuck to her mission till she could achieve her freedom from the humiliating practice of open defecation (Bhargava). Another woman, Puja, who in 2014 left her husband's house when her repeated demand to build a toilet was ignored by her husband and in-laws. It took her six months to finally take the step. Despite the intervention of the village panchayat in Bihar that directed her husband to construct a toilet, the deed wasn't done, and therefore, Puja decided it was better that she stayed at her parents' house than going to the open field every day before dawn to defecate. Puja was made a *Swacchta Doot* by her village panchayat (Smrity Sharma).

The film critiques our own way of living and insists that we look inwards and change ourselves according to the needs of the time. The message is loud and clear at the beginning of the film when Anupam Kher's character who is an agriculture scientist says, "I may have a dirty mind, but I have a clean heart." *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha* is the story of a bicycle repair shop owner Keshav in a village Mandgaon near Mathura. Already 36, he falls in love with Jaya (much younger to him) and marries her. His village-like several villages in India, follows the practice of open defecation. Jaya, who comes from a modern educated family, does not accept it. She not only demands a toilet in her home, but also raises her voice to inspire other women to stand against the daily humiliation of defecating in the open. With consistent efforts, they are successful in convincing the administration as well as Keshav's father, who would not even think of constructing a toilet inside the house. The movie questions, critiques and interprets *Dharm*, culture, tradition. Characters cite from the *Manusmriti* to bring home the idea of sanitation and hygiene.

Pad Man (2018) was inspired by the real-life story of Arunachalam Muruganantham who when in 1998 saw his wife using old rags for sanitary pads, made a prototype that failed terribly. Thereafter, he used different materials and came up with new models for sanitary pads every month. Since there was a month gap between each prototype tested by his wife, he had no other choice except to ask for a few volunteers from a nearby medical college. Though a

few female students agreed to try them, they were shy to give him the right feedback. So Muruganantham decided to test them himself. It took him two years to find the right material and another four years to come up with a way to process it. The result was an easy-to-use machine for producing low-cost sanitary pads. With the imported machines costing more than $5,00,000, Muruganantham's prototype came at just $950. As a result, women's groups or schools can buy his machine, produce their own sanitary pads, and sell the surplus. In this way, Muruganantham's machine has created jobs for women in rural India. He has started a revolution in his own country, selling 1,300 machines to 27 states, and has recently begun exporting them to developing countries all over the world. Today, Muruganantham is one of India's most well-known social entrepreneurs and *Time* magazine named him as one of the 100 most influential people in the world in 2014 ("Think Change India").

Pad Man is the story of Lakshmikant Chauhan from an Indian village who comes up with an idea of producing low-cost sanitary pads in order to improve menstrual health of women. For he has to fight with the taboos and stigma associated with the menstrual cycle (popularly called 'periods'). In fact, this is a problem all over the world:

> Many non-governmental organisations around the globe, such as Days for Girls focus on the need for hygienic menstrual products and make and distribute reusable pads. The argument is that the provision of pads enables girls to stay in school. One in four girls in India misses one day or more in school during menstruation. (Kay)

Outright heroic response to a crisis may necessarily not be the forte of the protagonists in today's Hindi cinema, but it upholds their courage to sustain the struggle in quite an unheroic way by often drawing sustenance from equally unheroic individuals who choose to support them. These protagonists are not corrupt, criminals, or sinners, but tend to be vulnerable to temptations. Today's hero is not larger than the life image out to uphold an idealist flag. The protagonists are quite identifiable and their conflicts are easy to relate to. The male protagonist has no qualms in crying on a woman's shoulder, and the female takes tough and realistic decisions. The representations challenge and go beyond the normalisations. They are humanistic representations that go beyond the prejudices and stereotypes bringing in the ideas of neo-masculinity and neo-femininity. These protagonists are not necessarily to be liked, sympathised with, felt pity for or hated. The characters are balanced–they are just let be.

Per capita consumption of cinema has increased enormously. Grand narratives are succumbing to everyday incidents and experiences. One can see a kind of defiance about the young filmmakers who seem to be trying to rescue cinema from the clutches of clichés, formulae and ideology. It is secularisation and democratisation of cinema that has no design to 'mould' or 'affect' the masses. Stories are cherry-picked from every day of the middle class and below.

Works Cited and Consulted

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* Verso, 2006.

Bareilly Ki Barfi. Dir. Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari. 2017

Bhargava, Mayank and Ranjan. "Woman who inspired Toilet: Ek Prem Katha not happy with Rs 5 lakh, wants film royalties." Hindustan Times, 19 July 2017, https://www.hindustantimes.com/bollywood/woman-who-inspired-toilet-ek-prem-katha-not-happy-with-rs-5-lakh-wants-film-royalties/story-o5pex1VPU yw6ywIjGPpucI.html Accessed 2 Oct. 2018.

Dangal. Dir. Nitesh Tiwari. 2016.

Gooptu Sharmishtha, et al. *Flashback: 175 Years of Entertainment Entertainment Entertainment*, Bennet, Coleman & Co. Ltd. 2013.

Hindi Medium. Dir. Saket Chawdhary. 2017.

Inglis David. *Culture and Everday Life*. Routledge, 2005.

Jamkhandikar, Shilpa. "Q&A: R Balki on 'Padman' and how to present a film with a message." https://uk.reuters.com/article/padman-sonam-kapoor-akshay-kumar/qa-r-balki-on-padman-and-how-to-present-a-film-with-a-message-idUKKBN1FR0Y9. Reuters. Accessed 2 Dec. 2020.

Kumar A. Provincialising Bollywood? Cultural economy of north-Indian small-town nostalgia in the Indian multiplex, South Asian Popular Culture, 11:1, 61-74, 2013. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14746689.2013.764642 DOI: 10.1080/14746689.2013.764642

Newton. Dir. Amit V. Masurkar. 2017.

Pad Man. Dir. R. Balki. 2018.

Piku. Dir. Shoojit Sircar. 2015.

Pink. Dir. Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury. 2016.

Ramnath, Nandini. https://scroll.in/article/728140/piku-writer-juhi-chaturvedi-explains-how-she-created-the-years-most-talked-about-film Accessed 2 Dec. 2020.

Rushdie, Salman. *Step Across This Line*. Vintage Books. 2003.

—. "Notes on Writing and the Nation". *Harper's Magazine*. September 1997, 24.

Sharma, Naina. "'PadMan' is Only a Means to an End: We Need Period Talks, Period." *The Quint*. 22 Jan, 2018. https://www.thequint.com/voices/blogs/padman-akshay-kumar-movie-menstrual-hygiene Accessed 2 Dec. 2020.

Sharma, Smrity. "Toilet Ek Prem Katha: Akshay Kumar, Bhumi Pednekar's Film Is Inspired By The Stories of These Real Women." India.com, 17 August 2017, https://www.india.com/entertainment/toilet-ek-prem-katha-akshay-kumar-bhumi-pednekars-film-is-inspired-by-the-stories-of-these-real-women-2337092/. Accessed 2 Oct. 2018.

Stadtler, Florian. *Fiction, Film and Indian Popular Cinema: Salman Rushdie's Novels and the Cinematic Imagination*. Routledge. 2014.

Standing, Kay. "Padman: how Bollywood is challenging the stigma around periods in India". https://theconversation.com/padman-how-bollywood-is-challenging-the-stigma-around-periods-in-india-90278 Accessed 2 Dec. 2020.

Thomas, Rosie. 'Indian Cinema: Pleasures and Popularity', *Screen,* 26(3&4): 116-31. 1985.

Toilet Ek Prem Katha. Dir. Shree Narayan. 2017.

Vicky Donor. Dir. Shoojit Sircar. 2012.

Virdi, Jyotika. *The Cinematic Imagination: Indian Popular Films as Social History*. Permanent Black. 2007.

—— * ——

From Othello's Race to Omkara's Caste: A Study of the Conflicting Political Identities in *Omkara*

Kirti Sachdeva

The movie *Omkara* (2006), an adaptation of Shakespeare's play *Othello*, drastically alters the moral landscape of Venice into the crude and scorched landscape of Uttar Pradesh. While Othello's race is widely debated as the centre of postcolonial studies, Omkara's caste and Uttar Pradesh's politics becomes the locus for Vishal Bhardwaj's projection of the twenty-first century India. The film, as an adaptation, gains an extra narrative reality, and moves beyond the central character, to sculpt a certain image of the nation-state and the ways in which fulfilment of identities is deflated. The camera movements intensify the conflict of modern politics, dwells into the labyrinthine of Uttar Pradesh's Bahubali culture and captures individuals who exist in a homeless world of modern politics, neither belonging to the modern world nor to the traditional world.

The film beautifully exposes the paradox of Omkara's position which is that of a disempowered Bahubali, in some of the pertinent scenes of the film. As an *Aadabaman* (half-brahmin), Omkara's position oscillates between politically enunciated subjectivity and the socially denied identity. The movie sets in motion the representative case of an inter-caste marriage between Omkara, a half-Brahmin and Dolly Mishra, an upper-caste girl. The disjunction between the indispensable political importance of Omkara is juxtaposed with his social condemnation which exhibits the deep-rooted contradictions of India as a Nation. The different spaces occupied by Omkara reflects this contradiction wherein his educational level, his access to modern institutions like banks, schools, universities, his knowledge regarding his fundamental rights, reservations and caste benefits are woefully lacking. Sunil Khilnani, in his book titled *Idea of India* (1999), highlights the contractions in the identity of the lower castes. He alludes to Dr. Ambedkar's declaration that recognised in politics the principle of "one man equal to one vote, equals to one value". however, inferred its denial in the social and economic life (Khilnani 34). That marks the point of contradiction in our politics wherein we fabricate equality in politics and we have inequality in social and economic life. Omkara ends up becoming an illiterate thug and the Bahubali for Bhaisahab Mr. Tiwari is still deeply entrenched into the feudal set up of his master. The acts of showing unquestionable obedience to Mr. Tiwari, again reinforce his indoctrination within the feudal set up which puts up a garb of modernity. He possesses the knowledge domain inscribed by

feudalism and in a similar pattern regulates his social and political relations. His psychological submission to Bhaisahab can also be pronounced by the fact that though he may move around and operate in different spaces, but his ultimate residence is located in an agrarian landscape, surrounded by cows, fields, farmers, hand pumps, and a feudal family. The process by which he constructs the identity and aura of Bhaisahab Mr. Tiwari within his mind reflects that politicians do not just occupy physical territory but also the spaces of our consciousness and morality. The character of Omkara constitutes another dimension in terms of setting forth the new alliances operating within the political domain, especially when it comes to UP caste politics. It shows the endeavours by the political parties to affirm collective identities through various inclusive methods and coalitions. Omkara, a half Brahmin, becomes a token figure for the rest of his community while there is no mention of the state-sponsored upliftment of the destitute. He is used as a representation of his class, a Bahubali who would later be promoted to the Vidhan Sabha. His knowledge does not comprise of the tenets of the constitution or our legislative or judiciary, but it lies in his understanding of his community dynamics, securing vote banks, criminalisation of politics and in engaging in all kinds of deviant behaviour. One of the engrossing aspects of the film is the way in which the film-maker bestows a grand entry to the protagonist, creates an aura around him, devotes the title song to the central protagonist and exposes the popular ways in which his marginalised position becomes a thriving political propaganda.

Omkara is no Othello. Though both the protagonists occupy positions of marginality with respect to their race and caste, Omkara's caste gives him the benefits of exclusive Dalit politics. The exercise of these exclusive Dalit politics creates a delusional quality of empowerment for the entire community. The paradox of Omkara's political identity is rooted in the exploitative nature of representational politics. The film-maker's resolution to give centre stage to a character from a marginalised community only debunks the notion of political empowerment of that community and creates a mirage-like quality for Indian democracy which fabricates identities for political ends.

The film, within the larger narrative, becomes less about Omkara and more about the political journey of the upper caste Bhaisahab Tiwari who becomes an all-encompassing figure in the narrative. The latter represents the inversion of the bureaucratic order by encapsulating the judiciary, the prison, the police, the legislature, the bureaucracy and even the voice of common masses. It is as if all the State systems live and run via him and through him. The movie introduces his character when he is sheltering himself in the State prison.

Figure 1.1 Bhaisahab Tiwari in the prison

However, the prison does not represent bondage or confinement for him, but it is a space that stands for his personal choice, a place of safety where he practises a farcical embodiment of celibacy as a rebounding force to strengthen his elections. Prison becomes a space for him to exercise all kinds of transgression of rules where Omkara and his fellows can enter and exit with their personal guns and mobile phones, while he himself can order for the depositing of his personal valuables. It is yet another portal for Bhaisahab to practice his politics wherein all the outside activities can be directed and manipulated by him. Bahubali (Omkara) and his gang can play the role of fake police any time to achieve their own ends without impunity.

Bhaisahab sometimes appears in a Nehruvian attire and sometimes with a bald head and a dhoti, which again reflects how he assimilates internal diversity and dynamism to become a face of the Nation. Thus, he represents not only the feudal order but also the modern concept of the State as proposed by Nehru and thereby, building an image that masquerades the voice of the feudal, the modern, the Brahmins, the non-Brahmins, and the educated youth, such as Kesu. This versatility becomes a mechanism for his performance and display of authority. By manifesting the diversity in a singularised entity, it again echoes the contradiction of our society wherein the name of State, democracy, patriotism, social, and economic development, India is constructed into a single political community which reduces the manifold variety into a single universal set of policy and places them at the disposal of the States. Finally, when Bhaisahab wins the elections—whose outcomes were already decided in the truck journey that Omkara undertook—the latter uses the discourse of the "triumph of Truth over injustice," to justify it which, in-turn, unravels the most ironic reality of democratic India. Bhaisahab Tiwari embodies the novel ways of flattering popular cultural sensibilities and feeds their populist instinct. He

does so through the choice of his clothes to have a patriotic appeal and installs party representatives like Omkara who are popular mass icons.

Figure 1.2 Bhaisahab Tiwari's release from the jail

The narratives used by Bhaisahab shows how regional parties inscribe their ideologies on the national political imagination. He comes across as a politician who has rehearsed the language of democracy, of Nehruvian outfits, of Gandhian discourses, and has subtly altered the definition of Indian political community. Democratic politics is characterised by electoral competition, acquisition of states, conflicting ideologies and imbalances that cannot harmoniously integrate the regional voices and claims of caste identity with the National identity. Writer Sunil Khilnani, reflecting on the concept of modern cities states, "The idea of modern cities– to the poor, to migrants from countryside, to the destitute, never reached" (118). Ishwar Tyagi, another major character and the cinematic equivalence of the classic villain— Iago (in *Othello*), represents another segment of the larger political family, filled with the feelings of discontent about his non-representability in the discourse of power politics, despite serving it for fifteen years. The power dynamics are also apparent from the fact that Omkara possesses a colossal house located at a comparatively elevated land while Ishwar Tyagi possesses a small one. This disappointment is a result of the altering identity politics in Uttar Pradesh under Bhaisahab. The initial political family installing a feudal and caste-based representation modifies its agenda to transfer the representation to an educated college youth. The shift in representation does not happen from a Bahubali, a feudal representative (Omkara, muscle man, feudal and half Brahmin) to another feudal identity (Ishwar Tyagi), but it transfers to an educated college youth who can draw more votes. Though Kesu becomes the face of the party yet at the fundamental level, the party still remains a feudal-oriented one. His motives and coalition with Rajjo are representative of the survivalist instincts within the larger politics

that is based on constantly modifying identities, where parties create "identities" akin to conflict rather than to competition and where identities can be activated or suddenly made sterile depending on the vote banks they can fetch. In modern politics that Bhaisahab designs, new definitions of identity are reconstituted, and they cannot remain feudal for too long; therefore, it calls for the rejection of Ishwar Tyagi and promotion of Kesu. In Kesu, the young educated college youth, Bhaisahab creates mirage-like quality of modern representation, therefore marking a recycle of old phenomena. Ishwar Tyagi sees the infiltration of new identities as a threat to his own progress since he had been serving the party for fifteen years, the feeling of being dispossessed overtakes him. The scene where Ishwar Tyagi breaks the mirror, and with his own blood rubbed on the forehead assumes a self-proclaimed identity, marks his departure from the main political narrative that does not recognise him and he assumes a separate identity which he tries to collaborate with Rajan Rajjo Tiwari, since they both represent sects that have been marginalised and disinherited from the main political identity.

Figure 1.3 Ishwar Tyagi breaks the mirror and smears the blood on his head

Forming a coalition, they do not speak the language of community representation but of individual identity materialisation. Their coalition is based on the fact that Ishwar Tyagi would assist Rajjo in realising his dream of attaining Dolly. These men, who see the State as an all-authoritarian entity with none of its institutions serving their interests or accommodating them, represent another division within the society. Ishwar Tyagi's discontent is perceptible from the choice of clothes he wears which are always dark shaded or grey, also reflecting his fears of the dark, infertile, impotent and shrinking future. Such tendencies are characteristics of Indian political system where as much as the democratic struggle has intensified; it has led to the proliferation of new categories. Even though Indian politics is imagined as a community of equals but it is a battleground where time and again identities are disputed and reconfigured. The vision that

framed India's plurality and diversity into a concept of unity has now become a threat to its democratic functioning.

The character of Kesu represents the emerging strata in the politics, symbolising modern and educated face of the party, adding on to more divisions in politics, in terms of its installation of leaders for vote banks. The new political family tries to incorporate and appeal to different sects, rather than invoking the ideas of people and Nation, it operates to subscribe to the immediate volatile authority of the electoral majority. Though externally the party appears homogeneous incorporating diverse interests, but internally it harbours differences. It tries to singularise various identities and in the process of doing so ends up in an unsuccessful democracy. Kesu emblematises the shifting representation dynamics of the party. It reflects predominantly the manifestation of regional interests rather than a reinforcement of nationalism. Empowerment of one is at the cost of disempowering the other. There is installation of a new leader, new ideologies and creation of new identities according to the service they can provide. Politics puts on the garb of modernism and functions in a feudal manner, thereby making the modern State a fickle, deceptive and fictive entity. Kesu's character represents the constant political negotiations and redefinitions.

The coronation ceremony where Kesu is crowned as the new Bahubali voices the new configuration of power, where it is not a religious ceremony as much as a political performance aiming for electoral ends. It defines the new political family that is oriented to draw votes from the educated youths. The composition of this scene becomes very pertinent in terms of the playing out power relations. Bhaisahab Mr. Tiwari, Omkara Bahubali, Kesu and Ishwar Tyagi sit on a lionised and exalted platform from where they can see the entire public but the public cannot touch them. Followed by the constantly ringing temple bells and recitation of mantras, Omkara hands over the position of Bahubali to Kesu and the announcement of the same is made by Ishwar Tyagi from that adulated platform.

Figure 1.4 The coronation ceremony of the Bahubali

The declaration is followed by fanatical dancing, drum beating and gunshots by the public which comes across as a homogenised group, all clubbed together, undifferentiated yet tossing varied Holi colours to cast a sense of distinctiveness. The colours represent an assortment, confusion and hotchpotch of the mob and mob psychology. The homogenisation of the people represents the way political parties' function in a representative democracy, where a single political identity is carved out of diverse identities, and elections become a mere process of identity creation. The colours also show the internal differences that lay at the heart of all identities and emerge as potential deviants in the face of hollow democracy that masquerades their representation without serving their interests. Ishwar Tyagi representing similar tendencies performs the dance of disgruntlement, filled with grievances against this political representation.

The power of the State determines the commercial and trade aspect of Uttar Pradesh politics. This becomes evident from the character of Rajjo who represents the relation between economics and politics. Rajjo is unable to articulate his discontent against the wrong done to him; he is unable to express his disappointment and lack of self-assertion in order to claim his love for Dolly since Bhaisahab and his gang regulate all the alehouses owned by him. They would all be shut down in case Rajjo shows dissent. This again reinforces the classical tendencies of our contemporary reality where politics is set against the modern commercial society as dramatically shown in the cities. These instances become symbols of uneven, contradictory and masquerading characteristics of Nation's modern life which claims to be a liberalised and privatised economy, yet at the fundamental level remains rooted into the feudal oriented layout with the concentration of power in the figure of the Bhaisahab. The thorough analysis of Indian politics by Sunil Khilnani aids in understanding the malfunctioning administration. According to the writer, "Policy choices about education, environment resources and fiscal responsibility, foreign affairs–their aptness does not depend on entrepreneurial brilliance or technological prowess or the cheapness of its labour but on politics" (146). The *kamarbandh* which belonged to Omkara, a half-Brahmin, stood for his tradition, purity, identity and his lineage. He values and treasures it and passes on its authority to Dolly, only to be later stolen by Indu upon Tyagi's behest. Seizing the opportunity, Ishwar Tyagi takes possession of it and uses it to manipulate Kesu by asking him to gift it to Billo, his girlfriend, so that she is pleased by this present and assists Kesu in championing his trust over Omkara, and in successfully killing his opponents at the political party. Billo wears it around her waist and dances in order to entice the rival political leaders, which finally leads to their demise amidst bloodshed. And when Omkara finally gets it back, he sees it as a symbol of betrayal, adultery and bogus.

115

The *kamarbandh* symbolises the idea of our Nation, which is envisioned in all its idealism with connotations of progress, development, welfare and purity of intentions attached to it. It constitutes the sacrifices of all those who helped in achieving and building this democratic sovereignty, however as it passed through feudal hands, modern ideologies, marginalised groups, each school of thought constructed its own idea of a nation and identity which ultimately rendered the society into hollow democracy with use of identities as a catalyser of personal interests. In the end, this idea left individuals feeling disillusioned and deceived. The movie also shows how the modern State employs technology at the service of political manipulations. The use of MMS sex scandal by Omkara and his gang against the opposition, sting operations and use of women has become the hallmark of our modern politics. Politics remain a masculine space that targets the personal space for political ends. It portrays the political reality of the states where the decision regarding who would own the seat in Lok Sabha is decided among thugs travelling in trucks, where gunshots, bloodshed, easy availability of weapons, implantation of political enforcer in the form of Bahubalis and criminalisation of politics define democracy and nationalism of the country. The film confronts the core issues that lie at the heart of Indian politics and challenges the notions of 'unity in diversity' and the notions of plurality and heterogeneity as markers of India's identity. These insights place the discourse of Indian Nationality under scrutiny.

Further, the entire concept of nationalism and identity becomes complicated when it is seen as state machinery. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson asserts the idea that "nation is an invention which uses the emblem of freedom". The challenges of freedom and individual rights, which never get addressed, reinforce the fact that Nation was never created for the interests of the people, but as a product of modernity, it was created for political and economic ends. The concept of nationalism does not materialise the fundamental tenets of freedom, democracy and welfare (50).

The film projects a misreading of the relation between nation and the region in India, wherein the fundamental matter of India's selfhood has not yet been settled. It is difficult to assert that 'cities' are an expression of the Nation's faith in future. These towns impose their regional sensibilities upon India's national politics and become the sites of sharp contests as parties try to establish a majority in the name of representation. Caste and kin function at a more expansive terrain within the politics of representation. The film echoes Khilnani's words, which states that "the conceptual sense of 'city' is weak. It has fostered new and distinct kinds of social relations–neither traditional nor modern" (146). The film successfully captures the defeat of national feelings in the cities and postulates Khilnani's idea that the cities continue to make the politics of India,

but the politics it is making and the India it is coming to believe in, have wandered far from what was intended and imagined in the early days. The last words of Ishwar Tyagi, wherein he states that there is no difference between his truth and his lie is analogous to our democracy which is marked by utter fabrications, and it is challenging to locate the gap between the theory of the Nation as imagined and the practical reality that we live and experience every day. It is the failure of that vision to materialise into reality, and indeed it has been distorted in a manner that we just live in the shadow of that vision. Through the dramatisation of personal agony and crisis, the play and the film open avenues to scrutinise the society and individual's position in it within the matrix of institutions that govern him/her.

While *Othello* critiques the western society and the white man's claims of racial superiority and undermines their identity politics, its adaptation in Indian context (*Omkara*) provides an index of ideologies that undermines the concept of democracy and nation state in India. Both the texts provide insights into the reality that is constantly being negotiated by the identity dynamics – be it racial identity, caste identity, political identity, social standing, or gender identity.

In *The Idea of India*, Sunil Khilnani elaborates on the evolution of the concept of State and asserts that "the absence of any neutral arm of the state to police and to provide protection, especially in regions like UP and Bihar has left this essential responsibility to the discretion of the politicians and men who command armed gangs, which gives these towns a culture of violence" (146). Building upon these lines, the movie shows a disappointing form of politics and the failure of democracy and concepts of nationalism.

Works Cited and Consulted

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 2006.

—. "Backward Caste Politics in Uttar Pradesh." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 40, no. 36, 2005, pp. 3889-3892. *JSTOR,* http://www.jstor.org/stable/4417094. Accessed 15 May 2020.

Brass, Paul R. "General Elections, 1996 in Uttar Pradesh: Divisive Struggles Influence Outcome." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 32, no. 38, 1997, pp. 2403-2411, 2413-2421. *JSTOR,*http://www.jstor.org/stable/4405870. Accessed 5 May 2020.

Dionne, Craig, and Parmita Kapadia, editors. *Bollywood Shakespeares*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. Routledge, 2012.

Jain, Ravindra K. "Hierarchy, Hegemony and Dominance: Politics of Ethnicity in Uttar Pradesh, 1995." *Economic and Political Weekly,* vol. 31, no. 4, 1996, pp. 215-223. *JSTOR,* http://www.jstor.org/stable/4403720. Accessed 5 May 2020.

Jeffrey, Craig. "Caste, Class, and Clientelism: A Political Economy of Everyday Corruption in Rural North India." *Economic Geography,* vol. 78, no. 1, 2002, pp. 21-41. *JSTOR,* http://www.jstor.org/stable/4140822. Accessed 13 May 2020.

Khilnani, Sunil. *The Idea of India*. Penguin Books India, 1999.

Lieten, G. K. "On Casteism and Communalism in Uttar Pradesh." *Economic and Political Weekly,* vol. 29, no. 14, 1994, pp. 777-781. *JSTOR,* http://www.jstor.org/stable/4401025. Accessed 14 May 2020.

—. "Municipal Elections in Uttar Pradesh." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 41, no.51, 2006, pp. 5218-5221. *JSTOR,* http://www.jstor.org/stable/4419047. Accessed 15 May 2020.

Omkara. Directed by Vishal Bhardwaj, performance by Ajay Devgan, Kareena Kapoor, and Saif Ali Khan, Shemaroo Entertainment, 2006.

Pai, Sudha. "Dalit Question and Political Response: Comparative Study of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh." *Economic and Political Weekly,* vol. 39, no. 11, 2004, pp. 1141-1150. *JSTOR,* http://www.jstor.org/stable/4414765. Accessed 14 May 2020.

Prakash, G. "Imaging the Modern City, Darkly." *Noir Urbanisms: Dystopic Images of the Modern City*. Princeton UP, 2010.

Rawat, Ramnarayan S. "Making Claims for Power: A New Agenda in Dalit Politics of Uttar Pradesh, 1946-48." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2003, pp. 585-612. *JSTOR,* http://www.jstor.org/stable/3876611. Accessed 12 May 2020.

Shakespeare, William. *The New Cambridge Shakespeare, Othello*. Edited by Norman Sanders, Cambridge UP, 2003.

Singh, Jagpal. "Ambedkarisation and Assertion of Dalit Identity: Socio-Cultural Protest in Meerut District." *Economic and Political Weekly,* vol. 33, no. 40, 1998, pp. 2611-2618. *JSTOR,* http://www.jstor.org/stable/4407245. Accessed 12 May 2020.

—. "Uttar Pradesh: Caste and Political Mobilization." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 39, no. 51, 2004, pp. 5463-5466. *JSTOR,* http://www.jstor.org/stable/4415933. Accessed 15 May 2020.

Verma, A. K. "Subalterns in Uttar Pradesh: A New Trajectory." *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. 45, No. 48, 2010, pp. 11-14. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25764171. Accessed 15 May 2020.

— ∗ —

Radicalisation of Narration in Dalit Fiction: An Analysis of Selected Works

Shibangi Dash

> In this country, the air one breathes has caste.
> The water one drinks has caste.
> The field canal that flows and the land that yields harvest have caste.
> The school, the temple and the village square have caste.
> The food one eats, the house one lives in and the clothes one wears have caste.
> The word one speaks has caste.
> Literature and culture have caste.
> — G. Kalyan Rao, *Untouchable Spring*

Dalit[1] literature is a body of texts that portrays the plight of the "lower" castes in India. It is marked as a literature of protest, re-envisioning history by documenting the violence, oppression and systemic exploitation. The history and roots of Dalit literature are still in the process of being written and negotiated. Hardly a product of three and a half decades, the corpus of Dalit literature is no longer limited to the Hindi belt[2] but it has spread itself throughout the Indian mainland. Besides poetry and autobiographies, novels, short fiction and literary criticism have been added to the growing corpus. Sharankumar Limbale defines Dalit literature as "writing about Dalits by Dalit writers with a *Dalit consciousness*" (Limbale, *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature* 19) (emphasis mine). He further adds the uniqueness of Dalit literature lies in the fact that it is born from "the womb of untouchability" (Limbale, *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature* 29). The yardstick for measuring the authenticity of such works has been the implicit "Dalit Chetna." Laura Brueck sees this as a strategy for Dalit critical analysis, a kind of "test" by which Dalit critics can judge the "dalitness" of any work of literature, "whether written by a Dalit or non-Dalit" (Brueck). As Priyamvada Gopal says, "the privileged texts and reading protocols of postcolonial studies tend to be antihumanist and hostile to systemic analysis" and hence I argue for the need to redefine and reinforce the aesthetics of Dalit literature (9). I have chosen *Kusumabale* (2015), *Hindu* (2010)and *Untouchable Spring* (2010) as my focus of study as these three novels represent regional, linguistic and Spatio-temporal diversity to polemically critique the caste system. Also, the novel strategies of the texts, employed to

evoke a world beyond caste, provides an impetus to focus on these three fictional works. All three novels incorporate oral storytelling strategies and motifs that draw on the oral traditions and culture of the specific community.

Radicalisation of form and narrative

The novel as a form can be seen to manage social guilt, articulate the outrage and potential radicalism in a conservative generic form. This has been tweaked and culturally appropriated to create a new genre of Dalit novels. The very form of the novel has been hybridised through the usage of mythic and folkloric tales to create a new genre. Eleanor Zelliot explores how the "materialist considerations of caste have been key to literary production as well, highlighting the gap between the actual texts of Dalit literature and what passes as 'theoretical' commentary in the metropolitan academy" (79). She cites certain indigenous writings like *lawani* (ballads), *powada* (panegyric poetry) and *tamasha* (folk dramas) which have lent their techniques and "radical newness"[3] to hybridise the form of Dalit novel in the world of literature. The resultant cross-breeding of Dalit fiction produces experimental writing which violates the conventions of mainstream literature and is "one of the engines of literary change and renewal" (Bray et al. 1–2). This radicalization of narration can be viewed as a political project, whereby it aims to stir the dalit consciousness creating a new dalit movement through its political challenge.

The said novels in this essay are united by shifting narrative perspectives, fragmented non-linear fractured narration and multiple protagonists. Key events such as the murder of Tatya Kamble in *Hindu* and Channa in *Kusumabale* are narrated more than once from different perspectives in order to "destabilise the narrative and provide a complex account of character's motivations and conflicting perceptions" (Thiara 260). While postmodernist aesthetics aim to destabilise the concept of truth, Dalit fictions portray the ugly picture of the sociopolitical landscape of India marred by hierarchies of caste, class and gender.

The novel, *Hindu,* traces the developments of the Ambedkarite movement and ideologies within a single village. Limbale drives forward the politics of collectivity while simultaneously providing an internal critique presenting a mirror to the disenchanted and disunified Dalit movement. Dalit literature is often inhabited by either courageous or suffering protagonists. But the presence of Milind Kamble as a discreet corrupted Dalit narrator is rare to find in Dalit literature: "I should become a witness, make Tatya Kamble's murderers wear handcuffs… But why did I feel so scared... I was a parasitic plant attached to the movement… People come to me with all sorts of requests, I do their work and take their money" (Limbale, *Hindu* 21).

Ambedkarite Buddhism has been integrated into the narrative as a medium of emancipation for the dalits. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar had embraced Buddhism as its philosophy of rationalism, morality and justice resonated with him. As Christopher Queen has suggested, "This religion enabled him to exercise individual choice based on reason and historical consciousness" (Roy Chowdhury n.p). In a strongly worded compelling speech, Ambedkar had urged the Dalits in the Bombay Presidency Mahar Conference in 1936 to convert. He implored, "Forgetting human treatment, convert yourselves. Convert for getting organised. Convert for becoming strong. Convert for securing equality. Convert for getting liberty. Convert so that your domestic life should be happy" (Ambedkar).

In *Hindu*, the involvement of Tatya Kamble in Ambedkar *jalsa* to persuade Dalits to convert into Buddhism irked the upper castes. This performance of *jalsa* is crucial to understand the narrative of *Hindu*. *Jalsa* involves singing, staging plays or presenting monologues in harmony with musical instruments made by Dalits. Satyashodhaki *jalsas* were celebrated for their vehement attacks on Brahmins and the Brahmanical tradition. It is a radically changed form of *tamasha*. The *tamasha* was historically performed by Dalits especially the *Mahars* in Maharashtra. This caste-based occupation killed the Dalit aspiration to lead a life beyond caste. Ambedkar altered this culture. In the *jalsa*, the structure of the *tamasha* was radically reorganised as verses and dialogues became the central point of the performance which began with a salutation not to Ganesha but to Babasaheb (Rege 17). The *jalsa* performances in the novel, which are allegorical stories about the dangers of being seduced and betrayed by enemies of the Dalit movement, politicise the Mahar audience.

Tatya Kamble and the other Mahars refused to perform the traditional duties assigned to them by their caste identity and performed allegorical *jalsas* to impart the significance of Ambedkarite movement. This highlights the emerging self-consciousness among the Dalits and details the long trajectory that the Dalit movements and campaigns have travelled. Tatya Kamble acts as a fictional counterpart of Ambedkar who tries to recuperate the past to arouse the Dalit self-consciousness. The *jalsa* form employed by Tatya Kamble as a piece of art is comparable to the author's artistic piece, the novel, in revamping the cultural ethos of the Dalits. The jalsaic procession employed by Tatya Kamble has a far-flung repercussion on the Dalit but the exploiters of the society feel it to their core. Tatya has an emphatic effect on Sonali, wife of the murderer Prabhakar Kavale.

> "Prabhakar Kavale came up on the roof and burst out angrily at Sonali: 'Watching the Mahars dance, are you a Mahar too?'... To Sonali, the sound of Tatya Kamble's speech felt like an erupting volcano. For the first time in her life, Sonali had heard such a blunt

critique of the Hindu religion. Its other face was made visible to her today" (Limbale, *Hindu* 49-51).

Besides the use of *jalsa* to arouse the Dalit consciousness, the hallucinating denouement of the distressed Milind physically turning into a eunuch and the co-texting of the narrative voices are all "transepistemic devices that surpass the socio-historical agenda of the novel" ("Into that Heaven of Freedom").

Untouchable Spring is an English translation of Telugu literary work *Antarani Vasantam* published in the year 2000. It is significant for its critique of literary historiography. It contests several prevailing tendencies of literature such as the privileging of the written modes over the oral modes, the prosodic poetry over the song. This is done by the use of orality and by critiquing the accepted standards. Intergenerational memory is an important trope used for preservation of indigenous art forms.

G. Kalyana Rao is quite clear in his intentions. He has set out to write the story of oppression of Dalits through the family saga and he has adopted the fictional mode to construct the narrative. He wants to highlight the oppression and injustice of the caste-riled traditional society with its social and economic disparities. The novel also questions the authenticity of written histories providing an alternate history for the Dalits. Kalyan Rao has pitched his story as the portrait of an artist of one of the forebears, Yellanna, who reaches out for emancipation through art and imagination. He seems to comprehend the possibilities of emancipation through art, concomitant with spiritual underpinnings. Dalits became singers, musicians, composers and lyricists to forget their hunger and pain momentarily. Yellanna, a folklorist and natural stage performer in the novel used to drag the tune along with him with utmost perfection which was considered natural. *Veedhi Bagotam* (a street play) is a great representation of the combination of song, music, dance and expression of Dalits in rural areas. In fact, "it is only in folk art that there are purity and integrity. There is frankness and naturalness. That's why it is still alive even though it has been thrown out and castaway" (Kalyan Rao 101).

The rich description of cultural practices and folklore may force a reader to consider this text as an ethnographic fiction but the strategic implementation of these cultural tropes makes the text a significant part of protest literature. It functions as a poetic celebration of Dalits as individuals and as a community and insists that their dignity, wealth of artistic talent, and beauty are the creative seeds of an equal, flourishing, and just society. The presence of seven generations contributing to the novel's large cast of significant characters, "abrupt changes of narrative tone and style and quick intercut between frame narration and the main narrative" produce a challenging experience for the reader (Thiara 262).

The novel opens with an unnamed narrator. After Reuben's death, an elderly Ruth passes the notes on to it. This complex narrative structure criticises the linear narrative conventions of both novels and historical writing. It further demonstrates the lacunae embedded in "individualist notions of memory to capture collective Dalit history" (Ibid.).

Untouchable Spring postulates Dalit performative art forms such as the street theatre *Veedhi Bagotam* and *Urumula* dance as privileged sites of resistance. The narrative is frequently interrupted by footnotes that confront the lack of historical documentation of Dalit oral folk art in Indian scholarship. Rao criticises scholars who have been unable to see the beginnings of Telugu drama in *Veedhi Bagotam*. There are many critical works on Telugu drama. . . . [T]here will not be any mention of *veedhina katams*, street plays… it may be truer to say [scholars and critics] did not have the inclination to notice them (Ibid., 268).

This revisionist novel restores the lost ethnographic and anthropological heritage of the Malas and Madigas, as well as acts as a "historiographical Ur text" for the lost art forms of the Dalits (Bose 996). It acts as an allohistory to the marginalized verses and folk art which had been shadowed under the canonical Brahmanical art form because in India "caste is more important than art" (Kalyan Rao 41).

Untouchable Spring makes a cultural statement by permeating the Mala past with the Christian present. The performance of *Veedhi Bagotham* and *Chenchunatakam* shows the disintegration of the hierarchical spatial demarcation between the stage and the audience. Once relegated to the margins as the audience, the Malas now occupy the centre stage as performers/artists. These performances are reworked in the pages of Kalyan Rao as they are passed as cultural inheritance via Yellana's songs. This fluidity and lack of structure both of the novel as well as the songs in it ensures their cultural vitality thus propagating the permanence of the art.

The unstructured folk drama and folk songs proffer their defiance of rules to the formal logic of Sanskrit drama and versification just as the language of the *dvipada*[4] unleashes "semantic violence" on the tradition of sophisticated versification (Bose 996). In an attempt to canonise the marginalised art, Rao highlights the *dvipadas* crafted by the potter Pedakoteswarudu. It is a natural literary work which rejected the proscriptions of the pundits. *Basavapuranam* and *Veerasaiva* literature are crafted in *dvipada*. The *dvipada* transgresses semantic limitations and grammatical boundaries of formal prosody and rhyme. It is unpurified unlike scholarly language. This stands in parallel to Rao's conception of the novel form with its fractured narration leading to the creation

of a Dalit epic. Rao's text thus acts as a research document exploring and recovering verse forms, songs, dances and performative texts expelled to the margins of the established canonised Brahminical literary tradition.

Ruth does not simply recollect and transmit the social struggles of her ancestors but of the whole Untouchable community. And it is through Ruth that Rao presents the exploited and marginalised communities. Rao's version of alternative history is also seen in Vemana's[5] verses and Yellana's songs as they engage with contemporary political issues such as land grabbing, irrigation and organisation of labour structures.

The presence of the imaginary Yennela Pitta/bird invokes the cultural vitality of the Malas. Rao presents a rich amalgamation of mythological narratives and ancestral tales, folklore and local legends. The Hindu myths found in the Vedas and Purana are re-examined to correct their prejudiced nature and transferred to the world of the Malas. The creation of Malas and Madigas through the death of *Kamadhenu* has been propagated through *Jamba Puranam*. Urmula Chinappa and Naganna both show how the *Vedanta* is tainted with caste prejudices and are not the word of God but rather the word of God as interpreted by the Brahmin Pundits, as appropriated by the upper castes to offer a divine justification for social structuring and stigmatisation.

In Naganna's retelling and revisionary parable, it was not Bhagirath but the Urumula people who brought down Ganga to the earth and thus they became the carrier of life, the founders of agriculture and the first cultivators. Thus, the history of human civilisation is intertwined with the history of the Malas (Kalyan Rao 91). The potter Pedakoteswarudu is another artist who wishes to transfer Yellana's songs into writing but this attempt is foiled by the upper caste who waylay Pedakoteswarudu, snatch his papers and burn them. This act of burning the papers resonates the Brahmanical censorship of literature born outside of the temples. Thus, another death is caused in the attempt to continue the Dalit literary tradition.

The validation of the Dalit experience and critique of upper-caste behaviour is read by many Dalit critics as motivated by a desire to instil a combative "Dalit consciousness" in Dalit readers (Brueck, *Writing Resistance* 10–15). Kalyana Rao's novel does this most overtly when it represents Dalit resistance to oppression and Dalit art as part of a long and proud history.

Devanoora Mahadeva had created an uproar in the literary world with almost redefining the idea of the novel itself with the publication of *Kusumabale,* which is nothing like the usual realist novel one may come across. When we analyze caste in the literary imagination, *Kusumabale* stands out with its use of magic realism in magically capturing the Dalit spirit with linguistic creativity.

Kusumabale presents the need for a new cultural politics to address the caste system through folk narratives. The novel in Kannada is dedicated to the memory of ancestor Male Maadeshwara, the central figure of a well-known oral epic highly revered by Dalits and other lower castes in Karnataka and not to Ambedkar or Phule.

Mahadeva radicalised the narrative by adopting a unique technique of mixing folklore and social reality and also breaking up of a linear narrative. This novel presents a vibrant tapestry of the human condition and Dalit exploitation. Mahadeva's novel is rooted in the folk traditions and influenced by the egalitarian *Vachana* movement of twelfth century Karnataka initiated by Basava to eradicate discrimination on the basis of caste and gender. Mahadeva's language of narration and the language in which the story takes place is the same. It is written in a dialect spoken in parts of Nanjangudu and Chamarajanagar district thus questioning the hegemony of Mysurian Kannada in Karnataka.

The structure of the novel resembles a traditional folk narrative. Dr. Govindray Nayak, a Kannada critic, remarked that the novel's unique style and narrative technique, probably not seen thus far, insisted on the need to overhaul the existing canonical critical tool to dissect the text (qtd. in Shanbhag xxii). Mahadeva breaks the mould of European realism and calls it *kathakava* or narrative verse, dissolving the difference between prose and verse.

With a non-linear narrative structure and very few actions directly occurring in the text, the tone of the novel is more reflexive and meditative. It breaks the dichotomy of the oppressor and the oppressed. Mahadeva employs a diegetic mode of narration with multiple narrating voices populating the text. Animate as well as inanimate characters speak out their lives. Fabular elements are noticed through the characters of *Jothammas* (the lamp spirits), bedstead, the personified worry and fate as they strengthen the narrative structure.

Engaging with *Kusumable* requires a certain sensibility as it tries to build a new world and a worldview which was totally alien to the Kannada reading public. Channa's murder is revealed at the beginning of the text but the diegetic narrator employs folkloric retellings and not the realistic portrayal of what happened to him. This fractured narration does not provide any easy way of reading this text. But perhaps it also reminds us of the oppressed communities (the Holeyas here) whose voices are robbed or fractured by the elite, upper-caste modes of narration.

Recent studies by critics like Laura Brueck and Toral Jatin Gajarawala have established that Dalit writers have not accepted realism in its Western form but have instead critically engaged with this mode of writing. Gajarawala argues that Dalit literature forms part of the lineage of social realism but that

Dalit writers revise the history of realism on how it has failed to represent the marginalized characters thus creating the genre of neo-social realism (129-164).

The form of Kusumabale is a challenge to realism. The novel begins with a congregation of *Jothammas* at a time when "stone melts in the water". *Jothammas* belong to different castes from headman's house to Brahmans to fisherman to untouchables, showing multiple viewpoints. An articulate *Jothamma* from the Untouchable Street curbs the authoritarian voice of headman's house *Jothamma* setting the tone of the novel. An innate sense of justice is perceived in their conversation. At the end of the novel, one of the spirits (of the fisherman house) enters the body of Kuriyah making him speak the truth.

The critic Prithvi Datta Chandra Shobhi mentions in an article "The Elusive Peacock: Devanoora Mahadeva and Dalit Imagination" (2013), that "if mainstream Dalits engaged with realism and straightforward storytelling and documentation in an aesthetic manner, Mahadeva complicates that creative project by re-imagining realism itself" (MCPH Community). The life of untouchables and other lower castes–in a total sense–has always remained outside the patterns of realism. Realism can be said to transform history into fiction. In fact, the realist novel is even seen as a fictional strategy to appropriate a form of history. A cot here narrates its life storytelling the decadence of the family to which it belongs. Similarly, a home lamp assumes the form of a human being and comments upon the events of the day. So, realist novels somehow restrict the scope of the narrative. Mahadeva uses such irrational structures to throw light on Dalit realism[6] and sensibility.

The politics of Dalit poetics

Any political project employs a particular kind of language. The texts considered here can be seen as subversive narrations possessing a distinctive form and voice. While the linkage between aesthetics and politics in Dalit literature is readily apparent, the dynamic between the two remains a controversial topic amongst writers and scholars of Dalit literature. According to Sharankumar Limbale, Dalit writers value analyses of their work that proceed "from a sociological perspective focused on social values [rather] than on beauty. An exclusively aesthetic consideration of Dalit literature will disregard the Dalit writers' fundamental role and hence is not acceptable to Dalit writers" (Limbale, *Towards an Aesthetics* 19).

Bearing the politics of Dalit activism in mind, other critics have argued that aesthetics does not necessarily have to be high-level cogitation to productively contribute to emancipatory struggles for Dalits and other oppressed groups. Toral Gajarawala, for instance, suggests that Dalit literature critiques

scholarly and popular norms of Indian literary production and consumption. The rejection of the "wide-angle lens" that forms the social-realist, "objective" predisposition of canonical novelists such as, Premchand can facilitate the Dalit literary perspective to "differ in significant ways from savarna readings of the historical, as well as from the more Westernized conceptions of history that circulate in postcolonial fiction" (Gajarawala 171-72). In addition, Nicole Thiara argues that the formal experimentalism of Bama's *Sangati*, Limbale's *Hindu*, and G. Kalyan Rao's *Untouchable Spring* articulates a politically valuable "aesthetics of empowerment" (258). Specifically, Thiara finds that these texts deploy "fragmented" and polyphonic narrative techniques to posit the "communal legacy" of Dalit cultures against the fraught political conditions of caste oppression at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Major publishing houses often do not enable the marginalised voices to be heard in their initial prints[7]. Therefore, many Dalit literary texts do not need to conform to the genre conventions and narrow concerns of mainstream publishing allowing them to experiment with the form and content. Limbale does not celebrate the experimental quality of Dalit literature. Dalit literary texts are frequently approached as outpourings of social pain and anger whose authenticity is manifested in a certain rawness and "artlessness" (Limbale, *Towards an Aesthetic* 108). It is highly ironic when he himself deploys creative narrative strategies to restructure the novel: use of Ambedkari *jalsas* and newspaper reportage in fiction being the most common.

As Ranciere suggests, there is politics in aesthetics and aesthetics in the political, making the invisible visible, and the inaudible, audible. "Art is political and politics artistic because both are practices of contesting the historical transcendental factors that delimit the social and ascribe to individuals as a particular mode of subjectivity" (Tanke 6). Art, therefore, has the possibility to institute equality.

The tradition of ancient India didn't have anything for the Dalits that they could own proudly and thus they have to look at their own culture to develop myths and reject religious texts to create their separate culture and thus they created their own poetry, folk songs and musical instruments to satisfy their cultural needs and aspirations. Over the last few decades, Dalit writing has further unfolded in the line of revolt with a direct call for complete transmutation of the social order. The politics of identity has attained newer dimensions with the proliferation of published material in writing as well as a wider spread of consciousness among the urban populace about history, memory and representation:

> The past three decades particularly has seen a flourishing of popular

Dalit literature, pamphlets and booklets, which have emerged as a critical resource for deeper insights into Dalit politics and identity. Dalits themselves are disentangling received knowledge from the apparatus of control. This literature brings fresh hope, as it is believed that now Dalits are in charge of their own images and narratives, witness to and participants in their own experience. They are rescuing Dalit culture from degeneration and stereotypes and bringing in a new Dalit aesthetic. They are not the "Other" and are themselves articulating critical questions of choice and difference (Gupta 1739).

Transcription and Recovery

Dalit fiction is a product of radical protest laying bare the structural inequality. It is a process of transcription and recovery. The involvement of self-reflexivity overcomes the ideological and aesthetic constraints of realism. The difference of power and the absence of public space for Dalits have led to increased identity assertion by Dalits (here, by wielding the pen), and collective action has increased political consciousness among Dalit communities, amongst other developments such as the assertion of equality. The cultural assertions made by Dalit communities in the post-Ambedkar period have increased the level of consciousness among the Dalit community, leading them to gain both social and political upliftment. The expression of Dalit identity through modern narrative poses a political challenge to the oppressor. Pramod K. Nayar claims this "radicalisation of narrative form epitomises a radicalisation of the political unconscious" (366). The newer narrative strategies challenge the bourgeois aesthetics of upper caste writers in India.

To say in Eva-Maria Hardtmann's words, "(the) subaltern counter publics…signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of the subordinate social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs" (88). She further states that the Indian public sphere has historically remained Brahmanical and hegemonic in side lining and invisibilising the Dalits from the public sphere, leading to a complete absence of Dalits from mainstream media or the public sphere. The Dalits have asserted their identity to form a counter-public, challenging this hegemonic suppression (Ibid., 3).

In his influential work *The Flaming Feet* (2011)*,* Dalit critic D. R. Nagaraj argues for a reassessment of folk art as both a form of subaltern art and a resource for contemporary Dalit art and literature: "Folk epics… are necessarily the creation of subaltern communities [that] are never canonized in the history and theories of Indian literature" (190). Nagaraj in his seminal work and Kalyan Rao in *Untouchable Spring* argue for a de-hierarchisation of Indian literature

that enables Dalit literature to find a legitimate space within Indian literature. Such a legitimation would also facilitate an appreciation of the way Dalit fictions incorporate innovative mixes of genres and traditional forms that challenge the aesthetics of mainstream literature.

The contribution of modern Dalit literature is to retrieve the human figure by reconfiguring modernity which the discussed writers have ably justified in their works. In this sense, Dalit literature is anti-establishment and it is capable of shaping a new India. A definitive way of enhancing the self-respect of humiliated communities like the Dalits is to revitalise their cultural forms and this has been appropriately done by Dalit writers.

Endnotes

1. The term Dalit means ground down and broken to pieces in Marathi and is a pseudonym that Dalits adopted in the twentieth century. See Rao.
2. This includes the states of Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.
3. Toral Jatin Gajarawala argues that "[t]here is no doubt that Dalit literature is infused with a radical newness and is quite literally unlike anything lettered before" (198).
4. *Dvipada*: couplets in Telugu poetry.
5. Vemana practised a mutiny in semantic terms by writing verses which challenged all kinds of rigidity and orthodoxy; his poetry was almost a social document of his times as it engaged with religion and contemporary politics. The Pundits frowned upon such versification and dubbed it uncouth and unsophisticated lacking formal polish.
6. On the concept of Dalit realism, see Gajarawala 16–23.
7. See Satyanarayana and Tharu, Introduction, No Alphabet pp. 25–27.

Works Cited and Consulted

Ambedkar, B. R. "What Path to Salvation?" *Columbia University,* www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/txt_ambedkar_ salvation.html#2.

Bama. *Sangati*. Translated by lakshmi Holmstrom, Oxford UP, 2006.

Bose, Arunabha. "Recuperation of Alternative Ethnographic History and Politics of Dalit Conversion in *Untouchable Spring*." *International Journal of Science and Research*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2017, pp. 996-99. www.ijsr.net/archive/v6i1/ ART20164239.pdf.

Bray, Joe, Alison Gibbons, and Brian McHale. "Introduction." *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature*. Ed. Bray, Gibbons, and McHale. London, Routledge, 2012, pp. 1–18.

Brueck, Laura R. "Dalit Chetna in Dalit Literary Criticism." *Seminar Web Edition,* www.india-seminar.com/2006/558/558%20laura%20r.%20brueck.htm.

— . *Writing Resistance: The Rhetorical Imagination of Hindi Dalit Literature*. Columbia UP, 2014, pp. 10-15.

Dangle, Arjun. *Poisoned Bread* Orient Black Swan, 1992.

Eleanor Zelliot, "Dalit-New Cultural Context for an Old Marathi Word." *Language and Civilization Change in South-Asia*, edited by Clarence Maloney. Brill Archive, 1978, pp. 77-97.

"Emancipation Through Artistic Flight." *The Book Review Literary Trust*, The Book Review India, thebookreviewindia.org/emancipation-through-artistic-flight/.

Gajarawala, Toral Jatin. *Untouchable Fictions: Literary Realism and the Crisis of Caste*. Fordham UP, 2013, pp. 16-23, 129-164, 171-172, 198.

Gopal, Priyamvada. *Literary Radicalism in India: Gender, Nation and the Transition to Independence*. Routledge, 2005.

Gupta, Charu. "Dalit 'Viranganas' and Reinvention of 1857." *Economic and Political Weekly,* vol. 42, no. 19, 2007, pp 1739-1745. www.epw.in/journal/2007/19/1857-special-issues-specials/dalit-viranganas-and-reinvention-1857.html.

Guru, Gopal. *Dalit Cultural Movement and Dalit Politics in Maharashtra*, Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, 1997.

Hardtmann, E.M. *The Dalit movement in India: Local practice, Global Connections*. Oxford UP, 2009, pp. 3, 88.

"Into that Heaven of Freedom." *The Book Review Literary Trust*, The Book Review India, http://thebookreviewindia.org/into-that-heaven-of-freedom/.

Kalyana Rao, G. *Untouchable Spring*. Trans. Alladi Uma and M. Sridhar. Orient Black Swan, 2010, pp. 41, 91, 101.

Limbale, Sharankumar. *Hindu*: *A Novel*, translated by Arun Prabha Mukherjee, Samya, 2010, pp. 21, 49-51.

——. *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature: History, Controversies and Considerations*, translated by Alok Mukherjee. Orient Longman, 2004, pp. 19, 29, 108.

Mahadeva, Devanoora. *Kusumabale*, translated by Susan Daniel, Oxford UP, 2015.

MCPH Community. "The Elusive Peacock – Devanuru Mahadeva and Dalit Imagination" By Dr. Prithvi Datta Chandra Shobhi." *The Manipal Centre for Humanities and Philosophy*, 19 Feb. 2013, www.mcpharchive.wordpress.com/2013/02/19/the-elusive-peacock/.

Mukherjee, Arun Prabha. "Introduction". *Hindu: A Novel*. By S. Limbale, Samya, 2010. pp xiii-xxix.

Nagaraj, D. R. *The Flaming Feet and Other Essays: The Dalit Movement in India*. Ed. Prithvi Datta Chandra Shobhi, Seagull, 2011.

Nayar, Pramod K. "The Politics of Form in Dalit Fiction: Bama's Sangati and Sivakami's The Grip of Change." *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3, Oct. 2011, pp. 365–380, doi:10.1177/097152151101800304.

Rao, Anupama. "Who Is the Dalit? The Emergence of a New Political Subject." *Claiming Power from Below: Dalits and the Subaltern Question in India.* Ed. Manu Bhagavan and Anne Feldhaus, Oxford UP, 2008, pp. 11–27.

Reddy, N. Manohar. "Inventing a Dalit Aesthetic." *50 Writers, 50 Books: The Best of Indian Fiction.* Ed. Pradeep Sebastian and Chandra Siddan, Harper Collins, 2013, pp. 86–91.

Rege, Sharmila. "Interrogating the Thesis of 'Irrational Deification'." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 43, no. 7, 2008, pp. 16–20. *JSTOR,* www.jstor.org/stable/40277605.

Roychowdhry, Adrija. "Buddha Purnima special: Three reasons why Ambedkar embraced Buddhism." *The Indian Express*, 7 May 2020, indianexpress.com/article/research/buddha-purnima-special-three-reasons-why-ambedkar-embraced-buddhism/.

Satyanarayana, K. "Caste as the Baggage of the Past: Global Modernity and the Cosmopolitan Dalit Identity." *Dalit Literatures in India*. Ed. J. K. Abraham and J. Misrahi-Barak, Routledge, 2015, pp. 289–306.

— "The Political and Aesthetic Significance of Contemporary Dalit Literature." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 54, no. 1, 2019, pp. 9–24. doi.org/10.1177/0021989417718378.

Satyanarayana, K., and Susie Tharu. "Introduction*". No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writing from South India. Dossier I: Tamil and Malayalam*. Ed. Satyanarayana and Tharu, Penguin, 2011, pp. 1–69.

Shanbhag, Vivek. "Introduction." *Kusumabale*, translated by Susan Daniel, Oxford UP, 2015, pp. xvii-xxvi.

Sreedhara, V.S. *A Dalit Epic*, *The Book Review Literary Trust*, The Book Review India, www.thebookreviewindia.org/a-dalit-epic/.

Tanke, Joseph J. "Why Ranciére Now?" *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2010, pp. 1–17. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/jaesteduc.44.2.0001.

Thiara, Nicole. "Subaltern Experimental Writing: Dalit Literature in Dialogue with the World." *Ariel*, vol. 47, no. 1-2, 2016, pp. 253-80.

—— ∗ ——

Writing Resistance, Building Identities: *Persepolis* and *Embroideries*

Nilanjana Ray

Marjane Satrapi's graphic novels have traced her journey as an Iranian immigrant in the backdrop of the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Her first novel, *Persepolis* (2008), documents the socio-economic and political upheavals amidst the Revolution and her way of dealing with the death, separation and loss that comes with a civil war. In *Embroideries* (2008), Satrapi presents the inner world of her family. As an Iranian immigrant in France, these novels become what Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls "memory objects", a way of materialising internal images and preserving her identity through reiteration and recollection (331). With the publication of Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1991), the notion of graphic novels being exclusively a young male's domain changed. This format has shaped the representation and depiction of spatial politics beyond impersonal op-eds of newspapers. While Joe Sacco and his war comics journalism depicts an outsider's perspective on war-torn marginal countries, Malik Sajad and Hamid Sulaiman's take on the crisis in Kashmir and Syria, respectively, show a more personal involvement and depiction of marginalised history. Gillian Whitlock observes that life-writing with autobiographical figures such as those created by the likes of Art Spiegelman and Satrapi creates a space for dialogue, dissent and resistance (5, 11-13). Marjane Satrapi fits in this niche of the postcolonial graphic novel that presents war history and trauma as a social fact, much removed from the fantastical science fiction drama that is usually the content of American comics and graphic novels.

Persepolis: The story of a childhood and return

The medium of the graphic novel attains documentary value because of its manipulation of frames that allows for a simultaneous fluid and static narration, allowing space for feminist modes of subjective aesthetic reproduction. In *Persepolis,* Satrapi depicts herself in the novel as a young girl and coupled with the minimalist style, successfully erases the boundaries between an "other" Iranian girl and the reader. The novel opens with the chapter titled "The Veil" and there's a feeling of peering into Marjane's life. The first two panels of the first chapter establish her individuality amidst the row of similar looking veiled girls (fig.1), and one has to take this figure as the commanding voice. The change from a liberal Iranian society to one controlled by a regressive dictum is expressed using a montage-like sequence of images that depict the lives of the narrator and the people around her. Satrapi goes against the dominant non-

fiction narrative styles of violent rhetoric and political blame games. Instead, she depicts how any country can become Iran, how many Marjis can't afford to escape.

Fig. 1. The first page of *Persepolis* shows the enforcement of the veil in schools; Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis*. Vintage, 2008, p. 1.

Her criticism of the State is through the young Marji, which gives it a subtle toneand shows how in times of war, intersectional identities are the most vulnerable. Being in a politically active family infused her with strong ideas about international politics from a very young age. Readers see young Marji shouting slogans like "Death to the Shah!" (8), only to be disappointed and disillusioned with the newly formed Ayatollah Khomeini regime. Her stand becomes that of a cosmopolitan feminist who recognizes that in times of war, marginalised intersectional identities are the most vulnerable and her call for solidarity cuts across binaries of gender. Her reminiscences in the novel depict her as a patriot and non-patriot, someone born of the war and yet not part of it.

With the new regime came a wave of crackdown on public morality and all things perceived as Western, right from jeans and glossy magazines to regulation of male and female relationships. Women's bodies are always the first to be targeted by the patriarchy. While the veil was being paraded as a safety measure for both men and women, abuse and oppression were inflicted on women by those same men. Nivedita Menon observes how the Right wing is always united when it comes to marking women's bodies and in homogenising

the Other. In the Indian context, she refers to the militant Muslim Lashkar-e-Jabbar and the Hindu Right wing groups such as Bajrang Dal's attempts at enforcing hijab for Muslim women and traditional dress for Hindu women, in an attempt at protecting culture (207). Iran's moral policing was fuelled by an anti-America approach because of America's interference in Iran's oil reserves, to the extent of supporting a coup. While Iranians, including Satrapi's family, rallied against the Pahlavi regime for its excess support to the West, Khomeini was opposed as soon as he began enforcing the Sharia law and a crackdown on the revolutionaries. Niamh Reilly proposes a framework for cosmopolitan feminism that involves five thrust areas– critical engagement with public law, utilisation of global forums for cosmopolitan solidarity, recognition of intersectionalities and the commitment to cross-border dialogue, the development of collaborative advocacy and a global feminist consciousness that challenges the structures of patriarchal, racial and capitalist power relations (190). Satrapi's depiction of her change from wanting to kill the earlier Shah of Iran to a more pacifist approach to conflict resolution is testament to a cosmopolitan feminism that is born of war and seeks to scrutinise intensely the role of the state in perpetuating violence on its citizens. Her radicalism manifests itself in her private and public choices. Satrapi shows equal concern for the men during war, when she depicts young boys being led off to fight in the Revolution with the promise of attaining heaven. The black and white format of her artwork makes this phenomenon of indoctrination and loss of innocent lives even more morbid.

As the new wave of religious fundamentalism engulfed the nation, Marji's parents decided to send her to Vienna to complete her education. Until the moment Marji leaves, the speech bubbles between her and her parents become lesser. Her grandmother comes to visit them, completes the family picture and weaves the three generations together for that final night before Marji leaves. At the airport, her father imparts a final advice: "You've got to go now. Don't forget who you are and where you come from" (Satrapi, *Persepolis* 152). It echoes the sentiment of every immigrant, looking for steady ground in foreign lands. This is a reminder of their past, the history and the memories which have no existence for the outer world. Their identities are determined by their nationality, their religion and their overall status of being an outsider in the spaces they relocate to. In the social circles of Vienna, Marji feels out of place and is viewed as a vulnerable and exotic woman from the Middle East, who needs protection and solidarity. Four years of education in a foreign city convinced her that Tehran, her home, was where she wanted to be, no matter what kind of political climate prevailed there. Her complex feelings and realisation of the futility of being completely rootless in Vienna is expressed in these sentences:

> I think that I preferred to put myself in serious danger rather than confront my shame. My shame at not having become someone, the shame of not having made my parents proud after all the sacrifices they had made for me. The shame of having become a mediocre nihilist. (246)

The heavy baggage of shame that Marji felt, of not having become someone is one carried by all those who have suffered adversely at the hands of the capitalist class. In the case of immigrants like Satrapi, who were lucky enough to escape, part of the burden involves attempting to forge a new identity from a perpetual feeling of being a hyphenated identity. Marji was often introduced as "She's Marjane. She's from Iran. She's known war" (Satrapi, *Persepolis* 168). She was often made to feel "welcome" with statements like "It's good to have international friends" (174). These two kinds of responses epitomise how cosmopolitanism, in a very general sense, appears to a lot of people across the world. It's about identifying hyphenated identities and trying to accept it as part of our own society. But Satrapi's experience of being an Iranian-French woman has been far from being smooth. Her homesickness in Vienna was aggravated by the alienation of being in a foreign land with no strong support. Instead of forcing her way to become someone, she chose to go back. While her criticism of the fascist Right is more direct, even the Left with its ideals doesn't escape her commentary. Her criticism of the Left is embodied in Momo, the senior from her school in Vienna. Momo was a self-proclaimed anarchist who always talked about Marx, Bakunin and how Christmas is a capitalist construct meant to profit businessmen from people's sentiments. Satrapi's criticism against the Left is displayed when Momo remarks: "...Thanks to the Left, there are holidays in Europe. We are not forced to work all the time. If at the beginning of the century, the anarchists had triumphed. We wouldn't work at all. Man isn't made to work at all" (175).

The second part of the novel is about Marji's coming to terms with the changes Iran has undergone, a marriage not meant to be and a final decision to leave Iran for good. On one of her walks through the old streets, she sadly observes:

> There were also the streets. Many had changed names. They were now called martyr what's-his-name avenue or martyr something-or-the-other street. It was very unsettling. I felt as though I were walking in a cemetery... surrounded by the victims of a war I had fled. (Satrapi, *Persepolis* 253)

Feelings of alienation resurface along with the guilt that she was feeling. Having been abroad for four years made her feel like a stranger in her own country

now. When she decides to leave Iran for France, her father says:

> You weren't made to live here. We Iranians, we're crushed not only by the government, but by the weight of our traditions! Our Revolution set us back by fifty years. It will take generations for all this to evolve. You only have one life. It's your duty to live it well. And now that you are twenty-four, it's not like when you went to Austria. You don't need us anymore. (341)

Satrapi's father doesn't express hatred for the country; rather it's an acute awareness of the problems that are plaguing it. Just like him, Satrapi's cosmopolitanism doesn't involve a complete erasure of the nation-state. It means constantly engaging with and critiquing it, while accepting the intersectionalities. This is how cosmopolitan patriotism or rooted cosmopolitanism operates, as explained by Kwame Appiah, which means one can be cosmopolitan and at the same time be rooted or loyal to a culture that one calls home. It's the same awareness that Satrapi exhibits in her novels. While she is critical of how the state system of Iran has turned out to be, she doesn't wish for another bloody war. Her approach is one of a cosmopolitan pacifism. In tracing this pacifist liberalism, Appiah writes:

> It is the historical evidence of the dangers of intolerance– religious intolerance in Europe in the seventeenth century, for example, for Locke; racial intolerance in the colonial context for Gandhi (or for my father) – that often lies behind the skepticism about the state's interventions in the lives of individuals that itself underlies much liberal sentiment . . . The political tradition of liberalism is rooted in these experiences of illiberal government. (636)

Appiah and Reilly both approach the question of cosmopolitanism from the standpoint of empathy. Their framework of cosmopolitan patriotism and feminist cosmopolitanism rests on going beyond binaries, recognising intersectional identities and engage with the contested spaces of human rights and individual liberties. The path towards Third World feminist cosmopolitanism involves having a collective voice without homogenising the identities. In leaving Iran for France, Satrapi chooses to engage with what her hyphenated identity entails.

Stitching lives and loves: *Embroideries*

Embroideries, unlike other novels of Satrapi, lack consistent panel details or even speech bubbles. The content of this novel–erotic lives of Iranian women under the shackles of patriarchy that foment a culture of controlling women's bodies and lives–fits in perfectly with the underground subculture from which the genre of comics, and later on graphic novels emerged, and goes well with

the hidden and rebellious private lives of many Iranian women, like the ones talked about in this novel.

The absence of panel details opens up the text to the possibility of juxtaposing the past and present, leading to a rupture in the way time is constricted in the space of a few panels (fig. 2). There is a flow of conversation and unrestricted access to private lives of women, and this creates a space of relief and freedom for them, each of who have suffered some degree of oppression such as forced marriages and marital rape. Porosity of these boundaries makes this novel a memoir with its voices rooted in a multitude, a collective.

Fig. 2: Satrapi's grandmother surrounded by her friends; Satrapi, Marjane. *Embroideries*. Vintage, 2008, p. 13.

"Cosmopolitan feminism is ultimately an account of emancipatory feminist practice– it only becomes coherent in the context of struggles linked to concrete issues and events," asserts Niamh Reilly (190). In this context, *Embroideries* is about how women across age gaps negotiate their oppressive conditions to be in solidarity with each other. The tales of their erotic lives capture the myriad ways in which repressed women create safe spaces for themselves in times of war. In the backdrop of a crackdown on protesters and free-thinkers, these women create their own non-violent resistance.

Unlike the darker images of Phoebe Gloeckner in her works like *The Diary of a Teenage Girl* (2002) that have a consistent backdrop of coming to terms with trauma, *Embroideries* talks about sexuality and sexual trauma in an intimate and friendly space consisting of women of different ages, sharing their

own set of experiences in a very light hearted manner. Satrapi sets the stage for these women by painting the scene with the piping hot fumes from the samovar and the opium of her grandmother, both necessary for engaging in enlightening conversation. While Marjane's grandmother was married thrice, one of her friends indulged in trickery to avoid being detected of having a past sexual relationship. When the women share their stories and discuss about other women and their ordeals, one gets a sense of the prevailing double standards of morality and how they are enforced as a means to only control and manipulate bodies.

The feminist aspect of this novel lies in how much the narrative discloses meaning without being explicit and the control it exerts on how bodies are viewed in the public discourse. While uncensored discussions take place among the women, one can't help but notice the striking absence of any explicit imagery, except in one page where a cheating husband is shown engaging sexually with Marjane's grandmother's friend, but there's no nudity involved. Instead of fulfilling a very mainstream cultural expectation of displaying an objectified male phallus in *Embroideries*, the author chooses to only suggest it.

Some of the feminist reforms during the Shah Dynasty include obligatory unveiling of women, making way for women to take up higher positions in their jobs, female suffrage and reforms in the family laws that fixed equal accountability for divorce, marriage, custody of children and so on. But all of this was undone when Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini came to power. This rupture in the status of women and human rights in Iran caused a change in the country's image. As Khomeini stood his ground against both Israel and the West, it fuelled anti-American sentiments on one hand, and large-scale migrations to America on the other. But even with large migrations to other countries, Satrapi writes, many Iranian immigrants looked for native brides with conservative values, which led to forced marriages and abuse when the brides didn't match up to the expectations of the men. Such a scenario creates barriers in the progress towards an inclusive Third World feminism that involves breaking down ideological structures of oppression.

The title of the novel is derived from a surgery that many women undergo to avoid being detected of their loss of virginity. The colloquial term for that surgery being used as the title of the novel shows how Satrapi has brought out the intensely private and even profane to the public discourse and redefined how it is viewed. This is her way of engaging in a conversation about the private and the public. One of the key challenges of a cosmopolitan feminist is to distinguish between the private and the public. In times of war and oppression, the private domain becomes the bastion of policing to ensure control in the public sphere.

An embroidery as a piece of heirloom acts as material memory. It bears testimony to craftsmanship and makes it an artefact bearing the history of lived experiences. The woven thread and other intricate details set apart different kinds of embroideries and are often handed down as part of a tradition. In light of this role played by a piece of embroidery, Satrapi's novel puts together myriad hues of these women's lives and presents readers with an object of memory that attests to its intention of redefining the connotations of sexuality and solidarity. Her art of resistance lies in forging new identities and representing this cosmopolitanism to a global audience.

Jasmin Darznik, Iranian-American poet and novelist, has observed that this profusion of Iranian narratives in the form of memoirs available in mass markets has sparked debates in America regarding who has the right to represent what exactly happened in the run up to the coup, the Islamic Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War (1). She observes that in the race for the right to represent, a crucial aspect of these memoirs is being overlooked– the Iranian women's control over how she is represented and in what capacity. The strain of rebellion that runs through all of Satrapi's novels speaks volumes about the act of resistance that informs such autobiographical life-writing. The mode of the graphic novel with its intensely personal form that consists of hand-drawn caricatures and text offers a more intimate encounter with the author who is actually in the process of drawing multiple fragmented selves, as observed by Sam Knowles (84).

While the whole novel is peopled with faces and flashbacks spread across pages, the other figures slowly recede into the background near the end as Marji's grandfather pops out of an inner room and is promptly shoved out of the scene by his wife. As he walks past the shadows of the other women in the room and reaches the end of the pages, he's alone and remarks: "When the snake gets old, the frog gets him by the balls" (Satrapi, *Embroideries* 130). This remark from Marji's grandfather seems to suggest gender roles and authority, and in all probability, he associates himself with the old snake as he has submitted to his wife. His lone comment at the end, with no other figures on the page is the first and last time that a male has been given space in the novel. Being a novel dependent on the visual, the difference of space occupied by men and women is sharply visible. The men have always been shown in the company of women, strange and immoral with double standards, while only Marji's grandfather is shown in a dignified light at the end, standing tall and with a wry smile, the whole page to himself.

As a movement of resistance and defiance, the mode of autobiography does well to express marginalised identities. The graphic novel has an evolving legacy that attests to the developing forms of feminist modes of production.

Even though this format of the novel is widely seen as a mass market and capitalist product meant for a class specific readership that can afford to buy graphic novels, this postmodern form of the book with its combination of images and text has scope in influencing emergent readership about the various modes of self-expression that arise out of spaces of conflict. Such alternative modes of writing history are important to provide a space of dissent and debate. This genre revels in its complexity to depict multiple complex themes wrapped in its ambiguity. The interaction between image, word and text creates a meta-narrative that fuses the personal with the political and creates a new aesthetic of resistance and protest.

Works Cited and Consulted

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. "Cosmopolitan Patriots." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1997, pp. 617–639. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1344038. Accessed 25 Jan. 2020.

Chute, Hillary L. *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form*. The Belknap P, 2016.

Darznik, Jasmin. "The Perils and Seductions of Home: Return Narratives of the Iranian Diaspora." *MELUS*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2008, pp. 55-71. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20343466.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. "Objects of Memory: Material Culture as Life Review." *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: A Reader*, edited by Elliott Oring, Utah State UP, 1989, pp. 329-338.

Knowles, Sam. "The Postcolonial Graphic Novel and Trauma: From Maus to Malta." *Postcolonial Traumas: Memory, Narrative and Resistance*, edited by Abigail Ward, Springer, 2015, pp. 83-96.

Menon, Nivedita. "Between the Burqa and the Beauty Parlour? Globalization, Cultural Nationalism, and Feminist Politics." *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, edited by Ania Loomba, et al., Duke UP, 2005, pp. 207-209.

Reilly, Niamh. "Cosmopolitan Feminism and Human Rights." *Hypatia*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2007, pp. 180-198. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4640111.

Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis*. Vintage, 2008.

—. *Embroideries*. Jonathan Cape, 2008.

Whitlock, Gillian. "Word made flesh". Introduction. *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit,* The U of Chicago P, 2007, pp. 1-23.

— ∗ —

Women as Warp and Weft of Painting through Time: A Select Study of 'Fallen Woman' Across Translational Space

Srishti Sharma

I

Interpretation is an integrated part of translation. Hence, translation and hermeneutics are closely related to linguistic disciplines. Hermeneutics, which deals with modes of interpretation incorporates ekphrasis as a mode of interpretation and thereby extends the temporal limits of translation, if the latter is considered conservatively. In fact, ekphrasis is a hermeneutic exercise that differs from translation only in terms of the degree of freedom with regard to medium: while a translator shifts the meaning of the original written text to another matrix establishing comprehensive equivalence, an ekphrastic interpreter translates a given text into any medium of his choice. Further, ekphrasis, which has often been described as "to speak out" in ancient Greek and also as "a plain declaration or interpretation of a thing" by the *Oxford Dictionary* in 1715, enjoys considerable interpretive latitude and therefore can engender transmorphed texts, that which are visual and musical as well. If ekphrasis is a form of interpretation as much as translation is, then it logically follows that ekphrasis is a kind of translation with greater creative independence. Besides, an ekphrastic spin-off also gains a critical perspective on the original.

This article is an ekphrastic exercise in that it lifts the stories told by some 19th century painting-texts, as well as songs by Bob Marley, Bob Dylan and John Lennon to take off from the stories they tell to a new narrative strand. They center on Lilith, the diabolical, run-away woman, a character of the Jewish folklore. During her aerial wanderings, she spies upon the most doleful scenes of the rejection of a fallen woman whom she claims and redeems. In this narrative, Lilith, the angel and the redeemed woman during their peregrinations come upon the repetition of the same sad scenes of a woman's sufferings at the hands of men. They intervene in favour of the woman victim depicted in the paintings under study, until she re-enters the Garden of Eden and meets Eve to set right the balance skewed against her and womankind. And to bust the myths of heaven and hell showing everyone, human and divine, that the stories of a woman's moral impurities are just canards. In order to achieve its intent, the article is written in two parts.

Gender constructs propose that a woman must embody virtue, chastity,

honour, humility, obedience and conform to the norms of propriety and decorum. A woman who dares question these rules is held guilty of moral flagrance, at the least a *faux pas,* and is degraded to the status of a loose or fallen woman. In a dominantly patriarchal society, "good" and "bad" girls are painted black and white accordingly, alleviated, as a rule, by the ease of sexual acquiescence. The one who questions the norms, engages in forbidden experiences and relationships, rejects appropriated sexual advances and thwarts all attempts made by men to control any aspect of her life is labelled as 'fallen'. For she fell out of the line and escaped the shackles of patriarchy adamantly trying to beat her into submission and accept 'her proper place.' Emile Zola's Nana, Flaubert's Emma Bovary, Krishna Sobti's Mitro from *Mitro Marjani*, Hawthorne's Hester Prynne, Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, Tagore's Binodini from *Chokher Bali* etc. are all women of scandalous repute who transgressed societal norms, thus revealing the hypocrisy of the proper and the virtuous. However, it is not limited to merely the women who committed an act of infidelity or defied patriarchal authority. We might take the *Ramayana*'s Ahilya, whom Indra seduced by impersonating her husband. Though not being in the wrong, she was cursed by her husband who considered her soiled and fallen. I need not emphasise the very obvious fact that, the contemporary society still continues to harbour intolerance of rape-victims in a very similar manner. Most unfortunately, however, the male counterparts remain safe and out-of-socio-legal reach. As William Gayer Starbuck said in *A Woman Against the World* (1864):

> When a woman falls from her purity there is no return for her– as well may one attempt to wash the stain from the sullied snow. Men sin and are forgiven; but the memory of a woman's guilt cannot be removed on earth. Her nature is so exquisitely refined that the slightest flaw becomes a huge defect. Like perfume, it admits of no deterioration, it ceases to exist when it ceases to be sweet. Her soul is an exquisitely precious, a priceless gift, and even more than man's, a perilous possession. (Starbuck qtd. in Mitchel xvi)

Literature abounds with countless such narratives of women falling prey to the double-standards of patriarchal sexual morality. At least in the 19th century, the moralizing intent of not merely popular fiction but also serious fiction seemed to reinforce the contemporary cultural mores that stigmatized the fallen woman and justified her punishment. Tess in Hardy's *Tess of the d' Urberville*s or Hetty in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* instantiate these; or the sexually transgressive women in Dicken's writings also earn opprobrium. I will, in this essay, focus on paintings, particularly of the Victorian period, reflecting the same social attitudes towards the fallen women, masculine anxiety over unstrained female sexuality, and the perception of threat woman's sexual promiscuity was believed to pose

to family and marriage, while men equally implicated in these 'sinful' things were neither judged so harshly nor punished. The paintings or visual texts, like literature, also debunked sexual hypocrisy embedded in the culture of the 19th century gentility.

Figure 1: George Frederic Watts' *Found Drowned* (1867), an oil painting which depicts the dead body of a woman washed up beneath the arch of Waterloo Bridge, while her lower body is still immersed in the water of the River Thames.

Before beginning the narrative, it would be pertinent to dwell upon the said paintings around which the ekphrastic narrative has been woven in the second part of the essay. She appears to have drowned having thrown herself in the river in despair to escape the shame of being a "fallen woman." In the background, the grey industrial cityscape is barely visible through the thick London smog hanging over the River Thames. The simple attire suggests her being a servant perhaps, and her arms and body form the shape of a cross. The locket and the chain in her hand suggest a love affair, and the single star in the sky represents hope, for salvation perhaps.

Figure 2: *The Awakening Conscience* (1853) painted by the English artist and William Holman Hunt, who was one of the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The painting depicts a young woman rising from the lap of a man with her gaze transfixed out of the window of the room.

At first look, the painting appears to depict a disagreement between a husband and his wife. However, the title and a host of symbols within the painting leave no room for doubt, that the couple consists of a mistress and her lover. The position of the woman's left-hand shows the absence of a wedding ring, and throughout the room, one can observe the dotted reminders of her "kept" status and her wasted life: the cat toying with a bird; the clock concealed under glass; an unfinished tapestry hanging on the piano; the unravelled threads on the floor; the print of Frank Stone's *Cross Purposes* on the wall; Edward Lear's musical arrangement of Tennyson's poem "Tears, Idle Tears" discarded on the floor, and Thomas Moore's "Oft in the Stilly Night" music on the piano, whose words speak of missed opportunities and gloomy memories of a happier past.

The mirror on the rear wall provides a tantalizing glimpse out of the room. The window opens out onto a spring garden flooded with sunlight, which is in striking contrast to the images of entrapment within the room. Far from displaying a look of shock that she has been caught with her lover, she is bemused by something that is outside of both the room and her relationship.

Figure 3: Hunt's Christian *The Light of the World* (1851)**,** depicting Christ holding a lantern and knocking on a handle-less door which, according to Hunt, represented "the obstinately shut mind." The young woman having her conscience pricked by an out-worldly spiritual presence here could be responding to that image.

Past and Present is the title given to the series of three oil paintings by Augustus Egg in 1858, which were designed to be exhibited together as a triptych. They depict the discovery and disastrous consequences of a woman's adultery in a middle-class Victorian family. The viewers are left to

determine whether the woman should be condemned or pitied. The paintings reflect fears of imperilment of public morality and family life caused by the Matrimonial Causes Act 1857, which led to the reformation of divorce laws by moving jurisdiction from the ecclesiastical courts to the civil court, thereby making divorce a realistic prospect for the middle-class people.

These works were influenced by Hunt's painting *The Awakening Conscience*. It cannot be stated with certainty as to how these paintings acquired the title *Past and Present*, as the artist was not known to have used the title, even though it was first recorded in the auction catalogue for Egg's works after his death in 1863. We may surmise that it was derived from a misreading of John Ruskin's *Academy Notes* (1855) since he discusses the untitled works in the book below a review of a painting with a similar title.

John Ruskin's *Academy Notes* described the three works as follows:

> In the central piece, the husband discovers his wife's infidelity; he dies five years afterwards. The two lateral pictures represent the same moment of the night a fortnight after his death. The same little cloud is under the moon. The two children see it from the chamber in which they are praying for their lost mother, and their mother, from behind a boat under a vault on the river shore. (Ruskin 8)

Figure 4: *Past and Present, No. 1*

The first painting, i.e., figure no. 4, *Past and Present, No. 1* depicts the drawing-room of a middle-class Victorian house. It shows the precise moment when a family's domestic bliss is ruined. A woman lies prostrate on the floor in front of her husband, fallen with hands clasped together and her gold serpent bracelet resembling manacles. He sits dumbfounded, clutching a letter revealing her adultery. An apple has been cut into two pieces; one half remains beside the husband's glossy top hat on the table, stabbed through its worm-ridden core by a small knife; the other half has fallen to the floor beside the

wife. The rear wall of the room, decorated with a rich red wallpaper, also bears two portraits, one on either side of the fireplace and mirror: the wife's portrait hangs to the left, above the playing children but beneath a picture of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (labelled "The Fall"); the husband's to the right hangs beneath a shipwreck scene by Clarkson Stanfield (labelled "Abandoned").

Figure 5: *Past and Present, No. 2*.

The second painting, i.e., figure no. 5, *Past and Present, No. 2* shows a night a few years later, shortly after the death of the heartbroken husband. His children have grown up now: the younger daughter in the white nightgown weeps into the lap of her elder sister, who is wearing a black mourning dress and is looking out of a window at the clouded moon. The portraits of their parents decorate the bedroom wall.

Figure 6: *Past and Present, No. 3*

The third painting, i.e., figure no. 6, *Past and Present, No. 3* is also a night scene. The clouds and moon depict the same evening as in the second painting. The fallen wife is sitting in the gutter beneath the Adelphi Arches, by the River Thames. She clutches a bundle of rags which shows the emaciated

legs of a child, perhaps illegitimate, either asleep or possibly dead. She looks up from the gutter to the moon. The following narrative, as part of critical discourse, shall help understand both culture and literature, and as an ekphrastic spin-off provide a critical perspective on the various interpretations of 'Fallen Woman' across the spatio-temporal matrix.

<div align="center">

II

</div>

Fallen Woman – A Re-telling

[They represent the archetypal battle of the sexes. Neither makes efforts to resolve their disputes or to reach an understanding where they take turns being on top. Men hang on to their masculine pride and arrogance to suppress a woman's desire for bodily pleasures and longing for social and intellectual freedom outrageous as well as immoral, even though they themselves tempt and abuse women– which women understand but stoically accept. In the end, neither of them wins the battle.]

"Yahweh" cried she, and that cry gave her wings to fly away. She, Adam's first wife, before Eve, left Eden for she refused to lie underneath Adam, who insisted "the bottom is your rightful place." Lilith, (figure 7) for that is the name of She who attempted to rule over no one, bellowed "Shove your stupid rules up your bottom. For all I know, you invented them yourself. We are equal because we are both created from the earth." Her mighty wings took her away from the manacles of performing wifely duties and childbirth.

Figure 7.

She flew across the world and centuries, admonished and chased. Cries of "Man-eater!!" and "child-killer!!" greeted her wherever she went. She would

have talked to the women, but they drove her away, screaming "Go find someone else's home to break!!", "It's between husband and wife, who said you could interfere?", "He hits me because he cares".

Apropos of *Found Drowned*

'Twas night, she looked down to find a drowned woman. An abandoned Echo arose from her dripping tresses. From far, the lament of Philomela arose:

> पीकी डगर में बैठे मैला हुआ री मोरा आंचरा
> मुखडा है फीका फीका नैनों में सोहे नहीं काजरा
> कोई जो देखे मैया प्रीत का वासे कहूं माजरा
> पीकी डगर में बैठे मैला हुआ री मोरा आंचरा
> लट में पड़ी कैसी बिरहा की माटी
> माई री …1   (*Mai Ri*, Lata Mangeshkar)

[Summary of the above song: Oh mother! Who do I confide in the sorrows of my broken heart? Oh mother!]

Her body formed the shape of a cross. "Come dear, thou need not be redeemed by thy kind. Henceforth, thy Echo shall be heard." Lilith took the hand of the drenched spirit and kissed it and said, "No, woman, no crying… woman, no crying!"[2] (*No Woman No Cry*, Bob Marley). Together they crossed the sea on-foot.

Apropos of *Awakening Conscience*

The next morning, they stopped before the parlour of a young girl sitting on her lover's lap as though she was a bird in a cat's grasp. Her eyes came to rest upon the be-winged Lilith and the spirit. Galvanised, she arose, as if awakening from a deep slumber filled with troublesome dreams. As she stepped outside the handle-less door of the parlour, her fingers touching the outstretched tips of Lilith's, the world melted away.

The trio continued onwards in their journey a-top the moon. A man letting his cat out swore he saw a bunch of witches fly across the sky on their broomsticks. For a moment he even thought he saw them conversing with the moon. Silly, man! Everyone knows Witches fly planes. Pff!! Ask one if you doubt it. Although, she might hit you on the head with a broomstick for asking silly questions! For the answer my friend is blowin' in the wind. You bet, the answer is blowin' in the wind[3] (*Blowin' in the Wind*, Bob Dylan).

Apropos of *Past and Present, No. 1*

"Wait!! Don't kill her!!" they shouted in unison. The knife flashed in the dim room, before slicing in half the worm-ridden apple. The man stood stupefied,

as if the shout had reverberated from his heart. "Leave, adulteress," said he to the woman lying prostrate upon the floor.

Apropos of *Past and Present, No. 2*

Five springs later, he died. Time flies if you're over the Moon. "Look! They're grown," said the spirit. "Yes. Just like their mother. And she, disillusioned and disenchanted," said rueful Lilith, "with another bundle at her breast. Such tiny feet…"

Apropos of *Past and Present, No. 3*

"Pour all your heart out in sweet melodies and be a siren in the deep sea, my dear. The child is already dead. Bury it in the water of this river and betake thyself to the ocean deep. Sing to the sailors, the rowdy, drunken men, to their perdition." She thought over this advice for a while and rose to her feet to do what she had been told.

The exiled Lilith, feeling forlorn, tried to re-enter Eden. The Unholy yet kind Trinity breached the walls of the Garden of Eden. Adam was beside himself with fury: "The impunity of that woman to bring filth into my home!!" But Eve reached them before he does. She had never seen a woman before… didn't know if there were more out there in the world. She was told that it was only she that had been carved out of his rib to only to serve and obey Adam. And now, she wondered if the stories she was told were all true. What if we were to imagine there was no Heaven, or no Hell below us, rather just a sky above our heads[4].

Figure 8.

Apropos of Eve and Lilith

She touched Lilith to see if she were for real. They talked and talked for

ages (figure 8). They found that they had much in common. The budding friendship puzzled and frightened both man and deity. Adam, wanting to throw the trio out, invented wildly untrue stories about how Lilith threatened pregnant women and children. How she was a man-stealer, the other woman. But Eve found Lilith to be exactly like her. And you can't control like-minded people.

To conclude, in this ekphrastic spin-off, Lilith, the universal woman, with a robustly energetic self, bold enough to articulate her bodily desire and longing for freedom is considered to pose a threat to the ideal domestic life and the civility of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie. Not just that, she could well be a bad influence on "the angel in the house" (Patmore 2010), the virtuous woman, devoted to the husband. Hence, she has been expelled from home, disgrace. But why would the wife walk out of the home like Nora or those typical 'new women'? Better, as this story suggests, the cast-away woman should return home and embrace her virtuous double, peer into her eyes, to be recognized by the other, so that her self-restitution can be possible. Modest and pliant though she is, she ought to discover the wild side of herself, explore the energy and find moral courage to call a spade a spade, and stop letting others turn her into a victim. Eve and Lilith must commingle to be one.

Works Cited and Consulted

Mangeshkar, Lata. "Mai Ri Main Kaase Kahoon Peer Apne Jiya Ki." *Dastak*, 10 Aug. 2020,www.lyricsindia.net/songs/1395.

Marley, Bob. "No Woman, No Cry." *Uprising Live!*, 10 Aug. 2020, LyricsFreak, https://www.lyricsfreak.com/b/bob+marley/no+woman+ no+cry_ 20021714.html.

Dylan, Bob. "Blowin' in the Wind". *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, 10 Aug. 2020, www.bobdylan.com/songs/blowin-wind/.

Lennon, John. "Imagine." *Imagine*, 10 Aug. 2020, Genius, https://genius.com/John-lennon imagine-lyrics.

Egg**,** Augustus Leopold**.** *Past and Present No. 1,* 1858, oil on canvas, 63.5 x 76.2 cm Giclee.

Accessed September 1, 2020. Print**-** https://www.art.com/products/p35701447987-sa-i9456994.

—. *Past and Present, No. 2,* 1858, oil on canvas, 63.5 x 76.2 cm. Accessed September 1, 2020. https://www.tumblr.com.

—. *Past and Present, No. 3,* 1858, oil on canvas, 63.5 x 76.2 cm (Tate Britain, London). https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/past-and-present-no-3-117707.Accessed September 1, 2020.

Hunt, William Holman. *The Light of the World*, 1851, oil on canvas, 59.8 x 125.5 cm (Tate Britain, London). http://dominican-friars.colourrich.co.uk/images/blogs/godzdogz/2011/06/Hunt-light-world.jpg. Accessed September 1, 2020.

—. *The Awakening Conscience*, 1853, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 55.9 cm (Tate Britain, London). https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hunt-the-awakening-conscience-t02075. Accessed September 1, 2020.

Klapouh, Yuri. *Lilith and Eve*.

https://www.tumblr.com/search/lilith%20and%20eve. Accessed September 1, 2020. Rosetti, Dante Gabriel. *Lady Lilith*, 1867, oil on canvas, 96.5 x 85.1 cm. Delaware Art Museum, USA. https://joyofmuseums.com/museums/united-states-of-america/wilmington-delaware-museums/delaware-art-museum/lady-lilith-by-dante-gabriel-rossetti/. Accessed September 1, 2020.

Watts RA, George Frederic. *Fallen Woman*, 1867, oil on canvas. Watts Gallery, Compton. https://foundlingmuseum.org.uk/events/fallen-woman/. Accessed September 1, 2020.

Eliot, George, and Carol A. Martin. *Adam Bede*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

Hardy, Thomas. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Penguin Classics, 2012.

Moore, Thomas. "Oft in the Stilly Night." https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44782/oft-in-the-stilly-night-scotch-air. Accessed 11 November, 2020.

Patmore, Coventry. *The Angel in the House*. La Vergne, Biblio Bazaar, 2010.

Tennyson, Alfred Lord. "Tears, Idle Tears." https://www.poetry.net/poem/1071/tears,-idle-tears. Accessed 11 November, 2020.

Ruskin, John. *Notes on Some of the Principal Pictures: Exhibited in the Rooms of the Royal Academy: 1855*. Smith, Elder, and Co., 1855.

Starbuck, William Gayer. *A Woman against the World. A Novel*. London R. Bentley, 1864.

Vaughan, Robert C., Thomas Sternhold, and John Hopkins. *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old Testament and the New*. Cambridge, 1980.

—— * ——

Godna and Modern Tattoo: A Transitional Narrative

Mandavi Choudhary

> There is only one form of ornamentation even more closely bonded to the body than jewellery, and that is tattooing.

—Wendy Doniger, *The Ring of Truth, Myths of Sex and Jewellery*

At present, body art has become a kind of fashion statement and a lot of people in the Indian metropolitan cities can be seen getting tattoos made on various parts of their body every now and then. However, tattoo-making, which is a special art form, is nothing new to the culture of India. *Godna,* the traditional tattoo art form which a lot of elder women in Mithila like to call "a permanent ornament" has now lost its cultural position in Maithili society. Sukrit Nagraj, who conducted extensive research on *Godna* in Chhattisgarh reports, "The word *Godna* is derived from *gehna* or jewellery, with these tattoos made usually made around body parts where jewellery was worn, in the belief that this jewellery will be adorned till the end of life and beyond." Tara Devi, a woman in the village, Karjapatti in Darbhanga, Bihar supports the assertion, "This is the only ornament that even widowhood cannot take away from a woman." What she means is that after the death of the husband, a woman is supposed to take off all her jewellery items, except for *godna* which has been inked permanently on the body.

There are various meanings that are communicated through *godna*. The Munda tribe in Jharkhand, for example, holds high regard for valor and uses *godna* to record historic events. Santhal tribes assign different tattoos for each sex and different parts of the body. Santhal men in Bengal and Jharkhand get tattoos called *sikkas* made on their forearms. The name is derived from the shape, which is that of coins (*sikka*). The Santhals also wear various tattoos which when combined together form an odd number, signifying life and even symbolizing death in Santhal cosmology. The Santhal, as well as Banjaran women in Rajasthan, get floral patterns tattooed on different parts of their bodies, including their faces. In Mithila, there are very few men found with *godna* since *godna,* like most jewellery items, have been perceived as an adornment for women in Maithili cultural realm. The men who do sport a *godna* either get it made out of their personal choices, or get their names tattooed at a tender age for other reasons such as, the fear of being lost when the *godna* can help them get back to the family. Jawahar Shahu, a local resident in the village Karjapatti of Darbhanga in an interview confirms, "Very few men can be found with the *godna.* It was mainly the women in our village in the past to have

gotten it." Also, as per observations, the face is one body part that the people of Mithila refrain from getting tattooed. Sukrit Nagraj observes, "Typically tattoos are made around the ankles, toes, fingers, the wrists, palms, thighs and breasts." Nagraj's observation on the *godna* of Chhattisgarh has been found true in the context of Mithila as well, where women were found with a *godna* on the mentioned body parts.

The narratives on *godna* that have emerged from Mithila can be divided into three categories:

1. **The older women**: The number of people with the *godna* is very less, and it was mainly the older women in the families that could recall their personal experiences about it and narrate stories. Maximum information could be obtained from this group of interviewees.

2. **The older men:** They were as good at recalling the past through memory and imagination as the older women. They may not have personally experienced the pain and the process of getting the *godna* made but, they are efficient storytellers who could interpret the *godna* story in multiple manners.

3. **The younger generation:** Both men and women under this category had limited knowledge about *godna,* and an extremely low percentage of them actually have it.

Godna, like many jewellery items of Mithila, is dying a slow death. There is not much work available in texts on it, and the only surviving data is that which can be extracted from personal narratives of the folk borrowed from shared folk beliefs and experiences.

Godna Artists in Search of New Identities

With *Godna* slowly losing its cultural relevance, the *godna* artists also called *godnawali* (female) and *godnawala* (male) have started looking for other options for survival. The nomadic community, *Karori* in Mithila as informed by the locals of the village, Karjapatti in Darbhanga, Bihar would walk from one door to the door, singing and encouraging people to get the *godna* made. They could be heard singing and announcing their arrival, *"Godaliyagodna! Godaliya e"* (Get *godna* inked on your body! Listen, get inked.) The *godna* artists are in search of new identities now and have taken to other professions such as hunting, gathering honey and running other errands. There still are a few *Godna* artists that hold on to the past and have not given up on artistic skills that they had inherited from their ancestors. However, locating those few is almost impossible with the shifting nature of their work, which means that they cannot be found at one particular place or spot. Rajender Shahu, a resident

of the village Karjapatti says, "They could be easily found earlier because they would come to the village from time to time and people would feel tempted to get the *Godna* made. Now, they don't visit us for months and sometimes years because they know that nobody would be interested." The inability to track down *godna* artists also tells a story that needs no words for narration. The dying art narrates its story of pain screeching under the wraps of oblivion and nostalgia.

Personal experiences and stories

While in the urban spaces of Mithila, it is difficult to find people with *godna*, the villages continue to be inhabited by a small fraction of elder female members in families who have it. Neha, a young teacher in the village of Karjapatti says, "The younger generation barely gets the *godna* made. Even if they do, it's for the sake of fashion." Different stories around the *Godna* have emerged from the common people. Jawahar Shahu living in the village Karjapatti could recall diverse stories and on being asked why the *Godna* is made, he answered,

> Mithila was under the Mughals for a long time and it was during this time that the women of Mithila did not feel safe. Often, Hindu brides and young women would be abducted and later raped. Once, a young beautiful girl with a *godna* was spared because the Mughals felt disgusted with the black ink on the body. The people of Mithila realized that the *godna* was the best way to deal with the abductions. Thus, *godna* was used as a shield against rapes and sexual assaults. (Shahu)

Mithila was indeed under the Mughals for a long time, and it was Akbar who had appointed a Maithil as the caretaker of Mithila because the people of Mithila who had previously been ruled by other Muslim rulers had little faith in them. There is no textual evidence to validate the story narrated by Jawahar Shahu, but he does strongly believe in its sanctity because this is a story that he and many of his friends grew up listening to. People in the village of Karjapatti have rarely questioned the stories and folk beliefs that were transferred to them orally for over several hundreds of years. In every Maithil Brahmin's house, for instance, there is a *Kuldevi* that has been installed and she is worshipped and valued like any other Hindu gods. *Kul Devi* is supposed to bring happiness and protect the family against evil and she has been there since time immemorial. While everybody in the village agrees that she brings happiness and must be respected as instructed to them by their ancestors, they fail to answer questions like why was she installed in each house and family to begin with? Like the *Kul Devi* who is perceived as a goddess protecting and providing

strength to each family, *Brahm Baba* is a male God assigned to each village that takes care of the entire village and provides shelter to the village folk during turbulent days. The *godna* story narrated by Jawahar Shahu and other people in the village is also similarly based on common folk beliefs whose origin cannot be located.

Nicola Barker in her novel, *The Yips* (2012) writes, "The tattoo represents not only a willingness to accept pain – to endure it – but a need to actively embrace it. Because life is painful – beautiful but painful." A lot of older women in Karjapatti agreed that *godna* is a permanent ornament and also shared reasons that were given to them for getting it done. A lot of times, they would be made to believe that would ensure that they reach heaven post-death. Laxmaniya Devi says, "Pain would be returned with a promise of heaven which was one of the primary reasons why we would feel tempted to get it." Laxmaniya Devi, Saakhi Devi, Mahalaxmi Devi are some of the women in the village of Karjapatti with a *godna* who had willingly embraced the pain for the exchange of great gifts. For Laxminiya Devi, *godna* means a guaranteed trip to heaven for a better afterlife, while for Saakhi Devi *godna* is a means to let her meet her parents in heaven. For Mahalaxmi Devi, the *godna* has several purposes and one of them like in the case of Saakhi Devi and Laxminiya Devi is the assurance of heaven.

Godna has also been seen as a symbol of purity and identity that differentiates the women with it from the rest. All castes find the *godnashudh* (pure) but the Brahmin women have a different story to share. Sagyani Devi, an elderly woman in Karjapatti showing her *godna* said, "*Brahmin ke chin haieegodna*" (This *godna* that I have is an identity marker for the Brahmin women).

Fig 1. Sagyani Devi revealing her *godna*

155

Mahalaxmi Devi, an elderly woman in the village of Karjapatti has numerous *godnas* on various body parts. She says, "A special ritual would be organised on the day which included the gathering of women together." The *godna* ritual would include singing, which was primarily meant to ease the pain. Remembering a song, she sings, *"Godaliyagodna, humro se, hey jaan"* (The *godnawaali* makes a request to the queen to get the *godna* inked). The song is sung from the perspective of the *godnawali* who has come all the way from the western side of the region and is currently sitting under the *chandan* (sandalwood) tree. She sings out aloud to the queen in the nearby palace, whom she requests to come out of her palace and get inked. Announcing her arrival, she repeats,*"Godaliya hum rose."*Mahalaxmi Devi adds, "The singing would continue throughout so that the pain could be suppressed with one's attention being diverted to the singing." Mahalaxmi Devi has several *godnas* on her body, with one on her foot (*paer*) which she explains while laughing, "This one is to ensure that my father is not born as a crow when he is reborn." The one on her neck *(kanth)* shall allow her to meet her mother when she reaches heaven after her death. On the *tarhatti* (palm), she says that she got the *godna* made so that when she departs from this world, the journey proves to be smooth and trouble-free. Describing her choices of designs, she says, "I picked a *pothi* and *phool* (book and flower) because the two stand for wisdom and beauty."

Fig 2.

From Mahalaxmi Devi's narration, it becomes evident that women are convinced that *godna* will be beneficial for them. Like the other women, she too believes that she is destined to reach heaven after death because the *godna* sets that path for her to attain it. While most women could not explain the

reason for their choices of symbols and designs, Mahalaxmi Devi could differentiate between them and explain further. It was found that maximum women in Karjapatti village have flowers or their names inked on the body.

Sunita Devi, another elderly woman in the village of Karjapatti offered an explanation, "We get our names tattooed so that we can be easily located in case we get lost somewhere." The flower, another important *godna* design glorifies beauty, and can also be understood as a symbol of adulthood and female sexuality, keeping in mind that women who have it only got it made after entering into their adolescent phase. Both married and unmarried women get the *godna* after getting their first period, and this transitional phase connects dots with the flower image. The *godna* here can be seen as a metaphorical transition of a bud that has blossomed into a flower, shadowing a girl's transformation into a sexual being. The *Godna,* hence, like the most jewellery items worn by women in Mithila (*bichiya, lahthis*) is a symbol of female sexuality.

Wymann argues that tattoo symbolises a medium of communication. The body that has been inked talks to the onlookers as it has a story to tell. In his opinion, tattooing can be understood as i) a product made by tools, materials and procedures; ii) a form of body alteration and iii) a form of social behavior. In the process of tattooing, the body turns into a cultural investment, promoted through an individual's identity making efforts. The *godna* can also be understood through the three mentioned parameters.

i) **A product made by tools, materials and procedures:** The most debated question was related to the ingredients used for making the *godna*. Suneeta Devi says, "Ink or coal is mixed with a new mother's milk and this together gives out a solid and a dark color used." A few other women during a group interaction had a different story to share, "Milk from *Kaneli* flower is extracted first and then blended with the ash collected from a burning *diya*." Possibly, there are multiple methods available to make the wanted mixture to be used. On one thing, all women agreed which was that the number of needles used for inking the *godna* is seven, an auspicious number.

ii) **A form of body alteration:** Atkinson called tattooing "a contextual and negotiated signifier of identity." Individuals devote a good amount of time and endure pain to obtain tattoos. Pain is a way of earning body alteration for them. Women with *godna* are aware that their bodies are different from that of the other women who do not wear the tattoo on their skin.

iii) **A form of social behavior:** Most women with the *godna* that fall in the 50 and above age groups agreed that they got the *godna*

made because it was a part of accepted social behaviour. Their body turned into a cultural investment. Tara Devi, an elderly woman with a *godna* on her skin confirms, "It was a nightmare but it was expected out of me and what could I do?"

Godna became popular in villages not only because of its claim to help people reach heaven after death, but also because it is probably the most affordable ornament that could be enjoyed by all castes and economic groups in villages of Mithila. The desire to decorate the body is cultivated within the hearts of all, rich or poor, upper caste and lower caste. *Godna* is one such important ornament that everybody can afford to have. While Gold and silver cost a fortune, *godna* can be used as an ornament with lesser amount of money being spent on maintaining and affording it. Vineeta Mandal, living in Karjapatti says:

> Nobody can take this from us. Who can rob it off? It is there, permanently on our skin. Like Brahmins, we cannot afford gold and there are times when buying silver can also be a problem. It is in such circumstances that *godna* comes to our rescue. (Mandal)

The younger generation has shifted away from the past and only one girl named Shilpi in Karjapatti could be found with the *godna*. She confessed, "I got it done out of choice because it makes me feel good." It is important to note that in contrast to the elder women who had reasons such as assurance of heaven or carrying it as a permanent ornament or had great respect for *godna* which they see as a symbol of purity, Shilpi and people her age do not follow rituals but rather create their paths, away from the old age traditions and folk beliefs. They don't choose tattoos or *godna* out of compulsion or under the influence of beliefs, but because they wish to reclaim their lives and build their identities.

Is Modern tattoo a replacement?

In a contemporary world, tattoos can function as a ritual and may serve as a physical mark of a life event in some cases. Furthermore, tattoos can also function as identification marks or simply as a mode of decoration. People can be seen getting the name of their children tattooed to celebrate their birth which is a great live event. People also get symbols like the phoenix or semicolon tattooed which represent different meanings (phoenix in certain cases is chosen by feminist groups since phoenix stands for rising post-fall, and semicolon is picked with people battling depression and suicidal thoughts). At present, particularly in the urban spaces, people who are separated from their past and traditions have started turning to modern art forms. Tattoo is one of the modern art forms to have risen to popularity in recent times. In the last two decades, perceptions and attitudes towards tattooing and tattoos have undergone visible changes. Tattooing which was once associated with non-mainstream groups

has now grabbed the attention of the modern consumer. Thus, from the realm of folk culture that celebrated traditional tattoo art; the tattoo has entered into the sphere of popular culture. Tattoo can be described as a kind of writing done on the body, existing as a form of visual and non-verbal communication. Helen Cixous had written in *The Laugh of the Medusa* (2017), "Write yourself, your body must be heard."

Today, a lot of feminist movements have encouraged tattooing as a form of protest and rebellion in response to patriarchy. A lot of young girls in Indian cities have also started getting tattoos made, and they feel liberated through the act. The modern tattoo has not officially reached Mithila but a lot of families that migrated from Mithila have readily accepted it. It was seen in Karjapatti that the younger girls opt for *godna* out of a personal choice and liking, and not because they are made to believe that pain will get them a guaranteed entry into heaven. As opposed to the *godna*, the modern tattoo is not based on such claims, and rather allows women to decide for themselves. Here, there is a clear shift from the female self-trapped in culture to making a move towards the "I". In that sense, the modern tattoo can be extremely empowering for some women as it can read as Plath's famous line from *The Bell Jar* (1963), "I am. I am. I am" (qtd. in Kristy) reminding them of their existence.

Numerous people battling depression also get the tattoos made on their skin to keep them going by filling, cultivating a yearning for life. Depression tattoos have become a trend worldwide and with people acknowledging depression, the way people perceive it has also undergone a transformation. David Klemanski, a professor of applied psychology says, It's almost like a battle scar in some ways (qtd. in Punjabi). Klemnski is of the view that tattoos allow people in a way to move forward by recognising and accepting the past and integrating it with themselves. The *godna's* flower design has been replaced today by the trending semicolon tattoo which was born out of a social media initiative with the same name. When Amy Blue lost her father to suicide, she wanted to honour him in a special way and this led to Project semicolon founded by her.

Through the project, she started spreading awareness about mental health-related problems which positively impacted countless people. The main agenda of the project, as mentioned on the website, is to "present hope and love to those struggling with depression, suicide, addiction, and self-injury." While the *godna* stories echo the want of heaven post-death, the semicolon tattoos and newer forms of modern tattoos seek to celebrate life in the present.

Conclusion

It is true that the traditional body art, *godna,* has lost the position that it had once enjoyed in the context of Mithila. However, it would be wrong to say that modern tattoos have completely replaced *godna*. *Godna* artists exhibit great skills like the modern tattoo artists, and both the art forms are intimately linked to one another. Instead of assuming that the modern tattoos have replaced *godna*, another way of interpreting it would be to assert that modern tattoo is an extension of the former, which is at a growing stage. The reasons for getting inked may vary if located in distinct time frames, yet body art has been a common feature of Indian culture since the beginning, and it shall continue to remain thus in the years to come.

Works Cited and Consulted

Devi, Laxmaniya. Interview. Conducted by Mandavi Choudhary, 27 May, 2018.

Devi, Mahalaxmi. Interview. Conducted by Mandavi Choudhary, 27 May, 2018.

Devi, Saakhi. Interview. Conducted by Mandavi Choudhary, 27 May, 2018.

Devi, Sagyani. Interview. Conducted by Mandavi Choudhary, 28 May, 2018.

Devi, Sunita. Interview. Conducted by Mandavi Choudhary, 27 May, 2018.

Devi, Tara. Interview. Conducted by Mandavi Choudhary, 27 May, 2018.

Jha, Neha. Interview. Conducted by Mandavi Choudhary, 28 May, 2018.

Mandal, Vineeta. Interview. Conducted by Mandavi Choudhary, 28 May, 2018.

Shahu, Jawhar. Interview. Conducted by Mandavi Choudhary, 28 May, 2018.

Shahu, Rajender. Interview. Conducted by Mandavi Choudhary, 28 May, 2018.

Shilpi. Interview. Conducted by Mandavi Choudhary, 28 May, 2018.

Barker, Nicola. "Quote by Nicola Barker." *Goodreads.com.* https://www.goodreads. com/quotes/596709-tattoos-are-a-right-of-passage-they-re-a-marker. Accessed 28 May, 2018.

Cixous, Helen. "Your body must be heard". *Artigollapudi.com.* May 30, 2017.http:// www.artigollapudi.com/shows/2017/5/30/your-body-must-be-heard. Accessed 28 May, 2018.

Dey, Archita. Das, Kaustav. "Why we tattoo? Exploring the Motivation and Meaning." *longdom.org.* https://www.longdom.org/open-access/why-we-tattoo-exploring-the-motivation-and-   meaning-2332-0915-1000174.pdf. Accessed 28 May, 2018.

Doniger, Wendy. *The Ring of Truth, Myths of Sex and Jewelry.* Speaking Tiger, 2017.

Evans, Maria. "The Magazine: Getting the ink felt right." *Episcopalcafe.com.* March 01, 2015. https://www.episcopalcafe.com/the-magazine-getting-ink-felt-right/ Accessed 28 May, 2018.

Pandey, Sanjay. "From marks of status to a kind of jewellery, tattoos are part of a centuries-old Indian tradition". *Scroll.in.* https://scroll.in/article/716615/from-

marks-of-status-to-a-kind-of-jewellery-tattoos-are-part-of-a-centuries-old-indian-tradition. Accessed 28 May, 2018.

Grocott, Kristy. "Slyvia Plath's Bell Jar still haunts me." *Thetelegraph.co.uk.* January 11, 2013. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/9793589/Sylvia-Plaths-Bell-Jar-still -haunts-me.html. Accessed 28 May, 2018.

"If You See Someone with a Semicolon Tattoo, This Is What Means." *PowerofPositivity.com.* https://www.powerofpositivity.com/if-you-see-someone-with-a-semicolon-tattoo-this-is-what-it-means/ Accessed 28 May, 2018.

Nagraj, Sukrit. "The story of *godna*". Sukritnagraj.com. https://sukrit-nagaraj.com/the-tory-of-godna. Accessed 28 May, 2018.

Punjabi, Rahul. "Depression tattoos can help people cope." *Tonic.vice.com. March 01, 2018.* https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/wj4knq/depression-tattoos-help-people-cope. Accessed 28 May, 2018.

Wymann, Christian. *Tattooing: The economic and artistic constitution of social phenomenon.* Copenhagen Business School, 2011.

— ∗ —

Home and the Inner Lives of Homemakers: A Study of Women Protagonists in Select Indian English Novels

Akansha Shukla

In the words of Roger Kennedy, having a 'home'[1] is akin to experiencing an emotion. It becomes more than a mere physical, concrete dwelling; it becomes an interior part of one's soul. Furthermore, the connotations for home can be multi-fold, allowing magnitude of interpretations as the dynamics of the space are imbibed with an individual in his/her manners, memories, culture, and tradition. For instance, an immigrant's idea of home would be rooted in memory and nostalgia and for the reader of post-colonial scholarship; the idea of home would be interconnected with that of homeland and home rule. Likewise, in a capitalist patriarchal society, the idea of home is interconnected with gender and the means of production.

For centuries women have been conditioned to perform the unpaid work of the house. Women constitute the inner or private space, where domestic (unpaid) work of the household like cooking, cleaning, and child-rearing is performed; the opposite of the public sphere where industry (wage, labour, working hours) is situated, which is classified for men. The household work has become synonymous with women's work as it has been performed by women for so long. The issue has been most aptly noted by V. Geetha as:

> The inside/outside dyad separates women and men, assigning women to the inside of homes, cultures – and men to the outer world, of labour, production and rule… and the outside is often a form for the exercise of local patriarchal authority… the home and hearth are conceptualized in folk, popular and much of literary culture – as an essentially gendered space, where the outer world of commerce, rule and war is seen as a 'man's world'. Words in most Indian languages designate the woman as the queen of the household, as its guardian angel, its custodian and so on; where as a man is described as the one that brings in an income, as a protector and guardian of the hearth in his capacity as a public figure and as one who fashions the world, makes history. (Geetha 144-145)

With so many entry points into understanding the essence of homes, this paper in its limited scope of the study would only focus on women in Indian households, through analysis of select Indian English novels. The study has been undertaken with the analysis of works by noted authors like Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), and Rama

Mehta's *Inside the Haveli* (1977). The literary households in this paper are studied as motifs of self-expression by the women in their struggle with issues of class, tradition, gender inequality, and at large, social anonymity of their intramural struggles.

By carefully studying the portrayal and caricature of the women and the households in literature, one realises that homes chronicle the most intimate struggles of women that remain unseen and unacknowledged behind the closed doors. The veiled structure of power between women and the private space of household brews ecosystems engineered and operated by women. The homes and homemakers become symbolic of the marginalised histories waiting to be unearthed. In order to understand Indian households and the inner lives of women inside them, it would be unjust to neglect the bounty of work done by Indian women writers around the themes of family and households. The voices of women characters in literature, by women, are significant as they come from a space of double oppression, first from patriarchy and secondly from economic dependence. Dr K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar rightly opines that "women are natural story-tellers!" (435) and writers like Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, and Kamala Markandaya mark Iyengar's words true. They articulate their work with a unique understanding of womanhood that projects the unseen aspects of being a householder and a homemaker. Their works question the systemic effacement and negation of the self to fulfil the roles expected by society. Moreover, the representations of literary homes in these texts attempt to capture the complexity behind the societal misnomers correlating domestic bliss with agreeable homemakers. The lives of women inside the home are expected to remain static and unchanged with time and movement. However, it is seen that women are the first to sense and prepare for the changes happening outside that will ultimately affect their inner worlds in time.

I

In human societies and Indian households in general, women shoulder the responsibility of primary care providers to their families and the household. One such household is portrayed in *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) written by Kamala Markandaya (1924-2004). In the novel, the protagonist, Rukmani recounts the ordeals of her life. The story of Rukmani is located in a simple, unnamed Indian village that is threatened by the arrival of the new tannery. The journey of Rukmani takes the reader into the labyrinths of rural India, where misfortune has not lifted its veil through centuries after colonisation. She is married at the age of twelve and Markandaya through her observing narrative style has chalked out the transformation of a young girl into a woman through the protagonist's own words. Young girls without education are trained to make an organic

transition into the future roles of loving mothers, affectionate wives, and obedient sisters or daughters. In order to prepare them as efficient managers of their future households, they are taught to provide for the household in various ways, from finances to ration and medicine, they look after the smallest of things that may hamper the smooth running of the household machinery. Rukmani's journey is no different when she enters her marital household. Her transition is summarised by Nathan's remark, "She was no longer a child, to be cowed or forced into submission, but a grown woman with a definite purpose and an invincible determination" (66).

Rukmani's land-owning ancestral heritage along with her ability to read and write generates much curiosity in the village women around her, yet her ability to learn and an amiable persona helps her gain their approval as one of their own. From childbirth to child-rearing the rural women become self-sufficient and codependent on each other. Each learns how the other is doing in her household through their regular house visits and holding open conversations about the pressing issues in their lives. The character of Rukmani is symbolic of the challenges faced by rural women who have no choice but to bravely face the hostility of nature and human forces alike. For a peasant family like that of Nathan and Rukmani's, the only assets at their disposal are labour and land. As owning land is a far-fetched dream for the poor farmers, the families could only advance their fortunes with the help of more labour. They live on a fine balance between hope and fear as Rukmani says, "Hope and fear. Twin forces that tugged at us first in one direction, and then another, and which was the stronger no one could say. Of the latter, we never spoke, but it was always with us. Fear is a constant companion of the peasant" (Markandaya 144).

As the men leave for fields, the wives look after the household, the children, and occasionally help at the fields whenever required. The women characters, like the protagonist Rukmani, her daughters: Irrawaddy, Kunthi, and Appu, are represented in their journey of becoming complex mother figures. Markandaya looks at how mothers are born. She shows how every mother has a different journey into motherhood and society cannot weigh all on the same scale. Three prominent female characters have their children born out of wedlock in the novel. The theme of motherhood and fertility shape the desires and self-worth of women. Women who are either abandoned by their husbands or sons, like Appu and Ira, resort to prostitution to support themselves. Others like Kunthi become sex workers as they aspire to live a modern lifestyle that an independent income could ensure. The irony is that many poverty-stricken women fall pregnant and hold on to illegitimate children. The emotional and financial exertion a child brings to the family is directly seen as a reflection of the hardships faced by women in their childbearing years. The women who are past their youth, like

the old granny of the village who supports herself by selling vegetables, become a daily reminder of the hardships faced by ageing single women. Rukmani fears that Ira might face the fate of the old granny, who dies alone in the streets out of destitution.

Here the idea of fertility plays a major role in terms of the agrarian rural economy. Markandaya has raised the issue poetically with an allegorical representation of the women and the land. Land and a wife without sons are of no use to a farmer. The rural economy of Indian villages weighs the value of women by the number of male heirs given by her to society. Susan S. Wadley rightly evokes this sentiment by pointing out in her chapter, "Hindu Women's Family and Household Rites in a North Indian Village" (1977) that:

> Having sons is considered vital by women for several reasons: sons are needed to perform the ancestral rites, they provide "insurance" in one's old age (especially crucial if a woman should be so unfortunate as to become a widow), and they also make up the family labour force. Equally important is the emotional support that sons provide. (Wadley 117)

The rural economy is already fragile as it depends perennially on the forces of nature like weather and rains. Also, the farmers work on lands that belong to someone else, which makes them a tenant on the land. While the peasants cannot control the forces of nature, they are still liable as tenants to pay the rent of the land. Rukmani aptly summarises the nature of the relationship between the farmers and nature as: "Nature is like a wild animal that you have trained to work for you. So long as you are vigilant and walk warily with thought and care, so long will it give you its aid; but look away for an instant, be heedless or forgetful, and it has you by the throat" (Markandaya 112).

In the novel, Markandaya shows that the peasant women are further impacted by the demands of a growing family as they have no place or profession to earn for their family except occasionally working beside their husbands on the land. In such cases, women only fall prey to the demands of a foreign crowd ready to pay them for carnal pleasures. N.K. Jain feels that the novel presents "an authentic picture of village life in transition, particularly of rural poverty and hunger" (155). Through the main protagonist, Rukmani, Markandaya brings out the need that is inculcated in women to bear male heirs. Rukmani undergoes a coveted fertility treatment as she wants to beget a male child to her husband, Nathan.

She never questions the demands that are going to be made on her body and mind as she fears that her marriage will fall apart if she does not bear Nathan sons. The birth of her six sons ensures a stable marriage, vital for

sustenance in the village. In the absence of any wealth or inheritance of her own, she solely depends on her father's or husband's allegiance for shelter. Although her suspicions are never realised due to the help received from Dr Kennington, the reader eventually reads Nathan's justification of Irawaddy's broken marriage as he says, "we cannot blame him, he waited long enough" (Markandaya 92). Through his justification, one can understand the motivation behind the young Rukmani's actions. Here it is important to understand the cultural investment Markandaya's protagonist has made into the idea of her marital home and family. Her idea of wealth and social acknowledgement does not lie with modernity and material advancement that is signified by the tannery, but rather with her home and kin as noted by Wadley:

> It is not surprising, then, those women's desires, as expressed in their rituals, are those of their world—the household— while men's concerns are focused primarily on the outer world. Since the world affects women differently than it does men, women's symbols of hope and prosperity are also different from men's symbols. (Wadley 121)

Rukmani is not happy with her sons, Arjun and Thambi, leaving the village to make money, and blames the tannery for the changes she is being forced to acknowledge and accept. Her other son, Raja, is caught stealing at the tannery and is brought dead to the house. Although financially the villagers benefit from the increased income, including Rukmani, she realises that the tannery exacts a heavy price in lieu of the modernity and money it offers. She says, "But the change that now came into my life, into all our lives, blasting its way into our village, seemed wrought in the twinkling of an eye" (Markandaya 25).

The challenges that come her way become a threat to her life's only motive: a stable home with her family protected inside it. She negotiates her position, where she has to choose her way of dealing with these challenges. It is seen that she fights all the battles, be it the invasive tannery or infidelity. Rukmani's household becomes a spectacle of the cultural clash that happens inside the village. The tannery provides a new income avenue to the young and the restless of the village, while the old try to patiently pass through the hard times of rain and drought alike with the same submissiveness. The economic structure of the tannery goes against the farming and cultivation pattern for the villagers. Agriculture and farming involve the whole family in the means of production; the family is connected with each other in labour and leisure, whereas the tannery plants the seeds of capitalist exploitation. "They had invaded our village with clatter and din, had taken from us the maidan where our children played, and had made the bazaar prices too high for us". (Markandaya 42)

The labour force is an impersonal unit of humans and can be replaced anytime. While the men are used for their skill and strength, the women become a completely detached body who are only to look after the house. The disconnect Rukmani begins to feel is on both the levels where her sons no longer want to help their ageing father on the land and also because here she cannot get involved as it is a foreign entity's space of production as A.V. Krishna Rao remarks: "Industrialization with its main emphasis on urban development and mechanization of the means of production and distribution results in the social dislocation of the family" (64).

The dynamics also change when it comes to modern relationships. The relationships inside the household start breaking apart once tragedy strikes the village. The marriage of Rukmani and Nathan sees various ups and downs throughout the novel, but not even once the couple decides to end their marriage. However, we see the other marriages falling apart as the characters start moving out in their independent search of livelihood. The women especially seem the hardest hit by economic novelty. Rukmani reports that most of the women turn to prostitution after crop failure as a last resort to earn money. Srinivasa Iyengar feels "Life has not apparently changed for a thousand year, but now with the invasion of industry and more technology sinister consequences issue" (43).

A.V. Krishna Rao considers the novel the "havoc of economics." He opines that "Kamala Markandaya in the *Nectar in a Sieve* has dramatized the tragedy of a traditional Indian village and a peasant family assaulted by industrialisation. Rukmani and Nathan, a couple in a south Indian village are the victims of the two evils - *zamindari* system and the industrial economy" (4).

II

Along with a residential shift, a bride is expected to make a cultural and psychological shift in her outlook to completely align her personality with her marital household. Thus, to become one of the members of her husband's family, the girl/bride forgoes everything that can be a hindrance in the espousal of a new identity. However, the 19th century was witnessing a change in perspective as Elaine Showalter writes, "self-discovery" and "a search for identity" (Showalter 13) became the major themes of women's writing in the early 20th century. In Indian English literature, one can see the caricatures of women protagonists who were struggling to hold onto their own identities rather than being defined by the face of their male guardians.

One such text where the question of identity is raised in a nuanced manner is Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli*. The protagonist Geeta undergoes significant

cultural shifts in order to fit into the aristocratic family of Udaipur after marriage. From being a free-spirited young woman at her parent's house to a coy bride, her journey deliberates on the unmaking of the modern girl and the making of a liberal woman inside a traditional household. She is educated, young, and spirited in her demeanour. She has an opinion and is vocal about her thoughts, which makes her all the things that are shunned in the stoic households of the elite *havelis* (traditional Indian mansions).

Mehta's text presents an excellent canvas to display the tension between modernity and tradition, inside the stately Indian households. The contrast of beliefs between the modern upbringing of a metropolitan city like Mumbai and value systems inside the ostentatious *havelis* as portrayed in Bhagwat Singh's *haveli* in Udaipur serves as an excellent detail to study the contrast of class and gender ideas with respect to the geographical locale. According to Jasbir Jain, the architecture of *havelis* itself displays a structural divide between gender roles, with separate courtyards for men and women. The segregation of spaces can be seen as symptomatic of various classifications based on class and caste inside the *haveli*. Jain says, "traditional architecture often has separate living quarters for women referred to as the '*Zenanas*', with men spending most of their time in the front portion of the house" (Jain 249).

Geeta and the *haveli* are juxtaposed in the novel against each other as opposing ideologies of modernity and tradition. The position of women inside the house is fixated as being beneath the men but above the servants. The women of the haveli, whether it is Bhagwat Singh's wife and mother or others who are primarily working in the *haveli* as maids servants, follow the norms and rituals of the household like a clockwork irrespective of age and designation as, "In the *haveli* men were regarded with awe as if they were Gods. They were the masters and their slightest wish was a command. Women kept in their shadow and followed their instructions with meticulous care" (Mehta 21).

Mehta's novel, *Inside the Haveli* is not a treatise of radical feminism; rather, it realises the compelling force of tradition and cultural dynamics which constitute the essence of a society. Geeta realises pragmatics of a patriarchal feudal culture that branches out into orthodoxy and superstition in the haveli. She sees people of the *haveli* and village going to a fortune teller, who is simply a fraud taking advantage of the ignorance and illiteracy of the poor villagers. Along with superstition, the household inside the haveli promotes the *Purdah* (veil) system which constricts women's right over their own bodies. Sociologists Indira Parikh and Pulin Garg in "Inside the Haveli: Incarceration or Insurrection?" describe the traditional state of purdah in India where upper-class women live mostly indoors:

> They come as brides and leave only for the funeral pyre. The husband's home is their prison, their castle, and their palace. They believe, or are made to believe, or have no other choice but believe, that this is all for their good . . . however, within the walls of their home, within the feudal system of a large joint family, run parallel themes of exploitation, intrigue and counter-intrigue, all revolving around the control of resources through legacy and heritage. This is the only life they know as wives. (Parikh and Garg 90)

Geeta, after a few failed attempts to revolutionise the *haveli,* realises that women cannot stand alone and have a point of view unless it is validated by the male head of the family. The women who were widowed or separated from their husbands like Pari ji, Bua, and Laxmi lived a hard life devoid of any hope of betterment or happiness in the future. They could not be educated as they did not know if any other narrative exists for them. Yet it is seen that each generation in the *haveli* is trying to patent a difference in the traditional set-up. As Geeta resolves that a servant's daughter must attain education along with her own, she begins to resist the histories of silenced women inside the haveli. In a moment of the tussle between choosing tradition or herself, Geeta has the best clarity of thought, "What if I cannot trace my ancestry beyond my grandfather? That is no reason why I should surrender; she was filled with rebellion and her face stiffened. She was determined not to be crushed by the haveli" (Mehta 100).

Geeta, in an attempt to save her own identity and self-erosion, chooses a cause that truly resonates with her personality. The idea of educating children and young girls from the servant families and making them independent marks Geeta's personal absolution inside the *haveli.* Along with teaching her pupils to read and write, she also introduces sewing and knitting classes for vocational purposes. The formal and vocational education comes as a necessary step for the haveli as cracks begin to show in the old regimen with the abolition of the aristocracy and feudal set-up. The aristocratic families like that of Bhagwat Singh and his ilks are seen struggling to match the lifestyle and revenue of the past and are forced to accommodate the realities of the present.

However, the idea of change is antithetical to the very sense of being of the *havelis* that stood as a symbol of class and tradition of the aristocratic lineages in Udaipur. The novel *Inside the haveli* subtly touches upon the issue of continuity, of passing on family and ethnic values across generations inside a feudal household. The haveli as a structure itself stands as a sensibility of the past generations. The protagonist Geeta comes as an outsider who is at first seen as a threat to the tradition with her city upbringing and education, other women comment: "She will never adjust. She is not one of us" (Mehta 29).

She is alienated due to her rebellious nature and her dislike for the ever silent women of Bhagwat Singh's household. Her conduct stays under constant vigilance both by the elders and the servants of the family as she strangles her urges to express and speak for herself. Yet, Geeta complies with the traditions and finds her own way around them. System of *purdah* for a city educated young woman is bound to be misinterpreted as restrictive and primitive, but it does not take long for Geeta to realise the power of *purdah* to shield her fierce emotions in precarious times as once said by Jung, the veil and *purdah* can be regarded as features of 'psychic empowerment' (Jung 19). She must follow the social mores that apply to her as the future mistress of the house yet she never wants to give away her individuality for the same, "Women behind thick walls had none of the exuberance of the women in the streets. They were like dressed – up dolls kept in a glass case for a marionette show. Women of the upper classes did not talk in the streets" (Mehta 110).

The idea of identity is important in Mehta's text as she depicts how the formation of the new identity inside the marital household is an outcome of a history of generations. The women among themselves propagate the myths and tales of a long gone past. For instance, Geeta's own mother teaches her, "Keep your head covered; never argue with your elders; respect your mother–in–law and do as she tells you. Don't talk too much" (Mehta 16).

The setting of arranged marriage and the structure of an Indian joint family reflects the collective consciousness of the family life in India. This protagonist of Mehta takes the reader through various phases of a new bride's journey where she learns, adjusts, and develops new understandings inside the marital home. She becomes the flag bearer of the very culture that she tried to resist but also discards the practices that are oppressive in the *haveli*'s cultural past. The coexistence of women as both outsiders and perpetrators of tradition brings a balance in the households of Rukmani and Geeta. Both these protagonists undergo a transformation for the sake of their families, yet they bring a negotiation into the coexistence of self with the other. The women in the village and the women inside the *haveli* display a strong narrative of power that women can possess inside the household as well. The women, realising the process of self-effacement into the domestic setting, become flexible in their approach to raise the family. They find ways to exert their presence in the house and make it their own space by creating subtle structures of economic and emotional independence. Geeta begins to appreciate the otherwise conservative haveli by involving herself into the upliftment of female servants. Nonetheless, there are a few protagonists like Anita Desai's Nanda Kaul in the novel *Fire on the Mountain* who stay perturbed by the proverbial domestic bliss.

III

It is interesting to see that home becomes a medium of self-expression for the female protagonists. It becomes a political territory for women who keep reworking the cultural aesthetics in order to impart their own imprints in the given circumstances. While Rukmani and Geeta recognise their homes as products of labour and love, Nanda Kaul, the protagonist of Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain*, considers her marital home as a domain only existing for societal obligations. She identifies her real abode in Carignano, a house devoid of any pretence, where she lives all by herself without any filial interruption. The memory of her previous house, her previous life only brings out a feeling of loss inside her. The third-person narration of her story only observes the alarming falsity of Nanda's marital abode:

> The old house, the full house, of that period of her life when she was the Vice-Chancellor's wife and at the hub of a small but intense and busy world, had not pleased her. Its crowding had stifled her ... She had suffered from the nimiety, the disorder, the fluctuating and unpredictable excess. She had been so glad when it was over. She had been glad to leave it all behind, in the plains, like great, heavy, difficult book that she had read through and was not required to read again. (FM 29-30)

Becoming a mother becomes a major responsibility for a woman in her life. The birth of an offspring is traditionally seen as the completion of the family unit and fruition of the marriage. With the arrival of an offspring, the women have shoulder added responsibilities to feed and care for the newborn as well as manage the household in her fragile mental and physical state. But it would be benign to assume that all women cope with motherhood and allied responsibilities in the same manner. Desai's Nanda Kaul is perturbed by the responsibilities of a homemaker and a mother. She feels that she is sacrificing her innate self in order to shape the household and the lives of her family and children. As Ladha Barathan says in *Female Voices*:

> To women is attributed another selfhood as essential selfhood, but not that of the male. For a woman, anatomy is destiny and it is the centre of her being. Her role is that of the procreator and nurturer. She inhabits a colourful margin. It becomes her essence and paradoxically a path to her own essentiality. On the one hand she is said to have an essence, which defines her as a woman but on the other hand she is relegated as matter and can have no access to this essence. (Barathan 167)

The house she gets in Kasauli, Carignano, is symbolic of her desire to live by herself and for herself alone. Nanda constantly runs away from the reminders that still conjoin her and her previous station as the Vice Chancellor's impeccable wife. She finds a refuge in the haunting serenity of the woods and shuns the establishments that demand her to fulfil certain roles as a woman. She feels at a loss to concern herself with the politics of the world and the troubles of her grown-up children's houses. Nanda feels that she has done her share of penance by making and raising a family and she has earned her recluse in Carignano. But with the arrival of the sickly Raka, Nanda is forced yet again to fulfil the responsibilities of being the great grandmother and take Raka into her house. Motherhood in the Indian society is considered as both an accomplishment and an impediment to a woman. As Kate Millet protests in *Sexual Politics* (1970), "Sex role assigns domestic service and attendance upon infants to the female, the rest of human achievement, interest and ambition to the male" (26). Once she becomes a mother, she has to compromise on the way she lives her life and her identity as an individual. Gaining economic independence and finding their own foot has always been a challenging task for women in Indian society. The women act as pillars of emotional support and stability of the family, the freedom to have their own emotional understanding would be a luxury to many of them.

Nanda Kaul is seen having solace in her life only when she is left completely alone in the house not frequently visited by anyone be it her family or friends. She is the happiest when she is assured of her seclusion from the world. Desai paints a rather morbid picture of Nanda's house and her aloofness. In an almost melancholic romance, the house and the owner are bound together by their remoteness from the outside world and its formalities. The arrival of young Raka changes the balance of the house as she somehow does not fit into the world of the old yet; she has urges and is not satiated from every minimisation of human urge. For instance, in Nanda Kaul's house the food and the supplies are only meant to serve the older people. The child is constantly hungry and runs off to the jungle to satiate her hunger for food and a better company than in Carignano. Raka is continuously searching for stories that help her fight the reality of violence and loveless relationships much like her great grandmother, but while Nanda makes compromises throughout her life, Raka wants to create a new universe for herself. The story of their household is unique, but it is the best representation of their lived reality.

Conclusion

The houses represent a reality that their protagonists are fighting against in these works. The households become symptomatic of a fight between the personal and the social beliefs of these women protagonists who sometimes are seen fighting the world to save their house or fighting the house itself to

save themselves. The economic settlement of the houses also becomes an important example in learning how the protagonists want to express their desires and want to build a lifestyle around their family.

Each of the women protagonists taken in this study becomes a unique manager of the household events in their own way. In their own ways, they carve out ways to mark their own territories when coexisting within a patriarchal structure. They do not depend on their husbands alone for experiencing independence; they exercise their freedom, be it intellectual or monetary.

Endnotes

1. Roger Kennedy in his book, *The Psychic Home: Psychoanalysis, Consciousness and the Human Soul* (2014), talks about a home as a psychic structure that performs various symbolic functions for a person while assessing his being.

Works Cited and Consulted

Anees, Jung. *Unveiling India.* Penguin House, 1987, p.19.

Barathan, Ladha. "Female Voices: A Focus on the Autobiographies of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Maya Angelon." *Journal of Literature and Aesthetics 3.* 1-2 (2003): 166- 171.

Desai, Anita. *Fire on the Mountain*. Random House India, 2012, pp. 29-30.

Iyengar, K. R. S. *Indian Writing in English*. Asia Publishing Company, 1962, p. 435.

Jain, Jasbir. "Erasing the Margins: Questioning Purdah." *Women's Writing: Text and Context*. 1996, p. 249.

Jain, N. K. and Kamala Markandaya. "Nectar in a sieve." *Major Indian novels*. 8th ed., New Arnold Heinemann, 1985, p. 155.

Kennedy, Roger. *The psychic home: Psychoanalysis, Consciousness and the Human Soul*. Routledge, 2014.

Krishnaswamy, S., and Kamala Markandaya. *Autonomy, Nurturance and the sisterhood of man, The Woman in Indian Fiction in English*. Ashish Publishing House, 1984, p. 162.

Kumar, Sanjay. "A Study of Women in the Hindu Nuclear Family in Rama Mehta's Inside The Haveli." *The Criterion: An International Journal in English,* vol. 8, no. 2, Apr. 2017, pp. 1-6. www.the-criterion.com.

Markandaya, Kamala. *Nectar in a Sieve*. Penguin UK, 2009.

Mehta, Rama. *Inside the Haveli*. Penguin Books India, 1996, pp. 16, 21, 29, 100, 110.

Millet, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. Doubleday and Co., 1970, p. 26.

Prasad, Hari Mohan. *The Fictional Epic on Indian Life - A study in Theme and Techniques of Nectar in a Sieve, Perspectives on Kamala Markandaya*. Edited by Madhusudan Prasad, Vimal Prakashan, 1984, p. 85.

Parikh, Indira J., and Pulin K. Garg. *Indian women: An inner dialogue*. Sage Publications. 1989. p. 90.

Rao, AV Krishna. "Continuity and Change in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya." *Perspectives on Kamala Markandaya*. Vimal Prakashan. p. 4.

Rao, AV Krishna. *The Indo-Anglian Novel and the Changing Tradition*. Rao and Raghvan, 1972, p. 64.

Wadley, Susan S. "Women and the Hindu tradition." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* vol. 3, no. 1, 1977, pp. 113-125.

— ∗ —

Rethinking Relationships in the Fictional Retellings of the *Mahabharata*

Adiba Faiyaz

Michael Cronin in *Translation and Identity* (2006) discusses the different ways in which translation has played a crucial role in shaping debates about identity and other cultural codes in the past and the present. Transcreation is an art of adapting a text into another language. The idea of modifying, retelling, and reworking a text in the same language has been in practice for long. Therefore, especially in the case of classics and religious texts, we find different versions of the same story with major or minor variations from the original/ source text. Literary recreation depends on the creative and the critical ability of the translator to transcreate a text on their own in their target language. Translating identity, on the other hand, would include forming, reforming, and deforming identities. The idea of one's identity gets established in relation to other identities of the text. Thus, transcreation leads to formation and felicitation of identities through negotiations and dialogues with the dominant and the 'silent' (277) voices.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* (2008), reframes the epic Sanskrit poem, *Mahabharata*. Consisting of more than 100,000 couplets and a series of myths, the Mahabharata revolves around the dynastic struggle for power between the Pandavas, or sons of Pandu, and their cousins, the Kauravas, the sons of King Dhritarashtra. The story is set in Dwapar Yug, yet is timeless in themes and motifs. This epic weaves history, religion, philosophy, statecraft, and myth with innumerable stories-within-stories. The epic was initially called Jaya, renamed as Vijaya, then called Bharat Varsha and then finally, it was called *Mahabharata*.

Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) too is a fictional retelling of the *Mahabharata* which deals with the life, voices, questions, and visions of Draupadi. The very cover page of the book calls it Panchaali's *Mahabharata.* This seems significant as here is a text by Panchaali, from Panchaali, and for Panchaali. Through her narrator, the wife of Pandava brothers, Divakaruni gives a rare feminist approach to an epic like the *Mahabharata*. For Divakaruni, the ways in which women have so far been portrayed in these epics have neither been satisfying nor appropriate. Instead, she believes the *Mahabharata* is full of powerful and complex women characters who have significantly affected the course of the action in several ways, yet they have never been more than "shadowy figures" (xiv), their "roles ultimately subservient to those

of their fathers, husbands, brothers or sons" (xvi). In this paper I shall scrutinise Divakaruni's attempt in unfolding the different layers of the epic from Draupadi's point-of-view and her relationship with other characters and how far is she successful in providing a different dimension to these characters and the story, by giving her a powerful "voice" of her own (xv). Attempts will also be made to compare and contrast this with the approach of Draupadi in Mahasweta Devi's text "Draupadi."

Right from her fiery birth, a gift beyond what king Drupad had asked for, Draupadi in *The Palace of Illusions*, is seen asserting her rights and position in the story. She is extremely unhappy with the name given to her. 'Draupadi', meaning daughter of Drupad, did not fall within the bounds of acceptability to a girl who is supposed to change the course of history.

> My years in my father's house would have been unbearable had I not had my brother. I never forgot the feel of his hand clutching mine, his refusal to abandon me. Perhaps he and I would have been close even otherwise, segregated as we were in the palace wing our father had set aside for us- whether from caring or fear I was never sure. But that first loyalty made us inseparable. We shared our fears of the future with each other, shielded each other with fierce protectiveness from a world that regarded us as not quite normal and comforted each other in our loneliness. (Divakaruni 7)

Though we know Draupadi had other names as well for herself - Panchaali, in the originals, yet if we consider this as a deliberate fictional manipulation on the part of the author, she is quite successful in doing so. After all, like Draupadi of the *Mahabharata*, Divakaruni's Draupadi asserts herself on various occasions. To quote her from the text:

> But daughter of Drupad? Granted, he hadn't been expecting me, but couldn't my father have come up with something a little less egoistic? Something more suited to a girl who was supposed to change history? I answered to Draupadi for the moment because I had no choice, but in the long run, it would not do. I needed a more heroic name. (Divakaruni 5)

Further, in the novel *The Palace of Illusions,* Divakaruni brings certain changes in the events and incidents. She makes Draupadi not only the narrator, the central protagonist of the novel, but Vyaasa and also beyond. She quotes Vyaasa at places and goes on to add on her own. Draupadi has all human weaknesses- she is a jealous woman, a self-obsessed wife, a shrewd daughter-in-law but apart from these, we also find her to be a brave, patient woman with no fear of what fate has to offer her. Her markers of identity are her name, her thoughts,

aspirations, expectations, the language she uses and the action she executes. She is very vocal and strongly opinioned. For instance, her thoughts on Gandhari's acceptance of lifelong blindfolded eyes are:

> I wondered if there were days when she regretted her decision to opt for wifely virtue instead of the power she could have had as the blind king's guide and adviser. But she'd made a vow and was trapped in the net of her own words. Her mouth was strong, though, and her pale, beautiful lips balanced disappointment with resolution. (Divakaruni 76)

Divakaruni is successful in carrying out this by shifting the pattern of narration now and then and making it non-linear, conversational, in flashback mode with the help of dream-sequence, interior monologues among others. The narrative technique can also be seen as an aesthetic move here. A narrator detains the past, holds the present and prepares the reader for the future. Some of the features of narratives include characters with stark personalities, deeply embedded dialogues, where time may travel to the present or to the future. Such narrative patterns also contribute in rethinking the relationships between characters. Chitra Banerjee has grappled with contemporary issues and a variety of themes: motherhood, marriage, individualisation, marginalisation, woman as a wife, mother, sister, and lastly, yet significantly, woman as human, not just as an object. To quote the words of the tutor of Dhri, "the woman's highest purpose in life is to support the warriors in her life: her father, brother, husband and sons. If they should be called to war, she must be happy that they have an opportunity to fulfil a heroic destiny." (26).

Unlike the tutor, she seems sceptical about tradition, the power structure of the society and it is through her mode of narration, the back and forth pattern of it, that she tries to disclose, display, unveil, reveal the secrets and silences of the source texts. The sage who warns Draupadi of the worst and predicts the future for her also unveils very many secrets in the book. He says:

> Only a fool meddles in the Great Design. Besides, your destiny is born of lifetimes of karma, too powerful for me to change. But I'll give you some advice. Three dangerous moments will come to you. The first will be just before your wedding: at that time, hold back your question. The second will be when your husbands are at the height of their power: at that time, hold back your laughter. The third will be when you are shamed as you'd never imagined possible: at that time, hold back your curse. (40)

If we take Draupadi as a modern woman, her assertion of rights is just the first step to claim one's position in the *Mahabharata*. It is she alone who

questions Karna's birth right before her swayamvar "before you attempt to win my hand, king of Anga, it said, tell me your father's name. For surely a wife-to-be, who must sever herself from her family and attach herself to her husband's line, has the right to know this" (95).

Also, the autonomy of desire exercised by her in matters like–her secret admiration/attraction for Karna in one way liberates her from the 'trap' (89) of a man's world. Her keeping an eye on Karna at all times, in Indraprastha as well as in Hastinapur, whenever he is before her, her elegantly dressing up for him in the Rajasuya Yagya thinking of how he would respond to it, her constant comparison of the five Pandavas to Karna during the period of her exile shows complex and confusing feelings for Karna. At times, she can be seen as a devoted wife who wants to have Arjun as her only husband, at other places she yearns for Karna. In the battle of Mahabharata, after Karna's death, regret racks her. She could not hold back her tears, the longing that she suppressed all these years' crashes over and she believes there is still a part of her which is not loyal to the Pandavas. But even the dying Karna could never come to know about Draupadi's secret desire for him. This secret never unfolds for him. Draupadi at one point says, "I confess: in spite of the vows I made each day to forget Karna, to be a better wife to the Pandavas, I longed to see him again. Each time I entered a room, I glanced up under my veil- I couldn't stop myself-hoping he was there." (208)

Draupadi's relationship with Kunti, as depicted by Divakaruni, is also an area of probing. When the Pandavas bring her to meet their mother, Kunti for the first time, she wants her to be equally shared among all her five sons. Divakaruni tries to pen down Draupadi's feelings as closely as she could. It seems as though an accidentally spoken word later became/ had to become her decision. Possible reasons for this could be Kunti being a kind of woman who would not like her sons to be lured away, wanted all five of them to have one wife. Also, politically sound, she cunningly and cruelly decides on Draupadi's fate to keep her sons united. She treats her like a commodity that can be shared and ought to be shared. Draupadi, though, is highly offended by her remarks when she addresses her as 'this woman' (108) and goes on to say, "This woman! As though I were a nameless servant. It angered me, but it also hurt...Now I saw how naive I'd been. A woman like her would never tolerate anyone who might lure her sons away" (Divakaruni 108).

It is Kunti again who proposes Karna before the battle of Kurukshetra to leave the Kauravas and take sides with Pandavas and accept Draupadi as his wife. Though Draupadi fights back all domestic battles with Kunti quite well, Divakaruni in her retelling could not let her change any course of events when it comes to sharing herself among five husbands.

The title of the book, *The Palace of Illusions*, is also very significant. It is not only the title of the book but the name of their magical palace which Maya had built for them. This was the name picked up by Draupadi for their new palace. In the book, it seems that the magic, the charm of this illusionary palace is equally responsible for the battle of Kurukshetra. Duryodhana is so intimidated by its grandness and its skilled magic that he desires to have a similar/ better palace. Draupadi's smile when he fell in the pool disturbs him as much as to see what his brothers had made of the wilderness.

When we talk of the politics of representation, it is imperative to understand the other side of the story. In all popular versions of *Mahabharata*, it appears that we only listen to the major thread of incidents and stories but even then, there is a clear perspective of the author that helps to frame the mind of the readers. There is an omniscient narrator who guides us through. It is this that Divakaruni tries to unsettle through her text, *The Palace of Illusion*. Draupadi observes, explores and inhabits territories which do not belong to her in the source text. It is a human story about a woman trapped in a man's world, quite insensitive to her needs and wants.

One of the most significant episodes in the Mahabharata is the incident where Draupadi is wagered and lost by Yudhisthira to the Kauravas in the game of dice, and later she is stripped in the Kaurava court. Iravati Karve in her critical commentary on the Mahabharata, *Yuganta* (1969)*,* proposes that Draupadi had no legal right to question the authority of Yuddhishtra over her. Draupadi—a queen, a princess, a wife and above all a human being—seems to have been gambled away like a bag of coins. But still, she believes her elders, Bheeshma, in particular, would come to her rescue and not let this happen. But she is mistaken, even the laws of men could not save her from all the humiliation. In this book particularly, Krishna comes to her rescue and she is convinced that they, Dussasan and other Kauravas, should be ashamed of shattering the bounds of decency instead of her. However, this conviction on her part also shows her autonomous power-her voice or inner strength. It is then that she realises her power over her husbands is a myth and for them nothing matters except duty and honour. She takes a counter position and goes on to say:

> A woman doesn't think that way. I would have thrown myself forward to save them if it had been in my power that day. I wouldn't have cared what anyone thought. The choice they made in the moment of my need changed something in our relationship. I no longer depended on them so completely in the future. (195)

Right after this episode, she takes an oath before the court that eventually leads to the battle of Kurukshetra.

Unlike Divakaruni's Draupadi, Mahasweta Devi's short story "Draupadi" has a different plot for the same setting. Her Draupadi walks naked, with her head high before the Senanayaks. She is an unarmed, naked body with no Krishna beside her. She is her own Krishna who alone can terrify the rest. Her breasts are bitten, nipples torn, but her walking naked, abandoning her clothes is her 'hope against hope'. Going closer to him, she says, "What's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man? Then spits blood on his white shirt and says she won't allow him to clothe her, daring him to counter her" (Devi 402).

Later she does not allow the Senanayaks to put on her clothes for she does not consider them to be 'man' enough (402). One might find her strange in asserting herself in such a way, but that is how she chooses it to be. Draupadi pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts, and for the first time, Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed target, terribly afraid. Her equation with society has completely changed and evolved for the better. She is no longer dependent on any external agency to rescue her. Even in Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*, Draupadi during her stripping says, "let them stare at my nakedness, I thought. Why should I care? They and not I should be ashamed for shattering the bounds of decency" (Divakaruni 193).

Draupadi's strange relationship with Krishna is also an area of probing here as the plot seems to deviate from the dominant narrative. Her dependency on Krishna, rather than on her husbands, at the moment of crisis, is more like a puzzle. At the beginning itself we know that it is Draupadi alone who is "the match" (76) for Krishna. He calls her Krishna – the blue one and the one who cannot be avoided. Krishna is not only a God but her sakha, a friend or mate, maybe her partner. In her own words, "It struck me like an iron fist, the realisation that if Krishna wasn't in my life, nothing mattered. Not my husbands, not my brother, not this palace I was so proud of, not the look I longed to see in Karna's eye" (165). Even in the Rajasuya Yagya, in the fight between Krishna and Sisupala, Draupadi feels a strange and desperate urge to save Krishna than anybody else on Earth. Such concerns cannot be explained and so her relationship with Krishna too remains unresolved in the entire book.

The novel concludes by all six of them, Draupadi and the five Pandavas, going for the mahaprasthan. At such critical juncture too, when Yuddhisthira, the symbol of Dharma, decides to move ahead in this final journey, she remembers Karna as "Karna would never have abandoned me thus. He would have stayed back and held my hand until we both perished. He would have happily given up heaven for my sake" (347).

It is Draupadi who falls first on her way, followed by four of the Pandavas

leaving Yudhisthira alone for his heavenly abode. This is very symbolic. It seems as if once the string, that is Draupadi, of the necklace is broken, the beads, the Pandava brothers, start falling one by one. Draupadi was the string, and after her fall, the rest too disintegrate except Yudhisthira, the central one- the representative of Dharma.

In conclusion, the essential thing that comes before us from this text is that there is an abundance of desire, queries asked and expressed by Draupadi. As the prophecy suggested at the beginning of the novel, she is definitely responsible for changing the course of history. It is she who convinces Bheema to kill Keechaka; it is she again who takes a revengeful oath in the Kaurava Sabha on her being stripped. In this context of creating, forming identities, Divakaruni also falls prey to the dominant female subject of the epic. Other women such as Dhaima, Kunti, Hidimba, Sulochana, Subhadra, Uttara do not have so much to express. So, their identity gets assigned by our very own Draupadi: if Draupadi's voice gets suppressed in most of the versions of this epic, where only men and war predominate, the same happens to these women in this novel.

As far as Draupadi's own powerful voice is concerned, it is not just powerfully expressed and initiated but also her silent wishes, secret desires even though they never materialised, come out distinctly before the reader. She is more like a catalyst in the epic. She questions the society from a feminist angle, but he questions are yet to be answered. Moreover, like Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi", it is she alone, being a representative of every woman, who ought to find answers to them. In the current terminology, she is a symbol of a true *atmanirbhar* woman.

We as readers may not agree with all of Divakaruni's or Mahasweta Devi's conclusions—for example, the Karna theme in *The Palace of Illusions*, where we also find him reciprocating the same admiration for her, and he goes on to admit:

> When Kunti told me that if I joined her sons, I'd be king instead of Yuddhisthira, I wasn't tempted. But when she used her final weapon, when she said that as her son, I too would become Panchaali's husband- I was ready to give up my reputation, my honour, everything! I had to use all my willpower to remain silent! (Divakaruni 276-277)

This might seem far-fetched—but the great manly heroes of the epic are no longer the perfect supermen of the popular retelling. Right from Yuddhistira's dharma, to Kunti's honesty, to Bheeshma's loyalty, to Krishna's war policies, to Kshatriya code of war, all of them are questioned. During the battle of Kurukshetra when Drona plots to defeat Pandavas by luring them to engage

themselves in a challenge, Divakaruni explains, even though he realised that things were unfair, Arjun did not turn down the challenge: such was the Kshatriya code.

These perspectives also serve as filling in the gaps. There are several versions of Mahabharata—such as by C. Rajagopalachari, Devdutt Patnaik, or Kamala Subramaniam among others—in all of them we come across innumerable mini-stories and episodes which are missing in the other versions. The beauty of this epic lies in digging those tales and then understanding the larger text. All such narratives must be heard, read, and celebrated, for they are crucial in understanding the real dynamics of the relationships of the characters with each other.

Works Cited and Consulted

Bannerjee, Chitra Divakaruni. *The Palace of Illusions*. Picador, 2011, pp. 5, 7, 76, 108, 193, 276-277.

Cronin, Michael. *Translation and Identity*. Routledge, 2006.

Hiltebeitel, Alf. *Rethinking the Mahabharata*.1st ed., U of Chicago Press, 2001.

Karve, Irawati Karmarkar. *Yuganta*. 1st ed., Deshmukh Prakashan, 1969.

Patnaik, Devdutta. *Jaya.* Penguin Global, 2011.

Rajagopalachari, C. *Mahabharata*. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2015.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "'Draupadi' by Mahasweta Devi." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1981, pp. 381–402. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1343169. Accessed 30 Aug. 2020.

Subramaniam, Kamala. *Mahabharata*. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2011.

—— * ——

Sita and Exile: Revisiting Ramayana in Devdutt Pattanaik's *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana*

Prerena Kush and Rekha

Exile symbolises an act of displacement—forcible or voluntary—where the people move from their homeland to a foreign land. The experience of exile spawns the feeling of loss of the familiar surroundings and fear of re-establishment in the new surroundings. However, it also cumulates the growth of people as it enables them to discover their strength to fight for their survival and makes them efficient in dealing with the challenges of life; hence, it is a major cause of the physical or emotional transition in them. But along with its unmitigated outcome to empower people, it often carries dejection and distress with it as it is often observed that the displaced people in exile are eccentrically attached to their homeland, yet they crave to be associated with their host land. Neera Singh in *The Dynamics of Be/Longing* explains that "this condition of being 'Unhomed' is associated further with alienation, a desire to reclaim the past yet revolt against it, the inability to move out, and the urge to show solidarity to the homeland but unwillingness to threaten relations with the host country" (9).

Migration and exile are as deep-rooted as the existence of humans on the earth: people migrate searching for 'greener pastures' with the hope of constructing a new self in a promised land. Though seemingly gender-neutral, the agency of migration is majorly associated with male domination. The idea of a migrating female seems to be calculatingly ignored by patriarchy. The migration of a male is accepted and applauded for their exploratory, venturesome quality, while for the same quality the migration of a female is questioned and criticized. The discovery and construction of a new self and a new identity are quickly dismissed when it comes to a woman travelling on her own to an unknown land. The double oppression, which a migrant faces, of being able to belong neither to the homeland nor to the host land tends to become triple when the migrating person is a woman: she not only has to deal with the problem of displacement, but also has to face gender discrimination.

The present paper attempts to deconstruct the much-deliberated discourse of exile in *Ramayana* through a feministic reading of Devdutt Pattanaik's *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of The Ramayana* (2013). (Here, *Ramayana* is used to refer to canonical text/s of Ramayana while *The Ramayana* is used to refer to the epic by Valmiki. Focusing on the theme of exile and gender the paper proposes to trace the pattern of the journey of Sita through her exiles and

attempts to graph her transition during these multiple exiles and in addition, attempts to see if each exile obligates any psychological, intellectual, or emotional displacement for Sita.

Marriage is a significant moment in the life of an Indian woman. Since her birth, she has been groomed and prepared for this. She is considered as a lump of clay, meant to be put in a mould, altered and shaped according to the sanctioned manual of the society. She is often treated as the one upholding the idea of perfection and sacrifice. This whole endeavour is arranged to make her a 'perfect' woman till the time of her marriage so that her accomplished perfection could bring a good name to the family. After marriage, a woman has to leave her parental home and move to the house of her husband. The comforts of her parental house and the familiar surroundings in which she had been brought up may change as she enters a new place, lives with new people and new surroundings. The life of a girl runs parallel to that of a migrant who, willingly or forcefully, leaves the land of his/her birth and migrates to a foreign land. The migration also brings the hope of living life in a utopian world where the new land seems promising to provide opportunities at every step. Unfortunately, the dreadful reality is often veiled in the gilded utopia. The migration of a girl from her parental home to her husband's home brings in the same expectations and challenges as that of a person in exile. The journey provides an opportunity to discover a new self. However, the physical locational change brings a girl to a no man's land as the land that she has left behind (the parental home) is unwilling to accept her back because of the prevalent social norms and the new home (husband's home) may not provide her the favourable living conditions to give her a sense of belongingness. Laura Esquivel in *Malinche* (2007) explains the plight of a woman as:

> Once again she would arrive at the foreign place. Once again be the newcomer, an outsider, the one who did not belong. She knew from her experience that she would quickly have to ingratiate herself with her new masters to avoid being rejected or, in more dire cases, punished. Then there would be the phase where she would have to sharpen her senses in order to see and hear as acutely as possible so that she could assimilate quickly all the new customs and the words most frequently used by the group she was to become a part of- so that finally, she would be judged on her own merits. (Esquivel 18)

More often than not, marriage for an Indian woman equals itself to the state of exile and during that period she is expected to uphold the image of an ideal daughter, ideal wife, ideal mother, and that of a self-effacing woman who puts the needs of the family before herself. This obsession of perfection by patriarchy is assumed to be derived from the life and behavior of Sita in exile as depicted

in the *Bhakti* texts based on *Ramayana.* Devotional texts such as Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas* and the televised Ramayana by Ramanand Sagar tend to portray Sita as 'pativrata' (a woman devoted to her husband) and Ram as 'maryadapurushottam' (a man who is supreme in honour). These texts are acclaimed and accepted without question because they boast of the exploits of *Maryada purushottam Ram* and his charisma, his ability, and most importantly, his Dharma. In these cultural and religious exclusive texts, Ram is considered as an ideal man and Sita, his wife, the ideal woman. In deconstructing Sita's character as a woman of flesh and blood instead of a goddess reincarnated, we come across the hypocrisy of the society and its biased perceptions about women. Sita is ripped off from every human emotion and is presented as the goddess who has an extraordinary endurance for pain. Her ordinariness is overshadowed by the light of her divinity. The voice of Sita is overridden by the patriarchal shrieks of 'honour' and 'reverence'. Madhu Kishwar in *Yes to Sita, No to Ram* (2001) says:

> In India, Ram and Sita are not seen as remote figures out of a distant past to be dismissed lightly just because we are living in a different age and have evolved different lifestyles. They are living role models seen as having set standards so superior that they are hard to emulate for those living in our more "corrupt" age, the Kalyug. (291)

Sita suffered multiple exiles in her life. Her first exile started as soon as she was born and abandoned by her biological parents and was left in a trench. Her second exile started when she migrated to Ayodhya after her marriage to Ram, subsequent exile started when she decided to accompany Ram in his exile. The next one was when she was kidnapped by Ravan and was taken to Lanka. This was followed by another exile when she was abandoned by Ram and left in the forest by Laxman following the orders of Ram. These exiles were forced on Sita, but she self-inflicted a life-time exile after being asked by Ram for another *agni-pariksha* (test by fire) to prove to the court that Luv-Kush were his sons and that she had been chaste throughout her stay in Lanka.

Sita's journey as a migrant started right after her birth. She was moved on from one mother to another, from one house to another, till king Janak took her responsibility as his child (also see S. Singaravelu's "Sita's Birth and Parentage in the Rama Story"). The birth story of Sita about her discovery in a trench strips off all the extraordinariness attached from her and makes her as ordinary as any girl child who is not readily welcomed in Indian homes even today and who is either killed before or right after her birth or is abandoned. To obscure the vile practice of abandoning a girl child since Valmiki's time, Sita's abandonment as a child has been manipulated by the patriarchy and is presented as something auspicious to the world.

Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of The Ramayana focuses on the abandonment of Sita and instead of letting this voice fade away against the pressure of all the acclaimed texts written on *Ramayana*, the text addresses the hypocrisy of the society where the abandonment is coated and presented as a miracle:

> Suddenly the King stopped. The furrow revealed a golden hand: tiny fingers rising up like grass, as if drawn by the sunshine. Janaka moved the dirt away, and found hidden within the soft, moist earth a baby, a girl, healthy and radiant, smiling joyfully, as if waiting to be found. Was it an abandoned child? No, said the farmers, convinced it was a gift from the earth-goddess to their childless king. (9)

The kingdoms of Mithila and Ayodhya stand in contrast with each other. A parallel can be drawn between these two kingdoms and two contemporary families with different ideologies. While Dashrath's family in Ayodhya acts similar to a family which is bent on attainment and recognition of a male child, completely ignoring the existence of its first girl child, Shanta and thus showing a gender-biased attitude, Janak's family in Mithila appears similar to a family which respects and celebrates the birth of a girl child and thus stands against child discrimination. King Dashrath's family abandons the girl child, while King Janak's family adopts the girl and celebrates her birth even though she is not a biological child of the family.

The progressive attitude of king Janak helps Sita to realise the power of choice and how to exert it. She, who as an orphan had no power of choosing the house she was adopted in, takes charge of her marriage and chooses husband herself. After her marriage, shifting to a new home, Sita acquainted herself with new people, customs, and practices. When a bride enters her husband's house, she carries a promise of not only nurturing a new generation but also a promise of understanding and accepting the traditions and culture of her new family and simultaneously familiarising the new family with her own culture and thoughts. To present the transition of a woman from one home to another, Pattanaik's *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of The Ramayana* shows how the bride's family prepares so that the bride could settle down in her new home with minimum discomfort:

> A huge caravan of horses, elephants, donkeys and bullocks left the city of Mithila carrying gifts from the home of the brides to the home of the grooms. There were fabrics, jewels and weapons. Craftsmen and their families also travelled alongside to carry skills from the land of Videha to the land of Kosala. Sita especially paid attention to the seeds of pulses and grains, vegetables and fruits, herbs and

> spices. This would be grown in her husband's garden to remind her of home. (60)

Sita's exile from her parental home to her husband's home is reflected here, as traditionally, in an Indian household, a girl has to leave her home after marriage and start a new life at her husband's house. This change was no less than an exile for Sita as she had to leave Mithila and had to move to Ayodhya to start a new life. Sita, being a princess, had the option to carry a part of her home-fruits, herbs, and spices so that she could still have some connection with her parental land. However, even as a princess, she was able to carry only a part of her home but did not have the option to stay back. Sita had to start the same journey as every girl starts after her marriage: of having to shift to a new place to start a new life with new people, new culture, and new traditions. Sita, being a princess, had an option and means to carry a part of her home to her husband's home but not every girl and her parents can do so. The act of making a girl feel at home in the new house has disappeared eventually and has been replaced with the social problem of dowry where the groom's family feels entitled to be showered with gifts from the bride's family. Along with the practice of giving gifts, the women of the bride's family are supposed to pass on the rules to the girl for a successful married life. Nabeeneta Dev Sen in *Lady Sings the Blues* (1998) presents the voice of women in Indian villages as the voice of Sita:

> In the women's folk tradition in India, never mind where you are, which century you belong to or what language you speak, you are all sisters in sorrow. Though the singers may live in different parts of the subcontinent, wear different clothes, cook very different food and vote for totally different political parties when they sing the story of Rama, they are astonishingly closeto one another, in their feelings, their perceptions, their expressions, their choices of events and their responses, they echo each other. (19)

The women have created their version of *Ramayana* to highlight the situation of a woman coming to terms with her identity in an alien land. The song serves as a book of code of conduct for a woman to excel in her new life as it conditions her in multiple ways. In one such folk song, a mother shares the secret of a successful married life with her newly wedded daughter. She advises her:

> Don't visit your neighbours after sunset,
> Don't go to the washerman in the evenings,
> Never leave your hair open in the street,
> Don't laugh showing all your teeth,
> Don't look around when you are in a crowd.
> Keep your eyes downcast in public.

> Never step upon rice husks,
> Strewn on the kitchen floor. (22)

Under the impact of society's tutelage to become perfect in every way, Sita tries to assimilate herself quickly in the new family to rule out any kind of foreignness. She acts and reacts as she is expected to. She adorns herself with beads around her neck, bangles on her arms, vermillion in the parting of her hair, and toe-rings just like any ordinary woman so that these symbols serve as red flags to other men signifying the woman as the property already claimed by a man. If a woman refuses to carry these marriage symbols, she is perceived as an object which has not been claimed yet, hence free to be taken. While married men remain free of any such symbols, their wives become a metaphor for the display of their husbands' authority and wealth and hence a victim of socio-cultural confinement. Devdutt's *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling* through the character of Arundhati, Vashisht's wife, tries to attest this symbolism as an imperative act for an Indian bride and implies that any violation of this would result in ostracism from society. Arundhati cites what the six wives of the rishis had to face when once they forgot to adorn themselves with the symbols of a marriage:

> Agni, the fire-god, mistook the women to be without husbands and made love to them. I, however, remained untouched. The rishis abandoned their six wives; they are now known as Matrikas, forest virgins who are bound to no man. I alone, faithful wife of Vashishtha, serve my husband in the yagna-shala while the other six have become tapasvins, refusing to see women. I have a star by my name in the sky beside the constellation of Saptrishi, named after the seven rishis. And the six women, once my sisters, form another constellation, the Kritika cluster of stars. (66)

An Indian woman not only has to bear the physical burden of carrying these symbols of marriage but has to carry the emotional trauma associated with marriage too. Not only she constantly tries to juggle between being a perfect daughter, perfect wife, perfect daughter-in-law, perfect mother in every situation, putting in efforts to make everyone happy and comfortable, but she also has to do away with her former identity as in many parts of India in the name of tradition, a bride is re-named after her marriage.

The Sita of Devdutt Pattanaik stands against the double confinement of women: first, when they are labelled as dutiful wives who are ready to suffer the insufferable for the good of their husbands and secondly, when they are presented as epitomes of purity and selflessness worthy of being followed in the canon of the patriarchal society. While the stark reality of their migration is

brutally covered with the long descriptions of the grandeur of their husbands, the wives remain confined as ever, in response to the existing recognised spatial inequalities of that society where the women dependent on the migrating men, choose to migrate to maintain their social significance, clearly shows that exile is certainly not a gender-neutral phenomenon. The gender biases are that a man would have the charge to protect the woman and look after the needs of her and the house, and the woman would have the responsibility of cooking and making sure that her husband's needs are fulfilled and that he is accompanied by a personal cook, maid, and mistress in the form of a wife. The women migrating to a new land are forced to do so because of their economic and social dependency on men. Sita's decision comes as a fresh wave of air where she is neither interested in maintaining her social significance in her family nor is she adamant to prove to the world that she is a dutiful wife, instead, she decides to choose for herself.

Sita's attempts and struggles to be belonging to the new family are often treated as evident steps a married woman takes to settle herself in the new family, but she exerted her choice and decided to accompany Ram in his exile and thus self-initiated her third internal exile. This exile has been portrayed as nothing more than a wife accompanying her husband out of love for him and duty to stand by him in all situations of life—good or bad. While it may be the impulsive desire to be in the lap of nature that made Sita go with Ram. The elemental desire to be associated with her motherland, nature had made her forget the numerous adjustments and attempts she had been making until then to have a sense of belongingness to her husband's family. Instead of pleading to Ram as a meek wife, she declares her decision to Ram: "I do not need your permission. I am your wife and I am supposed to accompany you, to the throne, into war and to the forest" (82). Also, Sita comforts the wailing mothers by taking charge of the protection of Ram and Laxman as she says, "Mother, do not worry for your sons. In summer, I shall find shady trees under which they rest. In winter, I shall light fires to keep them warm. During the rains, I shall find caves where we can stay dry. They are safe with me" (82). So, Sita not only exercises her power of choice but also sees herself in charge of the exile.

Bhakti texts portray the consequences Sita had to face for crossing the *Laxman Rekha* as immensely sorrowful, representing the confinement of a woman in a very controlled space referred to as 'safe-zone' (a patriarchal idea that limits the physical movement and intellectual evolution of women) where she is not allowed to come out on her own, to experience or even see the things around. This controlled zone which is presented as a safe-zone runs parallel with Foucault's idea of confinement, where all the 'misfits' of the society are huddled up together and segregated from the society. In *Madness and*

Civilization, Foucault describes a movement (the great confinement) across Europe in the seventeenth century which saw the establishment of institutions that locked up people who were deemed to be 'unreasonable'. The gaze praxis about the understanding of the term 'safe' has evolved over the years: where earlier for a man, a woman being safe might mean the defined space where she can shield herself from the claims of the other men. Devdutt Pattanaik's *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of The Ramayana* reflects this eccentric understanding of the 'safe-zone' through the character of Laxman where he defines a safe-zone for Sita as a space where "Inside is Ayodhya and you are Ram's wife. Outside is the jungle, you are a woman for the taking" (130). But for a progressive woman, a safe-zone is a space where she could use her freedom to make her own choices without the fear of being possessed or contained. The patriarchal rulebook influenced the *Bhakti* texts asking a man to take on the role of a coloniser and the woman, the colonised, is yet again left out with the role of a nurturer. Any breach in the commandments of that rulebook beget trial and adversity. Karline Mclain says, "The duties of the ideal role models are divided according to their gender: a man's primary concern is his *dharma*, while a woman's is her husband" (35). In the *Bhakti* texts, the abduction of Sita by Ravan to Lanka is accounted as the consequence of violation of the prescribed code of conduct for both the genders. Also, Sita's obedience was shown not only to her husband but also to her brother-in-law as it was Laxman who marked the line, not accepting which Sita was abducted by Ravan. Devdutt Pattanaik in *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of The Ramayana* reflects the change in the society's perceptions towards Sita and Laxman. Laxman considers jungle as a threat to a woman and as a place which creates an insecure space for a woman. For Sita, the same jungle is a space where she feels free and connected. For her, nature is her homeland and the security of being in her homeland gives her the confidence to explore its limits. She changes the connotations of a woman being perceived as the colonised land and instead takes the role of a subject who has the confidence and strength to deal with the challenges of the outer world.

Sita, who had the potential to lift Shiva's mighty bow and who could shield herself from *Agni devta* (God of fire) and come out unharmed as she is adept in the art of warfare, has to conceal her might to allow her husband to uphold manly honour in saving her: his wife and a woman. In Ashok Vatika, when Hanuman suggests her to climb his back so that he could take her back to Ram, Sita politely denies: "Let my husband liberate me. His honour is at stake" (196). Devdutt Pattanaik's Sita chooses to let Ram save her once out of love for him. However, when the world is threatened by the twin of Ravan, a thousand-

headed demon, Sita rises as a fierce warrior and defeats him. This Sita is a much greater warrior than Ram, but she chooses to hide her strength because of her love for Ram. The difference in the experience of a man and a woman in the *Bhakti* texts comes from the gender-based roles appointed by the society, which suggest a woman as a victim of exploitation and a man as a saviour of the woman in distress. While taking charge to kill the twin of Ravan, Devdutt Pattanaik's Sita also takes charge to change the eccentric binary concept of weak/powerless victim and a strong/powerful victor.

Sita's third internal exile manifests the strength of a woman who works till the last stages of her pregnancy. Sita does all the work in Valmiki's ashram till she delivers the twins, and soon after that, she resumes her duties towards the hermitage to provide better living conditions to her children. Here, we see a Sita who is proficient not only emotionally and intellectually but also physically.

The notion of honour has been cleverly employed by patriarchy to justify the victimisation of Sita. Women are the sites of honour to men. The objectification and denial of the choices and freedom are the results of the men of the house trying to locate their honour in the women of the house. The discomfort of the patriarchy seeks to maintain its dominance by constraining the women in a limited and limiting space. The tragic turnout of Sita's life in the *Bhakti* texts is the result of a calculating and misogynist patriarchal society. This misogynist attitude does not change even with women immigrants. If a woman has been a victim of some harassment during the exile, she is stripped of her dignity in the migrating land as well as in her homeland. Sita of the *Bhakti* texts represents women who are first victimised and then are forcefully separated from their family by the society. Many times, families willingly disown them because, being a site of dishonour, they become unacceptable to the society. Sita was abducted by Ravan as an object to satisfy his desires and ego and was retrieved by her husband as an object to retrieve his honour. She was stripped off from her identity and reduced to an object: a cause of glorification for Ram and Ravan both. Just like Sita, Ahalya has also been a victim of the exploitation by the patriarchal society. She represents a wife who gets punished by her husband for her deceitful seduction by another man though without her consent. Sita and Ahalya represent those women who are sidelined and punished by their own family members. But instead of being supported by them, they are further victimised.

Women like Tadaka and Surupankha are described as worthy of either being killed or mutilated by the powerful men in the epic. This clearly suggests that the patriarchy maintains its dominance by categorically representing women as either being 'acceptable' or 'abominable' by consistently ruling out those who cannot be tamed or dominated. Ram claims to rescue Sita to restore her

freedom from Ravan, but he rescues her not as a person but as a property to be possessed. It is never about Sita's freedom but her acquisition by winning a power game. Ram and Ravan's fight is to retrieve their lost honour. Well aware of the suffering of women who are abandoned if they fail to suit the needs of the beholder, Pattanaik's Sita gives a voice to the silent cry of a woman bereft of freedom, whose whole life has been spent in maintaining the honour of the men of the house. Yet the decision about her life hangs in the hands of the gender-biased society. She is given the same verdict as it is given to any woman who signifies the failure of men associated with her. She says:

> Renuka had been beheaded because she was unchaste in thought. She remembered how Ahilya had been turned to stone because she was unchaste in deed. She had been unchaste in neither thought nor body, but how does one prove purity? Those who trust need no proof; those who do not trust reject all proof. And whether she liked it or not, she was a blot on Ram's reputation. Ravan had seized her while she was in Ram's protection; she symbolized Ram's failure. (250)

For many centuries, this epic text, confined to the religious and cultural constraints, elevated a woman to be the epitome of virtue while expecting no such traits from a man. Since these codes of conduct cannot be altered, modified, or even eradicated from society, many women in their own way try to fight against the tyranny of the social code and conduct meant for women. Devdutt Pattanaik's Sita abandons Ram long before he had thought of abandoning her. This Sita voices the question by/of a woman who is not trusted by her husband and her family. The question is why the woman's side of the story is not listened to; why does a family choose to take the side of the patriarchal rules and ignore a woman's truth? Instead of hoping for her husband to understand her truth and to trust her, Devdutt Pattanaik's Sita chooses to abandon Ram knowing it too well that a woman anyway has to suffer unjust attitude of the patriarchy as it does not matter to it whether a woman is innocent or not. Devdutt Pattanaik's Sita's retaliation against this unjust attitude is evident when an embarrassed Laxman says that Sita did not deserve the abandonment as she is 'pure' and has taken the *agni-pariksha*: "And if I was not? Would it be socially appropriate and legally justified for a husband to throw his woman out of his house? A jungle is preferable to such an intolerant society" (278). The act of un-bounding her hair attests that Sita had disassociated herself from Ram long before Ram had not even thought about it.

Reaching out for a solution to the abandonment of a woman in her life, where every phase of her life equals itself to one or another form of exile, where she is not just evicted, but is being renounced forever, Madhu Kishwar in her article, "Yes to Sita, No to Ram", says that it was not just Sita who had to

undergo the fire-trial, but every woman has to undergo multiple trials in her life to prove her worth to the patriarchal society. Kishwar, through the poem "Agnipariksha" urges women to rise like a phoenix from the flames of inequality forced on them and refuse to be consumed by it. "Agnipariksha" goes as:

> I too have given agnipariksha
> Not one-but many
> Everyday, a new one,
> However, this agnipariksha
> Is not to prove myself worthy of this or that Ram
> But to make myself
> Worthy of freedom.
> Every day your envious, dirty looks
> Reduced me to ashes.
> And everyday, like a phoenix, I arose again
> Cut of my own ashes
> Who is Ram to reject me?
> I have rejected that entire society
> Which has converted
> Homes into prison. (290)

The terms—marriage, kidnap, migration and exile—become synonyms in the life of a woman as in any given situation, a woman undergoes more or less the same experience: having a mental and physical state of being in exile, cut off from her roots and struggling to adapt to a new environment. Sita felt the same when she got married, when she was exiled to the forest with her husband, and when she got kidnapped by Ravan. Moreover, with every exile Sita lost the people she was associated with. In her first exile, she gets separated from her biological parents; in the second from her father and in her third exile from her sisters and her family of in-laws, and from her husband in her fourth exile. Although she returns to her husband and the family after this fourth exile, she gets separated again and is left only with her children, and in her sixth exile, she abandons everything to stop this process of in and out once and for all. These exiles are not just of/for Sita but also of her relationships and all her familial ties. But instead of retreating in a cocoon, she rises time and again, every time and heals herself of every loss.

To sum up, portraying the skillfulness of Sita through different exiles, Devdutt Pattanaik limelights the idea that to Sita and every woman homeland is a place which provides her the freedom to explore, to exert her choice and rights, and a safe place to seek relief, to rejuvenate and strengthen herself for

her sustenance. The exiles offer her the opportunity to get her selfhood and identity, whereas being a queen and wife of a king, she is denied all that. Sita uses all the opportunities which come her way to go back to nature—be it as a loving wife accompanying her husband in his exile or as a heavily pregnant wife who was abandoned by her husband because of his inability to trust her, and later on as a single mother who prefers to nurture her sons in a forest, close to nature as opposed to raising them in Ayodhya. Even in Lanka, it is her strong connection with nature which gives her the strength to survive her ordeal in Ashok Vatika. She considers the trees and birds her friends. Mother Earth/ nature not only becomes her homeland but also personifies as a warrior protecting Sita as we find Sita, in her attempt to shield herself from Ravan, uses a blade of grass instead of using an actual sword. Sita seeks and takes every opportunity to be in the vicinity of nature; she turns every exile of hers as a platform to learn and emerge as a new person. The exile of Devdutt Pattanaik's Sita in *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana* comes to a halt only when she finally returns to her homeland, Mother Earth. There is a gradual transition during every exile of Sita and when we trace the pattern of the journey of Sita, it turns out to be circuitous as she seeks out a new challenge every time and still finds her way back to nature. She decided to go to exile along with her husband even when she had put multiple efforts to mingle with her in-law's family; she felt somewhat at ease when she was shifted to Ashok Vatika instead of being kept in a Palace in Lanka; she gracefully took her role of a single mother when she was in the lap of mother nature while being in the hermitage of Valmiki; she again chose nature over being a queen when she handed herself over to Mother Earth. To Sita, nature is her homeland and the only place she feels at peace, and she is tempted to come back to her homeland repeatedly. Devdutt Pattanaik's Sita turns all her exiles as the agency to exert her own will and live a free life as an individual not limited by patriarchal traditions. She grows into a strong person psychologically, emotionally, and intellectually.

Works Cited and Consulted

Esquivel, Laura. *Malinche*. Translated by Ernesto Mestre. Washington Square P, 2007.

Goldman, Robert. "Ravana's Kitchen: A Testimony of Desire and the Other." *Questioning Ramayanas: A South Asian Tradition,* edited by Paula Richman. California UP, 2001, pp. 105-118.

Kishwar, Madhu. "Yes to Sita, No to Ram: The Continuing Hold of Sita on Popular Imagination in India." *Questioning Ramayanas: A South Asian Tradition,* edited by Paula Richman. California UP, 2001, pp. 285-308.

Mclain, Karline. "Sita and Shrupankha: Symbols of the Nation in the Amar Chitra Katha: Comic Book Ramayana." *Manushi*, vol. 122, 2001, pp. 32-38.

Pattanaik, Devdutt. *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana.* Penguin India, 2013.

Sen, Nabeeneta D. "Lady Sings the Blues: When Women Retell the Ramayana." *Manushi*, vol. 108, 1998, pp. 18-27.

Singh, Neera. *Diasporic Writing: The Dynamics of be/Longing.* Books Plus, 2008.

— ∗ —

Myth-Making and the Holy Orders: An Appraisal of the Power of Homiletics and Hermeneutics of Sacred Texts

Obinna Ibezim

Researches on myths, center on stories that cannot be determined in rational terms if or when their events actually took place; but for the sheer aura or 'spirit' of the tales, successive generations are compelled to read, study, enjoy and receive guidance from them. Now, the question this paper seeks to answer is what gives the Scriptural texts, their power over generations of people over different ages, and even our own contemporary age? Having given the question some serious thought, the answer for us, simplistic as it may sound is, 'proclamation and interpretation'. These two activities are in the domain of preachers and teachers.

In academic and theological terms, the two activities are called Hermeneutics and Homiletics. The understanding of these two arts will afford us the knowledge of the powers that preachers and teachers of religious truths wield over the devout of any faith. Anthony Maas defines Hermeneutics in this way:

> …derived from a Greek word connected with the name of the god Hermes, the reputed messenger and interpreter of the gods. It would be wrong to infer from this that the word denotes the interpretation or exegesis of Sacred Scripture. Usage has restricted the meaning of hermeneutics to the science of Biblical exegesis, that is, to the collection of rules which govern the right interpretation of Sacred Scripture. Exegesis is therefore related to hermeneutics, as language is to grammar, or as reasoning is to logic. (Maas)

The above definition implies that there are rules which govern the interpretation of sacred scripture. Teachers of the Bible are trained according to the principles of these rules. A skilled and knowledgeable teacher can use a biblical text to toy with, or twist the belief, imagination, and life of the faithful, to suit his whims and caprices.

The Greek Dictionary of the New Testament contained in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (1890) refers to the word "teacher" as "didaskalos" which means "An instructor, Doctor, Master, Teacher" (1320), whereas *didaskalia* refers to the "function of the *didaskal*"*s* – doctrine, learning, teaching" (1319). These titles and functions convey the sense of an authority figure. Just like the poet can invoke poetic license to use words

sometimes in an unorthodox way, so is the teacher licensed, so to speak, to stretch his doctrinal imagination to convey prodigious truths. Sometimes, in the exercise of the skill of interpretation, myths are created that are not part of the original text that is being expounded. This fact, I believe, has been amply demonstrated by the numerous Jewish extra-biblical and Gnostic readings of the Old Testament materials (cf. Zohar, Kaballa, Gnosticism).

The second term Homiletics has been defined by the *New Advent* as:

> the science that treats the composition and delivery of a sermon or other religious discourse. It includes all forms of preaching, viz., the sermon, homily, and catechetical instruction. Since the nineteenth century, homiletics has taken its place, especially in Germany, as a branch of pastoral theology. The "Standard Dictionary" defines Homiletics as 'that branch of rhetoric that treats of the composition and delivery of sermons or homilies'. Many differ from this definition, and maintain that homiletics as a science is distinct from rhetoric. (Maas)

It implies that homily delivery, or sermonising, or preaching is a specialised activity that equally requires skill and some element of rhetoric. 'Preach' in Greek is called "kçrussô" which means "to herald (as a public crier), especially divine truth (the gospel):- preach (-er), proclaim, publish" (Stong 2784). This word broadens into the derivative "kçrugma" which is "proclamation, preaching, of the gospel" (2782). The gospel itself is called kçrugma because of its oral nature. Scientia gives us a more elaborate meaning of kçrugma that appeals to our discussion here:

> There is no one-word translation that really carries the meaning of kerugma. It could be translated as any of the following: utterance containing the essence of Christ; Christ-filled proclamation; impartation of Christ through proclamation. While kerugma is often translated as preach, this doesn't really get at the meaning of the word. Vines say: 'The substance of what is preached as distinct from the act of preaching.' Strong says: '(1) that which is proclaimed by a herald or public crier, a proclamation by herald (2) in the NT the message or proclamation of the heralds of God or Christ' these come closer to the meaning. (Scienitia)

The idea of a herald or public crier here appears a little off from the activity of preaching, but this seems to be the actual calling of preachers: to proclaim or pronounce the presence, glory, power and majesty of the king or deity under whose service the herald or preacher is enlisted. This calls to mind the function of the Town criers in our different communities, with skill and oratory they

convey the message and directives of the king or the community council to natives of the town or community. Their practiced skill of annunciation commands and compels the attention of the people.

The word 'myth' from which 'myth-making' is derived is a very broad term. Myths are universally seen as messages in cipher about human existence as it relates to the world of spirits and the supernatural. A great number of myths are essentially reservoirs of archetypes, motifs, metaphors, riddles, types, and parables. Myths are narratives of a high and lofty structure in terms of themes and rhythm, often somewhat poetic and yet prosaic; tending to stretch the imagination of readers and listeners from the mundane to the mystical. In the words of Abrams and Harpham:

> In classical Greek, "mythos" signified every story or plot, whether true or false. In its central modern significance, a myth is one story in a mythology – a system of hereditary stories which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which seemed to explain (in terms of intentions and actions of supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, as well as establish the rationale for social customs and observance and the sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives. (109)

The definition above definitely constitutes the very elementary and basic understanding of myth. A more in-depth and elaborate study into the tenets of myth will no doubt demand an expansion of paradigms of meaning. Suffice it, however, for the purpose of this study, to make do with the definition thus given.

Myth-making, a derivative term from myth, pre-supposes that myths are not mystically self-existing; they are created. This fact is a propelling force for the literary study of myth. The creativity involved in the making of myth is of great interest to literary scholars, especially of the oral sect. Through the Parry-Lord model of 'oral-formulaic theory', scholars for years have held that oral literary forms are composed in performance through the composer-performer's drawing from the store of formulae inherent in the traditional pool. The word "mythopoeia" or "mythopoesis" has been used in some places as "myth-making". The terms are derived from Greek words that denote the idea of building or creating myths. In contemporary times these words are often applied to literary genres that involve narratives or films where imaginary or simulated mythology is contrived by the writer of prosaic forms or other narratives.

It was actually Tolkien's use of the word as the title of his poem in the 1930s that foisted this meaning on the word Mythopoeia. Authors who experiment

with this genre incorporate cultural allegories into their themes and employ archetypal motifs to create fiction. Notable mythopoeic authors include J. R. R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, William Blake, H.P. Lovecraft, Lord Dunsany, George R. R. Martin, Mervyn Peake and George McDonald. Mythopoesis equally describes the process and craft of fabricating mythologies. A number of creative works of literature may have themes with mythic imperative; nevertheless, just a negligible number comes close to being studded with a density of codes, symbols and archetypes that are reminiscent of mythopoeia. Mythopoeia is artistically manufactured mythology. It is not derivative of age-long myths and tales of centuries of oral tradition. They are real time inspired creation or imaginations and scrawls of a gifted author or a group of writers.

Mythopoeia and Mythopoesis capture our perceived myth-making craft of modern preachers and teachers of religious truth. These men in holy orders are gifted and trained in the art of proclamation and elucidation; they wield these natural and acquired endowments to exude unimaginable creativity in mythic structures, far-reaching in their influence of the lives of individuals and groups.

Myth-Making and Modern Preachers and Teachers

In Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975)*,* the characters of Elesin Oba and his personal Praise Singer fundamentally capture the personality of the *Kerux* or the Herald. While Elesin Oba whose life and death are tied to Oba's fate, heralds the greatness of his king, his own praise singer in turn pours adulations on him who is destined by tradition to commit suicide at the event of the Oba's death. While their assignments are not exactly the same with those of modern preachers, their function of heralding the greatness of their masters and God respectively, is typical of the art of preaching.

The importance and power of preaching is underscored by the effect on the psyche of the hearers. *Britannica* reports that it is the rhetorical prowess of Jim Jones, the American Evangelist turned cult leader that persuaded over 900 members of his group to join him in committing mass suicide ("Biography of Jim-Jones"). Jones' story becomes reminiscent of the character of Ayesha, the butterfly goddess in Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988)*,* who leads the villagers to drown in the sea as they attempt to walk through it, under the belief that God will part the water for the pilgrims on Hajj. The irony present in the character of Ayesha is that four distinct characters are bearing that same name in the novel, and all can be seen as Mahmoud's "alter ego". The first Ayesha is the Empress, the mortal enemy of the Imam, the second and third are Mahmoud's favourite wife and her prostitute alter ego, and the fourth is the butterfly goddess. For us, these characters can stand as the different sides to religious rhetoric,

depending on the intention and purpose of the user; preachers can use the art of proclaiming religious truth to edify or mortify. Whichever he chooses, mythic idioms, archetypes and motifs are usually employed to create meanings that can affect the psyche of devotees. Scientia further underscores the power of *kerugma* in these words:

> Note that Strong does not say, "heralds of thoughts about God or Christ". He says: "heralds of God or Christ". That is, the essence of God, the essence of Christ, is contained in the utterance. By the context of how *kerugma* is used in the New Testament, we can see that this is not a kind of preaching that proceeds from human reasoning. It is the Utterance of Christ that is spoken by the Holy Spirit and contains the Power and Presence of Christ Himself – "A message that is preached about Jesus Christ comes from a man's intellect and contains man's precepts and opinions about Him. That kind of preaching brings very little or no spiritual change at all to the listener. The *kerugma*, on the other hand, is a proclamation that carries with it the life and attributes of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by it hearers can experience His life. The Gospel, then, is not a message about Jesus Christ, but an impartation of Him to the hearer.' (Scienitia)

The very nature of the New Testament *kçrugma* following the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ was prone to mythic accoutrements, since it was transmitted by oral tradition for scores of years after resurrection before being written down. There is a modern agreement that Jesus should be understood as a real Jew who existed in a Jewish environment (Voorst 5-9). In scholar Ehrman's view, Jesus had a very firm root in his own era and location as a first-century Palestinian Jew – with his ancient Jewish understanding of humanity, and God – that he is not easily assimilated into a modern idiom. Ehrman emphasises that Jesus was brought up in a Jewish home in the Jewish village of Nazareth. He was raised in the Jewish traditions, embraced Jewish customs and subsequently grew to be a Jewish teacher, who, alongside other Jewish teachers of the era, disputed on the Law of Moses orally (13, 86, 276). Dunn is of the view that:

> Early Christians sustained these teachings of Jesus orally. Rabbis or teachers in every generation were raised and trained to deliver this oral tradition accurately. It consisted of two parts: the Jesus tradition (i.e., logia or sayings of Jesus) and inspired opinion. The distinction is one of authority: where the earthly Jesus has spoken on a subject that word is to be regarded as an instruction or command. (Dunn 19-55)

Furthermore, Dunn exerts that:

> Prior to the reliability of the printing press, the oral tradition was considered more trustworthy than written texts. The accuracy of the oral gospel tradition was insured by the community designating certain learned individuals to bear the main responsibility for retaining the gospel message of Jesus. The prominence of teachers in the earliest communities such as the Jerusalem Church is best explained by the communities' reliance on them as repositories of oral tradition. (Dunn 55)

A remarkable feature that has emerged from a recent study is the "amazing consistency" of the record of the tradition, "which gave birth to the NT. The core and basic thrust of the oral tradition was painstakingly maintained. The core was established and did not vary in its fundamental character at any time of the history of the New Testament" (Dunn 55).

An important fact in a review of Richard Bauckham's book *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (2006) states that "The common wisdom in the academy is that stories and sayings of Jesus circulated for decades, undergoing countless retellings and embellishments before being finally set down in writing" (cf. Hahn et al 225). This fact is not in the least pejorative; rather it merely highlights the myth-making process of preachers and teachers. The circulation of the stories and sayings of Jesus was done by disciples of Jesus carrying out the great commission of their master to preach and teach the world his word (*Revised Standard Version,* Mtt.28:18-20; Mk.16:15-17). The assignment of telling and re-telling the gospel truth or preaching and teaching from other texts of Scripture involves interpretation and proclamation, which in themselves make room for aesthetic and doctrinal embellishment. Therein lies the myth-making power of Preachers and Teachers.

Sacred texts, whether of the Bible, the Koran, or the Vedic texts, are given power by the interpretations and proclamations of their preachers and teachers. One may feel tempted to suggest that the texts then lie in the power of human or mundane interpretation and imagination. This may not be the case if the *kerux* (Preacher) and the *didaskal"s* (Teacher) are devout and trained. If anything, the *kerux* and the *didaskal"s* are the ones that lie in the power of the *kerugma*. We believe that this has something to do with Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 3:6, "who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The Preacher and the Teacher become servants not of the letters of the texts, but of the spirit behind the text. Jesus himself as a preacher and teacher, submitted to the spirit of the texts, and was able to make living myths out of the Old

Testament texts – myths that are true. Thus, he said to his disciples, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (*King James Version,* Jn.6:63).

We seem not to have a defined practice of preaching and teaching in the corpus of African traditional religions and lore, but some practices can strike one as proclamations and mythopoeic in nature. Some of these practices also serve as forms of preserving history, and have their different expressions in different ancient cultures, some of which have survived into the modern times. Among the Igbos of Bende, Item, Abam, Ohafia, and Abiriba peoples of present day Abia State, Nigeria, the war dance troupes preserve great deeds of bravery and valor with their talking drums (Igba). Initiates of the war cult of these areas understand the language of the drums as events of ancient wars and warriors are recounted by the rhythms and sounds. It has been said that in ancient times the sounding of these drums and the underlying tales they recount, together with the invocation of war gods of the land, spur warriors into dare-devil and unusual feats during inter-tribal wars.

The use of Igba or the talking drum is not exclusive to these tribal communities of the Igbos of Eastern Nigeria. It can be found among the Yorubas of Western Nigeria, and the Hausa-Fulani of Northern Nigeria. Similarly, in Nri, Enugu-Ukwu, Ogbunike, Onitsha and some other parts of Anambra State, of Eastern Nigeria, the Oja flute serves virtually the same function as the Igba; with it, the awesome rituals of the masquerade cults are announced, the lofty deeds of the founders of the tribe are recounted. One wonders what a great reading it will make if the tales hidden in the Igba and the Oja are creatively transmitted into texts for the public. The strange idioms, mysteries and rituals, together with the gruesome and ghastly deeds of valiant warriors of these tribal societies will no doubt inspire awe in the minds of modern readers. But then, to the initiates and members of these tribal communities, it will be a faithful mediation of their spiritual and cultural realities. Consequently, the Igba drummers and the Oja flutists, can represent preachers and teachers of traditional and ritual doctrines of their communities, and therefore myth-makers in their tribal milieu.

C.S. Lewis without apology, but with an unrivaled insight into the nature of Christianity has identified the religion as a myth that is however true. Lewis believes that most of the classical and ancient archetypes of life and atonement find their consummate fulfillment in the story of Christ the complete sacrifice - the myth that is true. He writes:

> Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, *without ceasing to be myth,* comes down from the heaven of

> legend and imagination to the earth of history. It happens - at a particular date, in a particular place, followed by definable historical consequences. We pass from a Balder or an Orsis, dying nobody knows when or where, to a historical Person crucified (it is all in order) *under Pontius Pilate.* By becoming fact it does not cease to be myth: that is the miracle. (141)

The fact that Lewis presents to us is the fact that centuries of orthodox Christianity has failed to perceive or receive. Yet regularly, from the churches, the preachers and teachers of Scripture in such imaginative and inspired artistry, present and re-present this myth that is a fact. Without much ado, we dare say that Lewis himself was a lay *kerux* and *didaskal"s*, for he was a Christian apologetic. He further asserts, "to be truly Christian we must both assent to the historical fact and also receive the myth (fact though it has become) with the same imaginative embrace which we accord to all myths. The one is hardly more necessary than the other" (141). The myth consists of the various imaginative and creative ways, the preacher and teacher re-enacts in words the fundamental truths of the Christian doctrine.

This artistic and creative activity of preachers and teachers has been on for ages. The Old Testament high priests, the prophets, the Rabbis, The Zohar, Kabballa, and Gnostic instructors are all myth-makers as they perform the functions of interpreting and proclaiming sacred truths to meet certain needs and suit certain occasions. In the words of Klaus Koch:

> The biblical word has proved to be not truth in a fossilised, unchanging sense, but truth which is constantly adapting itself to the circumstances of the time. Anyone active in the church today is faced with a peculiar problem concerning the interpretation of biblical texts in sermons or teaching … If the preacher or catechist wishes to translate a text with a long tradition into modern terms he is faced with decision as to which stage of transmission must be considered the binding, and therefore the canonical one. For it is the church's lot to use the Bible as canon, as a model for life and teaching. (100-101)

The above analysis may be correct of Koch's modern period. In our own contemporary era, with the proliferation of churches and ministries, with preachers and teachers from different backgrounds, and many with little training, little attention is often paid to what stage of transmission a text may be in. Our contemporary preachers and teachers are often emotionally and circumstantially driven in their scriptural exegesis and application. This tendency makes even more ample room for myth-making. Surprisingly, this approach seems to be

more efficacious in reaching down to virtually all levels of worshippers in a given worship session, because the preacher or teacher seems to oscillate between the text, his emotion and those of the faithful, and the circumstantial needs of the hour. Our contemporary preachers are masters in this conscious myth-making. Lewis concludes his essay "Myth Became Facts" (1994) in the following words:

> This is the marriage of heaven and earth: Perfect Myth and Perfect Fact: claiming not only our love and our obedience, but also our wonder and delight, addressed to the savage, the child, and the poet in each one of us no less than to the moralist, the scholar, and the philosopher. (142)

The Place of Myth-Making in Societies

Despite the seeming averse disposition of modern sensibilities to myths and legends, myths and myth-making are constantly with us in contemporary time. Consciously or unconsciously, we rely on and make myths to explain life's perplexities and soothe our jarred psyches. According to Birzer, "Myth holds an estranged place in the modern world. But this is the modern world's fault, not myth's. Indeed, myth might just save the modern world from its innumerable follies."

Several scholars in the 19th, 20th, and 21st Centuries have employed myth to explain and deal with contemporary issues. Freud used myth to explain his theory of the subconscious, and clinical psychological approaches have been developed based on his theories in the explication of the subconscious mind in relation to certain aberrant human behaviours. Jung has emphasised the theory of the 'collective unconscious' indicated by archetypes manifesting as universal mythic idioms. This is a theory that has ruled out the supernatural while promoting the 'psychonatural'. Mircea Eliade, Joseph Campbell, J. R. R. Tolkein, and some others have brought an immense awareness of myths and their numerous operations to our attention.

The place of myth-making in contemporary times cannot be overemphasised. While religious instructions are generated by myth-making, societal world-views are shaped and reshaped through the same. To elucidate our assertion here, we will refer to two particular world-views that are wide-spread around the globe: 'Terrorism' and 'the Conspiracy Theory of a Global Control Plan'. Terrorism has made the world full of uncertainties and worries over senseless destruction of life and property.

Often, people wonder what terrorists gain by destroying the lives of others, and sometimes blowing themselves up as suicide bombers; the answer I dare

say is not far-fetched: one can see it in the pervasive influence of dangerous myth-making. ISIS wants to establish an Islamic State run only by Islamic laws (Sharia) and principles. To achieve this end, the myth of gaining heaven by slaying an infidel is invoked in the doctrinal instructions of clerics, and so a large-scale slaughter of innocent people ensues. In the same way, Boko Haram, the third most deadly terrorist organisation in the world, in search of Islamic Republic of Northern Nigeria, created a myth that 'Western Education is Dangerous.' This myth has seen the massacre of thousands of innocent people in the West African sub-region.

In the wake of the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, a myriad of explanations have been adduced as to the origin of the ravaging virus. However, it is instructive that a film *Contagion*, directed by Steven Soderbergh in 2011, as it were, foreshadows large-scale devastation by a virus from Asia. A fictional book also by the title *Contagion* published much earlier in 1996 by Robin Cook, though with a different setting from the film, equally has as its subject matter an invasion of an unleashed virus upon the society. This recurrent imagery in fiction and film-making can best be described as 'Mythopoeia', albeit dressed in the garb of 'conspiracy theory'.

Prominent among these myth-making forms is the one arising from the production of a Vaccine for COVID-19, and the fear of a forced vaccination that pervade the world. Need I say that the Media is awash with the fever of this 'conspiracy theory' about a planned microchip implantation via a world-wide vaccination programme being orchestrated by the elite globalists like the Rockefeller family of America, the Rothschilds of Europe, Henry Kissinger, and Gates, through Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and other allied corporations with an agenda of world depopulation (Gate, "Bill Gates's Depopulation Initiative [U.N. Agenda 21" 0.00 - 3.01]).

Now, one wonders what could have planted this ingrained suspicion on the communal psyche of society, so to speak, an investigation will reveal that the most vocal of the proponents of these 'Conspiracy Theories' is Evangelical Christianity. The fodder for the fire of this narrative is the myth of 'The Mark of the Beast' in the Biblical book of Revelation which runs thus:

> 15 He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. 16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, 17 and that no one may buy or sell except one who has [a]the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name 18 Here is wisdom. Let him who

has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666. (*New King James Version,* Rev. 13:15-18).

These few verses of the Christian Scripture have given vent to several Mythopoeic interpretations, the kernel of which is that a world-wide ruler will arise who will seek to be worshipped, and will want to place his mark upon the right hand or forehead of all his subjects, and that mark will be the access code for financial activities in the world. The Mythopoeia around this scripture is that all proponents of One World Government and implanted Electronic IDs are emissaries of this coming despot called 'The Anti-Christ'. If myth-making can affect society this much, one cannot rule out its power as an instrument of social guidance and change.

Conclusion

The myth-making propensity is quite high with modern preachers and teachers, what with the complexities of contemporary societies where every day life's realities are strained and stressed. People seek answers to the absurdities of the modern world. Myths are created by custodians of scriptural truth, as its age long precepts are applied to the intricacies of our 'jet age'. The political and educational systems of civil societies are yet to come to terms with the enormous power of myth-making, as a veritable tool of psychological orientation of the individual and the re-orientation of the communal psyche.

When you hear such evangelistic crusades of the American miracle evangelist Benny Hinn captioned 'Atmosphere for Miracles', and some 'fabulous' stories of miraculous occurrences at such gatherings; Nigerian Bishop David Oyedepo's book title *Exploits of Faith* (2005), and great prosperity that has characterised the lives of adherents to faith principles espoused in the book; Nigerian Pastor Enoch Adebayo's announcement of healing and deliverance of demonised persons; Evangelist Reinhard Bonke's Healing crusades with 'too good to be real' testimonies of miraculous encounters; when Ayesha in Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* through her indoctrination leads a multitude to mass suicide by drowning in the sea, with the hope of paradise; or men and women all too willing to blow themselves up in preparation for a celestial reception in some paradise, you are dealing with preachers and teachers making myths – myths that are facts. Interpretation of texts and its proclamation give rise to unimaginable solutions, explanations and motivation to the various lives' circumstances of devotees, whether to the positive or negative.

The interpretations of certain portions of scripture by some preachers and teachers have been known to influence adversely or favourably the lifestyle or conduct of their listeners and members. For instance, people's dress codes,

eating habits and diverse religious observances have been known to be influenced by certain interpretations of given texts proffered by teachers and preachers. And this goes to underscore the efficacy of the myth-making power of teachers and preachers, especially in modern times.

Works Cited and Consulted

Abrams, Meyer, Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 9th ed., 2009, p. 109.

Gates, Bill. "Depopulation Agenda 21." *Youtube,* uploaded by Billy Batson, 16 May 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gc16H3uHKOA.

Bauckham, Richard. *Jesus and the Eyewitness: The Gospel as an Eyewitness Testimony*. Eerdmans, 2006.

Beecher, Patrick. "Homiletics." *The Catholic Encyclopedia,* http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07443a.htm. Accessed 10 July 2020.

Birzer, Bradley J. "The Truth of Myth." *The Imaginative Conservative,* http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2015/05/the-truth-of-myth.html. Accessed 10 July 2020.

Dunn, James. *Oral Gospel Tradition*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013, pp. 19-55.

Hahn, Scott and Scott Dave, editors. *The Hermeneutic of Continuity Christ, Kingdom, and Creation: Letter and Spirit*. St. Paul's Centre for Biblical Theology, 2007.

Knight, Kevin. "Hermeneutics." *New Advent,* www.newadvent.org/Cathen/07271a.html. Accessed 10 July 2020.

Koch, Klaus. *The Growth of The Biblical Tradition*. A and C. Block Ltd, 1969, p. 100-101

Lewis, C.S. "Myth Became Fact." *God in the Dock Essays on Theology and Ethics*, edited by Walter Hooper, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994, pp. 141, 142.

Maas, Anthony. "Hermeneutics." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 7., 1910. http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07271a.htm. Accessed 10 July, 2020.

Moret, Leuren. "Kissinger, Eugenics and Depopulation", *Rense*, rense.com/general59/ kissingereugenics.htm. Accessed 10 July, 2020.

Robin, Cook. *Contagion*. The Berkley Publishing Group, 1995.

Oyedepo, David. *Exploits of Faith.* Dominion Publishing House, 2005.

Sampaolo, Marco. "Jim Jones", *Britannica,* http:/www.britannica.com/biography/Jim-Jones. Accessed 10 July, 2020

Scientia, Petros, "Kerugma" *The Online Bible Dictionary*. www.seekfind.net/ Bible_Dictionary_Define_kerugma_Definition_of_kerugma.html#.XwiD1IaSnIU. Accessed 10 July, 2020 .

Soyinka, Wole. *Death and The King's Horseman*. Eyre Methuen, 1975.

Strong, James. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Hendickson Publishers, 2009.

Tolkien, J. R. R. "Mythopoeia." *The J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide*. Edited by Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull, vol. 2, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2006.

Van, Voorst., Robert E. *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to Ancient Evidence*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000.

—— ∗ ——

Worlds Apart: Myth, Science and Fiction in Sukanya Datta's Short Stories

Sami Ahmad Khan

> The Indianness of science fiction in this country is not dependent on its geographical origin but rather on the cultural and social ambience which gives it soul. – Bal Phondke (xviii)

How does a country's 'cultural and social ambience' contour its Science Fiction (SF)?

The act of producing, distributing and consuming English-language SF in India – a nation caught between the globalised forces of techno-scientific capitalism and the indigenous modes of religio-cultural assertion – precipitates a distinct precariousness. The spectre of writing SF – a genre not only considered niche vis-à-vis the India's market, but also pulp in terms of its narrative conventions – that too in a former colonial language (English) haunts cultural production. The imbrication of SF within India is mediated by language politics, genre conventions, market forces and social mores among other things. This paper exploits such interstitial nuances and ascertains how India's anglophone SF adopts a new generative grammar with characteristic élan; the paper advances three strains of how SF deploys diverging modalities of hybridisation (what can be termed as 'mythic SF'), binary opposition (as in 'counter SF') and dialectics (as in 'alternative SF').

Mark Bould and Sherryl Vint find in *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction* that "genres are best thought of as ongoing processes of negotiation rather than fixed entities that pre-exist their naming" and SF is no exception (1). SF catalyses the mutation within (and of) India's popular imagination and is quintessentially located in the times in which it is forged and consumed. The efforts to 'define' SF have had a long history: Theodore Sturgeon, for example, argues that SF is "built around human beings, with a human problem, and a human solution, which would not have happened at all without its *scientific* content" ("Science Fiction Definitions", emphasis added). Paul Kincaid, however, acknowledges the drawbacks of essentialising endeavours in "On the Origins": "the more comprehensively a definition seeks to encompass science fiction, the more unsatisfactory it seems to those of us who know the genre" (411).

Kincaid's assertion becomes even more relevant for India, where the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of science (and hence, of scientific *and* science fictional discourses) not only find themselves infused with the

mythic, but also folklore, *itihasa*, etc. The mythic and the scientific, myth and history, truth and fiction are not hermetically sealed epistemic frameworks – at least not in India and its SF. The notions of myth, science and fiction intertwine within India's SF, perhaps owing to the nation's distinct engagement with history and non-linear time. Shail Mayaram believes that "history and myth are not exclusive modes of representation" in India (qtd. in Ashis Nandy, 45). E. Dawson Varughese corroborates this by citing R. Malhotra, for whom "accounts of past are not made through *either* myth or history exclusively" but by itihasa (loosely translated as myth or narrative), "which may not always be the opposite of truth" (30). If itihasa disrupts the dichotomy between 'history' and 'myth', then Indian SF subverts 'science' and 'fiction'. Jayant Narlikar, for example, refers to the 'Invasion of Indra' in "The Ice Age Cometh" (1993), and Mainak Dhar's *Vimana* (2012) transposes the ancient astronaut hypothesis on Hindu gods.

This paper is conscious of how the projection of itihasa and its varying epistemologies can shape the SF to come, a protean, mutating-being from a time-yet-to-come. Aware of the unique nature of Indian SF, this paper advances three concomitant 'SF strains' which intermesh within (and via) select texts: one, a reaffirmation of indigenous scientific literacies, an ostensibly bipartisan thrust that promulgates an 'alternative SF' which not only exists outside a centre/ margins binary but whose epistemology seeks to move past binaries; two, an overt challenge to the ontology of *western* SF, a 'counter SF' that resists the normativity imposed by any central (usually western) tradition; and three, the conscious interpolation of the mythical into the scientific and the science fictional, which leads to a 'mythical SF'. Consequently, this paper reads three (contemporary) SF short stories composed by Sukanya Datta in English: "A Little Learning" (2012), "When the Tide Turns" (2008) and "Gem of a Story" (2012) interweave the mythic, scientific, science fictional and indigenous scientific literacies within their ambit. Moreover, Datta is a serving scientist with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and studying her SF – especially one that fuses myth, folklore, history and science – is a logical ingress into the materiality of this fusion.

One can begin with a story set in the present, one that manifests alternative strains of/in Indian SF. "A Little Learning" advances a localised (tribal) proto-scientific knowledge that emerges parallel to its western counterpart. It is set in Linu-livu, a tiny island located off India's coast, in the aftermath of the deadly 2004 tsunami: the tribal inhabitants of the island have been relocated. Dr Aditya Sarkar leads a scientific delegation to Linu-livu in order to conduct tests and study the island: a metaphor for the imposition of western scientific epistemology and normativity on 'native' lands. The scientists find a surprising ally in Bur-el: a "villager elder with no village", who becomes the soi-disant "embodiment of

the spirit of the Island" (48). One night, Bur-el tells the assembled scientists a tale of how the 'Devil's Own' had "walked unfettered [on the island] – using a fragrant lure – summoning wayfarers and sailors and holding captive all who came too near" (41). The demon trapped innocents by a scent which paralysed them – and then feasted on them. However, "this was long before Bur-el's tribe colonized the island. When they did, the Lord had already vanquished the Devil's Own in form a snake" (41). The form of a snake, usually associated with Biblical evil, becomes a force of good within this context: for Bur-el, the 'Lord' had taken a serpent form to battle the forces of darkness a long time ago.

The *clou* of the narrative (and of Linu-livu) is a sacred shrine: "all over these temples trailed the *Linnia* vine – a species endemic and limited to Linu-livu, and from which the Island derived its name. The vine bore masses of tiny cream-coloured flowers with a lingering sweet fragrance" (42-43). As these scientists run tests on the soil, flora and fauna of the island, they are aided by a good-natured, Bur-el, who, however, vehemently prohibits going to the sacred shrine after dark, and warns them against picking the flowers. Driven by curiosity, a scientist (Michael) goes to the shrine at night, and Bur-el catches him disassociating the 'Devil's Own' (the flowers) from the 'Lord' (referring to the dodder). A snake bites Bur-el, and he dies despite an anti-snake-venom dose being administered.

Days later, as the shocked group of scientists prepare to depart the island, one of them (Pratim) proposes "they go to the main temple and give thanks to Bur-el" (73). Unsure of what to do and still reeling the impact of the loss of Bur-el, the scientists decide to visit the temple one last time, even though it had gotten dark. At the shrine, they find "the dodder was absolutely encrusted with the genetically engineered purple fungal spore that had been introduced as a biopesticide" and smell "a perfume so intoxicating that they forgot to talk" (75). The Linnia flowers are in full bloom at night, and unbeknownst to them, release deadly neurotoxins that kill the scientists on the spot. This scent also attracts snakes, increasing the probability of being bitten. The scientists stand rooted to the spot as the fragrance from the flowers paralyses them: they sway and crash to the ground, becoming fodder in the food-chain.

Only two scientists survive: one was chain-smoking and the other had a blocked nose. Dr Sarkar and Anjan, the two lucky survivors, rush back to the campsite and request emergency evacuation. The island is placed under quarantine: the fragrant Linnia are actually the 'Devil's Own' and the lord turns out to be a dodder which bonds with the deadly flowers and countermands their lethal nature by suppressing the inherent neurotoxins. The dodder, which had prevented the flowers from becoming lethal, was weakened by the biopesticide

introduced by the 'outsiders'; this also explains why visiting the shrine after sunset was forbidden since this particular flower bloomed only at night. This not only subverts the hierarchy of the pleasant, sweet-smelling flower and the ugly-looking parasitic dodder, but also heralds a 'tribal' scientific literacy characterised by customs (such as visiting the snake temple only during that day, that too after washing oneself) which are seen as ancient ways of containment. Such a literacy mythologises the dodder and Linnia relationship as the Lord and Devil's Own: proto-science translates into folk and myth.

Vandana Singh believes that "Indigenous ways of knowing are worthy of scientific respect" especially since it is not a coincidence that "traditional indigenous territories constitute 22 percent of the world's land surface, and contain 80% of the world's biodiversity" (email). Singh echoes Grace Dillon's assessment that "Native/Indigenous/Aboriginal sustainable practices constitute a science despite their lack of resemblance to taxonomic western systems of thought"; Dillon finds that "Indigenous scientific literacies represent practices used by Indigenous peoples over thousands of years to reenergize the natural environment while improving the interconnected relationships…" (7). As the "urban matron" at a kitty party exclaims in "A Little Learning": "Imagine! These backward tribesmen, with little formal schooling, knew that a tsunami was about to strike...what else is a Water Dragon?" (50) While Datta later refutes such claims by attributing Bur-el's prescience to a "generalized prediction" passed down generations, the story establishes how such claims "summed up what most of the nation thought" (50).

"A Little Learning" foregrounds that Bur-el and his tribe had knowledge that was orally passed down across generations but somehow failed to see the complete picture. Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay's concept of the mythologerm comes into play here; mythologerm is "the site of a struggle between closed scientific tradition—which can be defined in national, racial, cultural, and even gendered terms—and the historicity of scientific knowledge as a continuous entanglement across time among nations and peoples to which no single culture or tradition can lay claim" (438). It debates how a (tribal/indigenous) people's history, myth, and folk have elements of not just the paranormal and mythological, but even more importantly, of alternative science, which is more along the lines of traditional/indigenous scientific literacy and not wholly indebted to western techno-capitalist science. This challenging the legitimacy of (western) science reminds one of how Suparno Banerjee read Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome,* which subverted "Western normativity by empowering a native secret cult with their practice of counter science, but it also subverts the established Brahmanical elite knowledge" (*Other Tomorrows* 60).

Datta's portrayal of Bur-el proceeds in a similar fashion: his predictions come true, and his prophecies emerge as being rooted in scientific fact. For example, he had protested against going to the shrine at night, and his tales about the lord (dodder) 'subduing' the devil's own (Linnia) by forming an internal association had come true in physical, metaphorical, and botanical senses. Moreover, the subaltern/tribal wisdom he espouses becomes a conscious subversion of 'western' science and 'established Brahmanical' knowledge (even though, unlike Ghosh's Mangala, his knowledge is incomplete). The reaffirmation of indigenous scientific literacies echoes an 'alternative SF', which is shaped by a dialectical progression, and avoids derivation from any one mythological arche *in toto* (as in mythic SF); it also eschews reifying binary opposites by consciously arguing without a framework of west/east, male/female, white/ black (as in counter SF), thereby advancing a mode that goes beyond a simple opposition between two poles.

Datta's next story, "When the Tide Turns", jumps to the future. The earth is dying, and the end of time seems near: when faced with acute food shortages and impending extinction, chloroplasts are genetically engineered in albinos, enabling them to draw nourishment directly from sunlight. This cure, however, does not work on those with melanin in their skins, and the millennia-old discrimination is subverted as only the albinos, organised under the unified command of Dr Pinctada, survive the apocalypse.

"When the Tide Turns" begins with a diatribe against a world in which those who appear (or *are*) different are relegated to the margins of society. It is the year 2206; Rukun, a lonely albino child, is kidnapped by a covert group of activists who are able to predict the end of the world and have been preparing for it. The story then jumps a few years: Rukun is now Dr Sinha, and the planet reels under an existential crisis as food security becomes a distant dream. In this future, the planet has been divided into two hemispheres, northern and southern (a direct reference to the global north and global south), and agriculture ministers on both sides realise that all food grain reserves would last only three more months (142). The reader is taken on a short tour of history: "agricultural returns have been falling drastically over the last five or six years", and the condition is such that "the shortfall would kill fifteen percent of the world's population" (142). The food shortages and scarcity of natural resources reminds one of *Interstellar* (2014), except this time, humanity seeks the aid of genetic engineering rather than space exploration to combat extinction.

The story then lists how "late in the twentieth century and in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, sweeping agricultural reforms had taken place. Biotechnology had been the engine powering the movement" (142-43). However, "with inorganic fertilisers and artificial nutrients, agriculturists had

whipped the land to produce more and more, ignoring the silent signals that the inherent fertility was close to being snuffed out" (143). The technology was overused to such an extent that humanity dug its own grave and the lack of sustainable development created an uncertain future: "Intensive agriculture, mechanized farm equipment and the total disregard for natural biological webs and chains that defined ecosystems, in the brutal rush to produce more, had killed the land" (143). This is not only an indictment of humanity's over-reliance on science and technology but also on the unsustainable, greed-driven human consumptions patterns that precipitate catastrophes, ecological, or otherwise.

Dr Galling, the agriculture minister of the northern hemisphere, tries to find a way out of this doomsday scenario; his sole driving impulse is to put food on the table of the people he is meant to serve, but even he is powerless in the face of this 'natural' calamity about to hit the earth. Initially hopeful, Galling believes that scientists would come up with another technological transformation that would reorient the way humanity approaches its lifestyle and how it consumes resources. He contacts Dr Margaret Pinctada and flies to meet her at a remote location (146) – however, once there, he is told that the tables have been turned. For millennia the albinos had been discriminated against due to the low levels of melanin in their skin, but now it is precisely this dearth that would enable them to enter to future by going green, quite literally: "the albinos are preadapted to accept the express the chloroplast" (149). The 'normally-pigmented', who constituted the norm, would soon go extinct due to their bodily rejection of the grafted chloroplasts – not that the albino council did not try to save them (149).

Pinctada explains that "the trait was inherent in us [albinos] even when the technology did not exist. Now the technology has been refined and we have been engineered – transformed into chloroplast-containing humans" (150). As a shocked, depressed Dr Galling leaves, aware that his world is about to end, the dusk of 'man' transforms into a new dawn for humanity. Clearly, the story both subverts dominant paradigms (those with melanin discriminate against those without it, or even against those who have a different skin tone/colour), and seeks the creation of an 'equal society'. Adopting the mythologerm again: it manifests how the struggle between a closed (western/northern *and* eastern/ southern? or *both* northern/southern?) scientific tradition(s) and 'the historicity of scientific knowledge as a continuous entanglement across time among nations and peoples' as represented by the albino council that exists outside this north/ south binary. Reminiscent of proletarian internationalism, this council unites albinos across the hemispheres and erects a new paradigm of (the discriminated) albinos versus the rest of humanity: albinos of the world have united, and they have nothing to lose but their chains.

While it may be argued that Datta creates a new binary between albinos and those with 'normally-pigmented' skin, the rejection of western normativity is evident since Pinctada uses science to save the human race – or at least those she could. This claim to the mantle of science not only challenges western/male/white/pigmented normativity but also becomes a metaphor that highlights colourism, racism, ableism, and the edifice of unfettered development. "When the Tide Turns" runs counter to the normative epistemology of western systems, cultures and SF (and of the techno-scientific, patriarchal world order); it generates a 'counter SF', a conscious political intervention that brings to fore tussles between the centre and the margins, and turns the periphery into a new centre (which, however, Datta again destabilises in her future works).

If "A Little Learning" advances a localised (tribal) proto-scientific knowledge and "When the Tide Turns" questions the basis of western/male/central science (and normativity), then "Gem of a Story" derives its roots from a mythic past and exhibits an indigenous scientific literacy that is essentially Brahmanical in nature (to borrow terminology from Suparno Banerjee's *Other Tomorrows*). As Prof. Hans Kinder, a German professor in the story reminds the readers: "All myths have a kernel of truth in them…beliefs that have transcended time; folklore as you call them, are rooted in facts – maybe facts which have got a little blurred around the edges; but facts nonetheless" ("Gem" 209).

Structurally, "Gem of a Story" comprises two streams: the first is about *Mahabharata*'s Ashwatthama, who fought for the Kauravas in the ancient epic. The story interprets his firing of a celestial weapon that would have destroyed the planet; this *brahmastra* "would have annihilated the Earth…sounds like a nuclear warhead, doesn't it?" ("Gem of a Story" 213). Ashwatthama knew how to fire the weapon but not how to abort it; when asked to take the weapon back, a vengeful Ashwatthama, in order to end the Pandav lineage, redirected the weapon to kill Arjun's grandchild in-utero instead. This resulted in his downfall – he was cursed by Krishna and the gem, which gave him powers, was "wrested from his forehead as punishment for an unforgivable sin" (212). The second stream locates the mysterious phenomenon of the Himalayan yeti and syamantak gem as emanating from the Dwapar Yuga, and hints that Ashwatthama could be the yeti of our time, long lost in the mists of time. After all, "*all ancient civilizations have stories about immortals. About them who can never die. Celestial beings. Demi-gods, some of them*" ("Gem of a Story", emphasis original, 201).

The protagonist of the story is Tunir Chatterjee, a gemologist who seeks the syamantak gem of the *Vishnu Purana* with his inquisitive friend Hans Kinder. "Prof. Hans Kinder had first come to India as a backpacker when was

still in his teens and had fallen in love with the country" ("Gem" 202). The two had become friends at a trekking camp; years later, when Kinder is injured during an expedition, Tunir gives him shelter. As the two talk more about what led Kinder to India again, the German professor convinces Tunir to accompany him to the mythical monastery of Thamo-La deep in the mountains.

The story is a case study for the interpolation of the mythical into the science fictional and urban legends, thereby generating a mythical SF that finds its way into the narratives about (and of) our today. In an interview, Datta says, "we have such a rich tradition of mythology…flying horses and chariots, weapons that can rain fire... Five thousand years' worth of folklore, there for the picking and reinvention" (email). However, the organicity of the narrative she creates is contingent upon semantic elements usually associated with SF. For example, Datta remarks about the setting, "everyone knows this area is mineral rich, so I brought in elements from the *Mahabharata*. Syamantak gem that rains tonnes of gold, and added bio-indicator species as a marker for gold deposits" (email). Led by a search for Aurum flowers, which are a bio-indicator for gold deposits (premised on scientific know-how), Kinder and Tunir embark on a quest to seek the stone but end up dead – there is a thin line between zealous exploration and a greed-driven monetisation of the natural and mythic world(s).

The Kinder-Tunir relationship enunciates the subtle linkages between exploration, knowledge and power within the realm of the unknown (developing world), and can be read with John Rieder's assessment that SF "exposes something that colonialism imposes" (15). The hybridisation within the story creates a distinct syntax that is imbricated in its socio-political and economic realities. In the introduction to *Walking the Clouds,* Grace Dillon acknowledges how 'native' writers of SF must negotiate an ancient tradition that "weds sf theory and Native intellectualism, Indigenous scientific literacy, and western techno-cultural science…" (2). While Dillon refers to native American writers, Indian SF writers face a similar predicament. Datta showcases how western techno-cultural science fuses with indigenous scientific literacies but also mythologies that support them. This particular strain of mythic SF can again be explored via Chattopadhyay's "mythologerm", a critical intervention that "derives from a mythic presentation of the long history of human civilizations in which knowledge constantly appears and disappears, is refined and transformed as science, and in some cases inaugurates a future" (Chattopadhyay, "On the Mythologerm" 437-438). "Gem of a Story" represents a kind of SF that is caught between mythology and indigenous scientific literacy, one in which long-forgotten knowledge is sought, and becomes approachable. For example, after taking a holy dip in Manas Sarovar, Tunir wondered why it was forbidden to bathe in the adjacent Rakshas Taal, "although by all accounts there was a

216

connection between the two waters" (202-203). Kinder and Tunir later rationalise that it might be so because the ancients had known about radioactivity since there was Uranium in those waters. These strands of knowledge were lost in time, and a quest to reclaim this forgotten, often distorted knowledge drives the plot forward. The story also enumerates how 'knowledge constantly appears and disappears' and 'is refined and transformed as science'. Apart from Ashwatthama as the yeti, the 'immortal spirit of the mountain' (at least for Kinder), the story brings to light indigenous scientific literacies that operate at the cusp of itihasa and myth: the references to nuclear warheads, radioactivity, etc. are examples.

The three stories discussed generate their own modalities of engagement with the SF's semantics and evolve micro-processes that mutate the basic syntax of the genre (if there is one). The stories advance varied interpretations of the power dynamics between the diverging conceptions of science, whether Western, Brahmanical, or tribal/aboriginal. "Gem of a Story" operates between myth and technology; it foregrounds Brahmanical science where mythology becomes the *arche* of the (much) less technologically advanced present; thereby, it creates a mythic SF whose primary operation can be surmised as that of hybridisation between the scientific, historical, mythic and itihasa. "When the Tide Turns" uses commonly accepted SF tropes (such as dystopia, genetic engineering, etc.) and produces a counter SF that challenges the normativity imposed by dominant discourses; its basic character can be said to be of providing resistance to a central discourse via its vantage point of/from the margins. "A Little Learning", with its comprehension of the dodder-Linnia relationship, posits a tribal/aboriginal scientific literacy as being complementary to western science (though not being counter to it); thus, it generates an alternative SF whose being is, arguably, driven by dialectical progression and social reformation.

Moreover, the mythic, counter, and alternative strains of SF exist in a warp and weft of interconnected thematic tissues, and cannot be regarded as insulated pigeonholes. While primarily exhibiting a mythic strain, "Gem of Story" also harbours counter (e.g., how the ancients were aware of the Uranium-laced waters of Rakshas Taal, a knowledge that renders this position to be of primary nature) and alternative (e.g., the behaviour of the villagers of Thamo-La) claims. "When the Tide Turns", despite being 'counter SF', also hints at the mythic (e.g., reference to *Gita*) and the alternative (e.g., the studied equidistance of Dr Pinctada's from both northern and southern hemispheres) discourses. "A Little Learning", while primarily an example of the alternative strain, also contains features of the mythic (e.g., the tsunami as a water dragon) and counter (e.g., references to the golden past) agendas. The three strains, as earlier pointed, intermesh and fuse, which gives Indian SF a unique character.

To return to the question this paper began with: how does the socio-cultural permeate India's SF? By activating counter, alternative and mythic strains, India's SF responds to its ambience just as much as it shapes it. While being contoured by the epistemological frameworks, generic conventions and narrative modes of science, itihasa and fiction, India's SF is imbricated in its mythology, history and folklore to such an extent that it becomes a whole new subset of global SF. Simultaneously, India's SF also manifests and negotiates with different kinds of scientific traditions – both indigenous (whether Brahminical or tribal) and external (Western). The future looks to the past, the *yugas* beckon – but not in a manner of their own choosing.

Works Cited and Consulted

Banerjee, Suparno. *Other Tomorrows: Postcoloniality, Science Fiction and India.* 2010, Louisiana State University, unpublished PhD thesis. http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-06012010-164011 (Accessed 10/1/2017)

Bould, Mark and Sherryl Vint. *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction.* Routledge, 2011.

Chabria, Priya Sarukkai. "What is SF?" Received by Sami Ahmad Khan, 10/08/2015.

Chattopadhyay, Bodhisattva. "On the Mythologerm: Kalpavigyan and the Question of Imperial Science." *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 43, no. 3, Indian SF. 2016. pp. 435-458

Datta, Sukanya. "When the Tide Turns." *Beyond the Blue*. Rupa, 2008. pp. 140-151.

—. "A Little Learning." *Worlds Apart*. NBT, 2012. pp. 36-78

—. "Gem of a Story." *Worlds Apart*. NBT, 2012. pp. 201-239

—. "Interview on SF." Received by Sami Ahmad Khan, 7 Dec 2018.

Dhar, Mainak, *Vimana*. Penguin, 2012.

Dillon, Grace. "Introduction." *Walking the Clouds*. Arizona UP, 2012. pp. 1-12.

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Calcutta Chromosome*. Ravi Dayal, 1996.

Interstellar. Directed by Christopher Nolan. Paramount, 2014.

Kincaid, Paul. "On the Origins of Genre." *Extrapolation,* vol. 44, no. 4, 2003, pp. 409-419.

Mehan, Uppinder. "Domestication of Science in Indian Science Fiction Short Stories." *Foundation* 74 (Autumn 1998), pp. 54–66.

Menon, Anil and Vandana Singh, editors. *Breaking the Bow: Speculative Fiction inspired by the Ramayana*. Zubaan, 2012.

Nandy, Ashis. 'History's Forgotten Doubles', *History and Theory*, 34/2 1995. pp. 44–66.

Narlikar, Jayant. "The Ice Age Cometh." *It Happened Tomorrow*, edited by Bal Phondke, National Book Trust, 1993. pp. 1-20

Phondke, Bal, editor. *It Happened Tomorrow*. NBT, 1993.

Rieder, John. *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction*. Wesleyan UP, 2008.

"Science Fiction Definitions". *KU Gunn Centre for the Study of Science Fiction*. URL: *www.sfcentre.ku.edu/sf-institute/sf-definitions* (Accessed 5 August 2018).

Singh, Vandana. "Science Fiction". Received by Sami Ahmad Khan. 10 Sep. 2018.

Varughese, E. Dawson. *Genre Fiction of New India: Post-millennial receptions of '"weird'" narratives*. Routledge, 2017.

— ∗ —

Turbulent Flow: Chaos as a Narrative Technique

Mahim Sharma

Inelegant versions of existence are often aesthetically negotiated through unorthodox and irregular aspects of narration. They are deemed immoral when considered against the backdrop of the traditional aspect of developing the narrative's plot linearly. When Chaos Theory advanced upon the scientific discourses of study, it asserted a sense of importance on the free play of multiple consciousnesses in the empirical world's various meaning-making processes. To adhere to the organicity of empirical experiences, even writers had to acknowledge the presence of the "the great gulf between knowledge of what one thing does – one water molecule, one cell of heart tissue, one neuron – and what millions of them do" (Gleick 8). The relational dynamics and flow of characters and events in a narrative provide the text with an instability that is turbulent and audacious enough to be aesthetically still.

Each fissured stroke of a character's presence, absence, entry, and exit in the flow narrative may have the capacity to be designed in a manner where they supply meaning in addition to the dialogical text. The writer's intent may intrude assertively in the text and the manner in which meaning reaches the reader. Meaning is still, however, negotiated between the writer and the reader but the entry point of significatory alterations in the text remains an expression of free will by the writer. Along with the awareness of chaos as potential in the scientific domain of discoveries, many organic minds witnessed the presence of chaos as a technique and form in the aesthetic realm of literature without the conscious canon of discourse as a staunch theory.

Around the 1960s, cognitive audacity of the organic intellectuals provided a chance of revisiting much of literature but with a varied perspective enabling the supply of a new text from an old book. Chaos was not the discovery of something new. It was always already present in each deterministic system that has been conceptualised as total, complete and absolute. The revelation emphasised that dissipation is a part of stability in a system. It arises from within a stable system and is not introduced from the outer, immoral realm of a system. Randomness or chaos in a pristine and precise system arises from the midst of regular and routinely movement of elements within it.

Writers had long conceptualised that the chaotic arrangement of narrative instancing can unravel beauty that otherwise would have eluded a representational image in the text through the intent of words. Traffic, for example, works in a similar manner. Understand the concept of an individual

who wishes to learn the art of driving a car. Isolated tracks of a driving school offer her the space of frolic and play without the interruptions of other reckless and righteous drivers around her. Her capacity to learn driving the car is easily achieved in the linear atmosphere of the learning school. It would be, however, infinitely removed from the empirical reality and actuality of the world around. Traffic, by its fundamental nature, is turbulent and, thus, chaotic. Each shape of the road and its modulations that are extended to ease the congestion of a road patch in an area have the untimely defeat when it supplies higher rates and instances of congestion further on from the moment of its applicability.

Humans endlessly believe that a tendency to support a linear module in application around them, like the assembly line of the industrial revolution, signifies order, efficiency, and comfort. Such a comfort, paradoxically, is a stagnant expression of existence. Through the metaphor of traffic, organic minds of the twentieth century in the field of science adhered respect to the capacity of uncertainty on the trajectory of a deterministic individual, for example, driving is a negotiation between the self and the impact of choices that the other drivers endlessly take. Isolated movements, like the ones eternally taught in traditional physics, help conceptualise a phenomenon in a manner so that the human mind can comprehend it, still, it rarely exhibits the behaviour that humans witness in the formation of weather and clouds for instance.

James Gleick was a meteorologist, and in his book *Chaos* (1998), he expressed how he would often look out his window to witness the fiddling of clouds above his house while his extremely expensive and specialised computer repeatedly asserted, through taut and precise algorithms, that it would be sunny outside for days at a stretch. His contribution is remarkable for his stances of reality, of being worthy enough to counter the discourses of traditional physics, the terminology of which has been adopted through generations without a single utterance of doubt. He claimed and contested that the sole reason why weather conditions are elusive is that small changes in the initial conditions lead to drastic changes in the final condition, and thus no change is insignificant, irrelevant, or merely a dissipation when the functionality of a system is concerned.

Aesthetically, the turbulence of such nature was asserted in various texts even before James Gleick was born. Gordon Slethuag, who wrote *Beautiful Chaos* (2001), explored the implications of chaos theory in some literary works. He asserted that these writers explored the nuances of chaos and its aesthetic consequentiality of causing turbulence in a text. Slethaug asserted that texts "are subject to turbulence at almost any point" (Slethaug 63). The writer of *Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science* (2018), Katherine Hayles admitted that "writing is turbulence, or more precisely, brings turbulence into being" (24). Such writers provide a direction in which

intellectuals could witness the always already presence of chaos and its varied nuances.

The purpose was to attempt and etch various forms in which chaos exhibits its potentiality in a text. One such form is the Turbulent flow, where the flow of the narrative asserts a sense of chaos which offers a chance of inflicting meaning upon a text which otherwise could not be attained. It is inspired deeply by the works of Gleick, Slethaug and Hayles when concerned with the scientific aspect of the research and explored a way towards the aesthetics of chaos supplying it with a theory that is rarely needed but the exploration of which could supply readers with an insight that would enhance their experience of the text.

Narrative gaps and ruptures may seem insignificant to an unaware mind, but it is through them chaos flows into the text and extends the plurality of meaning. These gaps, disturbances, and ruptures were blatantly shunned by the scientific discourses for a long, long time. It was stated that "for most physicists, turbulence was too dangerous to waste time on" (Gleick 121). Such statements expressed the state of the human condition when sections of organic intellectuals wished to explore the improper and immoral gaps of chaos in scientific and literary narratives. Gleick elaborated the presence of turbulence in a stabilised and controlled system through the example of water flow through a pipe. A perfectly smooth pipe attached to a perfectly moduled source of water is supposed to be perfectly shielded from vibrations and dissipations of any kind. The flow and vents may be controlled, but the turbulence of the water is untamed when it comes out of the hose. Gleick observed the unrest that was caused in physicists as they were unable to comprehend the empirical chaos of a controlled situation, and they wondered "how can such a flow create something random?" (122). One can wonder how humiliating it must have been for traditional intellectuals in the scientific field to witness the eternal presence of dissipation in their deterministic system while they shunned its existence as irrelevant and absent from a perfect system.

The writers of the Turbulent Flow adhere to the potential of dissipation in the narrative flow. The gaps and ruptures in the narrative may seem immature or irrelevant to the unaware reader, but they provide aesthetic experience to those who patiently approach the realm of chaos in literature. Toni Morrison, in her novel *The Bluest Eye*, fiddled with the linear flow of the narrative and introduced turbulence in the narrative. While introducing Mr. Henry in the novel, the subjectivity of the narrator intrudes the linearity of the narrative. It impacted the readers' present understanding of the character himself by a conclusion that is made from the events that happen later in the narrative. On seeing Mr. Henry, Claudia stated her opinion in a manner that altered the way the reader would negotiate with him, "We loved him. Even after what came later, there

was no bitterness in our memory of him" (Morrison 14). The linearity of the narrative is breached by a gap through which the effects and events of the past, being recollected in the present scenario, alter the future negotiations of the readers.

Morrison admitted that her intent in *The Bluest Eye* was to "break the narrative into parts that had to be reassembled by the reader" (Introduction x). These narrative gaps ensured that Morrison could dismantle the narrative only for it to be reassembled by the readers in their own nonlinear manners of existence with which they affiliate meaning to the text that was without dialogue but with context to the lack of chronology of the narrative, which impacted the interpretation that was bombarded on the characters of the narrative even without their committing a crime while they are introduced as offenders. Hayles asserted that a gap in the narrative is "never merely a void" (73), but is a "fold that conceals or a tear that reveals" (73). Such a tear in the narrative fabric is an aesthetic gap and "through this gap chaos pours" (73).

Clarissa's introspections of herself in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) are designed such by Virginia Woolf that they cause a rupture in the cognitive trajectory that rationality flaunts as a stable and deterministic. Woolf narrated about Clarrisa's introspect: "Perfect idiocy she knew (and now the policeman held up his hand) for no one was ever for a second taken in" (13). The usage of commas and other sentences to capture the fleeting state of Clarissa's mind could be used in the narrative, but Woolf asserted her organicity to enable the readers' in feeling the turbulent flow of Clarissa's cognition, the one each individual in a system holds. The random nature of comprehension that humans hold towards the events that unfurl around them is the natural state of being. It aids the interpretative audacity of the readers who wish to approach the aura of a character so intense and split in the situation she has been shaped by and for.

Slethaug explored the nuances of traffic and how each individual utterance of a car's movement alters the manner in which the other cars state their reality. Not only does, he says, "traffic piles up in unpredictable ways but their very design, meant to minimize disorder, often contributes to chaotic behaviour" (77). Despite the linear plans of engineers to decongest often intensify the traffic pile-ups, they also inflict a realisation in the traditional intellectuals that controlled circumstances, situations, and conditions do not always and eternally unfurl controlled outcomes and patterns in a system. Turbulent Flow is the embrace of turbulence in the narrative escape by various writers where they respect and admire the effect of dissipative turbulence in their narrative and how it sustains the character's dynamicity in the text.

Morrison calmly introduced the trajectorial conclusion of her narrative in

the prologue she supplied to *The Bluest Eye*. She accorded the readers with the knowledge that no marigolds bloomed in the fall of 1941 and Claudia narrated, "We thought, at the time, that it was because Pecola was having her father's baby that the marigolds did not grow" (3). An event that is vital in understanding the actuality of the text is delivered to the readers in a manner where the climax, in the context of the Aristotelian model, is nonlinearly situated in the introductory briefing as such. Claudia's perspective statement conjured a sense of pity and sympathy for Pecola and a sense of detest and contempt for her father. Normalcy for the readers is when they host these emotions towards the conclusion of the narrative. Such a breach in the narrative ensures that the novel is read always and already with a blue, painful eye igniting more concern towards the how rather than what occurs in a totalitarian system for which the writers provide an aesthetic expression of dissent.

Imposing incestuous inflictions on Pecola's father, Morrison hints at the development of characters through the context of Pecola's situation, while Pecola herself rarely claims a narrative space of dialogism. Morrison extended her audacity and submitted the end of the narrative at the beginning itself in order to sustain the blue eyes of the readers throughout the narrative when she created a rupture through the articulation of Claudia, "Nothing remains but Pecola and the unyielding earth. Cholly Breedlove is dead; our innocence too" (4). The destination of the narrative is already deduced for the reader and the emphasis, like any aesthetic expression and experiences, lays on the journey that is embarked upon after being unsettled by such turbulent fissures in the narrative that succumbed the readers to the conclusion while venturing the introduction itself.

Morrison accepted, "But since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how" (4) as she unfurled the consequentiality that led to the creation of Pecola and her tragedy through the hands of those who inflicted her with their version of reality and beauty rather than finding it in her. Morrison's intent of embarking Pecola as a mute essence moulded and shaped by the constraints of the society designs itself through the turbulence of the narrative. Hayles commented on the linearity of the narrative "When I return to the chapter's beginning with the foreknowledge of the end, I can see plainly enough that it was all there in the beginning, had I only known how to read it" (Hayles 67). Morrison folded the narrative in such a manner that the turbulence etched the knowledge of the end at the beginning of the narrative in order to attain the attention of the readers towards the causes and reasons for a character's misery rather than the culmination of her narrative as an individual. Pecola suffered is the fact that Morrison clarified, but the fictionalisation of the parameters with which her beauty was judged and rebuked remains the sole venture of the readers to explore through the rupture caused by Morrison.

Arthur Miller, in *Death of a Salesman*, fractured the stage settings and directions, and through these gaps, he wished to nourish the narrative flow. "The entire setting is wholly or, in some places, partially transparent" (7), he admitted about the setting in which he made his play flow. There is an apron in the front which "serves as the backyard as well as the locale of all Willy's imaginings" (7). The events of the past are mostly designated to this area and "whenever the action is in the present the actors observe the imaginary wall-lines, entering the house only through its door at the left" (7). However, "in the scenes of the past these boundaries are broken, and characters enter or leave a room by stepping 'through' a wall on to the forestage" (7). The complexity of the stage setting enabled him to harbour turbulence in his play without eternally insisting a dialogue to impose a Spatio-temporal shift in the events of the narrative.

The flow of events through these breaches of past and,nt enhance the subtle play of nonlinearity in the narrative which, in turn, intensifies the dynamics of the characters. Nonlinearity, as physicists observed in scientific models, interferes with the linear flow of factors and values, and the result of such interferences is not eternally catastrophic for the system or the elements within the system. The American dream is negotiated in the play by Miller with the emphasis on the split in an individual between the dream that is imposed through the articulations of billboards and advertisements, and the potency of the individual to be imaginative and dreamy. Willy regretted the present exclusively in the context of the past that he cherished as a salesman. Each moment and event in the present dwelled in him to create a presence of the past essences, which he endured and laments in the present.

Miller introduced the rupture in Willy's personality through the reminiscences he held of his son's fixing of his car when Biff was young and the present scenario where, in the present, Biff and Happy are upstairs from their father and discussing the rift that Biff has with his father. It is floated that Biff often made Willy proud through his acts of intelligence in the past that made Willy imagine a future for Biff as an impressive salesman like him. As Biff grew up, he diverged from the linear trajectory that his father anticipated out of him and that caused the lament in Willy who lamented the glorified past. While Biff and Happy are talking upstairs, Willy is downstairs and unaware that he is audible to his sons:

> HAPPY. You're not still sour on Dad, are you, Biff?
>
> BIFF. He's all right, I guess.
>
> WILLY. (underneath them, in the living-room). Yes, sir, eighty thousand miles -
> eighty-two thousand!

> BIFF. You smoking?
>
> HAPPY. (holding out a pack of cigarettes). Want one?
>
> BIFF (taking a cigarette). I can never sleep when I smell it.
>
> WILLY. What a simonizing job, heh! (Miller14)

Willy hosted a gap in his essentiality and that enhances the turbulent aspect of the narrative. The random leaps of cognition that caused Willy a sense of lament and regret ruptured his mind. It was represented through the stage setting and the flow of the narrative entirely for the audience to unravel the nonlinear cognitive leaps of a troubled mind much like theirs in empirical situations that they face eternally in their experiences of reality. Miller conceptualised that the gaps he wishes to provide for the narrative, through them chaos shall pour which shall aesthetically extend the debate and concern of modern human parameters of linear progress while being reduced to unaware elements in a system. Like the smooth pipe that can, without utmost obviousness, supply a happy and perfect flow, American dream progressed with a similar claim in the consciousness that adhered to their trust and belief in its claim. Willy was a consequence of the American dream, and he was turbulent even though the claim of the dream was to bring linearity and happiness to the element who wished to reach and arrive at it.

Miller comprehended the aspect of nonlinearity that shielded an element through the afflictions of a system. The conditional inability of Willy to negotiate the contours of turbulence that bombard his mind causes him to be troubled and be in agony throughout the narrative. The flow of narrative depicts the angst of his personality and extends the aesthetic claim of nonlinearity as an embrace of existence rather than its dissipation. Willy was unwilling to embrace the divergent trajectories of life that his sons had chosen in their lives. Without compromises, Willy wished everything to be circular in motion and right in the linear trajectory of existence. He denied the aspect of life which is dynamically unstable in nature and defiles being routinely in the behaviour of any sort.

A puncture in the narrative floated the essence of Willy to a realm where a woman is placed in the context of his wife, Linda. The presence of the woman gapes through a dialogue that Willy uttered as a praise for his wife while she was present before him:

> WILLY. You're the best there is, Linda, you're a pal, you know that? On the road - on the road I want to grab you sometimes and just kiss the life out of you . . . There's so much I want to make for-
>
> THE WOMAN. Me? You didn't make me, Willy. I picked you.
>
> WILLY (pleased). You picked me?

> THE WOMAN (Who is quite proper-looking, Willy's age). I did. (Miller 29)

In the linear trajectory of the narrative, Willy's lament and guilt cause a rupture through which the relevance of the woman in the past is turbulently negotiated through the emphasis of her aura being more than that of Linda in the present. The aversion of asserting a flashback by Miller is crucial in understanding the Turbulent Flow of the narrative. It is a knitting factor through which emotions and feelings are associated. The ruptures cause the simultaneous existence of the past in the present and vice versa. A human being is never consciously devoid of his/her past, and the organic nuances of his son caused turbulence in the stabilised and perfect existence of Willy. Willy, pleasing the woman in the stage presence of Linda, etches a zone of polarity between the past and the present that are rarely distinct features and attributes in his mind. While being seated in the dining area, Willy is placed in front of the audience as a voice awaiting affiliation with context. He is heard advising Biff to wait for schooling to be over:

> Then when you're all set, there'll be plenty of girls for a boy like you. (He smiles broadly at a kitchen chair.) That so? The girls pay for you? (He laughs.) Boy you must really be makin' a hit.

> (WILLY is gradually addressing - physically - a point off stage, speaking through the wall of the kitchen, and his voice has been rising in volume to that of a normal conversation). (Miller 21)

The knitting of two varied stands in the moments of observation by the reader causes a sympathetic blend of the past and the future. To enhance and extend the turbulence of the narrative, Miller depicted the entry and exit of Biff and Happy through the walls as well, signifying the past essences of their character. Young Biff asked Willy, while looking in the direction of the car offstage, "How's that, pop, professional?" (22). The readers witness the presence of Biff and Happy in the past of Willy not merely as abstractions but actual interactions that intensify the unsettled attributions of Willy's shattering cognition caused by the deviation from the American dream.

The trigger of the pair of stockings folds the two women in the assertively unaffected flow of Willy. On seeing Linda mending the stockings, Willy bursts in disappointment, "Will you stop mending stockings? At least while I'm in the house. It gets me nervous. I can't tell you. Please" (58), but Miller breached the stage to let the chaos pour for the audience to witness:

> THE WOMAN. (He [Willy] suddenly grabs her and kisses her roughly.) You kill me.
>
> And thanks for the stockings. I love a lot of stockings. Well, good night.
>
> WILLY. Good night. And keep your pores open!
>
> THE WOMAN. Oh, Willy! (The WOMAN bursts out laughing, and LINDA's laughter blends in. The WOMAN disappears into the dark. Now the area at the kitchen table brightens. LINDA is sitting where she was at the kitchen table, but now is mending a pair of her silk stockings.)
>
> LINDA. You are, Willy. The handsomest man. You've got no reason to feel that.
>
> WILLY (coming out of the WOMAN'S dimming area and going
>
> over to LINDA). I'll make it all up to you, Linda, I'll -
>
> LINDA. There's nothing to make up, dear. You're doing fine, better than -
>
> WILLY (noticing her mending). What's that?
>
> LINDA. Just mending my stockings. They're so expensive.
>
> WILLY (angrily, taking them from her). I won't have you mending stockings in this
>
> house! Now throw them out! (LINDA puts the stockings in her pocket). (Miller 30)

The nipping visual of Linda stitching the damaged stockings also weaved the strand of Willy's guilt. Merging laughters foreground the split in the reactions of Willy on the same ornament. Miller's fissured turbulence in the character of Willy, being divergent and convergent of past and present, has narrative references and affectuations, and he aesthetically insisted the turbulence neither through the dialogues of the characters which narrated the gap nor through the distinct flashback involving the characters. He asserted the presence of the past in the absence of the present, and that ruptured the narrative.

The aesthetic capacity of chaos that has been endured by literature sans a theory for literature is in itself a journey towards chaos. Literary texts that embark beyond the spatio-temporal praxis of existence in which they conceptualised owe their survival to certain, willing or unwilling, chaotic essences that sustain the text to be read and reread over the ages and regions. Turbulent Flow is an audacious attempt by various writers to console the cognitive itches of the readers and ensure them of the capacity of meaning-making even when

there exists a lack of linearity. The scientific field of enquiry in the twentieth-century encompassed the divergent views of reality. Literature, however, has articulated the marginal stances of existence from time immemorial to be empathetic, sensitive, and sensible towards the empirical dynamicity of individuals about whom it is about.

The providence of hope is eternally towards humanity when the purpose of literature is sought. In attaining such a sense of belonging, writers moved towards the associative capacity of the readers. They comprehended the capacity of the readers to relate to the nonlinear leaps of the narrative exclusively to provide the imaginative scape innumerable individuals host in their consciousness even when conditioned impeccably by the linear mannerisms of life. Chaos in literature adheres to the form and design that causes a literary work to be existent. It is often beyond the readers and the writers themselves. It is about humanity.

Empirical experiences of humanity may be curtailed as abnormal if not belonging to the traditional linearity of the system in which an individual is born and raised. Organic writers accommodate the leap of chaotic endeavours within the text to perforate the taut morality of existence that defies the dissipative agency of cognition and imagination to be existent exclusively by claiming them as immoral and decadent to the human state of existence. The immorality of chaos, as defended by physicists as well, is an unhinged perspective that has more to do with the morality of the self rather than the morality of the other. The turbulent narrative may be offensive to the practitioners and protectors of the linear flow of narrative, but it is dependent exclusively on the person who witnesses it as what.

Chaos theory in literature celebrates the lack of totalitarian fixity and reality exclusively to relate it to the dynamics of empirical life and not to the diagrams of a liquid boiling in a vessel in perfect circles splitting right in the middle at the surface. Reality is raw, ugly, and thawing with imperfections, because the fissures of dissipation are not eternally departing towards immorality but often a different morality that is subjective, highly, to the parameters with which consciousness visits them. An individual's morality may be posed as immorality in a system dislocated by time and space.

Chaos, thus, emphasises on the organicity of experience that may not always already be encapsulated in the terminology of expression that is flaunted by the isolation of morality in any system. One should, as one must, imagine chaos as a dialogical embrace of stability and instability with the intent to celebrate the fluidity of static variables and consonants of life. It may be ugly at first, and in the last as well, but then what is beauty? One must ponder.

Works Cited and Consulted

Gleick, James. *Chaos: The Amazing Science of Unpredictable*. Vintage Books, 1998.

Hayles N. Katherine. *Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science*. Cornell University Press, 2018.

Miller, Arthur. *Death of a Salesman*. Penguin Classics, 2015.

Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. Vintage, 2016.

Slethaug, Gordon. *Beautiful Chaos: Chaos Theory and Metachaotics in Recent American Fiction*. State University of New York Press, 2001.

— ∗ —

Between Hammer and Pen: Variegated Hues of Gurdial Singh in his Autobiography *Kya Janu Mai Kaun*

Jaishree Kapur

Ever since the Socratic dictum of "Know thyself", St. Augustine's supplication in *Confessions*" I beseech you, God, to show my full self to myself", W. B. Yeats's claim "I begin to study the only self that I can know, myself, and to wind the thread upon the pern again" (*Mythologies* 364), Mahatma Gandhi's appeal in the introduction of *Story of my Experiments with Truth*, "What I want to achieve, what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years — is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha", and the emergence of subaltern autobiographies that attempt to assert one's marginal self, the genre of autobiography has traversed a long way to self-explore, self-understand and self-construct.

The notion of self-knowledge or *atma jnana* which has been one of the core elements of Indian Metaphysics is usually what the genre of autobiography intends to capture. Within the western literary tradition, the traces of modern life writing or autobiography that emerged during the sixteenth and seventeenth-century emphasised on the notion of self as a "unique historical identity" (Smith 21) with a "conscious awareness of the singularity of each individual life" (Gusdorf 29). However, while the high modernist and New Critics gave privilege to a knowable self that is a unified entity, the post structuralists and postmodernists emphasized creating versions of self as fragmented, de-centred and unknowable. Psychoanalysts such as Jacques Lacan described self in terms of a continual flux that is both transformational and discontinuous, C. J. Jung extended his arguments to explicate human entity as a process instead of a settled state of being. Interestingly, within the genre of autobiography, the possibility of human identity construction is contingent upon the notion of the narrative discourse of the person-protagonist. If a narrative discourse according to theorists like Mikhail Bakhtin views human beings as always in the process of making themselves, as rejecting any definitive or fixed version of identity, then life narratives too, become open, unending and available for multiple interpretations. It becomes pertinent to recall the famous lines of Bulleh Shah at this point:

> *Na Mei Mullah hu Masjid Ka*
> *Maslak Kufr Nahihai Mera*
> *Saathi Mai Nahi Ache Buro Ka*
> *Mai firoon na mai musa*
> *Bulla Kya Janu Mai Kaun* (Epigraph, Singh)

These lines appear as an epigraph of Gurdial Singh's autobiography and the phrase "Kya Janu Mei Kaun" indicates that the author identifies himself with the philosophy of Bulleh Shah that is premised on the rejection of any fixed, compartmentalised and rigid labelling of his identity within a prescribed framework. This refrain from limiting his identity allows his readers to witness multiple facets of the author during the journey of his life narrative. Gurdial Singh clearly underlines the objective behind writing an autobiography: he separates the artists or authors from the common populace to underline how the former are born with a "streak of madness" because of which every incident leaves an indelible impact on them. By employing a couplet from Sant Kabir, "*Sukhiya sab sansar hai, khaveaursove; Dukhiya bas Kabir hai, jage aur rove*" (Singh 358) he underlines how a "thin-skinned" artist will continue to "stay awake and weep" till the time suffering continues in the world. Other than the major and minor incidents of his life, he has been born into a particular family, a particular cultural landscape and a particular society—all these factors that constitute his location has been the source of inspiration for his writing. It is perhaps pertinent to remind ourselves that by the time he finished writing the second part of his autobiography, he was conferred with the prestigious Padma Shri award in 1998 and the highest literary honour, the Jnanpith award in 1999. It is remarkable that throughout his autobiography, he doesn't mention a single award or honour as if they do not hold much relevance to his journey. However, he realises that an autobiography is written when a certain section of readers is so invested in a personality that they have an urge to know the individual responsible for creating these literary works. As a skilled author who is highly aware of the writing style employed in this genre, he almost theorises the interplay of fact and fiction in the following words:

> In this sense, autobiography is an amalgam of half-truths and fiction. First of all, the author of the autobiography selects those incidents that influenced him the most. Then he evaluates the literary significance of those incidents. These two steps are easy. But the next step is rather difficult. At this step, in addition to evaluating the importance of past incidents, he has to recreate them from the perspective of his present views, feelings and attitudes. It has to be done in such a way that, while retaining the factual status of those incidents from the past, the added fictional elements may give an artistic form to the particular event—a form which augments the perception of deeper meanings of life and leaves a special impression on the mind of the reader. (Singh 5)

His autobiography has been divided into two sections, *Pehli Dehi* and *Dusri Dehi*, indicative of the two phases of his life. The first phase resembles a

memoir of past incidents, anecdotes, places and people that came in contact with the author during his formative years. Interestingly, though the author is the narrator here, he is not the protagonist. Instead of him, the people associated with him are highlighted while he maintains the position of an acute observer. He reminiscences about these episodes as several "micro-narratives", a technique he followed throughout his literary works. The transition from childhood to adolescent years also alters the narrative strategy as the focus gradually comes closer to the person who tries to live away from his parents, who is attracted by the opposite sex, who relishes the little moments in the company of his friends and bear the pangs of separation from them in the wake of communal disharmony. During the second phase of his life journey, he first becomes a skilled blacksmith and carpenter and then makes a departure from his family occupation. Documenting the personal account of his struggles, scarcity and growth through the disposition of his skills and knowledge, he becomes both the narrator as well as the protagonist in this phase, underlining in other words, the completion of his transition from one phase to another. Between these two phases of his life, he mentions a well-renowned Punjabi proverb:

> *Bandia teria dus dehia,*
> *Iko gayee viha, nau kidher gayia*
> [Man, life has ten phases fine,
> The first one blew you away
> Where have gone the other nine?]
> [As quoted in the English translation] (Singh 185)

Out of the ten phases of a person's life that the Punjabi folk mentions, he suggests that he has been able to lead only two phases in his life where although he has changed his situation by becoming a writer and teacher in the second phase, even at the age of sixty-seven (when he writes this autobiography), he has not been able to achieve the physical comforts and a certain level of contentment. Despite his struggles, he explains his autobiography in an interview to the famous Hindi critic Dr. Vinod Shahi by saying, "The way life is vast and multi-layered; it is also variegated and differentiated. I have tried to portray it in all its variety and multiplicity, as best as I could" (Singh 53). One of the ways in which this 'variety' and 'multiplicity' is depicted by Gurdial Singh involves different facets of his personality that unravel in front of his readers throughout the story of his life. Furthermore, an individual's life narrative is never completely her/his 'own' in the sense that it is always conditioned by the cultural context that has shaped a person. The effect of the cultural landscape of Punjab can be easily witnessed in his autobiography.

Gurdial Singh was born on 10th January 1933 in a village called Bhaini Fateh near Jaito into a family of Ramgarhia Sikhs. At the onset of the

autobiography, readers come across the naïve carefree world of a child who has been deeply attached to the culture and soil. Going back in time, the author recalls how merely at the age of three, he used to sing Punjabi couplets in front of his friends and a few years later, revel in inventing new games in the lap of nature. The young Gurdial also grew up listening to the stories of his *taya*, which impacted him so much so that they would lose their form, become fluid and intermingle with each other in his dreams. As a child, he had the ability to convert real incidents into convincing stories in front of his friends as in the case of his *tayi's* fits where she cursed the *chowdharies* (which has caste, class and gender implications). This preoccupation of employing real life instances as a catalyst to ignite one's active imagination has been employed by him throughout in his literary oeuvre. His genius as a storyteller can be traced not only from the manner in which he suffuses his life narrative with myths, customs and anecdotesbut also with characters telling stories to each other. Furthermore, the cultural stories rooted in the traditional narratives of Punjab like that of Jani-chor, Roop-Basant, Nal-Damyanti and Sohni-Mahiwal are scattered over his autobiography. In the article, "Narratives of National Identity as Group Narratives: Patterns of Interpretive Cognition" (2001), Carol Fleisher Feldman explicates profound connection between our personal stories, cultural stories and the governing thoughts behind the larger fabric of the narrative itself. The vital role that culture has played in shaping Gurdial Singh as an individual can be witnessed from passing references to the River Jhelum or the Malwai dialect spoken by several characters throughout the Hindi translation of the autobiography. By extensively employing quotes from Gurbani, Quissas, local songs, folk stories, couplets, idioms, local phrases and anecdotes, Gurdial Singh underlines what Brockmeier and Freeman calls, "the folk psychological canon" (Freeman 288). His narrative is replete with ideas from Baba Sheikh Farid Shakrganj, Guru Nanak Dev, Bulleh Shah and Amrita Pritam, and highlights how the vastness of Punjabi literary tradition has influenced his literary genius.

By the virtue (vice?) of being born in a family Ramgarhia Sikhs, who were considered 'backward' artisan clans due to their traditional occupation as carpenters, he occupied a marginal status in the social hierarchy, an impediment he endeavoured to transcend throughout his life. It is because of his traditional family occupation that his name was struck off from the school when he was merely in the sixth standard, he was made to work for more than fourteen hours in a day as an apprentice to his father and hold thrice the amount of weight of his body on his shoulders. Going down the memory lane, he recalls how ashamed he felt while trying to sell menial wooden items on the road and sits in absolute passivity as tears roll down his eyes when he is caught by one of his school friends. When at a tender age of thirteen, he was burdened with the family responsibilities as a husband and son; as a father, it became even more

difficult for him to work laboriously as a carpenter or to make iron trunks. In a documentary produced by Sahitya Akademi, K. Satchidanandan underlines the relevance of hard physical labour in the literary corpus of the author which empowers his characters to revolt against the injustices enmeshed in the social system and this emphasis on hard physical labour is a direct consequence of the location of the author. Readers witness how his frail shoulders were not only burdened because of the family responsibilities and economic deprivation resulting from extreme physical labour, but more importantly, the work also lacked any sense of honour or dignity. To add to his dismal worldthe physical and emotional pain suffered by him were considered mere excuses of a slacker by his father. The constant tantrums and societal pressure created by his father at one point even made him feel suicidal. His decision of discontinuing the work of his father on the one hand and rekindling his lost love for education under the guidance of his school Headmaster Madan Mohan Sharma on the other, allowed him to take a departure from his family occupation as well as 'carve' a different course of life for himself. It is pertinent to note that the rejection of his traditional family occupation also has implication in terms of caste as occupation plays a major role to keep the caste hierarchies intact. In his article, "Gurdial Singh: A Storyteller Extraordinaire" (2012), Dr. Rana Nayar opines: "An inveterate progressive, he subscribes to the Darwinian notion of continuous, uninterrupted struggle with the environment/circumstances and also to the positivism of the evolutionary principle minus its ruthless competitiveness…" (Nayar 13.)

This observation becomes relevant to understand Gurdial Singh's entire life story too as this 'continuous' and 'uninterrupted' struggle continues even when he rejects his traditional family occupation as a carpenter. It is noteworthy to recall that he left the work of a labourer after single-handedly finishing the task of three months in one month and generating five hundred rupees for the family. However, even after struggling to clear the matric exam after a gap of many years and getting appointed as a primary school teacher, he managed to procure only sixty rupees for the family, a paltry sum that led him to indulge in translation projects, churning out a translator in him which reminds the readers of his commitment towards evolving irrespective of the circumstances. In an interview to the Malayalam writer, Dr. Arzoo, he reveals that he did not translate his works due to some external inspiration but because he earned sixty rupees as a teacher and "…it was difficult for me to run the house" with it (Singh 71). Even when he was appointed as a lecturer, he earned three hundred rupees which were inadequate to meet the higher educational needs of three children along with their marriages, an impetus that shaped him to view the 'microscopic visions' of life and fostered him to become a short story writer in 1955 and a well-known novelist by 1968. His teaching, writing and translation projects kept proceeding simultaneously. He retired from Punjabi University, Patiala as a

reader in 1995. In an interview to Dr. Vinod Shahi he asserts, "If I had not wielded a hammer, chisel and axe, I wouldn't have had so much of physical strength as I have now. And probably, in that case, I wouldn't have wielded my pen with the same sort of force" (Singh 50). It is because of this arduousness that he has been able to garner such scholarly acclaim.

In the essay, "Metaphysics and Narrative: Singularities and Multiplicities of Self" (2001), Rom Harré explicates multiplicity of self in the second category which is continuously changing, not merely through "skills and powers" that might become stable but because, he argues, "knowledge is always being augmented" (Harré 62) and reveals how acquiring a new manual skill requires learning which leads to changes in the nervous system of the learner which constantly moulds the self. Gurdial Singh not merely acquired the skill of holding a hammer and a pen but his childhood artistic impulses later manifested itself through the immense mental satisfaction received after holding the paintbrush tool as he craved to spill myriad hues on the canvas—a metaphor that can be employed to understand the canvas of his life as well. Unfortunately, due to the economic constraints, he could not incur the cost which painting as a hobby demanded but nevertheless, managed to somehow give private classes of painting to students and make portraits of Gurudwaras for the school inspector, therefore fulfilling his desire to paint while simultaneously evolving himself. Another dimension of his personality is revealed in front of the readers as he unfolds how he learnt another art form by Dr. Bhatti who used to make idols from plaster of Paris which fascinated him to the extent that he himself sculpted Tolstoy's bust and a beautiful naked woman. Readers are gradually acquainted with different shades of an artist in his personality from his formative to the mature years.

Interestingly, within his autobiographical journey, the motif of journey itself recurs throughout his narrative. He can be witnessed as somebody who constantly travels—to physical places in search of work against which he gets insufficiently paid, to teach, to training programmes, to find the burnt houses of lost friends in the wake of partition of Punjab and ultimately, in his memories that keep revisiting him from time to time throughout the journey of his life. While reading his autobiography, one observes that he not only revisits his memory lane, but often juggles between incidents of the past that renders him sentimental, anxious or sometimes even gloomy, but he doesn't shy away from accepting his feelings in the present and therefore, consistently forges the journey.

In the documentary titled, *Kalm Da Safar* (2020), Gurdial Singh mentions the vital role that his teacher Madan Mohan Sharma played in shaping him into the person that he eventually became. Sharma painstakingly brought Gurdial

back to academics, took care of him when he fell ill before his matric exam, warned him against continuing his temporary teaching job at a private institute and instead asked him to go for higher studies. Calling himself Gurdial's 'foster-father', he even asked one of his students for a job for Gurdial. Gurdial Singh, in turn, played the role of a true disciple as he passed on his joining letter into the hands of his teacher with eyes full of gratitude and tears.

While his teacher and *taya* were his support system during the difficult times, in a few deeply moving moments in the autobiography, he recalls how his family as an institution failed him as none of the relatives, not even his father and mother came to ask about their whereabouts in years. The incident where his wife offers her *Saggi Phul*, the traditional emblem of prestige for a woman, to be sold to buy milk for the children is marked by his emotional and psychological turbulence. Instances such as these left an indelible mark on his psyche and when he employed them as inspiration for his work (short story *Saggi Phul* in this case), he gave voice to the larger marginalized sections of the society. This lifelong preoccupation with portraying the world of marginalized has been clearly borne out of his own personal experiences. In fact, his entire literary oeuvre reflects his deep commitment as a 'critical realist', a category borrowed from György Lukács that he willingly aligns himself with. His most acclaimed novel, *Marhi Da Deeva* (1968), became a landmark work in the history of Punjabi literature for its successful attempt to throw light on the suffering of the low caste sections of the society which jolted the consciousness of its readers as much as his autobiography does. The novel has been adapted into an award-winning national film with the same name by Surinder Singh in 1989.
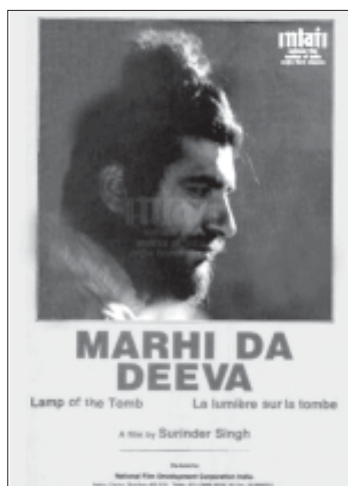

Figure 1. Poster of *Marhi Da Deeva* (1989).
Courtesy: National Film Archives of India.

Figure 2. Collage of stills from *Marhi Da Deeva* (1989).
Courtesy: National Film Archives of India.

In his autobiography, the personal becomes a pretext to unravel the collective as he creates such a minute picture of the social, religious, political and historical milieu; he also becomes a critic of the prejudices prevalent in the society. Being a miniaturist, he delves into the details of stifling caste prejudices, of malpractices by *sevadars* within Gurudwara because of which he could not continue to sing as a *raagi* in *keertans*, of political parties murdering their own party members as a consequence of religious bigotry, of the effect of the second world war on ordinary men in villages, of the nostalgia of a lost 'Lahore' in the wake of Partition and of the gory details of slaughtering in the name of religion on each side. It is beyond the scope of this paper to consider the entire background against which he paints his autobiography but it becomes imperative to reiterate that his social interactions and an acute observation of injustices impelled him to portray the world of the marginalized and oppressed sections of the society in his literary works.

NS Tasneem in "Tradition and experiment in Punjabi Novel" (1974) mentions, "A streak of sadness runs through all his creations...They [his characters] have become hypersensitive in an unkind world. They are full of passion, anger, hatred and jealousy but deep down in their souls there stirs an intense longing for the soothing touch of love" (14). In a similar vein, against the personal crisis and barbaric external world that the author creates in his

autobiography, some of the most appealing moments that present a "soothing touch of love" appear through simplest humane gestures which had indelible impressions on him. When he is reminded of his *taya's* words at a life threatening moment, when his *tayi* slides twenty five rupees into his pocket without saying a word about his financial condition, when Sharma has tears in his eyes after looking at his joining letter, when a comfortable silence prevails between the husband and wife in the times of crisis as well as in peace, when he throws his little girl up in the air who starts clapping in a moment of ecstasy, when he tastes *desighee*s weets as a primary school teacher after a lapse of many years, are some of the many experiences of Gurdial Singh that forms the essence of the person that he was.

Singh had been able to mould himself into several roles without conforming to any one of them and simultaneously document these experiences with an objective eye of the writer. Such an endeavour is contingent upon the ability to surrender the pomposity of the self that manifests itself in terms of ego. In the words of the author, "Until a writer gets rid of his ego, he cannot reach the depth of his own experience or his context. An ego is like a stone wall beyond which you cannot see anything" (Singh 52). Randal Collin in *Theoretical Sociology* (1988) asserts that "We are compelled to have an individual self, not because we actually have one but because social interaction requires us to act as if we do" (256). Keneth Allan's article, "A Postmodern Self; A theoretical Consideration" analyses Collins arguments on multiplicity of self by claiming, "people play multiple and fleeting roles at any one given time and that those roles may be played in double fashion, simultaneously enacting and distancing one's self from the role. Thus, multiple, fluctuating, and situational selves is normal" (3). Interestingly, his life itself can be understood as a mosaic of 'variegated hues' which is seen differently by different people at different junctures of his life. Besides playing the role of a son, husband and father in his personal life, he became a future *raagi* in a Gurudwara for his uncle, a mere slacker for his father, a skilled labourer for his *taya*, an emotional support for Sarla and Pushpa, a disciple and a son for Sharma, a traveller for elderly people yearning for a lost Lahore, a lost friend for Basheera in the wake of Partition, a painter for the school inspector, a sculptor for Prof. Bhatti, a translator for the publisher of Gorky, an invaluable Professor at Patiala University and one of the greatest writers of our times. He is at once all of it and none of it, leaving vast interpretive possibilities for his readers without conforming himself to any singular unidimensional identity. Commenting on his autobiography in an interview to Dr Vinod Shahi he says, ". . . you must figure out for yourself as to what kind of person I am" (Singh 50). This reminds the readers to think more about the title of his autobiography: *Kya Jaanu Mei Kaun*.

Works Cited and Consulted

Allan, Kenneth. "A Postmodern Self: A theoretical Consideration." *Quarterly Journal of Ideology*, Vol. 20 (1 & 2), 1997, pp. 3-24.

Arsoo. "Author: Face to Face with Dr. Arsoo." *Gurdial Singh: A Reader*, edited by Rana Nayar, Sahitya Akademi, 2012, pp. 66-81.

Collins, Randall. *Theoretical Sociology*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988.

Feldman, Carol Fleisher. "Narratives of National Identity as Group Narratives: Patterns of Interpretive Cognition." *Narrative and Identity Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture,* edited by Jens Brockmeier and Donal Carbaugh, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001, pp. 129-144.

Gandhi, Mahatma. *My Experiments with Truth*. Amazon Reads, 2019.

Harré, Rom. "Metaphysics and narrative: Singularities and Multiplicities of Self." *Narrative and Identity Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture,* edited by Jens Brockmeier and Donal Carbaugh, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001, pp. 59-74.

Freeman, Mark. "From Substance to Story: Narrative, Identity, and the Reconstruction of the Self." *Narrative and Identity Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture,* edited by Jens Brockmeier and Donal Carbaugh, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001, pp. 283-298.

Gusdorf, Georges. "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography." *Autobiography as Fiction: The Example of Stop Time*, edited by John Haegert, John Hopkins University Press, Volume 33, Number 4, Winter 1987, pp. 621-638.

Gurdial Singh. Dir. G. S. Chani. Premiered 20 September 2015. Accessed on 30 June 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNTm-rX7M9k&t=3s.

Kalm Da Safar. Dir. Amar Gholia. Premiered 15 April 2020. Accessed on 30 June 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wC4D3eMiVDc.

Nayar, Rana. "Gurdial Singh: A Storyteller Extraordinaire." *Gurdial Singh: A Reader*, edited by Rana Nayar, Sahitya Akademi, 2012, pp. 8-29.

Shahi, Vinod. "Author: Face to Face with Vinod Shahi" *Gurdial Singh: A Reader*, edited by Rana Nayar, Sahitya Akademi, 2012, pp. 47- 68.

Singh, Gurdial. *Kya Janu Mai Kaun*. Unistar, 2011.

Singh, Gurdial. *Two Lives of a Man*, translated by Paramjit Singh Ramana, National Book Trust India, 2010.

Smith, Sidonie. *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self- Representation*. Indiana University Press, 1987.

Tasneem, N. S. "Tradition & Experiment in Punjabi Novel". *Indian Journal*, Vol. 17, No 1/2 (January – June 1974) Sahitya Academy, 1974, pp. 12-24. Yeats, William Butler. *Mythologies*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

—— ∗ ——

Tailing the Tales of Love: Reading Rendition as an Extension of Imagery in the Select Compositions of S.D. Burman

Chetna Nassa

Humanity is universal and brings people together, more than religion ever did. It is needed to sustain and nurture people through the permutations of life. It becomes essential to address the ebb and flow of life and never allows the stench of stagnant ideologies to gain any degree of importance. The select songs through their lyrics and inherent melody present humanity as the ultimate design of love. Ranging from affection to passion, from the spontaneous expression of embedded emotions to the pain of a yearning heart, each song has a journey of its own. Enjoying the sombreness, splendour and textual grace, compositions of S.D. Burman are infused with joy and sorrow as elements of a composite whole.

The alliance of the two cultural surges of his parental origin, combined with the hues of the mysticism of folk songs, rural and *bhatiyali,* nurtured by the indulgent setting and environment of East Bengal and Tripura, aided Burman's cultural growth and musical exploration. In the restful night, when the flickering birds were lulled beside the stunted trees, knotted in their slumber, there was a sense of tranquillity in people's mind which made them look for not resources or relief but for silence and truth, or the flute they had heard before in the meadows nearby, as the lonely farmer aligned himself with a tree, having earned his day's labour, the song comforting his wearied self. It is music, rhythmic like the pulsating loom, like his heart entwining the chords with his wisdom that would foretell his prospect on a journey to attain his God in music.

Young Sachin, later celebrated as the genius Burman Da, sitting alone at night would smile at this moment of epiphany and let all music present around him, the chatter of birds, glistening waves of Durgabari, the unfurling ragas in his structured nursing of classical music, and his defying chase in the mud spattered lanes after the Baul singers nurture his soul, for it was an expedition to absorb generously what his surroundings had to offer in the form of music. The natives of rural Bengal had in their own way sown the seeds of happiness and suffering into the rustic tunes of the mystical colloquialism. With the newly formed understanding of music, attuned with the ideals of Indian customs, classical music with a fine blend of rusticity of folk tunes from the muddy lanes

by the Durgabari shore, the artistic quality and aesthetic susceptibility of S. D. Burman's music then received wide attention and unchained him from the confines of the structured practice of classical music of his royal lineage.

Life's longing for itself — that is what a fine piece of music reflects through its harmony. Hindu mythology offers the divine concept of *Darshan* which is not just seeing a particular person or visiting a religious place but experiencing of the reality of an idea, something higher and beyond, defined by its aspects of eternity, sublimity, infinity, and absoluteness; the substantial and the internal in absolute connect— that is *Darshan*. Man will not find God if he touches a specific stone, but he has the ability to connect with something or nothing, sizable or ordinary, rare or every day, connecting with every inch of space and reverting. Even a breeze blowing — what does it do to the person feeling it and the entire space around, that is what is so magical about human life and human spirit — a slight bump, faith, an acknowledgment of humanity and being, time and its constant change, that is the path towards a divine cosmic reality, a harmonious totality that leads to *Darshan*.

Composing all of his tunes through humming and murmuring of melody and lyrics to himself, he would respond to his music with the emotional inspiration of the moment when alone. Enriched by the sacredness of these melodies, these excerpts from the narrative of his life stated above, trace the historicity of the institution that S. D. Burman was. The paper is an attempt at tailing the tales of love in its variant forms through the study of selective compositions and renditions of the legend S. D. Burman, where his rendition becomes the extension of imagery in the songs.

Music, when played using an instrument, creates its own energy, a continuous motion, which does not stop in an instance when the harmony moves back to bass. So to balance the harmony of the entire piece *coda* is used. An Italian word with its literal translation as 'tail', *coda* means an end piece of something. For musical purposes, coda is required to reflect on the major portion of the movement in some new way, like insightful commentaries, dramatic reverse, or for acquiring a more harmonious ending.

S. D. Burman's rendition of his selective songs such as "*Sun Mere Bandhu Re*" from *Sujata* (1959) or "*O Re Manjhi*" from *Bandini* (1963) or "*Wahan Kaun Hai Tera*" from *Guide* (1965) and "*Safal Hogi Teri Aradhana*" from *Aradhana* (1969) majorly deals with the female protagonists and their varied emotions. These songs are like the *coda* in the narrative of the respective films where the rendition itself becomes important, elevating the entire composition, and also balancing the storyline of the film. It mitigates the tangent, thus altering the curvature of the story. With an autonomous standing of their

own, these selective numbers would act as a fulcrum and change the entire story of the film or steer it in a new direction like in *Sujata* and *Aradhana* or act as a climactic backdrop in *Bandini* or foretelling the fate of man in the film *guide*.

A melody that breaks the barriers of the mundane and moves towards harmony of the uncertain to grapple with the randomness of the concept of love, the paper also traces the flow of this traveller; addressing the question of what makes S. D. Burman's rendition, a medium of interpretation with an expression of the idea of love in its varied forms that is comprehensive yet generic shall be the core attempt of this work. Studying the selected songs, their narratives, composition and rendition, where nature was a constant presence to inspire yet be a listener and to communicate through its various elements. A poetic landscape offers itself most willingly to an interpretation as a symbolising facet of man's inner being, where these stars and the river and the moon are but the agents of the divine force of nature that is ever-present as a companion for this unquenched soul as he wanders through the exotic landscape where love is ever-present.

Starting with the fundamental concept of love and analytically exploring the three stages of evolution of the concept of love through the human contours as variables, participants and evolving entities, the analysis in terms of its hypothesis moves from concrete to abstract, i.e., from being in love, the trajectory of love and the experimental abstractions as an evolving concept of love. A rebel is one who's randomly dissociated with the norms and the normative love, as a human manifest is redundant semiology of defined relationships and thus, normative. On the other hand, experimental love is random and thus, abstract.

Various forms of love and the evolving idea of the lover-beloved surface when dealing with the selected songs and their context in the respective films. Sujata is the wild, fleeting soul whose path is hindered by the obstacles of social ill such as inequality yet, in contrast to this hierarchy, in her expression of love through the song, we hear a sense of equality of emotional intimacy in the relationship of man and woman where the lover is not just a saintly figure but a friend (*bandhu*), a soul mate (*mitwa*), who is also a constant companion in this journey of life (*saathi*).

When a composer and a musician of his stature experiments with the attained knowledge of music and gives it an expression of thought and musicality, it is on the level of ideological elevation that the maestro traverses through the depths of knowledgeable oceans, thus finding the most precious of pearls. The dilemma that comes along her *birha* finds its root in the displeasure and restlessness that surface due to the distance:

243

Mann ki kitaab se tum, mera naam hi mita dena
Gun to na tha koi bhi, avgun mere bhula dena
Mujhe aj ki bida ka, marke bhi rehta intezaar. (Tiwari 31)

Philosophy and poetry, as understood, are not opposed to each other, as Keats establishes about beauty being truth (philosophy) and truth resembling beauty in its varied facets (poetry). The conceptual whole that is formed with no dualities in a synoptic idea that is formed which brings together all terms and relations is a ground for spiritual vision. There is a constant struggle to reach from the finite to the infinite, aiming at the spiritual core of beauty on earth that strives for the beauty of the divine. Moving towards individualised reality or common reality from personal angles, philosophy aims to resolve and concretise, while poetry aims to infuse and strive for abstraction.

Music and poetry attune our soul to the world. Aside from these native influences on his music, there was an individualised philosophy and personal interiority in Burman Da's music that blended many kinds and shades of love, and revealed their harmonic interplay, as of light and shadow, or of shifting colours. These diverse expressions of devotion, versified or deciphered through music, often overlap in these songs, but the moments of creative inspiration are often recognised as a site for aesthetic offering to the divine or a dialogue with it, though more often it was a motivational striving for the journey to achieve a purpose beyond the personal.

In profundity of the entailed emotion and sincerity of expression, they are matchless when Shailendra combines in his lyrical verses the fiery imagination and poetic intensity of the romantic sense of beauty. Yet in their rhythmic lyrical flights, they never fail to remember the world and its needs. His songs sing of love, chanting tranquillity and serenity, calmness and mystical solace.

Sensual and devotional forms when combined in the unified state of love, the songs that celebrated this love grew as much in subtleness, as they grew in complexity. In these poignant tales of love, one could trace the desire to give oneself and the anguish of not being able to give oneself like in *Bandini*, "*Mere saajan hai us paar, mein mann maar hun iss paar…*" or shades of separation and sublimation of that pain when we hear wistfulness about love lost through death or estrangement; we get a sense of love's deathlessness in one's own memory-filled mind as in *Aradhana*, "*Safal hogi teri aradhana, kaahe ko roye…*"; or of unspoken words being expressed through singing (or flute-playing as a metaphor for music and grace) like in the classic film *Sujata*, "*Hota tu peepal mein hoti amarlata teri…*"; and we hear of unrequited love and of past or love lost like in the film guide, "*Beet gaye din, pyaar ke palchin, sapna bani wo raatein…*". The songs witness the tales of love and longing

that resound the yearning and parting but more importantly their beauty in the journey of love with the silences of those memories in this travel that accompany the beloved, the *Aradhana* continues.

A great piece of artwork more often or not hints at the fact that there is something, in the vicinity or at a distance, in the form of imperceptible and inexpressible 'other', which is of much more significance than what is available for our sensual perception. In our apprehension and delight of this, we almost overlook the particulars of a definite work of art and move beyond them into a state of silence for it addresses not the ear but the spirit. In his stimulated moment of creation, he sought after giving expression in music and words to that other indefinite and yet dominant music which exists as it is.

With all recognition that filmmaker earns and deserves, here in the selected films (*Sujata*, *Bandini*, *guide* and *Aradhana*), it is also the soulful melody and rustic unearthing of those deeply embedded emotions of a woman's heart that S.D. Burman, as a musician, tackles with his composition and rendition. The aroma of rural Bengal in Burman Da's voice is so lingering that one is reminded of the pathos as it reverberates in *Padma Nadir Manjhi* and the romance of the lilting waves, the sewing boats, the dancing oars, and the throbbing heart of the beloved. These river narratives are co-terminus with these songs that a contextual reading is not only desirable but rather imperative. It should be candidly submitted that at this juncture direct references to these texts as it provides depth and rigour; it may introduce unique dimensions which may not fall in the ambit of the present study.

The *manjhi* songs are a contemplative journey of a wandering conscience, which flow and march ahead like a lover who is a rebel, the one that never arrives at any particular destination as they are in a state of continual departure. But every man has his own path to travel and as he wrestles with the idea of the journey of his soul through his harmonic piece of music, he must catch the decisive yet peculiar point in his pilgrimage that would alter his entire journey. A life-work of serious aim is naturally developed from the first choice of things that matter to the individuals, like a certain subject or theory or ideology as a means of a statement. A fabric is provided, upon the resolution of which, all changes of mood and occasion and artistic adventure may ultimately rest. The divergent narratives of his life converged in his music.

Burman's rendition of these songs about journey adds to the destination hues of otherwise subtly inserted songs in a narrative that acts like an equivocation to the entire narration of the film. In Vijay Anand's *guide*, the song *"Wahan Kaun Hai Tera"* starts the journey of a film from the end of a long journey undertaken by a man who would travel through numerous lives in

the course of a few hours on screen. Allah Megh De Paani De, based on a classic Bengali folk song, in the composer's voice with a chorus line joining in, brings the entire work of film to completion, musically as well as through the narrative. In many ways, *guide* was the encapsulation of an entire life.

"Here lies One Whose Name was writ in Water" (23), John Keats in his epitaph would weave the warps of truth with the wefts of transient nature of life and its echoes, are heard in the journey of Raju guide:

> *Kehte hain gyani, duniya hai faani*
> *Paani pe likhi likhaayi*
> *Hai sabki dekhi, hai sabki jaani*
> *Haath kisi ke na aayi*
> *Kuchh tera naa mera, musafir jayega kahan.* (Tiwari 52)

Embedded in the folk tradition, the song fluently transmits the mood of someone wandering in search of one's own self. Sachin Da renders the word *musafir* in multitudinal style, knitting a magical web of music around. The repeated emphasis on the fundamental question of existence, the song evokes multiple debates about the philosophy of life and afterwards that encapsulates it all. A journey of transformation is witnessed in the character of Raju on the grounds of identity and spiritual alterations.

Like these rebellious poets, the matured sensibility of acclaimed Burman Da was an amalgamation of romantic, spiritual philosophy of life and journey beyond and the innocent lover who would communicate the experiences of love and loss through his music, turning to a broader canvas of human life, a higher reality.

Derrida would put forth the idea that closure was not only not desirable, but also not possible, and with this idea in mind the river becomes the perfect symbol, for it never ends; rather it flows into other rivers and eventually into the sea. Just like a river, bound by its straining banks, eventually finds its freedom merging into the sea, the curious life in the otherworld, i.e., *us paar* is believed to give one his/her own ingenious liberty with a growing sense of destiny that is materialised in the movement of the river to the sea.

With an attempt at versifying the intensity of love that is engrained in Sujata, Majrooh Sultanpuri pens down this poetry of passion. It is in the embodiment of her desires in love that most intimate and personal associations surface with the juxtaposition between the exhilaration of youthful desires and woe of despair, the passionate expressions of body with the symbolic touch of nature, "*Hota tu peepal, main hoti amar lata teri, tere gale maala ban ke, padi muskaati re*" (Burman 124). Songs of a broken heart have many hues,

but a heart that yearns for its lover is like a blank canvas with probabilities infinite. It becomes the site for all creations in abstraction. When a beloved yearns for her lover, it is a twin philosophy of a beloved and a devotee longing to be united with her lover or the Ultimate One; that yearning is Vandana's Aradhana.

Kalyani believes herself married to an anarchist stranger who is rebellious in his nationalistic outlook, but it is Kalyani who is truly a rebel in love, where she chooses to devote her life for this love. She has this faith that it is only in the domain of love that she will attain any form of untainted joy and when at the helm of life *preet* would steer her boat to send her off to her lover. This world is but an illusion to her, but in this effort to find a perfect universe she does not shun away the actuality in order to seek an escape to a different world, a world where dreams create perfection, where faith is real, and no pretence prevails. Rather while idealing the other world, she encapsulates through her character, varied experiences of life, and does not shy away from feeling and expressing all shades of human life and emotions creating an emotive spectrum that is ever-evolving.

> *Mere saajan hain us paar,*
> *Main mann maar hoon is paar*
> *O mere manjhi abki baar,*
> *Le chal paar.* (Tiwari 107)

The journey of love weaves within the textures of un-fulfilment, inevitable tragedy, to the extent that it ultimately becomes a celebration of the loss. The love, as one comprehends is unattainable; it becomes synonymous to an eternal longing that inspires a poet to celebrate the sadness in love. But the true journey of love as devotion and suffering is of Vandana in Shakti Samanta's *Aradhana* (1965), where when in love she rejoices like a free bird that is unburdened in this brittle world with the newfound wings of passion and happiness in the form of love. But she truly embarks on her journey when she loses her lover Arun who, after a brief episode of romance, dies in a plane crash and Vandana is all alone, heartbroken and pregnant out of wedlock. His family rejects her too, but it is with her father's death that she truly is all alone, in want and vulnerable. Having given birth to her son, she puts him up for adoption for a childless couple to accept him.

> *Diyaa tute to hai maati, Jale to ye jyoti bane*
> *Bahe aansu to hai Paani, Ruke to ye moti bane*
> *Ye moti aankho ki, Punji hai ye na khoye*
> *Safal hogi teri aradhana, Kaahe ko roye.* (Burman 43)

Resolute to be an important aspect of his life and watch him grow, she accepts

the job of becoming his nanny. A vow to raise their son with all shades of virtue and textures of morality, a vow to keep a dead man's honour, it's a story of a 'vow' made in love. It's a journey of that 'vow' which is a process of transience that does not limit itself to any arrival point. It appears to be what soul is to the human body, where the body acts as a mere catalyst for the eternal journey of the soul, and the phenomenon continues to fuse time into a state of perpetuation, a *sanatan parampara.*

In aesthetically portraying 'invisible potential' of a certain character or idea or a song or a division of the narrative, from the selected films with strong female protagonists, a powerful vision is employed that unfolds the hidden emotional, sociological, artistic, fictional as well as factual portion of the reality. Sometimes, these songs present in the films not only serve the purpose of entertainment, but also accent the curbed voices, or challenge the injustice being done or very tactfully, express a certain character's heartfelt emotions of joy or sorrow, grief or merriment.

Meticulously embroidering the song, one traces in the complex human emotions the textures of sadness with unalloyed innocence and hope for life. With intentions to move away from dimensions of this world of common sense and practicality, these songs stand out in a form of *dua* or prayer to safeguard humanity and man's unblemished innocence. Efficiently contributing to the thematic potential of the films, these songs also add to the aesthetic frame of the entire narrative, where Burman Da had the tragic capacity to align with the emotional vibrancy of the narrative through his rendition.

Imagine the idea where everything is ever-changing form, ever-evolving, ever interacting with its surroundings by means of some delicate link like rustling leaves, flowing water, a beating heart, a young girl lost in the spell of her dance— this all becomes the core of the musical sound. Each movement, every act of man or nature is a part being played for the unity of multiple illusions in this world to form a cosmic whole yet a different path chosen by each entity. What is required is in some way to nurture the continual advancement to this state, to be recurrently in a state of approaching it, to be moved towards a sustained approach.

Burman Da's perfect idea of the surroundings was not a mere structure of thoughtful constructs but a powerful source of sublimity and cosmic energy beyond the comprehensible limits of our senses, and therefore quiet and calm, but more genuine and real than many of our sensory experiences. The soil had something to do with it, the sound of water, and the rain as it speckled on the earth hardened by the blazing sun. The moving breeze must have whispered to

him too, as he strolled through the streets, the rising and falling voices of the components of this universal whole met or watched from afar.

Fragrance and melody have a way of enduring. Facades of names and faces and people may be forgotten, but a tune, a taste, a specific odour and a heartfelt melody never fades away. It can remain sheltered in memory, to rise extemporaneously at the most unexpected times. It often happens that a tune not recollected in years suddenly visits us one day, moving aside all weariness of the mundane living and accompanies us for the rest of the day in slight humming.

In the renditions of Burman Da, words became the tone, emotions took on the rhythm, and desires became palpable through the magic of his voice. To him, exploring the language of music was a spiritual journey in itself. This journey took him over into a sphere where he put to the test both his response to various sounds and his beliefs. The traveller delved into the spiritual underpinnings of this territory of music. The foundation being belief and imagination, the artistic and spiritual heritage above all was the most potent binding force.

He attuned his harmony with music of nature, with the melodies coming from the murmur of rushing water, from the songs of birds, from the rustling of leaves. Nature is a constant companion to man, and all novelty and creation are inspired by its mere presence. Embarking on a journey of their own, his songs moved from affection to passion and spontaneous expression of embedded emotions and finally resided in the pain of yearning for a lost lover and afflictions of true love. The lyrics of these songs are ingrained in joy and sorrow as elements of a composite whole where each song travels along the narrative yet surrenders to the journey of its melody. Enjoying the somberness, splendour, and textual grace, Burman's music was never without the artistic liberty for changing occasional notes and merging other innovations.

Sachin, as a young musician, had the courage and passion to choose his path to travel. When being around the artistic pillars of classical music, he roamed around the lanes to find his answers in the philosophy of the Baul and the *Bhatiyali* music. Not only did he choose the path but also defined the character of his travel. His songs have an autonomous standing of their own where if heard without the visual, one can imagine, through poetic imagery and melodious scaling of this song, their own Kalyani that seems to tremble with every emotion of love, every feeling of romance, every pang of longing and every thrill of belonging.

His songs have an equal amount of sensitivity for the treatment of landscape, where he imbues his trees and their rustle, flowers blossoming with feelings of buoyancy giving another visual dimension to the narrative with sound and imagery that is very transparent in its poetic suggestion, yet add a layer of complexity with its depth. The waves of river in Comilla had infused into his singing the moods of flowing water and the glittering moonbeams playing with their reflections, but now it was the sorrow of Vandana (*Aradhana*), the yearning of Kalyani (*Bandini*) and Sujata's desire to be one with her lover (*Sujata*) that was reflected in his renditions.

Manjhi or the boatman survived as a recurrent metaphor for the guide or guardian of destiny in varied literature that engaged in the theme of Indian mysticism or spirituality. With a sense of cosmic joy, they are often addressed to be the muse and steer the boat of thought or life in the right direction. With the cosmic music resonating within one's soul, one feels like a part of the cosmic whole that's in harmony with the blissful worship of beauty, like a *manjhi* or 'the eternal traveller', whose ceaseless motion in a journey and significance of change lies at the very core of life. A worship that yearns to escape the internment, moving towards a sublime light, a sensation of reaching beyond the constraints of binaries, an energy that finds expression in his songs.

The celebration of loss and longing has to be reflected within the mind and soul of the lover where the memories of their love are engraved. The aching heart and the grieving soul shall find peace in the eternal longing of their purest form of affection and in the journey to fulfill the promises made in love. This state of unalloyed bliss of yearning for the lost lover can never be comprehended by the minds with linear understanding. When the memories of love, desire and yearning become the colours on the palette, the final work of art will be nothing less than an expression of true love itself, the journey of love from 'melody of tears' to 'tiers of melody'.

For in that momentary and intense romantic happening, there is only the outpouring of the heart, but in that poetic moment is the fulfilment of one's very being. The beauty of that moment can only be captured in such elevated poetry only to be extended exponentially in Burman Da's rendition.

These songs, though eternal in their own capacity, move away from the timeline after fulfilling their purpose as a part of the narrative where it is rooted in history, vision of a filmmaker, tune of a composer and audience's perceptibility. But their rendition was such that they kept coming back; revisiting us in our memories, unannounced, with ever-flowing melody and harmony. The musicality

of this thought is the journey of that melody and the listener who, travelling towards each other like lost lovers meeting after ages, sit together and recall.

> *Kabhi rukhsat hui dhun ko wapas se sunna*
> *Wo wahi khadi milegi gungunate hue*
> *Choo kar uska haath, sadi ki baatein karna*
> *Waapis usey bithana, uski taraf kadam bhadhaate huye.* (Puri)
> Thus sang Burman Da and his echoes stain the clear water.

Works Cited and Consulted

Aradhana. Directed by Shakti Samanta, performances by Rajesh Khanna and Sharmila Tagore, Shakti Samanta Pictures, 1969.

Bandini. Directed by Bimal Roy, performances by Nutan, Ashok Kumar, and Dharmendra, Bimal Roy Productions, 1963.

Burman, Khagesh Dev, and Ray Chaudhuri S. K. *S.D. Burman: The World of His Music*. Rupa Publications India, 2013, pp. 43,124.

Fraser, G. S. *John Keats: Odes: A Casebook*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 23.

Guide. Directed by Vijay Anand, performances by Dev Anand and Waheeda Rehman, Navketan Films, 1965.

Puri, Kanika. Interview. Conducted by Chetna Nassa, 23 May 2018.

Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore.* Vol. I, Niyogi Books, 2016, pp. 19-50.

Sujata. Directed by Bimal Roy, performances by Nutan and Sunil Dutt, Bimal Roy Productions, 1959.

Tiwari, Brij Bhushan. *Geeton Ka Jadugar: Shailendra*. Vani Prakashan, 2013, pp. 31, 52, 107.

— ∗ —

The Curious Case of the Indian Muslim: Assessing Significance of Physical Spaces in the (re) Definition of Identity

Hiba Ahmed

The Indian Muslim's identity has been in an unprecedented flux ever since the country was wrecked by the violence of partition. The history of Muslim's existence in India, since partition, is pockmarked with events of communal violence. The violence has been of all kinds: social, political, physical as well as verbal, but what binds all of these is the common method in the madness of violence. This method makes the possibility of its reoccurrence more severe, and this possibility has nearly always been turned into actuality. Muslims who have faced physical violence or have watched it closely, naturally redefined themselves post it, some in order to cope with it, others to save themselves from it in future, still others as a means of retaliation. But even those Muslims who are spatially and/or temporally removed from violence tend to redefine themselves in India with each episode of violence. This paper looks at contemporary Indian Muslims and their history post the Babri Masjid demolition through some major episodes of physical violence that lead to their re-definitions. These include Mumbai 1992-93, Gujarat 2002, and the violence that erupted from the fiasco of the *Babri-Masjid-Ramjanmbhoomi* case in 1992. These episodes did in no way alter the lives of just the people of Ayodhya, Mumbai, or Gujarat, but Muslims all over India were pushed behind new borders and into newer margins. Muslims, as a result, related to the violence despite their distance from it, due to the symbolic nature of this violence. The perpetrators ensured that these attacks were clear as attacks on the entire community even when only a certain section was actually physically affected.

It has been firmly established that an individual is the subject of several overlapping identities; this research paper looks at the factors that have led to religious identity taking precedence over all others. In an atmosphere of growing communalism, and owing to perpetual alienation of a religious community, individuals who affiliate themselves with the given community, are identified as members of that group and also, in turn, begin to define themselves in terms of their communal identity. Group identities seem to be formed through and exist within over-arching narratives that *employ* events lived through post-memory. Despite regional, class, and caste differences, the violence faced by Muslims has led them to feel connected as a community on the basis of their shared religious identity.

I talk of the Indian Muslim as part of a group, the identity of which is a

culmination of a common narrative. This paper analyses how physical spaces seem to be an inextricable part of the Indian Muslim's identity. In Saeed Naqvi's memoir, we see how the physical spaces on India's map were proof of the country's syncretism before the partition. As the discord grew, segregation of physical spaces became the most pronounced markers of ethnic strife. Naqvi explains how the conflict in Ayodhya was "not (between) two belief systems . . . but rather the use of religion to expand territories". What Naqvi says next highlights the question of status and class, which is gradually situating itself at the core of the Indian Muslim's identity. "It (the Ayodhya Conflict) was about status (and) as far as the Indian Muslim was concerned, it was status reversal all the way" (1). Muslims in India are especially the heirs to a division of land and reminders of a boundary on the map. With the gradual rise of Hindu Nationalism, which is founded on the Otherisation of Muslims, territories have become ever more important. Ashutosh Varshney talks of the "two simultaneous impulses" of "Hindu nationalism" which are "a commitment to the *territorial* integrity of India . . . (besides) a political commitment to Hinduism" (228).

Ever since partition, the Indian Muslim has been forced to redefine not just himself, but the spaces he inhabits. Arundhati Roy's *Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) is a novel situated in Old Delhi, an area which is unmistakably Muslim. Roy traces the trajectories of her characters lives within the confines of the old city, and we can see how religious identity is intertwined with life in the walled city. Roy remarks in her novel how some people viewed these areas "with a tinge of relief that Delhi's Muslim population seemed content enough in its vibrant ghetto. Still, others viewed them as proof that Muslims did not wish to 'integrate' and were very busy breeding and organising themselves, and would soon become a threat to Hindu-India" (14). Roy's commentary on the condition of Shahjahanabad, the 'Muslim-area', and how it is viewed by the 'outsiders' can be extended to segregated Muslim colonies all over India. All these colonies are similarly called 'Pakistan' by these 'outsiders'. The Muslim in India is taunted to be a Pakistani and all areas he inhabits are symbolically pushed across the border. Rowena Robinson brings to light a shocking revelation that highlights the ingrained nature of this Pakistan-*phobia*. She writes how she heard people in North India referring to toilets as 'Pakistan'. Pakistan has been established as a hate-worthy symbol and associating the members of a community with it leads to a "brutal communal discourse" in which all Indian Muslims are Pakistanis (13).

Almost every scholar or writer who enters the discursive space of the Indian Muslim's identity also enters the issue of physical spaces. Being called Pakistan, Muslim spaces are perennially haunted by the ghost of partition that ensures that the Indian Muslim never forgets what he has inherited. Rakshanda

Jalil in her memoir, *But You Don't Look like a Muslim* (2019), dedicates an entire chapter to the area she lives in. Certainly, she must have felt it central to her identity as an Indian Muslim. Jalil writes, "living in the Jamia neighbourhood has always been tough . . . an exercise in fortitude." Though not attempting to distinguish between a ghetto and an ethnic enclave, something that this research will conclusively answer after a detailed analysis, Jalil laments how "coping with a ghettoisation that is not entirely of one's own choice is no easy matter" (8).

This paper analyses and bases its observations on two surveys done to access spaces segregated on communal lines. One was done by Rowena Robinson and published in 2005 while the other was published in 2013 by Nida Kirmani. The dates of the two books and the surveys entailed are used here to exhibit their contemporaneity and to realise how the time-gap would be beneficial to study how violence affects people who are temporally distanced from it and those who have it fresh in their minds.

Robinson's research assesses "the physical re-organization of urban spaces that has altered Mumbai in the years after 1992-93 and . . . other cities such as Baroda and Ahmedabad sites in 2002, of orchestrated attacks on Muslims" (39). While people directly hit by violence are bound to redefine their habitat and shift residence, in the survey by Nida Kirmani, we see how people far removed from violence also shifted and redefined boundaries. While Muslims have continuously been pushed to the margins, there now also seems to be a voluntary distancing from the mainstream. The growing alienation has led to the creation of defence mechanisms, which rarely works in anyone's favour.

Robinson, in her survey of post-violence Gujarat, studies "the brutal and tragic re-organisations of self, community, the material world, social and physical space that are the outcome of communal riots and other forms of violent group engagements" (19) and ". . . enquire(s) into how Muslim victims and survivors reconstruct their modes of being brutalised by actual and symbolic violence" (22). Robinson's research reveals that the Muslim victims of violence not only moulded their outward symbols and structures of existence but also re-structured their beliefs. Tragic as it is, a heterogeneous mass of different individuals is united by a thread of violence. Veena Das questions, "How does one render the relation between possibility and actuality; and further, between the actual and the eventual?" (59). This gap between the possibility of the eventual and the actuality of it is where group identities are formulated post-violence. While some are redefining themselves due to actual violence, others do it due to the eventual violence that has a growing possibility of occurring due to several factors. It is a question of post-memory that finds mention in Kirmani's work when she talks to residents redefining themselves in response to violence that

they had not themselves experienced but only heard of. Kirmani, taking from Das, writes how post-memory functions through stories and experiences of violent events that are passed on from one generation to the next. We see how these events are *employed* in the narrative of the Indian Muslims that leads to a further concretisation of their group identity. According to Kirmani, these narratives are what lead to the "necessity of living in a Muslim locality, thus contributing to the construction of shared insecurity and identity — both of which were mutually constitutive" (85).

It is all a result of the formation of a narrative that starts at different points in time for different people but connects each of them to an overarching structure. No Muslim in India (or elsewhere) exists in political isolation, and therefore it is easier to put them all in one category, that of the Indian Muslim, due to an inevitable awareness of their religious identity. A growing sense of community is also being felt as violent events at the international level are also becoming part of the Indian Muslim's narrative. Margaret R. Somers talks about the narrative construction of identity in her *The Narrative Constitution of Identity* (1994). She says that several scholars have established the argument that all individuals "come to *be*, who [they] are (however ephemeral, multiple, and changing) by being located or locating [themselves] (usually unconsciously) in social narratives *rarely of our own making*" (606). Somers' idea of 'casual employment' is also referred to by Robinson, who says writes it is "useful . . . in understanding how particular events are converted into episodes in the narration of group identities". This comes to light in the descriptions of violence in the stories of people Robinson talks to. These individuals who have seen violence up close and personally relate these episodes in different ways, thereby constructing differing narratives that reformulate their identities. For the construction of the Indian Muslim's identity, these "particular events" are events of violence that Muslims as a minority have been subjected to overtime. Robinson's survey tries to answer several questions: one of the most important of them is how a community that is 'Othered' defines itself in relation to those it is 'Othered' by. It is similar to the imperial dilemma where *colonies* forever struggle to redefine themselves to rise out of their Eurocentric plight but rarely do they succeed in creating an identity that is not relational to the Imperial power. Or how women struggle not to define themselves in terms of men while fighting against patriarchy. The story is the same for all Others. How Muslims redefine themselves other than as not-Hindu because this is how they are described in the dominant discourse that leads to their Otherisation.

Besides this, Robinson also highlights the difference between how men and women recount the violence, how they redefine themselves, and how differently they formulate their narratives. She concludes that the narratives of

the male survivors of violence operate in a larger political space and construct the "image of a community injured and attacked by others and by the State," whereas the women counterparts of these men view the same violence more *domestically* (34). What Robinson perhaps fails to realise or highlight, due to an inescapable limitation of the survey, is that such distinctions between male and female outlook are also the result of class distinctions. Robinson surveys mostly the lower and lower-middleclass Muslims in areas rendered unstable by violence. The kind of difference in outlooks of men and women seems more to do with the degree of political awareness where men are more aware because of the public spaces they traverse in and women are secluded in the private sphere. The violence affects women personally because that is the scale they see it being operated at, while men are (made) aware of the larger scale. This is also the reason why fewer women from this section would seek to redefine any fundamentals of their identity. To state it more clearly, people who are politically unaware, in this case women, are unable to see the symbolism of the violence they are faced with. They see the violence as not one in a chain of events but as an outstanding event, which they also think could have been avoided at their personal level. Tabassum Appa is a woman Robinson interviews who lost her child in an event of communal violence, and in whose narration we see this narrow view of communal violence. Robinson writes that in her survey, she came across several individuals who failed to "place their losses within the framework of the overall violence that engulfed their city" (62). Tabassum Appa is one such person who views this violence only in the limited scope of her losing her son in it. Robinson calls this "domestication" of narrative for the reason that it is the domestic space within which it is viewed and placed, while the violence's true overall effect exists in oblivion for these individuals.

Areas affected directly by violence, like those surveyed by Robinson, show an involuntary and forced segregation of spaces. People who could not afford to shift the base of their homes and work-space were forcibly made refugees in other parts of their cities. Here we also see how voluntary segregation, to ensure safety, can act out as a tragic privilege, examples of which we see in Kirmani's survey of Zakir Nagar. Robinson talks of unmistakably Muslim pockets in Ahmedabad, some of which were created in the aftermath of the Gujarat violence, while others that existed before were made more prominent. Talking about Ahmedabad and Baroda, Robinson writes, "in both cities, Muslim *mohallas* could be readily identified. Practically every episode of violence . . . worked to make the spatial boundaries between Hindus and Muslims a little sharper." The segregation following violence is always methodical as several factors make sure the persecuted class is unable to return in any form, material or symbol. Robinson talks about Juhapura, a Muslim mohalla in Ahmedabad that saw an influx of Muslims from even elite

neighbourhoods. Gradually, real estate prices of these areas also increased and measures were taken to ensure that these areas remained "closed to Muslims, regardless of class" (48).

It is worth noting that even though all classes are severely attacked, the lower class is the worst affected. For many, the violence costs life as well as livelihood. It is pertinent for the discussion to produce two instances of working-class men from Robinson's research here as evidence of the systematic segregation and the existence of extremely clear-cut boundaries between areas designated as Hindu and Muslim. One instance involved a man in a wheelchair who used to repair cigarette lighters in the segregated area of *Bapu Nagar*. This person recounted to Robinson how he was once threatened by some Hindus and told to steer clear of this 'border area' (47).

The other instance is of an auto rickshaw driver who ferried a passenger to the Gurukul area. Gurukul is one of the colonies that was completely closed off to Muslims after the carnage of 2002. It lies west to the river Sabarmati which Robinson calls a "symbolic divide for areas designated 'Muslim' or 'Hindu' (48-49). Once the auto-rickshaw driver set-down a passenger, he was told, "*Abhi Musalmaan ka pul ke is paar koi kaam nahi hai* [Now Muslims do not have any excuse to be on this (western) side of the Sabarmati]" (49).

These instances highlight the untraversable boundaries resembling the border between India and Pakistan that have been created between Muslim and Non-Muslim areas in States stricken by communal violence. There are several Muslim ghettos in all cities and villages of India, but each treats its residents differently. For instance, the ghettos formed post-violence in Ahmedabad, Baroda, and Mumbai seemed to shackle those who were forced to reside within it. They were not allowed to leave even if they wanted to and in no way did these ghettos accord any security to the residents. They, in fact, heightened the chances of being attacked as clustered in one place; it was easier for perpetrators to trigger any sort of violence without fear of harming any of their own community members. On the other hand, areas such as Jamia Nagar in New Delhi, which was surveyed by Kirmani, foreground the questions of choice and security. In Kirmani's research, almost all the residents questioned cited security as the primary reason for their 'choice' to reside in these areas. Though Jamia Nagar and various Muslim-areas within it, like Zakir Nagar, Batla House, and Okhla, are usually termed ghettos, it seems to be wrongful labelling; the key issue being of 'choice' here. Kirmani calls areas of Jamia Nagar 'ethnic-enclaves'. Her distinguishing definition arises from Peter Marcuse's definitions of an ethnic enclave and a ghetto. According to Marcuse, a 'ghetto' is different from an 'ethnic enclave' on the basis of 'choice'. Where 'ghetto' is an area of spatial concentration that is deliberately used by dominant

forces to separate a particular population that is categorised as inferior based on ethnic or racial characteristics . . . [an] 'ethnic enclave', [is] where people *choose* to congregate 'as a means of protecting and enhancing their economic, social, political, and/or cultural development' (62).

This distinction is clearly visible in the areas that Robinson and Kirmani survey. While Robinson traverses Muslim ghettos in areas directly stricken by communal violence, Kirmani moves through the ethnic enclaves of Jamia Nagar. The residents' narratives are a testimony to the degree of choice that is accorded to them due to the different kinds of segregated areas they inhabit. However, the question we need to ask is, how much of it is a choice if the people choosing to congregate in such ethnic enclaves see no other option to ensure their safety. There are undoubtedly several differences between direct victims of violence and those muslims who take decisions as a result of their knowledge of the violence of which there is only a plausibility of it occurring for them. The actuality and possibility of violence lead to a similar segregation of spaces between Hindus and Muslims, and yet the re-definitions are different for residents of both these spaces. While the dominant trope in the narrative of residents of ghettos is their helplessness at not being able to return to their earlier habitats, residents of ethnic enclaves are focused on how their areas could be made better for residence as they usually have no intentions to leave it but are bothered by the lack of amenities. Jalil writes in her memoir while contemplating why Muslims "come in droves to live in some of these over-congested, ill-equipped localities". She says, "A great many muslims no doubt prefer to live in Muslim-dominated neighbourhoods of Shaheen Bagh, Gaffar Manzil, Noor Nagar, Zakir Nagar, Batla House, Abul Fazal Enclave, et al for reasons of '*security*', many I suspect, do so because they are left with no *choice*" (emphasis added, 11).

Robinson mentions an instance which makes clear how the retaliatory tactics of those living in Muslim ghettos in violence-stricken areas comprise of attempts to reclaim their spaces outside their margins. Continuously pushed behind boundaries, the fear of being attacked exists but is combated with courage taking over the persecuted community. When rock bottom is hit, the process of rising up begins. Robinson talks about a Muslim activist, who is one of many who refuse to accept the polarisation of spaces. The activist told Robinson how one of the forms of their protests is to occupy the spaces they are not allowed in. They put up protests in areas that they are almost debarred from entering. They say that if they do not do this, they will soon be "forced to remain inside (their) houses. Not able to go out at all. *We have to confront them in those very spaces*" (Kirmani 50, emphasis added).

Creation of ghettos in India leads to the formation of a vicious cycle of

depriving Muslims their fundamental rights and privileges and then feeding into the same stereotypes that lead to their Otherisation in the first place. Robinson and Kirmani, both note in the surveys of their respective areas how Muslim ghettos and ethnic enclaves are markedly different from other areas due to the lack of basic civil amenities. Robinson notes how "such conditions feed continuously into popular images of Muslims as dirty and unhygienic and, in more ways than one, therefore, dispensable" (51).

The distinction is so acute that these deprived colonies could exist at the border of various posh colonies and yet be extended with no benefits that the elite colonies enjoy. Robinson says that even though all slums are more or less similarly deprived, Muslim ghettos are even more deprived than spaces occupied by "Dalits and the mass of the urban poor" (50). Kirmani notes how ". . . New Friends Colony is quite clearly separated from Zakir Nagar . . . (and how this) speaks to the conflation of religion and class in the creation of socio-spatial divisions and the privileging of religion as a marker of difference" (35). New Friends Colony is an area that offers residence to not just non-Muslims, but also only those who belong to the elite, upper-middle-class. Issues of religion and class, therefore, often overlap when segregation of spaces is analysed. The contrast between such areas as New Friends Colony and Zakir Nagar, while it should not, still appears surprising to many. Kirmani quotes one of the residents of Zakir Nagar lamenting this (un)usual contrast. "We never imagined that Zakir Nagar would become like this, that it would become like Old Delhi. Because it was adjacent to New Friends Colony, we thought it would be like that, that kind of crowd, but now look at the contrast (Sadaf, 31 December 2004)" (Kirmani 46-47).

For Muslims attempting to move up the social ladder in Zakir Nagar would mean shifting residence to New Friends Colony. This privilege of attempt is accorded to the residents of a Muslim ethnic-enclave, but not to those of a ghetto like Juhapura in Ahmedabad. Though class distinctions exist within the Muslim community, each member of this community is 'Muslim enough' to be at the receiving end of 'suspicion and mistrust'. It is not an unknown fact that most colonies are unofficially out of bounds for the Indian Muslim. Personal experiences of individual Muslims can well be called universal. To recount Jalil's attempts at finding a home to live in a *non-M*uslim colony near her workplace that uncovered the great divide that had crept into Indian Society. Jalil writes: I spent ten torturous months looking for a house in nearby New Friends Colony, Sukhdev Vihar and Sarita Vihar. Perfectly decent people in their perfectly middle-class drawing rooms froze us off when they saw our business cards or heard our names. Others reneged on deals worked out through property dealers saying they wanted 'vegetarian tenants' (11).

Jalil's distress swiftly takes us to Skybaaba's short stories in his book V*egetarians Only: Stories of Telugu Muslims* (2015). The title suggests that it is triggered by instances of discrimination in the process of housing for Muslims even though the book is a compilation of stories covering several themes of the Telugu Muslim's everyday existence. *Vegetarians Only* is also the title of the short story which recounts the prejudiced treatment meted out to a couple who roamed the streets in search of a place to live. Skybaaba tells us this was an educated couple and the woman also did not wear the *purdah,* so they did not showcase any markers of Muslim identity at all. They also spoke Telugu which made one of the landlords assume they were Hindus. The landlord tells them without mincing any words, "I thought you were one of *our* people going by the Telugu you spoke. I am sorry but we can't rent out to muslims" (34).

The contrast between Muslim colonies and those others that they are surrounded by is so acute that the borders between these prominently stand out without any labelling. The stark contrast between Zakir Nagar and New Friends Colony is touted as an "ugly disparity" between "pockets of abysmal neglect" and "oases of privilege" that "exist cheek-by-jowl" (Jalil 11). Saeed Naqvi laments his realisation of this fact in the epilogue of his memoir when he writes, "we have lived in a state of un-institutionalized apartheid for decades, even centuries" (209).

While Robinson talks to Muslims from the lower classes of society, we see how their issues are markedly different from the Muslims that Kirmani interacts with. The most important for a majority of residents from the ghettos in Ahmedabad and Mumbai were questions of survival and helplessness at not being able to move out and conduct business as usual. On the other hand, the middle-class residents of Zakir Nagar lamented the influx of people from lower classes who, according to them, were responsible for the decline of the neighbourhood. The changing demographic of Zakir Nagar turned it from a society earlier known for the educated middle class to now being labelled as a Muslim-Ghetto. For this reason, while the Muslims residing in Zakir Nagar, redefined themselves in newer ways, they made sure they were viewed as different from the new residents who were mostly uneducated. This 'uneducated' class is blamed for the area's gradual deterioration resulting in the residents' unhappiness. If not for this, residing in a Muslim ethnic enclave was absolutely fine for those who chose to stay there. Kirmani records several residents who told her how the educated Muslims were moving away and out of the area because of the growing numbers of this "class of 'uneducated and ignorant' people" (48). To quote one Mrs. Rahim from Kirmani's survey, "*their* numbers started growing, and *they* grew so rapidly that we stopped liking this place. The colony was ruined" (48, emphasis added).

The vocabulary used for these residents that the majority distanced itself from, and therefore 'othered' in this process, is the same that is used by the victims for the perpetrators of violence, and vice versa. When the binary of 'us' versus 'them' is established, the 'other' becomes a faceless mass and loses individuality. It is, therefore, easier to attack and also increase the propensity of the attack by gaining a symbolic nature. By attacking a part, the whole is damaged. So, even though the major re-definitions for Muslims constitute their differences from the majority, middle class, 'educated' muslims, also simultaneously distance themselves from their own community members whom they believe to be 'ruining' society. It is intriguing to see how the choice of giving class identity precedence over religious identity is also a privileged choice, which, despite its limitations, still exists. For the members of the working lower class, are violently reduced to just one identity, that of being Muslims.

The research paper assessed and analysed how re-defined physical spaces in the wake of communal violence lead to the re-definition of the Indian Muslim's identity. The vicious cycle of alienation resulting in a stricter redrawing of boundaries between 'us' and 'them', has led Muslims to define the spaces they inhabit and being defined by those spaces in return.

Works Cited and Consulted

Das, Veena. "Violence and the Work of Time." *Signifying Identities: Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Values*, edited by Anthony P. Cohen, Routledge, 1999, p. 59.

Jalil, Rakhshanda. *But You Don't Look Like a Muslim*. Harper Collins, 2019, pp. 8, 11.

Kirmani, Nida. *Questioning the Muslim Woman: Identity and Insecurity in an Urban Indian Locality*. Routledge, 2013, pp. 35, 46-47, 48, 50, 85.

Naqvi, Saeed. *Being the Other: The Muslim in India*. Aleph Book Company, 2016.

Robinson, Rowena. *Tremors of Violence: Muslim Survivors of Ethnic Strife in Western India*. Sage Publications, 2005, pp. 19, 22, 34, 39, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 62.

Roy, Arundhati. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Penguin, 2017, pp. 13, 14.

Somers, Margaret R. *The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach.* University of Michigan, October, 1994, p. 606.

Skybaaba. *Vegetarians Only: Stories of Telugu Muslims.* Om Publications, 2015, p. 34.

Varshney, Ashutosh. "Contested Meanings: India's National Identity, Hindu Nationalism, and the Politics of Anxiety." *Daedalus*, vol. 122, no. 3, 1993, p. 228. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20027190.

— ∗ —

Sights and Sites of Communal Violence: Reading Memory through Temporality

Chetna Karnani

> I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war,
> But I saw they were not as was thought,
> They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,
> The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,
> And the wife and the child and the musing comrade suffer'd,
> And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.
> - Walt Whitman, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd"

To justify the magnitude of its violence, war may be justified in order to restore the virtuous in the world, but the discourse of suffering in a tale as great as the *Mahabharata* does not limit to five Pandavas or a hundred Kauravas—for the catastrophe in the *yuddh* was not merely of brothers against each other but also the defeat of soldiers from both ends. In this battle of *dharma* and *adharma*, they were merely pawns, and regardless of the side he fights from, the defeat of a soldier is destined as and when he enters the battlefield. The battle called Partition may have been locked into a void, but it is certainly not a closed chapter. These fears and anguish of the Collective are reinforced when such historical events create ripples across its present. The Hydra that Partition was, propagated riots like the Babri Masjid bloodbath, the anti-Sikh carnage of 1984 or Godhra riots of 2002, which were not violent acts autonomous of Partition, but were reflections of, and also impending channelisations of the revulsion religious groups had for each other. The histories of these barbaric acts carried under the garb of religion belonged to another history, and this is how violence does not allow itself to evaporate. This Hydra serpent keeps springing into its multiple due to indifference and indifferent approaches made towards the tragedy of mankind, and great literature is born out of this collective human suffering.

A communal tragedy where daggers, blood, and hatred entered places of worship and still refuse to leave extends its collectivisation to the spatiality of the present. Three decades hence, extremism engulfed the state of Punjab during the 1970s. Fundamentalists had begun the separatist movement of Khalistan, which gained momentum in the 1980s. These separatists, driven by the collective conscience that their religion was under grave threat, took the path of violence to achieve their means. As a way to maintain the social integrity of the nation-state intact, the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi executed

Operation Bluestar—the military attack on the holy Sikh shrine Golden Temple in order to execute Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his allies. Between the crossfire of the army and those rebelling them, thousands of innocent pilgrims were held captive and killed. The desecration of their holiest shrine and the killing of innocent Sikhs hurt collective Sikh sentiments. Later that year, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was slain by her two Sikh bodyguards on October 31, 1984. As a result, the assassination triggered subjective and targeted violence against Sikhs in northern India, majorly Delhi, Punjab and Kanpur. Hindu mobs with the political support of Congress leaders burnt Sikh households, shops, and people. Men of each household were pulled out by the hair and burnt alive, and their women raped. Mothers would chop their sons' hair so that the rioter would not know it is a Sikh child. Those whose bodies were unharmed had their hearts tittered in pieces. He, who had left his heart in his homeland during the exodus of 1947, now faced another separation from his people. This time, the Sikh innocent man was betrayed by his own state. It was Partition again, for the daggers were out this time too—this time not to kill the Muslim but the Sikh brother. The moral complexity of the anti-Sikh carnage of 1984 lied in the impressionistic spreading of rumours and raising of slogans against Sikhs which opinionated Hindu mobs to loot and kill, where rationality was suspended by a collective hyper-political being. Life was reduced thus to a mere slogan.

The mutilation of *Akhand Bharat* was one such problematised propaganda which carried with itself the suffering of the Collective, regardless of the borders created on the grounds of the land and the mind. The affliction of Partition is not limited to the physical brutality read and reread over the years but scatters over to the psychological and emotional capturing per se. Physical brutality is the lowest form of violence—for once you are dead, you are relieved of the sorrow. Grimmer is the suffering which is not physical, for even if the wounds fade away with time, the scars on the psyche of the survivor remain. Tragedy is a joy to the man who dies.

An event of the past, especially a communally charged political event like Partition or the genocide of 1984, can be broadly spoken of, without juxtaposing into binaries, in two ways—through the historian's history or the accounts of the survivor. The portrayal of community or nation's history will always be incomplete and astray due to the politics of its representation, and it will only glorify the oppressor for he is the one who holds the pen until the victim chooses to write his own narrative. These narratives in the form of memoirs and testimonies provide an alternate perspective about the crisis which history often omits in its narrative. Personal documentations have their gullible nature, but when intertwined with aesthetics of life credo, they turn into great literature of suffering. While the official history chooses to ignore the grim realities of the

unrest, real and fictional narratives are fragmented and oscillatory stories inflicted with silence and often incomprehensible.

History shall always elevate one and condemn the other, but literature through its fictional or non-fictional representation puts on the reader's plate an often unbiased take on suffering, which transcends from individual to collective through literature. What makes literature greater than the partial official history is its palimpsest nature of speaking underneath the silences. Each violent upheaval reflects its past, and for the creation of a master narrative of each community that traces its trajectory, it is crucial to unify all voices into a single social text. The master narrative of the Sikhs in independent India that absorbs all voices, and even the silences, cannot be created without a little alteration, delineation, and forgetting of the experiential reality. The amnesia then also silences the bond between Hindus and Sikhs—which was a long journey of shared worship and mythology, cultural integration and exchange, language, and everyday lifestyle. Similarly, the equally close bond that Sikhs shared with Muslims has been eradicated through the communal violence of the late forties in Punjab.

In a multicultural and pluralistic society like India, the problem of communalism and religious extremism gained momentum ever since the nation acquired independence in 1947, and simultaneously raised walls to a land a part of its own. Post-independence, rising communalism has directly victimised women and ethno-religious minorities in particular. And while each Indian citizen carries multiple identities based on their affiliations to caste, politics, and religion, unruly becomes the governance when these inclinations turn into ideologies and conflicts in the public sphere, staining the very fabric of democracy with the Saffron and Green of their own.

Literature written on the Partition of India or the Sikh genocide of 1984 is an exploration of scribed violence through its silences, texts and textures of which are caught up between speech and silences. The paper attempts to read how and when memory turns into silences and these silences after a long journey of anxiety transmute into courageous articulation. These silences, with time, gain space into confessions to the Self, and are woven into a social text by the community's act of collectivisation.

Violence, of any kind, leads to two possible conditionings of the victim— either they withdraw from speech to silence and don't articulate the suffering at all, or they live in the denial and nostalgia of the past marked before the violent disruption. Memory is always collective, and so is suffering. But the entire act of inflicting the history and triumph of one's community on the body that belongs to the other subjects the victim's body as a contested national and

gendered space. This collective memory involves simultaneous remembering and forgetting. And its simultaneity places history and trauma not in the space of causal factor but as elements that shape the narrative of a heterogeneous society. Thus, collective memory is the language of trauma that either resorts to silence completely or confronts colonial or communal victimisation by means of unified individual narratives, not *recollected in tranquillity* but amidst the creaking silences in the chaos of the 'foreign land' that the displaced person continually fails to call home. Krishna Sobti asserts in *Partition Dialogues:* "I, wrote *Zindaginama* thirty years after the Partition, even though I had made the first draft in 1952. Time is a strange chemistry. First we wanted to forget and then we wanted to relive the time that was!" (qtd. in Bhalla 103), which further problematises the complexities of the displaced refugee.

Trauma, whether in the past or the present never ceases to haunt the victim. It resurfaces itself in the form of extended hatred, detestation, and silence as a form of reluctance. As a result of the colonial hangover, silence further levies itself upon both the instigator and the victim, both for redemption and reacceptance in the society. Silence is the State's tool to rework and mend the victim's experiential history to mint a master narrative glorious and unblemished of the displacement of the victim. As a result of this conditioning at the centre, to thrust the voice of the victim majoritarian at the periphery, in a rather appalling moment of violence, the victim drapes the garb of silence, voluntarily or involuntarily. It then serves as a coping mechanism for the victim, which ultimately results in them muting their discourse to negotiate the gap between their pre-trauma and post-trauma life. At the same time, this muteness also works as a shadow under which the instigator victimises. Silence is paranoia. Silence is deliberate. The idea is to read violence and trauma through memory, not histories, the contours of which demand deep and continual excavation in academia.

Veena Das questions the ways of mourning found in the discourse of independent India that seek to recreate or alter the world, to this, she regressively suggests: In the normal process of mourning, grievous harm is inflicted by women on their own bodies, while the acoustic and linguistic codes such as that of mourning laments makes the loss public. Upon asking women to narrate their experiences of the Partition she found a zone of silence around the event (Das 84).

Repressed memory—whether quietened in public or shunned in private, often operates like a mechanism to cope with its trauma through the trajectory/reminiscing of pre-trauma memories; some choose to silence their narrative instead of placing it on the surface. This adapted silence is also often imposed on the victim by the orchestrators of organised violence. The victim also recalls

their personal history through two ways of contesting or romanticising—their memories of mortification are eventually turned into tales of martyrdom and these biographies become social texts with the collective nature of memories of the community. Urvashi Butalia writes in *The Other Side of Silence* (2000): "It took 1984 to make me understand how ever-present partition was in our lives too, to recognise that it could not be so easily put away inside the covers of history books. I could no longer pretend that this was a history that belonged to another time, to someone else" (23). The incoherence of social and relational matrices caused in India of 1947 levied themselves as collateral damage to the anti-Sikh carnage of 1984, which also tested *humanness* to redefine morality and views humankind on moral, ethical, and aesthetic grounds. The discourses of pre-violence memories, or tales of bravery and victory like in the case of the Sikh militant discourse, keep the identity of the community alive and preserve its culture while also simultaneously integrating the history of violence in the post-trauma memory., The mark made on the victim's psyche is undeniably unalterable, but this process of collectivisation—converging the divergent local, personal, and authentic histories and cultural collectivisation bridge the gap in the victim's psyche, trying at the very least to repair the inability to fathom trust in another individual, providing an escape, however little, from the suffering. There is solace in empathy when one himself is in a state of negotiation with the times and spaces he lives in.

The myth, tradition, and history of the community play a vital role while talking about violence and memory. They speed up the communal drive in contemporary India besides succeeding to unite individual memories of suffering into a collective narrative of the community—which does not fade away but only manifests itself again in another riot, another violent upheaval. The memory of the victim is claimed by the community, not through mere historical factualisation but is also bases of on the mythical and religious narratives. For instance, the instigation of riots of Ayodhya lay on the mythical narrative of Ayodhya as the birthplace of Lord Rama.

This conflict of memorialising history or willing to forget it also causes in some the problem of fragmentation of expression. Emotionally expressing oneself is another way of coping with suffering. While Manto's Sakeena incorporates silence after being brutally raped, and Munawwar Rana describes the pangs of Partition by wearing on his sleeve the identity of being a *muhaajir,* there are also people in abundance like Joginder Paul's Deewane Maulvi, who surrenders to cynicism as a result of stunning suffering impending on him.

The truthfulness of the events of 1947 and 1984 state facts placed by the government on the psyche of public identity, but silence and memory play a dispassionately dominant role here. If at all the Hindu is expressive of the violence

inflicted on them during Partition, seldom would they accept tying a tyre to a Sikh's neck during the carnage of 1984—silence as a strategy also becomes a garb the victimiser wears, oft also becoming his redemptive shelter. Silence is the shadow under which Manto's Ishwar Singh from "Thanda Ghosht" rapes a Muslim woman, the muteness of which disturbs his relational matrix in the course of the story. It is the garb under which the victimiser hides his shaming reality.

To curtail an individual from reminiscing their cherished past is difficult. However, being unable to place it in our memory is agonising. Life is but a long journey of excruciating partitions. Our imagination is intertwined with words, which dies out when words fade away with age. The nuances of the past are bottled up in the memory of the victim which may well be called the 'grecian urn' of human emotions with abrasions of unpleasant memories on its surface, but most of the time it does not find the right channel to articulate. Memory is a land, and a nation is an idea with no boundary or physical contours. For the victim, the reality before the disruption becomes inaccessible both in memory and reality. With time, memory gets deprived of a space to surface itself. The signifier which signifies the happiness or remorse of the refugee dies with age. Language and emotion used to resurface nostalgia and memories go under constant accretion. This discontinuity and rupture between the signifier and signified create a gap which results in nostalgia as trauma. The pull between experiential memory and reality numbs them to their suffering. The sufferers are then in constant negotiation with their past and present.

The victim dies in the gap of desolate present and a relatively smoother past. The past is not a 'foreign land,' rather is the space where one belongs but only irretrievably distant in time. The present is, what Rushdie states, "elsewhere" (Rushdie 3). The refugee's words to reminisce the experience of violence fossilize out with time when they do not find the channel to articulate, or when the memory of the experience is often controlled and curtailed in the name of religious consciousness or when the implications or signifiers of the space have died out with time, and this inability to place the land of memory on a space creates a silent spectrum of insanity for the victim doubly displaced.

Studying one's psyche extends itself from reading the spaces of silences, memories, and memorialisation. The "collective amnesia" (Pandey 7) found among refugees and survivors of Partition riots was not only consistent with forgetting colonial injustice but also the indignities sprouted from communal hatred. Doubly subjugated victims of communal hatred are women, whose lives were altered and re-narrated by the State in the massacre of 1984. As Butalia states: "this collection of memories, individual and collective, familial and historical, are what make up the reality of Partition. They illuminate what one

might call the 'underside' of its history. They are the ways in which we can know this event. In many senses, they are the history of the event" (8).

There have been heterogeneous responses for treating trauma and turning it into ideas of remembrance and memorialisation. Archives, historical sites, and monuments that mark the 'martyrdom' of fighters are sites of tangible memory, opposing which Butalia mentions in *The Other Side of Silence* that victims of Partition "have no monuments" (40). The very site of traumatic memory is itself the nation. The land on which memories of trauma are scribed happen to be the body and the nation—also manifested through the iconicity of *Bharat Mata.* The line of partition, often pictured as the dismemberment of the sacrosanct *Bharat Mata,* was drawn across the body of the woman, not only rupturing her bosom but also leaving a deep scar on her psyche. After a certain stage of shaming the Self due to failures they believe they brought to the community by allowing the victimiser to 'mark' them, it becomes crucial to give the pain an expression. But victims, and especially women, internalise the pain to unfathomable depths of inexpressible privacy. When the voice of the victim is muted during any violent disruption, the absence of a personal narrative manipulates the larger text of democracy. Language is inherently important for the creation of a community or State's history, but an event of violence leaves the reality devoid of any courage and figures of speech. The only language that remains is that of silence. Some who fail to endure the bolts of disruption clutch to selective or total silence, which perpetuates in the life of these survivors until their ability to wear the scars of grief burns out. Sometimes the individual biography of the victim becomes the voice of lament for the entire community, and sometimes such stories are erased from the social text and collective memory of the community—all in the name of bringing back the lost glory.

An individual who has been captured becomes an individual who has been marked. In the times of crisis, by the culprit or the society, a mark is put on the psyche of the individual. Thus, the mark thus becomes a hindrance to forgetting—the body becomes a memory, a testimony of the disparity of society. Veena Das, in her essay "Transactions in the Construction of Pain" (1996) mentions how the collective experience of women's suffering never entered the public discourse. Bodies of any victims, male or female, are sights of testimonies of the indignities caused to them—they speak for themselves, not in public, but in the private spaces of their minds, "monochromatically" (Rushdie 3).

Another stance of the victim's history that sprouts from the violence is that the victim recovers from his survivor-conflicts until the Self, which is raptured, is reintegrated into normalcy. Here crops the need to align trauma of the Self to the nation's course of history. The failure to do so produces a Toba

Tek Singh, a Deewane Maulvi, and a Ratan *ki maa* along with innumerable people to whom silence and denial sprawled as results of ground shaking violence. Silence has its own cynicism. The way history is space and man partial towards its representation because of the impossibility of complete representation—any historical document will always be a non-sequential fragment. This lack of sequence marks the trauma and difficulty of recalling, a reliving of time past even as time present flows through the past, when recollecting, Ratan's mother in Asghar Wajahat's *Jis Lahore Ni Vekheya...* (2006) says, *"Jis Lahore ni vekheya oh jammeya he nai.."* (Wajahat 6), not for the Lahore of time present but of the time past—of a Lahore where her son Ratan was still alive and where she was not seen as a *kaafir*. Each victim's story is a story of suffering that extends itself to bringing the pieces together, and how they have arranged their present within the horizons of their past. It is characters like Deewane Maulvi in Joginder Paul's *Sleepwalkers* (1998), living in the juxtaposition of their time and space, with an eventual knowledge of the loss levied on them. Lucknow for Deewane Maulvi is a signifier of belongingness as much as Lahore is for Ratan's mother. The feelings are stagnant and static while the space has changed, the only difference that lay between the two characters is that Maulvi is physically displaced, but his mental space is acquired by the time of Lucknow and its *nawabi* culture before the violence and displacement, rendered in a state of placelessness. On the other hand, Ratan's mother does not live in denial of her son's death, but the implications of the space in which she continues to live and the signification derived out of it has changed with time. These heterotopic spaces of Lucknow and Lahore remain as mere spaces of the heart, not of geopolitics, thus marking a departure from topology to topography.

What does history look like when seen through the eyes of a victim? How does history represent itself or memory recall itself when told by a Sikh to a Hindu or a Hindu to a Muslim? Retelling and recounting memories has haphazard and unnatural ties with time present and past. These recollections may or may not contradict the primary feelings of undergoing the experiences emerging through lapses of time. Sometimes, memory can also refuse to manifest itself into speech. Some memories are extensively described, some neglected, and some never brought on the surface at all. Of the totality of life that underwent the pre-partition days of harmony and post-partition years of exile, only a fragment of the oscillation is offered to the second or third generations, which is an act of rebellion to confront with the past one could never accept as the present. The silence that envelops abducted women often compels them to "re-narrativize their relationship to the state, community, and their own identities" (Didur 138) to compromise and weave a meaning of the violence which creates scars on their bodies. This negotiation, however another constituent for trauma, becomes crucial for survival.

269

There are many similarities in the way in which motifs are stitched together and a world created through storytelling in the oral discourse of the Sikh militant and the way in which these stories are woven and the militant disguised as a victim, which forges a sense of legitimisation of his terrorism as revolution. The idea of Sikh history as a series of martyrdoms for social well-being further deceives the militant into transforming the Self into a heroic figure. The Sikh militant discourse elevates the biography of the Self into a social text, which ultimately makes him believe that the community is in grave threat. Thus, the imperative of defending the community's pride by means of violence is framed by institutionalisation of memory. It is not only the nation-state that tries to regulate collective memory in a manner that makes the individual die and kill for the cause; there are also communities which, in the process of emerging as political actors, try to control and fix memory in a similar pattern. In the process of reconstruction and fixation of memory of a collective (especially a community), myths play an impactful role. Myths are a way of constructing the past like history is. Myths that run through the Sikh community are the tool of empowerment for religious and political extremists, where they draw inspiration from tales and sacrificial traditions of bravery amongst the gurus and the tenets of Sikhism. At the same time, the phenomenon of forgetting works as the master narrative that associates the Sikh suffering to the colossal Sikh identity as always being a preserver of honour and sacrificial to the predicament of Hindus and Muslims. The separatists could not retain that this bravery was for a causal event and involved selflessness. So the Khalistan Movement, under the garb of welfare, pushed to death the accused and innocent alike. The agitation of separatism has been justified through the betrayal and agony of the state, but the means to achieve demands have not. But one cannot counter myth to history as truth to falsehood. Factuality of events stated in a mythical story may not have a spatio-historical reference, but are placed within the realms of the world and reality. They talk about the world symbolically and metaphorically. For something that cannot be backed up through historical justification is put through the course of myth, an example of which is the long-standing dispute of Babri-Ramjanmabhoomi in a democratic, communal India.

The flood of communal violence sweeps the mass and its hopes associated with one's future, one's faith in one's religion, beliefs, and one's own self. Morality in the carnage that followed Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination was tossed in the sky that smelled of blood and fell on streets full of corpses of those who didn't know why they had been targeted, ripped off their *dastaar* and dignity, and put ablaze. Those who had shaved their heads to guise as Hindus also fractured hearts out of their bodies. The Sikh man left alive was left to ponder how long would it take for him to feel a part of the nation—from

1947 to 1984—and many betrayals by the state apart, with a seemingly never-ending journey of thirty-seven years in search of peace, dignity, and communal harmony.

The only empathy that this complexity hints towards is that instead of demanding complete autonomy over its people and creating a melting pot of homogeneity, it is essential for a community to unify its members by being denotive of tradition, revitalisation, and nostalgia, and create a space of peaceful coexistence for its members. While collective survival is essential, the members' autonomy to refuse any claims made on them by the community is also pivotal, just how the community has, under no obligation, the right to contest the claims of the state. The silences, however fragmented in nature, need to be addressed and preserved like a legacy.

Works Cited and Consulted

Bhalla, Alok. *Partition Dialogues: Memories of a Lost Home.* Oxford UP, 2008, p. 103.

Butalia, Urvashi. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India.* Duke UP, 2000, pp. 23, 40.

Das, Veena. *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India.* Oxford UP, 2018.

—. "Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain." *Deadalus,* vol. 125, no. 1, 1996, pp. 67-91.

Didur, Jill. *Unsettling Partition: Literature, Gender, Memory.* U of Toronto P, 2006, p. 138.

Grewal, Jyoti. *Betrayed by the State: The Anti-Sikh Pogrom of 1984.* Penguin, 2007.

Manto, Saadat Hasan. *Thanda Ghosht aur Anya Kahaaniyan.* Rajpal & Sons, 2006.

Pandey, Gyanendra. *Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories.* Stanford UP, 2005, p. 7.

Paul, Joginder. *Sleepwalkers.* Katha Perspectives, 1998.

Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991.* Vintage, 2010, p. 3.

Sandhu, Waryam Singh. *Chauthi Koot.* Netflix, 2015.

Wajahat, Asgar. *Jis Lahore Ni Vekheya.* Vani Prakashan, 2006, p. 6.

Whitman, Walt. *Memories of President Lincoln.* Forgotten Books, 2016.

—— * ——

Monological Inflictions on the Margins of Existence: The Design of Madness in *The Bluest Eye*

Nikita Sharma

> There can't be anyone, I am sure, who doesn't know what it feels like to be disliked, even rejected, momentarily or for sustained periods of time
>
> — Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

The universal disposition of being marginalised has, since time immemorial, been the basic categorisation of individuals based on certain parameters which were initially on the basis of roles assigned for convenience and parameters defined for segregation. But as humans evolved, it became the parentheses of the way they began to assume themselves and the people of their kind with a self-imposed sense of classification. It is the fixation of order and its forced reinforcement which made the human slashes of existence to be implicated and followed thoroughly. With the advent of birth, the principles of naming followed by caste, race, colour, etc. become factors of identity as the source of origin. In this diabolic disposition of the individual, a sense of self begins to embellish into an ornamental being where the prescribed authority stays and stages the human's defined and routine existence.

The dominance of one individual over the other and thus attaining autonomy is multi-fold when the system appreciates one element while it dismisses another. These divisions are noticed by Toni Morrison, in her work *The Bluest Eye* (1970), as in the above-mentioned statement she addressed the concerning issues of acceptance in the terms 'dislike', and 'rejected' where no individual could be said to have never hosted such an emotion. It is the essence of feeling, a subtle sense of touch that enriches the soul like a dewdrop in a desert and reaches the core of a shadowed tree which never had a green leaf. Such is the metaphysical aspect of human existence where the formidable idea of Self is governed by a set of principles the given system operates with. It is the system of monologues where the vacancy of speech is prevalent under an authority, and all are mere subjects to power politics.

A monologue, as Mikhail M. Bakhtin agrees, "pretends to be the ultimate word … it closes down the represented world and the represented persons" (293). It becomes the standard of understanding where the praxis of cause and effect is defined only by the monologue. The authority it asserts, in turn, subverts the presence of anything that is beyond its control and definition of existence.

Thus, it is at the margins that madness arrives as a phenomenon where that which fails to empirically belong to the system is termed as mad. The idea of madness as an ailment highlights how doubts are addressed in a system. The need to crush and silence these voices is done by the monologue in order to sustain its authority. With the lack of vibrancies, individuals sustain the role of being submissive as they follow and are in accord with the professed parameters of the system, while the madman has to be pushed outside the boundaries of the system as madness is propagated as initiation of threat for those who do not wish to exercise free will.

The imaginative leaps, which are able to flourish when there is freedom of expression, become consigned with the monological approach as it tries to control the natural dynamicity of the Self. The authority of a monologue makes the elements believe that the nuances of existence which do not belong to the system are unnatural and immoral. Such a version of reality, where certain jurisdictions are made by those in power, ensures that a system flourishes blind faith on the parameters which etch the boundaries between right and wrong in a predestined manner and not as the hollow constructions they empirically are. The spur of being natural is considered irrational where a correction model needs to be adopted as a measuring scale to qualify the human self as human. One should comprehend that no individual or group of individuals have the supremacy of defining acceptability parameters that remain persistent eternally. The doubt on such a postulation is bleak when humans endlessly seek the aspects of locating normalcy in their life and in the life of their loved ones. Those who remain varied from the urge of being endlessly at the centre or willing to be at the cent of the system are abnormal, and their self-imposed sense of abnormality causes them to be mad.

Madness is deployed by writers as a narrative technique where, instead of placing it disparities of black and white, it is insisted as the grey zone of existence, which is aesthetically competent and potential but is doomed to be interpreted as a fallen state of existence that must be endlessly abhorred and detested by the normal human beings of a system. The consequential madness in character entails the attention of the reader as a factor that is pushed to the margins through the channels of the centrality of a system. The monologue tries to hold and subvert the madman's voice by emphasising the immorality of the madman and his/her inability to belong to the   natural order of being. A defiant state of being marginal has the capacity to bombard the madman with a sense of regret. In an attempt to belong to the centrality of a system, the madman etches a desperate urge to be affiliated with the parameters of monological impositions that define the attributes of belonging in a system.

Morrison, in *The Bluest Eye*, expressed the creation of monological stances where the already acknowledged system of black people began to reflect upon themselves as dark-skinned individuals who are barbaric in comparison to their white counterparts. She explored the nuances with which the conviction gained its deep-rooted sense of naturality in the mind of the white as well as the black human beings on both sides of the slash. The view of black people about their own selves reflects how the supremacy of a monologue is established. A culture fluent and flourished before the intervention of a higher order of being becomes the victim of the colour prejudice, where white becomes pure and clean whereas black stands for dark and evil. The African-American experience of reality changes when they are confined to a system of power. The heightened self of awareness finds its origin, as in his essay "Signs Taken for Wonder", Homi K. Bhabha explains it, through the concept of 'The Book' upon the arrival of colonialism as an authority which wished to be spread from the first utterance itself: "The discovery of the book is, at once a moment of originality and authority, as well as a process of displacement that, paradoxically, makes the presence of the book wondrous to the extent to which it is repeated, translated, misread, displaced" (38). Therefore, with the appearance of 'The Book', it becomes a standpoint for all the literature created. The mad metaphor of superiority governs that any creative venture taken post the discovery of the great book will always be considered as submissive to the original with regard to the originality and the dynamicity of the idea that was always already conceptualised and negotiated by the moral stances of morality that govern the system. This is the same authority with which the blacks were referred to as counterparts to their fair-skinned masters. It is here, with the impositions of a superior, the establishment of a monologue occurs to the consciousness of the people.

The writers of literature thus wish to bring focus on these reasons and parameters as to why someone considers himself or herself as marginal. It tries to enlighten the idea of the 'other' as equivalent to the self where with the presence of madness as a literary tool, it brings approximations to the monologue. The sense of ultimate reality that lies beyond the constructed hands of a few, when experienced, determines the scope of defiance present in the subjects. With the eradication of the system, as Jacques Derrida stated, highlights the presence of aporias in the system which celebrates the humanistic approach to life. It is in the ruptures of the absolute autonomy that life happens. The fissures make it possible, if not to knock down the system, to at least create spaces of creative natural stances that humans have the potent capacity to claim for their own selves. The aesthetics of beauty is present in those crevices which etch for it being recognisable in the eyes of the readers as in its natural appeal it arrives.

The sense of beauty when unapproachable makes it difficult to grasp as in the case of Pecola who craved for acceptance. It was the need for beauty that made her an apparatus of the monologue wherein her madness for the bluest eyes urges her to become symbolic of the conception of seeking approval and hence a victim of the monologue. Pecola conceived the lack of love as an extension of her destined body lacking those beautiful blue eyes. The signifiers of beauty, when it is situated as the pivotal standpoint for affection, show the degradation of an emotional self. It befits the physical sense of beauty as the significatory triggers making her believe that it is only through the attainment of those blue eyes that she could be potent and capable enough to be loved. Such derogatory receptors of standardised beauty are workings of the system which formulate the ceremonial aspects of beauty in its fixed shape rather than negotiating the actuality of its form which is beyond mundane triggers of colour, tone, etc. The structurality of a building, when compared to the maddened flow of the river in its natural form, depicts how nature can be beautiful whilst being threatening and unshaped. The customisation is not eternally and always necessary. It is such a notion which writers of literature urge their readers to comprehend in their empirical reality and claim a perspective beyond the stringency of a system's structurality towards parameters of belongingness and normalcy.

Morrison, as a writer, rarely propagated in the text but ensured that the readers observed Pecola as a madwoman whose madness was consequential through the infliction of the monologue in the context of beauty and happiness. Madness becomes the metaphor for those at the margins as they crave inhumanely to belong to the human essences of life and be a part of the society that is gleaming with happiness, progress, and affection. Pecola asked Claudia, "How do you do that? I mean, how do you get somebody to love you?" (Morrison 30). It manifests the conception of love as a thing to be obtained through obedience towards mannerisms and also traits of the former of which can be attained through mirroring attempts of institutions, but the latter is an aspect that is externally imposed on a human being since birth. With the materialisation of an emotion, a child suffers at the hands of a system while the white, pretty Shirely Temples of the world, are adorned with affection and are idolised as a state that is to be achieved by each child to be an acceptable woman that shall be suited for a capable man in the coming years of her life. It is the stimulation of certain defined aspects of beauty which arouses and ensures the death of self-esteem in many like Pecola. The cruelty of such distancing is doubled as Pauline, Pecola's mother, herself rejects Pecola as an ugly abhorrence. Pauline, in her affiliations to her daughter, was confined as Pecola was heard calling her mother as Mrs. Breedlove and nothing else. The sense of the system and the

heightened sense of being where an innocent child is made the scapegoat for the entire community is observed by Claudia:

> All of our waste which we dumped on her and which she absorbed. And all of our beauty, which was hers first and which she gave to us. All of us all who knew her-felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness . . . Her inarticulateness made us believe we were eloquent. (Morrison 203)

It registers the concept of beauty forced upon the community. The thriving thirst for power subverted the instincts between a mother and her child. It is this establishment of mad monologues which turns rogue and entraps those who are not shrewd in the dynamics of subjugating the other to make their own self hierarchically superior in such a dialogue.

Madness, therefore, includes shelling of an element which in order to survive, seeks contemplation. It is in this self-reflection that, if not the character, the readers are able to witness in the reality of what they have articulated upon those elements which do not overtly belong through the filters of acceptability. The doubt initiated a feeling and sense of disgust as an innocent child becomes a puppet and is made to believe she lacks parameters that quantify her to deserve love. Pecola's silent acceptance of the system as the natural order of being imposed the blind urge in humans to follow the monologic version of reality. Here madness becomes a necessity to go through with the disease of appearance. T.S. Eliot in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" etches the visions of reality as, "There will be time, there will be time/ To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet" (lines 26-27) while indicating the duplicity that lies in the faces prepared to meet other consciousness of a system. The pretense of beauty that beholds the eye is appreciated more in contrast to the natural beauty of the soul. The monologue establishes the gaze of a consciousness' essence as the standard parameter of acceptability and belongingness.

The supremacy of the system is expressed by Bhaktin as "Monologism, at its extreme, denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities" (292). It explains how the system thrives on hegemony and objects to the presence of any other consciousness that can claim authenticity to a divergent version of reality. Morrison explored a dimension of madness and its predominance through Claudia, whose role in the narrative was to observe the politics and dominance of the monologue. She elaborates on the constructed ways in which adults appropriate the young essences of a system, "Adults do not talk to us – they give us directions …. They issue orders without providing information" (Morrison 8). Morrison manifests the presence

of a monarch who sets a definitive charter of existence in order to rule and govern without noticing the parallel universe of identities as diverse consciousness but interprets them only as immoral instances of existence.

The idea of authority as Claudia stated, "When we discovered that she clearly did not want to dominate us, we liked her" (Morrison 17), prompts the constructed notion of the other as a threat. When they met Pecola, it was the fear of the unknown that made Claudia and her sister doubt Pecola's viewpoint, but it soon subsided when she became their friend. Claudia matters to the marginal dynamics for she understood that the approach of Pecola was not to appropriate them but to celebrate them by accepting them along with their dynamicity and diversity. The madness of identity creation, and the need to assess the idea of threat, highlights the nuances in which human beings operate in active relational positions. Claudia becomes a mirror to the objective self in the narrative who displayed the reality as it is, "The master had said, 'You are ugly people'. They had looked about themselves and saw nothing to contradict the statement; saw, in fact, support for it learning at them from every billboard, every movie, every glance. 'Yes,' they had said. 'You are right' (Morrison 37).

The ability to contradict has been taken from them in order to establish a monopoly. It is the sense of the self as better that led to the deterioration of the other. The parameters that etch an individual as a self or the other is through the notions of the monologue's conceptualisation of reality. The version of acceptance and self-imposition of black inferiority is shown in the meek submission of 'You are right' signifying that which remains is absolutely wrong.

Morrison depicted the intricacy of her culture when the chance to be a natural existence is not taken but rather submitted by the blacks as a display of how the paradigm of silence occurs from the surface of an aesthetically potent community. The acceptance of a belief as truth is deadening to the human praxis of being sensitive and sensible. The realisation of oppression as the ultimate reality is responsible for the murder of the selves in characters like Pecola and many others for whom the presumed system of predominance is worthier than nature. It is here that madness enriches the humane side of the Self, which believes in the possibility of an error in the system as also natural and moral. The reason why an innocent child is portrayed at the threshold of this monological stance in the novel is explained as, "The death of self-esteem can occur quickly, easily in children, before their ego has 'legs'" (Morrison 8) foregrounding how the initial seeds of consent in the young minds are sown to follow the system. The version of reality propagated by the monologue is of established sovreignty at whose command orders are disposed of while the individuals become subjects of the administration.

The version of this establishment is visible in Pauline for whom the search for beauty was only possible outside the black town as she began working for a white family. "She found beauty, order, cleanliness and praise" (Morrison 125) in the Fisher's household which reflects how symbolically her own house became dirty, ugly, and filthy like the people it was surrounded with. The sense of acceptance in being a maid in a white house rather than the owner of a black house depicts how seeds of abandonment are sown in the ground reality exclusively in a quest to be affiliated to, and in proximity with, the meaning-making praxis. Her rejection of her own family made her achieve a sense of liberty as now, "the creditors and service people who humiliated her when she went to them on her own behalf respected her, were even intimidated by her, when she spoke for the Fishers" (126). The affiliations of white as better choices of being existent in society continues to haunt the natural self as it offered a sense of comfort to be uplifted away from the decadent state of the margins. Pauline scolded her own daughter in the Fisher's house when she spilt the blueberry cake on the floor. Her affection towards the white child and rejection of her own daughter disturbed the readers as the nuance of discardment she offers for a particular skin colour. She was enchanted by the films where the beauty of life is depicted in the glamour of lights and dreams through the constructed triggers of beauty and the American manner of dreams through products and possessions. Her keenness was to achieve that clean, neat, and beautiful household as propagated by the monologue. The madness for beauty made her confess for her own daughter, "But I knowed she was ugly. Head full of pretty hair, but Lord she was ugly" (124). The fact that she gave up on her own house and daughter mirrors the hypocrisy of the system. The sense that it turns invisible to see the child as beautiful apart from the standardised form of creation as done by the monologue. It was this instance which made Pecola realise the need for beauty in order to be accepted not only by the people of the society but even the members of her family.

Morrison, in the narrative, described the brown people as those who "married 'up,' lightening the family complexion and thinning out the family features" (166). It portrayed their need in them to get rid of the innate yet external trigger of darkness they were born with. The aspiring nature, where the black would prefer to become a hint akin to the white element instead of remaining as a dark entity, bothers the cognitive rationality of the readers where it seems as a certain state of madness in itself where the drastic nature of steps taken to belong are intensely gruesome, unnatural, and sometimes even forced without basic contemplation. The pressure of the mob mentality where what the administration is moved and supported at the command of the leader are the undertones in a monologue. Madness becomes important because it craves its

own understanding of the dialogue as the issue of natural and unnatural is addressed. The essence of a madman lies in recognition of the Self which individuals like Pauline, in her own mad monological manner of pursuing parameters of beauty, was unable to witness and observe. It is here that the readers focus on how mad normal human beings are in their rationality, also subjective to the perspective with which their actions are scrutinised and received.

The madness for beauty, nationalism, identity, or love, where it becomes a need in humans, is the result of the lack the madman suffers from. Stereotypical madness is more applicable to the normal elements of the system, while those at the margins have an aesthetic beauty in them. Pecola began to belong to this sense of beauty as she never became heroic in her stance against the monologue. All she ever wanted to be was natural. The realisation of "Pecola's voice was no more than a sigh" (65) makes her essence as humane in contrast to the loud and vocal monologues.

Thus, madness becomes an empirical actuality of existence for those who do not belong. The free will of a predestined orientation finds its root in the organic sense of a being, which is possibly the concept of conviction. It is the basic reason which is dependent on how the trust of human beings works on the linear and deterministic systems of reality and its ideas. Madness is the journey through which one departs towards a realm where the rationality of the madman is not always already irrational and insane but a varied version of the rationality that might offer much more sense beyond the spatio-temporal experiences of a particular system. Writers negotiate madness as a method and as a design through which questions are surfaced in the cognitive realm of the readers. Pecola may have been effaced by the monologue of beauty, but she nonetheless extends the aesthetics of her madness as a dire condition that was forced upon her through no fault of her own.

Works Cited and Consulted

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. University of Texas, 1984, pp. 292, 293.

Bhabha, Homi. K. "Signs Taken for Wonder". *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, edited by Bill Ashcroft et al., Second ed., Routledge, 2006, p. 38.

Eliot, T. S. *T.S. Eliot: Selected Poems*. Doaba Publications, 2003.

Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. Vintage, 2016, pp. 8, 17, 30, 37, 65, 124,125, 126, 166, 203.

Scull, Andrew. *Madness: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

— * —

Beyond Heteronormativity: An Interrogation of Homosocial Desire in Science Fiction

Sheena Lama

Science Fiction (SF) is known to imagine transgressive representations through its extrapolatory potential. It is a (sub)genre of Speculative Fiction and has arguably been 'ahead of its time' ever since its inception. The model on which SF develops is a concoction of science and technology (ever-evolving in nature), real or imaginative, in a plausible setting. With the magnitude of advancement in technology and science, it has become possible to have virtual experiences which give a "real" life effect. Besides, any work of art produced in a specific era, more often than not, reflects the society in the given time. More than ever, the use of online technology has become pertinent during the global pandemic whilst we face the lockdown. The society has drawn itself towards different forms of virtual experiences, from online gaming to online streaming. Taking into consideration an episode viz. "Striking Vipers" (from Netflix's *Black Mirror*) combines the narrative of online streaming and gaming, this paper aims to interrogate the space provided by SF to explore the unexplored, that is, look beyond the notion of heteronormativity.

"The boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" (Haraway "A Cyborg Manifesto"). Over the years, online streaming has gained raging popularity across the world. Both recorded, and live broadcast of content has become accessible to the viewers on their devices with viable internet connections. From the plethora of available streaming websites, the viewers are spoilt for choice. However, in recent years, Netflix has topped the charts of streaming services, offering original content as well as distributing additional content. The subscribers can choose from the ambit of series, shows, movies, documentaries, etc. This paper aims to study an episode from one of the most celebrated series, viz. *Black Mirror*, a Science Fiction (SF) television series created by Charlie Brooker. Initially, the series of standalone episodes ran on television for two years (2011-13), before Netflix purchased it in 2015. Thereafter, the series has had five successful seasons with different episodes and a movie of the same moniker.

The show revolves around the impact of modern technology on human society, analysing repercussions of scientific and technological advancements, often depicting its dark side. The title of the series called *Black Mirror* perhaps highlights the idea that it is meant to reflect the cataclysmic elements of a technologically advanced society. Darko Suvin in *Metamorphosis of Science*

Fiction (1979) states that SF is "not only a reflection *of* reality but also *on* reality" (10). Incidentally, this SF series intends to disseminate the same. Moreover, as SF develops on the real or imagined science and/or technology set in a plausible context, it always tends to be in a state of flux. For the principles of science and/or technology are ever-evolving and allow the speculation to take flight. In other words, something that is a subject of wild speculation in our empirical world may become, due to advancement in science and technology, a real subject in years to come (Lama 108).

For instance, a couple of decades back, advanced technological devices like computers or mobile phones were not in existence; likewise, who would have thought of an online streaming technology like Netflix? In contemporary society, such advancements become inspiration and motif for SF, shaped by the interaction of "estrangement and cognition" underlined by Suvin. Interestingly, SF has been ahead of its time ever since its inception and has been known to explore all possible aspects of the society, normative and/or alternative. However, it has also been noted that "SF has traditionally been better at imagining machines and their conjunctions than it has been at imagining bodies and their possible relationships" (Pearson 150). Keeping the same in consideration, this paper aims to assess and examine the space beyond the normative representation of bodies, identities, and desires. In order to do so, episode one of the fifth season of *Black Mirror* will be studied to interrogate the idea of homosocial desire in SF. Firstly, an attempt will be made to discuss the idea of homosocial desire and secondly, an extension of the same discussion will be made in conjunction with SF, that is, the idea of homosocial desire in SF will be delineated. It must be noted that homosocial is not equivalent to homosexual; the former happens to be a neologism derived from the latter. In the words of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick noted in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985):

> It describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with "homosexual," and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from "homosexual." In fact, it is applied to such activities as "male bonding," which may, as in our society, be characterized by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality. To draw the "homosocial" back into the orbit of "desire," of the potentially erotic, then, is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual—a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society, is radically disrupted. (1-2)

Additionally, when we talk about the depiction of bodies, identities, and desires in SF, the result mostly oscillates amidst the "normative" orbit. Even if one

dares to talk about the portrayal of alternative forms, one may stretch one's imagination and/or understanding to the extent of looking at "alternative" sexualities in the same old binary, homosexual as opposed to the "normative" heterosexual. Moreover, categorisation is as dangerous and as misleading as profiling, for not all homosocial bonds are homosexual relations and vice versa, that is, "homosexual activity can be either supportive of or oppositional to homosocial bonding" (Sedgwick 6). This understanding needs to be revised in order to provide space to a more nuanced understanding of bodies, identities, and desires. Queer theory provides a novel and more inclusive scope for the much-needed re-evaluation. "In science fiction, the body (whether human or other) is a tabula rasa, capable of multiple and contradictory readings" (Wheeler 210).

As mentioned above, in this paper episode one of the fifth season of *Black Mirror* will be taken into consideration. The episode, like all the other episodes, is a standalone episode with no reference and/or connection with any other episode of the series. On June 5, 2019, the episode was released on Netflix, titled "Striking Vipers" written by Charlie Brooker and directed by Owen Harris. It lays bare the nuances of desire, homosocial desire, per se. The plot underlines a homosocial bond between two old friends (Danny Parker and Karl Houghton) over a virtual reality fighting game. However, the story turns out to be much more convoluted as it proceeds further.

Owing to the rules of virtual reality, one undergoes a simulated experience which may or may not be an expression of reality. Also, one witness's physical presence is simulated in a virtual environment which may involve a certain degree of sensory experience. The term, if closely looked at, is an oxymoron where virtual is something which is not factual and exists only in essence or effect as opposed to reality which exists in actuality. Interestingly, the term 'Science Fiction' also gives a similar effect; further, as quoted in the epigraph of this paper, Science Fiction and social reality is separated by an optical illusion. That optical illusion, in the aforementioned episode, seems to be provided by the *novum.* As defined by Darko Suvin, a *novum* is an innovation which is scientifically plausible, validated by the logic of cognitive estrangement, that is, a new thing "deviating from author's implied reader's norm of reality" (63-64).

Albeit, the idea of haptic sensation in virtual reality may possibly have been a novum a few decades back, perhaps when a queer cyberpunk novel like Melissa Scott's *Trouble and her Friends* (1994) was published. Scott's novel underlines the story of Cerise, Trouble's ex-partner, who virtually consummates with another woman (Silk) on the internet where the woman in the virtual body

turns out to be a teenage boy in real life. But, in 2019, a virtual reality video game where the players can feel physical sensations is not quite an innovation. In that situation, what can be considered the *novum* possibly? Well, the answer lies in the experiences of the virtual body in the virtual reality game when seen through the lens of queer theory. The two friends take two virtual bodies, Danny and Karl play as Lance (a virtual male form) and Roxette (a virtual female form). Betwixt the fight, the virtual bodies are consumed by erotic desire, surprisingly fulfilling for two straight men. As both snap back to the realisation, they mutually switch off the game, seeking a valid explanation.

The virtual bodies happen to exhibit their emotions in the virtual reality game where Danny and Karl project an alternative (virtual) desire. However, the show takes a step ahead by extrapolating bodies, identities and desires instead of the players' empirical reality altogether. In other words, the technology, that is, the virtual reality game itself becomes a mode of deviating Danny and Karl from their "norm of reality." The show builds over the idea of reality and hyperreality, interrogating possibilities beyond the rigidity of corporeality. As stated above, according to Pat Wheeler, in SF the bodies (human or other) are capable of multiple readings and representations. In SF, "protagonists can 'perform' gender, they can be male or female, they can be neuters, have no definable sexual category, be intersexed or switch between genders" (210).

Here, the protagonists, after coming into terms with the discovery of homoerotic desire in the virtual reality game, continue to live double life. Before the discovery, both the men were already in committed relations with women outside the game, which they continue to maintain while playing the game simultaneously. This calls attention to the notion of infidelity for Karl and Danny when they continue their liaison in the name of male bonding while their partners remain unaware of the same. However, the connection of desire between them remains completely virtual, which makes the matter more complex than it sounds. Any argument to be made in order to defend or refute the notion of infidelity would require deep thought, for one has to think of the regulations of virtual bodies which technically do not exist and prevail only due to technological intervention. The line of thought is interesting but beyond the scope of this paper, for it aligns with the principles of ethics and may be discussed under the banner of human ethics and technology. After all, the consummation remains limited to the virtual bodies.

Further, the obvious thought strikes the two of them as their respective real-life relations begin to deteriorate. They ponder upon the possibility of homosexuality and try to confirm facts. As soon as they attempt to act upon it, they realise that it is not working; they do not experience what they felt in the

virtual world. This provides the characters as well as the viewers to explore what lies beyond heteronormativity. Another point which needs to be noted is that Karl tries to replicate the experience with the same combination of virtual bodies with other players but fails. It is his bond with Danny which makes the experience what it is, which is why this paper looks at homosocial desire, the bonding between two people of the same sex, not necessarily homosexual. SF provides a space to bloom "the potential unbrokenness of continuum" between homosocial and homosexual: a continuum which remains disrupted in the society, as noted by Eve Sedgwick (1-2).

In toto, both of them are seen craving for physical gratification beyond the virtual reality game, but the desire remains limited towards people of the opposite sex, and they practically never act upon it. In addition, the two do not display any signs of homoeroticism in their real bodies. This is where the nuanced idea of bodies, identities, and desires come to the surface. To recapitulate, two men who happen to be the best of friends bond over a virtual reality fighting game where they take virtual bodies (Lance and Roxette), end up being consumed by erotic desire and failing to understand the situation, they try to recreate the experience in real life to check for an alternative possibility of sexuality but all in vain.

Also, it must be noted that amidst the virtual reality game, when the two characters consummate, they have virtual bodies of a man and a woman, which makes it a heterosexual encounter. Whereas, beyond the game, they are cisgender men, which technically makes their virtual experience homosexual in nature. Furthermore, any possibility of homosexuality is ruled out when the two try to consummate as an experiment in the real world. Given their circumstances, if they were to have the same experience in the real world too, then perhaps one could have thought of possible bisexuality, but evidently, that does not happen.

While this seems as complicated as it appears when one watches the show, the idea that is brought home underlines the fact that gender, sex, desire, identity, and body are complex ideas. It cannot be limited to binaries of black and white: it is about time to explore the grey. As the episode reaches its climax when the two decide to meet and confirm facts, the meeting leads to an altercation where they end up beating each other. Interestingly, the adrenaline rush does not lead to anything close to what they had experienced during a similar intense fight in the game. On the contrary, they get arrested for getting into an ugly fight. What follows next is equally intriguing as Theo (Danny's wife) comes to her husband's rescue and on her request, Danny confesses the truth. The episode concludes with a mutual agreement between Danny and

Theo where the former can continue to play Striking Vipers with Karl while still being married to and being in love with Theo in real life.

While the notion of the homosocial bond is being discussed, the activity which binds the bond also needs to be scrutinised to understand the working of the relationship shared by Danny and Karl. It must be noted that the two middle-aged men bond over hypermasculine fighting (virtual reality) video games where the virtual bodies are built to perfection. Danny, who otherwise suffers from a knee ailment, finds himself in the virile body of Lance (male virtual avatar), capable of participating in extreme physical activities. And Karl takes up the avatar of Roxette (female virtual body), extremely attractive and young. Initially, when the two have a conversation about their experience, they seem to be visibly disturbed. While they fail to fathom what goes around, the possibility of a "wish fulfilment" situation can be taken into consideration. From the vantage point of the patriarchal society, there must exist an ideal situation of compulsory heterosexuality, seeking refuge from the societal expectations, the two find an expression of their repressed desires in the virtual reality. But, the bottom line is that the desire is not necessarily homosexual; the interpretation is open to the viewers as their relation remains fluid stimulated by homosocial bonding.

Besides, this highlights the idea of performativity discussed by Judith Butler in *Undoing Gender* (2004) where she mentions that gender is a kind of performance where one is acting in a concert organised by the society. In other words, gender is a construction maintained by various social factors. One can define and understand one's identity only to a certain extent regulated by the definitions given by the social constructs. It is a kind of "doing" or a performance by an individual who is negotiating between the possibilities defined by society (7). She further advocates that if this "doing" is dependent on what is done to an individual, how can one possibly have a sense of their gender? Therefore, do desires really originate in one's personhood? Is one really the author of their body, gender and desire? Posing such thought-provoking questions, she appeals to "undo" gender norms (1).

Evidently, in "Striking Vipers" both Danny and Karl are performing in the virtual bodies of Lance and Roxette but the question is, are they not performing beyond the virtual reality? The virtual reality provides them with the potential to tear down the rigid walls of fixed identity. However, the performance lasts only in the virtual reality game. As soon as they get back to reality, they get back to "perform" their identities as Danny and Karl, cisgender heterosexual men. "Indeed, stories which are sympathetic to homosexuality do not necessarily involve any sort of unsettling of a heteronormative regime; at the same time, stories which interrogate alternative possibilities for sexual-social structures

are not necessarily sympathetic to alternative sexualities" (Pearson 150). This happens to be one of the most intriguing things about "Striking Vipers" where the viewers never get a concrete insight to the characters' sense of desire as the characters themself are exploring possibilities of the same. As the ending remains open, the viewers come into terms with the nuances of bodies and desires where the notion of performativity holds water.

The potential of SF to imagine transgressive representations and interrogate possible alternatives pose a challenge to both constructivists (who hold a belief that the expression of human desire, identity, and sex is acquired from society and culture) and essentialists (who are of the opinion that human desire, identity and sex is innate). By default, SF offers endless opportunities to study, question and explore myriad possibilities, only limited by logic of extrapolation and imagination aided by the effect of "cognitive estrangement." When aided by queer theory, SF has the potential to transcend the liminality of fixed identities as queer theory opposes all claims of rigidity. "Science fiction's task, often, is to make visible to us the unthinking assumptions that limit human potentiality; epistemologies of sexuality are just as blinding and just as important to the construction of any future society as are epistemologies of science" (Pearson 157). Moreover, SF is capable of depicting and commenting on social issues, questioning the obvious and deconstructing the norm in order to provide space to the concerns otherwise pushed to the periphery. In that light, the SF series examined in this paper aimed at reflecting the dark (read hidden) characteristics of society in the light of modern technology. The episode, more specifically, manages to initiate a discourse on myriad possibilities which exist beyond the heteronormative sphere.

Works Cited and Consulted

Butler, Judith. "Introduction: Acting in Concert." *Undoing Gender*. Routledge, 2004, pp. 1-16

Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." *Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Routledge, 1991, pp. 149-181.

Lama, Sheena. "Science Fiction and the Others: A Study of Representation of Minorities in X-Men." *Literary Harold*, vol. 5, issue. 5, Feb. 2020, pp. 108-114.

Pearson, Wendy. "Science Fiction and Queer Theory." *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, Cambridge UP, 2003, pp. 149-162.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire. Columbia UP, 1985, pp. 1-20.

"Striking Vipers." *Black Mirror*, created by Charlie Brooker, season 5, episode 1, 5 June 2019. *Netflix*, https://www.netflix.com/in/title/70264888?source=35

Suvin, Darko. "Estrangement and Cognition." *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction*. Yale UP, 1979, pp. 3-15.

Wheeler, Pat. "Issues of Gender, Sexuality and Ethnicity." *The Science Fiction Handbook*, edited by Nick Hubble and Aris Mousoutzanis, Bloomsbury, 2013, pp. 209-234.

— * —

Socio-Logic of the Capitalist World: A Reading of Machiavelli's *The Prince*

Avani Bhatnagar

The fingers of a hand with feathered sleeves holding the golden pommel of a sword, carved and designed for a man of authority and power, connotatively suggests that it is the closest tool to a man for immediate use to function, which can be further deliberated to understand his instantaneous need to operate, using it. The feathered sleeves may suggest the kingly stature of the man surrounded by the articles of flamboyance. It is the engaging grace of the hand and the unseen other half of the sword which invites curiosity. The hidden intentions and the upper view of the visual gives it a depth and takes it inside to see the depth of the sword which is unknown.

The cover page of Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1984), the Penguin Classics edition, assembles a visual composition to be read and reread for the text to communicate the ideas established in the written text, in the political treatise. Its intense close-up view focuses on the concentrated idea of *The Prince,* which establishes the guidelines and gives a framework for a Prince to come in power and maintain it. The basic premise of the text is based on attaining power to control the State. Therefore, the sword as a tool of grace in the hands of the Prince suggests his way of operate in the sphere of politics. Machiavelli gives a detailed account of the psychology of the Kings and the survival strategy of the rulers to stay in power. He systematically records the account about the interaction and negation of an individual with the collective psychology of the political rulers as well as the masses.

Finding its roots at the time of Renaissance, the Machiavellian argument is built on the independent unit of an individual who makes a choice beyond moral deliberations and restructures the paradigm of the political world. When human beings became the centre of everything, society went through the process of rebirth at various levels. A lot of faith was bestowed in human endeavours, and the limitless exploration and expedition became an integral part of the system to experience the shift in the outlook. Renaissance began from Florence, Italy, and therefore, the Renaissance spirit was experienced in Italy more intensely than any other country. Moral debates were in question, yet human beings started to exhaust every field of knowledge, having confidence in their capacity. Therefore, to make a choice without any imposition and fear gave agency to the being to be able to take the bridle of life in one's hand. Pico della Mirandola writes in his essay "The Dignity of Man" redefines the position of man as the

288

privileged one, "You, who are confined by no limits shall determine for yourself your own nature, in accordance with your own free will, in whose hands I have placed you" (2). He relocates the human potential and directs it towards curiosity and inquisitive nature of the human self.

Renaissance, when interpreted sans moral and ethical complexity, undergoes a praxis of Machiavellian ways which can lead to unidirectional rationality. The philosophical coordinates of human existence, when left loose, create a crude framework which lacks the elements working towards human cognition. Knowledge when not aligned with human cognition will fail to create wisdom. Hence, for the evolutionary movement of the human being, there comes a need to be inclusive. The strategic framework when recorded, creates a possibility of being an established norm for the society to function. The paper is an attempt to read the Machiavellian model as a norm of the capitalist world which seeped into the society through the interaction of the capitalist forces and started to define the way of life.

Not disregarding the merits of the historical context of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, this paper brings the socio-economic influences of the text on the contemporary corporate world; it reads the capitalist functioning in today's time as a derivative of the Machiavellian paradigm, and studies Martin Scorsese's *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) and Shyam Benegal's *Kalyug* (1981). Literature and films, being the modes of representation of life, become a subject to reflect on the changing trajectory of human civilisation. Therefore, the above-mentioned films will become the binding thread for life and reflection for the paper.

The boundaries of the discourse of *The Prince*, which once contained its engagement within political domains, have expanded to penetrate the lives of the people. It no longer enjoys its limited space, because it has started to share the space with other fields of knowledge to be able to redefine the functioning of humanity at large. This paper is an attempt to understand the reach of the discourse in the economic domain, which has become the way of life in capitalist society. To understand this, one needs to gauge through the socio-economic conditions which form the basis of penetration and re-establishes human beings to be socio-political beings only and takes away the philosophical nectar of their fundamental existence. This paper reflects on the influences of Machiavelli on our contemporary corporate sector which regulates the market and hence controls not just the movement of the capital but also the movement of human desires.

The word capitalism derives its origin from the Latin word *caput* meaning 'head,' and hence it carries in itself the dynamics of power and control. In the guise of a free play market, capitalism actually offers a monopolistic market, letting the few control the capital flow and human drives. Similarly, the political

treatise of Machiavelli redefines the political world from the point of view of the Prince seeking power. His survival strategy is based on the premise of using and manipulating the weak and eliminating the stronger. Manipulating the psychology of others for retaining power is what the Machiavellian character does. To exercise power and also to be able to control and exploit the tools of power is what the political philosopher highlights in the text.

The premise of the political treatise functions devoid of any moral concerns. Machiavelli argues that the strategy works in the domain of the real world and is not the utopian idea with philosophical insights. His argument shows the contrast between the empirical world rooted in reality and the philosophical world of the pursuit of ideals. Unlike the theories of political philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, whose ideas on politics never eliminated the issues of morality, Machiavelli's *The Prince* reformed the political regimes by ratifying the immoral actions of a ruler with his ideas of an ideal leader in his attempt to portray Roman history. For him "Christian principles were admirable, but not applicable for politicians in certain circumstances, the idea that all human behaviour could be assessed in relation to one set of values was naive and utopian" (Introduction xxv).

As a pure strategy and a rational linear argument, he thrives on an immoral world of cruelty, injustice, self-serving shrewdness, and a world based on the calculative moves to attain and retain power. Machiavelli establishes the human being as a power-seeking animal who must adapt to the vices which he/she is bound to commit and further dehumanises the discourse of the political treatise. In the "Introduction", Tim Parks writes, "Machiavelli was to present leadership and nation-building as creative processes that should be judged not morally but aesthetically" (Introduction xxix). But the primary concern remains: is the idea of aesthetics devoid of the human element? Or can the discourse devoid of moral complexity contribute to the growth of human civilisation?

Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* divides the knowledge under politics into three categories, namely, theoretical, practical, and productive, which aim at contemplation, creation, and action, respectively. All three functions together make it a more scientific process whose praxis in the real world will find a direction for the materialisation of the theoretical world. He, therefore, brings the utopian world close to reality, not making it an ideational impossibility. He closely links the idea of human ethics with politics making it more inclusively complex working in the direction of civilisational growth. Aristotle establishes, "And on this account nothing but a good moral training can qualify a man to study what is noble and just— in a word, to study questions of Politics" (6). The one who enters into the world of justice has to be in love with justice and pursue the actions manifested in excellence as per Aristotle.

Ethics work under the collective human functioning of the society and therefore, its primacy in the evolution of human civilisation or its insignificance as directed by Machiavelli as two varied positions will create different choices to decide the trajectory for beings. For a ruler, Machiavelli writes:

> ...he mustn't be concerned about the bad reputation that comes with those negative qualities that are almost essential if he is to hold on to power. If you think about it, there'll always be something that looks morally right but would actually lead a ruler to disaster, and something else that looks wrong but will bring security and success. (61)

The choice to reject morality defines his position as a political philosopher. He eliminates the questions of reflection and introspection, as his argument is not bound by any obligation or responsibility of a governing agent. His ideas work in the domain of the Prince as a ruler who wants to rule to hold a position of privilege in the society. The choices holding ethical positions are outrightly rejected by Machiavelli as his presumptions fail to see the success of a ruler who is ethically bound to serve the subjects. Under the light of the above quote, the ruler does not function under challenging circumstances of human cognition as an engaging force, because one of the elements of responsibility is eliminated. The idea of success is defined in the attainment of unhindered power. The Machiavellian utopia is another dysfunctional model which shows no patterns of extrapolation as it lacks the elements of uncertainty and unpredictability, which is a part of any political functioning rooted in the subject of human beings. Causational assumptions of the Machiavellian model limit its dimensions and political discourse hence becomes devoid of its complexity when the other important coordinates of operation are ignored.

Similarly, the idea of a capitalist society is based on the economic development of a country. The idea of power operates through economy under capitalism. Competition, supply, demand and self-interest as per Adam Smith, the philosopher of economics, are the forces of a free market. The idea of a free market is seen as a guise under the play of monopoly. The demand and supply is actually regulated by the capitalist forces; therefore, these forces manipulate and reshape the consumer behaviour to earn profit, which is the ultimate objective. The paradigm shifts from social growth to making profit for self-interest changed the centre of humanity, aligning money with growth and success.

This lopsided movement changed the socio-economic structures of the society which, in turn, is seen as a new norm replacing the ideas of human evolution with human growth. As this works with little or no regulation, it gives freedom to the capitalist forces to access their liberty to operate and shape the socio-economic structures with the motive to earn profit. Nation-states building

their supremacy on the basis of economic possession entered into the world of economic war for power. V.B. Singh, in the essay "Adam Smith's Theory of Economic Development" (1959), describes Adam Smith's theory as not to give much importance to the idea of benevolence as a regulator of harmony. He highlights that law and magistracy are always on the side of the trader, which reflects that the trader has an extended freedom of operation. In Adam Smith's view, the idea of natural philosophy which gives human beings the freedom to function. Categorical specialisation under the division of labour creates a world of freedom for the producer who could use the yardstick to measure and manipulate according to their own requirements. It also created a world of exclusivity with the idea of focused knowledge which redefined the idea of efficiency, making things categorical instead of inclusive and comprehensive.

The strategies are used by the capitalist to entrap the consumer. And in the garb of a consumer-centric working environment, corporate offers what it intends to offer and further controls the collective desire. It captivates the taste of the consumer and reduces the shelf life of the product forcing the consumer to be a part of the nexus offered. The political treatise of Machiavelli has become the treatise of the political economy today. To critically view the Machiavellian model, the paper has been divided into three sections which will specifically talk about the basis of the idea of power which thrives on pure rationality as a way of life, and it has taken the course of linear progression dramatically. The values of the Machiavellian model can be broadly seen under the following classified systems.

Quantifiable Expansion

Invading to conquer to acquire power on the basis of territorial augmentation empowers the Prince to access maximum control. This topographical expansion restrains the topological mooring of the Prince, and hence the measurable land control becomes a defining principle of quantifiable extensions. To possess and access control directs the ways towards the power-struck mappable elaboration of the Prince. "Move the money from your clients pocket to your pocket" (*The Wolf of Wall Street* 00:08:50-52). Maximisation of profit and holding maximum money using minimum time frame is the principle of the capitalist working which again, reiterates the quantifiable norms of expansion. Hence, we see that the idea of the unseen human expansion does not fit in the frames of both the models.

The fascinating idea of earning three million dollars in three hours in the film *The Wolf of Wall Street* puts a compulsion on the vulnerable stock brokers of Wall Street to extend their access to be able to suck the money out of their customers under the strategic working of employing the immoral ways of life.

Jordan Belfrot, along with Donnie Azof who befriends him, is lured by the amount of quick money his profession offers and they use their pump and dump scam to capture the speculative market. They are well-versed with the market's mechanism and further use it and manipulate it in order to control the money floating there. In today's capitalist world, the idea of money commands the lives of the people. Mark Hanna, a professional stock broker already working on Wall Street, lures Belfrot in the sex and drugs filled world of stockbrokers by enticing him in the money-making world when he convincingly tells him, "Where the money is to be reinvested and the client gets addicted to it and then give more and more and moving money to which will go into the pockets of investors. Client will think he is getting what will be true on papers but not in reality" (00:27:23-30).

For the corporate industry profit maximisation becomes the bottom line where they choose to overlook the other more humane aspects which add value to life. When this blinkered worldview governs life, people soon forget to enrich their existence by the ignored factors. Belfrot in the film *The Wolf of Wall Street* says, "I want you to go out there and I want you to ram Steve Madden stock down your client's throats until they fucking choke on it" (01:21:20-34). Considering money, the only and the ultimate factor for growth and happiness makes them untouched by the more profound factors of life. Ultimately, money becomes the socio-logic of the capitalist society empowering the corporate world and ultimately the politicians who are the hidden governing bodies of this empire. The economic terrain is driven by the American empire which stands at the centre as the market-driven force. Belfrot says in the film, "But of all the drugs and God's blue heaven, there is one that is my absolute favourite you see… Enough of this shit will make you invincible. Able to conquer the world and eviscerate your enemies'' (00:03:50- 00:04:07). Money here becomes a tool for power. It is not money but the power one gains with money that requires attention.

To conquer the economy to redefine the power structures is what we see in the above-mentioned lines. The Machiavellian ideas of invincibility and obliteration are the continuing forces of the capitalist world. Whereas in the film *Erin Brokovich* (2000) we observe Erin's understanding of expansion in direct contrast to the PG&E's unethical ways of earning money. Their use of Hexavalent chromium contaminated the drinking water which further caused terminal diseases to the Hinkley plaintiffs. The primary business ethics of PG&E involved deception, bribery, harm to the environment, and the idea of distrust. This case was the largest direct-action lawsuit in the history of the United States, which revealed their socio-economic functioning under the light of degenerated actions. This quantifiable expansion is measurable and so is the

expansion of Machiavellian power.

Human expansion is the unseen extrapolation of the being which adds to the evolutionary journey of civilisation growth. Che Guevara's journey of Latin America in the travelogue *The Motorcycle Diaries* can be mapped, but can we map the constantly evolving Self of the man who became a revolutionary? The changing consciousness cannot be mapped, nor can the thoughts, but the measurable land and money can be, by which one derives a sense of power. The modes of exercising power and deriving a sense of power need to be redefined for the unseen human expansion to be able to find its roads. From a dreamer to a man of action who shed himself of "I" to identify with the world waiting for him to be "we" is that unseen human expanse. The journey from "I" to "we" is of an untraceable human self who not only contributed in the field of leprosy under the identity of a doctor, but rose for humanity at large with his empathetic temperament. The song "Jeena Isi ka Naam hai" (1958), written by Shailendra, holds literary sensibility and reiterates the purpose of life and designs the civilisational fabric through his poetic rendition by Mukesh:

> *Mitte jo pyaar k lie vo zindagi*
> *Jalebahar k lie vo zindagi*
> *Kisi ko ho na ho Hume to aitbar*
> *Jeenaisi ka naam hai (13-16)*

Life of love, compassion, and empathy infuses the mundane working with the romance to delineate the consciously engaging human endeavours with humaneness for the unseen progression. The world of Machiavelli and capitalism works on the ideas of distrust and deceiving. Therefore, *aitbar* as a missing force in the above-mentioned works makes it a fragmented and a tumbled structure.

Political Morality in the Capitalist World

> But since it is difficult for a ruler to be both feared and loved, it is much safer to be feared than loved, if one of the two must be lacking. For this can generally be said of men: that they are ungrateful, fickle, liars and deceivers, avoiders of danger, greedy for profit; and as long as you serve their welfare, they are entirely yours, offering you their blood, possessions, life and children...when the occasion to do so is not in sight; but when you are faced with it, they turn against you. And that Prince who lays his foundations on their promises alone, finding himself stripped of other preparations, falls to ruin... For men are less concerned with hurting someone who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared, because love is held by a link of obligation which, since men are wretched creatures, is

> broken every time their own interests are at stake; but fear is held by a dread of punishment which will never leave you. (Machiavelli 31)

In the above lines, the Machiavellian morality re-establishes the ways of convenient vices. His argument is primarily based on the non-humane, separatist ethos. In the capitalist society, the means of production are used in a manner to generate profit to hold power, which is constant in the entire process of the working of any corporate firm. And Machiavelli talks about maximisation of political power to rule. Therefore, we see that exploitation is one of the consequences of profit-making and demands a specific morality. The modes of operation of capitalistic forces as represented in the films again show a human vice manifested in action. The film *Kalyug* by Shyam Benegal is an argument of Mahabharata under capitalist decadence. The scandalous battle between families of the two brothers leads to the fall of both the families. The fight to get the contract for the STS project worth 27 crores leads to a series of self-planted unfortunate circumstances. In one of the conversations between Dhanraj and Karna where they plan to strategise against their rival family so that the STS project is finally taken by their company, they say:

DHANRAJ : *Baat ban gai. Lockout ho gya.*

KARNA : *Good, Yani filhaal factory se humari machines jane ka Sawal nai uthta* (1:12:00-07)

With a motive to not let the cousin take the contract they tried to sabotage the working of their factory so that the contact remains with them. Human relations take a backseat and the greed to earn more and more money takes over. Also, the subcontext of Mahabharata gives a mythological in-depth to the plot. To protect their own working, they plant an impediment for the other company. This continues when Karna again says "*Production factories mein scandals kibooh jab government to milegi to unka STS project khatre mein padh jaega aur sath hi banking circles aur stock market mein unki prestige girjaegi*" (1:17:12-20). The political morality of Machiavelli demands the need to act pretentiously and work for one's own profit-making process at the cost of the ethical commands of life. Revenge through murders, which ultimately lead to the ruin of both the families and the tragic state of Bharat and Dhanraj and deaths of all the other people involved in the game, created a space for unfair practices where the characters had different motivations outside the ethical code. The hijacking of the trucks loaded with products so that it doesn't reach in time and then to secretly tell the police about the return of the trucks with the motive to gain the insurance claim money would bring bad reputation to Bharat and the family business.

The idea of morality is individual, whereas ethics deal with the collective human civilisational responsibility and growth, which are fundamental to human existence. Individual morality can lead to subjective choices, but ethically deliberated philosophical positions are embedded in the process of creation itself. Machiavelli sanctions the Prince to have the traits of a lion and a wolf at the same time and therefore allows cruel means to take shape in politics. He writes: "The reader should bear in mind that there are two ways of doing a battle: using the laws and animal force. But since playing by the law often proves inadequate, it makes sense to resort to force as well" (69). Hence it approves of the animalistic behaviour on the part of the public figure of the Prince. Machiavelli goes to the extent of saying:

> Fortune varies but men go on regardless. When their approach suits the times they're successful, and when it doesn't they're not. My opinion on the matter is this: it's better to be impulsive than cautious; fortune is female and if you want to stay on top of her you have to slap and thrust. You'll see she's more likely to yield that way than to men who go about her coldly. And being a woman she likes her men young, because they're not so cagey, they're wilder and more daring when they master her. (101)

Similarly, the capitalists in the film *The Wolf of Wall Street* are able to attain their aimed goals, while they function in the sex and drug-filled environment. Issues of human dignity aligned with the ideas of gender debates are portrayed elaborately in the film. The ill- treatment towards the sales assistant, Daniel Harrison, whom he pays $10,000 to shave her head before the office staff portrays his pleasure-deriving principles based on the cruelty of his actions. The treatment of women in the film and the Machiavellian discourse is highly debatable. Beyond gender is human dignity which gives the right to every being to live a life of respect. Denying that to anyone causes a sense of dissatisfaction and also unhappy human existence.

Vertical Movement of Regressive Progression

The conclusive and definitive argument of Machiavelli takes all the probable combinations as per his understanding of the design. According to Machiavelli, morality is not for the rulers to deliberate upon, but it is for the masses who function on it. Creating these hierarchies, he fails to think of horizontal stretching of the fabric of the political argument. Spatially or temporally, the Machiavellian paradigm will function in the independent units of these two domains. It will, therefore, never function in the space of spatio-temporal complexity. Hence, the aesthetic design of the model which needs to consider the uncertainty principle that contributes to the evolutionary process of theories, thoughts, and actions is

absent from the framework. Hence, it lacks the evolution of an aesthetic design of the collective civilization.

The framework shows the structural skeleton, whereas the idea of design is an evolved term contributing to the aesthetics of creation. With human elements missing in the discourse and reiteration on the strategic and unidirectionally linear argument, the Machiavellian and capitalist discourses are devoid of the aesthetic pleasure of literary sensibility and sensitivity. According to him, "Morality was for ordinary people and not the rulers. "Political leaders are above law" (Introduction xvi). Rejecting a particular section of the society, Machiavelli writes from the point of view of the ruler only. His positional value takes away the people from different strata of the society and his idea of growth is individual which fails to bring different sections together. Machiavelli gives man the power to survive in its full capacity against the idea of fortune which becomes a hindrance in human endeavours.

Machiavellian certainty rejects fortune against *virtu*. In the "Introduction" to the text, Tim Parks says "The modern, positivist attitude, where thought and analysis serve in so far as they produce decisive action, rather than abstract concepts, lies at the heart of *The Prince*" ("Introduction" xv). Deductive reasoning has led to an inferential progression. The exactness of information and detailed concretisation of the known has attuned the human mind for precision. Dependency on the seen world is an admirable endeavour to venture into the minutest of the attributes of nature, and on the other hand, it has taken the poetic imagination of artistic yearning for abstractions of universal significance away from human comprehension. It has built confidence for progression but has reduced the field of evolution of human civilisation. The mystery of the unseen is comprehensive and needs the imagination to be deciphered. Obsession with exactness, therefore, takes away the romance of holistic nature.

Machiavelli says, "War is just when there's no alternative and arms are sacred when they are your only hope" (23). In the film *Corporate* (2006) by Madhur Bhandarkar, launching the toxic drink was the only alternative to hold the market. But then the question comes how far can we consider the efficacy of the above statement? The industry works towards sustaining the liquid flow of money in a unidirectional manner, therefore, homogenising the process and simplifying it. From the eyes of the two company workers, we get to know how the people in power live and how they feed themselves with the unfair means of earning the luxuries of life. During one of the conversations one of them says:

> *Sala Company k paise se har do mahine mein London ja rehta hai. Our aapne to Lonavla k bhai lalle hai… ye fab VP, CEO'S, Executives, ye say haina company k paise se jalve karte*

hai. Aur ye shanna har 6 mahine mei apni secretary badalta hai. Kya hai apne desh me in biwi nahi badal saktena, is lie ye secretary badalta hai. (1:38:50-1:39:13)

Feeding on the money of the common people, the top-notch exploits the subjects. In *Kalyug,* the company workers ignite under a strategy by Dhanraj, and the leader of the worker's union, who in the garb of protecting the rights of the workers, carves out a way for his own motives. He befools the workers for earning money and makes a deal with the company to materialise his own motives. He tells Bharat "*Lekin workers ko ye yakeen dilana hoga k management se bonus ki baat chal rai hai*" (1:16:13-18). In the hands of the company and also the middleman, the workers suffer. Their innocence is used by others to keep their pace with money and the competitive world of the imperialist forces. They are exploited under a fake attack planned to set their anger on fire so that the company faces anarchy and their production stops.

Capitalism advocates self-governed societies with voluntary institutions opposing the hierarchical organisation in the conduct of human relations which is distorted as inequality is an inevitable consequence of economic growth in a capitalist economy. The resulting concentration of wealth can destabilise democratic societies and it undermines the ideals of social justice upon which they are built. There are times when the surplus produced needs to be allocated to the right consumers and to materialise the purpose when the need is not there in the market, a capitalist creates the need by exploiting the subjects. This prompts the following reflection from *The Prince*, "that many people reckon that when the opportunity presents itself a smart ruler will shrewdly provoke hostility so that he can then increase his reputation by crushing it" (55).

The saddened state of human existence today can be seen in the form of colours in Pablo Picasso's *The Weeping Woman* (1937)*,* which represents the collective suffering of humanity. The "still sad music of humanity" resonates the narrative of the collected water stuck in a pond, longing to meet the river and flow eternally ("Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" 93). The helpless hand with a handkerchief in the mouth shows the anxious being. The bright, vibrant yellow, blue, red and green are in direct contrast to the black and white inner face. The inner face shows the core of the human being in the form of a mouth which is infected and pale. If we continue to adopt the unempathetic ways of life as functionary forces of human civilisation, the complex philosophical being will be in a doomed state of unseen anarchy which will become a metaphor of distortion for the human state.

It is not always action in its physicality that is needed. Hamlet's inaction in the state of crisis was an act of a cognitive being who travelled through the

crevices of hardships. Action without a beautiful idea of a cognitive mind will make the world full of Iagos and Bosolas. The capitalist corporate is working like a *rehat*, a Persian wheel which sucks the water from one side and drains out to the other side. Capital under corporate and power under imperial forces conjoined at the top to suck up the fundamentals of a human being leaves the common humanity parched. Perhaps, the aesthetics of ethics will weave in the threads of humanity for society to drape the fabric of collective evolution.

Works Cited and Consulted

Aristotle. "Book 1: The End". *Nichomachean Ethics*. Translated by F.H. Peters, 10th ed. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1906, pp. 1-30.

Corporate. Directed by Madhur Bhandarkar. Performances by Bipasha Basu, Kay kay Menon, and Payal Rohatagi, Sahara One, 2006.

Erin Brokovich. Directed by Steven Soderbergh. Performances by Julia Roberts, Albert Finney, and Aaron Eckhart, Jersey Films, 2000.

Kalyug. Directed by Shyam Benegal. Performances by Shashi Kapoor, Rekha, Anant Nag, Shashi Kapoor, 1981.

Machiavelli, Niccoio. *The Prince*. Penguin Classics, 1984, pp. 23, 31, 55, 61, 69, 101.

Mukesh. "Jeena Isi ka Naam hai". *Anari.* 1958. MP3**.**

Picasso, Pablo. *Weeping Woman*. 1937. Oil Painting on Canvas. Tate Collection, London. *The Wolf of Wall Street*. Directed by Martin Scorsese. Performances by Leonardo Di Caprio, Johann Hill. Red Granite, 2013.

Singh, V. B. "Adam Smith's Theory of Economic Development." *Science & Society*, vol. 23,   no. 2, 1959, pp. 107–132, www.jstor.org/stab

—— ∗ ——

The Muse and the Music: The Story of Love and Loss in *Agra Bazaar* and *Umrao Jaan*

Kanika Puri

Habib Tanvir's play *Agra Bazaar* is set in Kinari Bazaar of early nineteenth century Agra (which was then called Akbarabad). As far as stage setting is concerned, the brothel or the *kotha* finds a place in the centre of the market standing tall between the extreme poles of the bookseller's and the kite seller's shop. This brothel of Benazir, the courtesan, stands as a sea and the worlds of the kite seller and the bookseller come out as seashores, coexisting but never intersecting. On the one side, in the words of Patangwala, there are "*Shero shayari par jaan dene wale*" (Tanvir 58) and on other side, "*Shero Shayari ka karobar karne wale*" (58). Here, just like Nazir, Benazir also gets bifurcated and divided in terms of how these two worlds saw her. As a courtesan, she was a figure of gaze, but the gaze differed as far as these two different worlds were concerned.

Kitab Wala, Maulvi, and the Shayar scoff at Nazir's poetry and his way of life which consisted of going to the *kotha* and cherishing, and also celebrating its empirical culture. In one of the instances, the Shayar expresses his version of Nazir's approach towards reality and existence, "*Ab to khair aakhiri umar mein ek soofi saafi kii jindgi basar karne lagey hain. Ismat-e-beebist az bechadri ki misaal hai.Varna suna hai ahde shabab mein ye alam tha ki bazaar ke laundon ke sath gaate bajaate aur kothon ke chakkar lagaate the*" (50). Such lines reflect the way Nazir's life was considered wayward and how knitting experiences by going to the *kotha* was considered a marginally dishonorable aspect of aesthetics by them. However, the kite seller, just like Nazir, took utmost pride in attending "*Tairaki ke Mele*" (72) and also in being a part of Agra's empirical culture of which *kothas* (brothels) were an integral part. One can observe that these two diverging worlds or corners of the bazaar had different views of the *kotha* that stood between them.

If one considers the temporal backdrop of the play, as it is set in 1810, one realises the humongous transformation Agra was undergoing. The Mughal Era was declining, and the Britishers were getting a hold on this city. Economic situations were weak, resulting in a feeling of hopelessness and futility in society. In this extremely chaotic situation, one place which was booming despite the economic situations of the city was the *kotha* or the brothel where it became "house of illusions" as in Jean Genet's *The Balcony*. In Genet's play, the brothel serves as an escape from reality for its customers where they indulge in

momentary fissures from the hideousness that was outside. Outside the brothel, on the streets a revolution is going on, but the customers were flocking to the brothel, putting their lives at stake. A similar situation can be witnessed in *Agra Bazaar*, where the society and the people inhabiting it might be facing a downturn, but that fails to affect the business and the booming of the *kotha*.

The *kotha* has two distinct worlds surrounding it, and it also supplies a chance where divergent consciousness of people like Shauda and Daroga hold a physical presence under the same roof. The knitting beauty of the *kotha* has an empirical beauty of celebration and delight, where binary positioning of existence succumbs to basic human aspirations and desires. The *Kotha* emerges as a hub of people who are a part of a system and the people who aid in running it. It culminates in an interactive and dialogic space for people to assert their presence whether they hold a central or marginal position in the system. These people perhaps find solace and pleasure in the company of Benazir and her *kotha*. It perhaps serves as a sea to them in which they want to dive in, where the hue and cries of this disordered society remain calm and unheard and instead, they hear the musicality of the waves. The musicality of *Agra Bazaar* or for that matter the whole of Agra and its culture has been muted in this era of the early nineteenth-century. Apart from providing an anchor to its customers, the *kotha* served the purpose of securing the culture of Agra, which was losing its roots and its diversifying experiences. The *kotha* somewhere might be seen as one of the factors that were helping in keeping the rhythm of the culture alive and thriving through the tumultuous time.

A similar sense of nostalgia can also be talked about in reference to the film *Umrao Jaan* by Muzaffar Ali. In the Treaty of 1801, Saadat Ali Khan, a puppet king, yielded half of Awadh to the East India Company while also agreeing to disband his own troops in favour of a highly expensive British controlled army. This treaty allowed theBritishers access to Awadh's treasuries. The Nawabs were ceremonial kings, busy with pomp and show but with little influence over matters of state. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the British had grown impatient with the arrangement and demanded direct control over Awadh. In 1856, the East India Company first moved its troops to the border and then annexed the state under the Doctrine of Lapse. Awadh was placed under chief commissioner Sir Henry Lawrence. Wajid Ali Shah, then Nawab, was imprisoned then exiled by the East India Company. In the subsequent rebellion of 1857, his son was killed, and his wife, Begum Hazrat Mahal and other rebel leaders fled to Nepal.

Culturally, Lucknow also had a tradition of courtesans, and it was the tradition and the culture of *mehfils* and dancing, singing, and revelry that Lucknow lost when the Britishers gained control over the city. This is the collective

nostalgia of *tehzeeb*. The silence, not only of longing but also of a place left empty, an era bygone, the silence of those *kothas* from which people had to flee and ensure their own survival when the pangs of despair throttled their existence, filled Lucknow

Umrao Jaan is empathetically capable of connecting to such nostalgia of the historical past through one character in the film, Faiz Ali, enacted by Raj Babbar. He is the character who narrates about the Britishers and the pompous ways of the Nawabs to Umrao. He is the thread that leads Umrao to share a collective historical nostalgia. He is a man who not only loves her but also elopes with her. The song at the end when she goes to her birthplace, Faizabad, beautifully captures her loss and the sudden unfamiliarity she feels for a place so dear to her heart, "*Ye kya jagah hai doston, ye kaun sa dayaar hai, Hadd-e -nigaah tak k jahaan gubaar hi gubaarhai*" (*Umrao Jaan* 2:20:00-2:20:30).

According to the translation of the song, the lyrics are "Which is this place my friends, which is this region/ where, till the eyes can see there are only clouds of dust". These lines function at two levels. First, for Umrao maybe this region is full of dust storms, i.e., the nostalgia is there, as later in the song she asks whether someone is calling her from behind the curtain. That longing is also there, but maybe the memories have become a bit hazy like a dust storm. Secondly, this song can also be negotiated in the light of people like Khannum Jaan and others who have to leave their homes due to the political unrest and are going to different, new places, and feel the strangeness of a new place.

The gust of memories also cyclones in her heart where the past is hazy, but eyes are full of tears. The sand is a tricky texture to hold, but it pinches hard when a whiff of it gets into the eye. The vision becomes unclear, and one struggles to see the complete picture. It is as if Umrao is suddenly unaware of her own heart as she delves into the depth of it. She uses the word '*doston*' to address in the song. Perhaps what she really misses here is the companionship where she is lost in the familiar waters. There are certain questions in her mind which she is troubled by, so she throws this dilemma over to the people surrounding her. Perhaps she seeks to connect with the audience through these lines. Here, the film works as a medium of communication through which the search of Umrao extends towards the viewers who as humans might share her woes.

The song by Shiv Kumar Batalvi, "*Maaye ni maaye mere geetan di naina wich virhan di radhika pavey*" beautifully captures the emotions of Umrao. These lines lend a vision and an image to a song and show fluidity (and lack of it), a memory provided to the musicality of life. The pangs of separation

mostly do not hurt like pelted stones; rather they pinch like sand granules which are more unnerving. These flashes of memories are in pieces, and as a human, one struggle to make a mosaic out of them. Umrao feels a myriad of emotions which is an amalgamation of happy and sad notes. At Khannum Jaan's place, she is a successful and beloved courtesan and so are her songs, but in the realm of her past memories, even her songs have a grainy texture, and they lament the loss which is personal as well as collective. The unfamiliarity of the long-known *dayaar* pierces Umrao but apart from that, the gust of uncertainty *(gubaar)* is also shared by people like Khannum and several others who are saddened because of the land and the life they have left behind.

In *Agra Bazaar*, the business of the *kotha* also flourishes because, unlike the *feriwallas* whose simple plain voices to sell their stuff fall on deaf ears, the music of the *kotha* rushes forth as a humanitarian refuge of sensitivity and sensibility. It fills the voids in the lives of people who locate themselves in horrid experiences caused by the power structures around them. The nostalgia and the longing are there, but perhaps they are muted because of the cacophony of chaos. The rhythm and the musicality, similar to the *kotha*, are perhaps desired by the street vendors in Agra Bazaar. One, in the literal sense, where the *kakdiwala* or cucumber seller is on a frantic lookout for a *shayar* who can write a few lines of *shayari* on his cucumbers, and second, they want to acquire the musicality of normalcy, the lost rhythm of the life, where the *sur* of the life is somewhere shaken.

Benazir, a courtesan at the *kotha*, is a woman who has seen Nazir come to her place apart from other characters like Shauda and Daroga, and she even sings Nazir's *nazms* in her *kotha*. One might say she becomes a tool for helping Tanvir portray certain characteristics of Nazir as well as his poetry and how they mattered to the consciousness of the people around the *kotha*. Through Benazir, one comes to know about the people who cherished the dynamics and aesthetics of his poetry. When Benazir sings *nazm* of Nazir as her '*Aapbeeti*', Shauda says, "*Waah waah kaisi achi aapbeeti sunayi hai/ Ye Miyaan Nazir bhi ajeeb karishmon ke aadmi hain*" (100). In this *Bazaar*, not many female characters are seen. Yet, the two important characters have got their due as far as their relevance in the play is concerned. The portrayal of Benazir as well as the grand-daughter of Nazir, that is the character of Nawasi, becomes a beautiful mouthpiece for Nazir, his way of life, and his poetry.

Patangwala is also one such character who is a friend of Nazir and a lover of his poetry and thus becomes an important mouthpiece of Nazir. But, Vilaayti Begum, the granddaughter of Nazir, and Benazir are two important female characters and are subtle yet effective reminders of Nazir's poetry. If Nawasi reminds one of Nazir through the recital of the nazm '*choohon ka*

achaar' to the Pansaari, Benazir sustains Nazir's poetry by singing his *nazms* at her *kotha* and sensitizing the people who cherish her embrace like poetry. On the one hand, it is the note that Nawasi brought to the Pansaari:

> *Fir garam hua aanke achaar choohon ka,*
> *Humne bhi kiya khwanchaa taiyar choohon ka,*
> *Sar paaon kuchal koot ke do char choohon ka,*
> *Jaldi se kachhoomar sa kiya do char choohon ka,*
> *Kya jor mazedar hai achaar choohon ka* (79)

On the other hand, it is the *nazm* sung by Benazir:

> *Khhorej karishma, naaz sitam gamjon ki jhukawat waisi hai,*
> *Mizgaan ki sinaa, nazron ki anni, abroo ki khichawat waisi hai,*
> *Ayyar nazar, makkar ada, tevri ki charawat waisi hai,*
> *Kattaal nigah, aur dusht gazab, aankhon ki lagawat waisi hai,*
> *Palkon ki jhapak, putli ki fitrat, surme ki ghulawat waisi hai.* (99)

Both these instances show how Benazir and Nawasi help in bringing to the fore what Tanvir was attempting to showcase in his play, the presence of Nazir without giving him a physical presence in the play. Through the lines that Benazir sings, love is also foregrounded as to how love can be beautifully encapsulated in words.

Benazir as a courtesan had no dearth of customers, especially at a time when all other structures of the economy were collapsing. Her *kotha* and her business remains unaffected. In the context of this play, in 1810, *kotha* and Benazir were the much-needed escapades for the customers of the *kotha*. The number of women characters in the play does not go unnoticed, but Tanvir perhaps had something in his mind when he portrayed Benazir as one of the mouthpieces of Nazir, however indirect and subtle. Tanvir somewhere knew the position of women at that time, especially courtesans, and the way they were seen by the supposed intellectuals. Through Benazir, perhaps, he tried to give a platform to the voice of the women in society and that voice is strengthened by the voice and the character of *Nawasi*, who in her childhood as well she carried the parcels of Nazir's poetry to people.

Erica Wald in her article, "From Begums and Bibis to Abandoned Females and Idle Women: Sexual Relationships, Venereal Disease and the Redefinition of Prostitution in Early Nineteenth Century, India" observes the position of the early nineteenth century women, specifically prostitutes who were considered as 'diseased' and transmitters of venereal diseases. This concept started when,

during the British Rule, European soldiers started relationships with Indian women and venereal diseases were seen as one of the threats to the Company in these relationships. In the early nineteenth-century, Lal Bazaars were established along with the Lock hospitals system. According to the above-mentioned article, "Lal Bazaar was the term most frequently used to denote the area of a cantonment Bazaar dedicated to regulated prostitutes" (Wald 13). This idea was combined with that of a lock hospital, a venereal disease hospital, where Bazaar women who were considered diseased, would be sent for treatment and detention until they were cured of their diseases. Tanvir, by designing a central position for a *kotha* in Agra Bazaar, perhaps also wanted to indicate towards the practice of Lal Bazaars that was prevalent in the early nineteenth-century.

Though the *kotha* of Benazir runs well as a place of business, yet her being an object of male desire cannot be ruled out. The power struggle to obtain her as an object is quite evident in the way in which Shauda and Daroga fight for Benazir. For instance, when Daroga comes to the *kotha* and sees Shauda, he says, "*Aap kaun naat-e-shareef hain? Koi nayi chidiya maaloom hoti hai. Barkhuddar abhi tum humein pehchante nahin ho*" (Tanvir 102). To which Shauda replies, "*Bhaanp raha hoon. Mauka dijiye to abhi pehchan leta hoon. Aeeye ho jaaye do-do haath*" (102).

This power struggle intensifies when Daroga, making use of his power, gets Shauda arrested for being a part of a feud in the market which was actually a fabricated case. Shauda reprimands Daroga and says, "*Abey bada namard nikla tera Daroga ka bachha. Hum samjhe the mukabla raavan se hai. Seeta haran hoga, do-do haath honge*" (103).

This statement is very powerful as far as the position of Benazir is concerned. The phrase "*Seeta haran hoga*" points to the fact that women in that era were seen as objects to be possessed and be proud of. On one hand, Benazir has these two characters of Daroga and Shauda who fight for her possession and on the other hand the play has Manzur Hussain, who seems to be an insane person to people. But in the words of Benazir, Hussain has surpassed that petty level of supposed love that Daroga and Shauda show her and she says to Daroga "*Woh raqabat ki manzil se guzar chuke hain*" (Tanvir 118).

Through the character of Manzur Hussain, Tanvir perhaps gave that era a possibility of humanness, a possibility of loving a woman, even to a courtesan, irrespective of her status in the society. But towards the end, this possibility sort of dwindles, where the loud shout of Daroga to Hussain as "Manzur Hussain" instills a feeling of fear in Hussain, and he hurriedly leaves. Perhaps Tanvir

305

wished to convey that in the era in which the play is set, looking at a woman as a human being, capable of being loved, that too a prostitute might not be impossible but still had a long way to go.

Umrao Jaan as a cinematic text also tugs at the feeling of love for beloved or the lover. Ali, as the director, beautifully weaves an angle of love in the life of a courtesan. Whether this love would amount to something or would fade far away is a question to grapple with. In one of the scenes, Maulvi sahab is sitting with Umrao and is explaining to her how true love happens and what are the conditions that are to be fulfilled to call it true love. He talks in terms of *bekhabri*. He says in true love, nothing remains— Be it the beloved, the lover, or feeling of love itself. Everything just becomes one, and that too goes into the shadow of *bekhabri*, which is a beautiful emotion of being completely lost in love. The silence that comes with this feeling also brings the serenity and the calmness where one is reduced to nothing yet he or she has everything.

This is not the type of love which Mirza Gauhar is seeking. In fact, it cannot be called love as he somewhere only seems to take physical or material pleasure from Umrao. Later in the movie, she herself says when he comes to her "[..] *kya asharfiyaan khatam ho gayin?*" (*Umrao Jaan* 2:00:01-2:00:07). It shows that Gauhar is only concerned about his personal gains. Incidentally, when Umrao and he come close and are caught by Khanum Jaan, he deters owning up and puts the blame on Umrao instead. It signifies that Umrao is a mere commodity, another material wealth for Gauhar to possess, to accumulate. He, perhaps, looked at Umrao as trade and not as someone who could be a worthy companion.

Another silence in terms of love, lover, and beloved is that enchanting silence, where Umrao gets another space to grapple with the possibilities of love with the Nawab, who is played by Farooq Sheikh. This love is sort of a trajectory which is associated with words or their absence. This maze of presence and absence of words is interesting because it can invoke a feeling of awe as well as denote the piercing silence of a relationship which has nothing left. The silences that were there in their relationship denote the different junctures that their love encounters.

When Umrao and Nawab are with each other, the *sher* is uttered: "*Jab aap saamne hain to kuch bhi nahin hai yaad, varna kuch aapse kehna zaroor tha*" (00:57:50-00:57:58). Here is a desire to express love but the moment there is an encounter with the person one loves, everything fades away, except for the image of the beloved. Further, when Nawab and Umrao come close to each other physically, Umrao asks Nawab to listen to her *ghazal* to which the Nawab replies that he is already listening to one, and describes the different

body parts of Umrao as a complete, beautiful *ghazal*. He hears an unspoken *ghazal* and the absence of words takes a beautiful form where they are swapped for silent compassion. This silence is perhaps the feeling of awe that is inspired in the Nawab.

Further, when the Nawab is tensed about talks of his marriage into his father's family and is silent when Umrao comes to meet him, this silence pricks her. Then she questions the Nawab about her not being dear to him as he is not sharing his worry or problem with her. Due to this silence, she questions her worthiness in the eyes of the Nawab. The final silence comes into this relationship when the Nawab keeps silent on his relationship with Umrao and agrees to marry another girl who, later on finds, is the same girl who met Umrao when she was abducted. This silence of the Nawab unsettles Umrao, and in a frenzy, she tears off the Nawab's clothes and she cries her heart out. The man she loved with all her heart chose to be silent, and the silence crumbled her world. He came as a ray of hope in her world and instead, left her heart in darkness.

At a point in the film, Husseini also shares her idea of love with Umrao and Gauhar. She says, "*Yaa to kissi ko apna banaa lo, ya to kissi ke ho lo*" (01:30:01-01:30:03). She combines nostalgia with love when she says that if true lovers were there, then it was in her era. In her golden days, lovers used to completely give themselves to love; there was peace and satisfaction in completely belonging to someone.

In conclusion, as Hemingway says, "All cowardice comes from not loving or not loving well, which is the same thing" (*Midnight in Paris* 00:34:54-00:34:56). These courtesans got a chance at love or perhaps they too were seeking it somewhere. Benazir was the bright and eye-catching sight right in the middle of a bustling market who people sought refuge in, and she was left as a possession to acquire. The courage of a prospective lover fails her somewhere when Manzoor Hussain who, according to her, is above all the petty competitiveness that her other customers have for her. She perhaps longs for the sense of belongingness as a woman capable of love, but it might be the lack of courage on the part of the lover.

However, if one tries to understand the time that it was, can one really blame the person or is the situation to be blamed? Has courage nothing to do with the times that the person is living in? Perhaps it is easy to love a courtesan, but what about the fulfilment that she craves which goes beyond the physical aspect of existence? Similarly, Umrao also gives ample chances to love and with the character of the Nawab, she dreams of practising love as she used to sing about it in her songs. Eventually she is left with no one. She perhaps realizes that in her world the idea of love is beautiful, but practising it, committing to it, receiving loyalty from the other person, and being worthy of the courage

that this type of love demands is not easy. In both the texts discussed, love somewhere travels its journey through verses, whether it is Benazir singing, Nazir's poems, or Umrao singing the songs at her *kotha*.

These verses are an anchor to these courtesans in a way, where the emotion of love perhaps is not able to provide a firm grounding to them. They have a long way to tread before they get hold of the companionship they desire. However, the sense of loss that they possess is perhaps a priceless feeling to hold on to. Loss in love is not necessarily a feeling to lament. It can be celebratory as being in love is a festival in itself. It is a carnival where the whole world seems to be in revelry. But the loss of love is a festival of one's own. It is a cyclone, a whirlwind where the choice is between getting stuck in that hazy but fierce engulfment of remorse or reveling and dancing in that circular milieu where the mystique of one's contentment will help him or her achieve sublimity. Here, one's existence becomes one with love more than the lover. The song of life and love then goes far away from the push and pull of happiness as well as sorrow, and instead becomes a melody in itself. It is a melody with the strength to twirl and dance in the mysticism of being born, living a life for love and because of love. This melody surely has tunes of longing, but perhaps it contains a lingering hope. It takes the form of a mosaic where the muse is not life or feeling of love alone but is a myriad of experiences that a person goes through in the journey of love. This journey fuses the muse and music, and a melody is born.

Works Cited and Consulted

Batalvi, Shiv Kumar. "Maaye Ni Maaye Mere Geetan Dey Naina Wich." *Birhan Da Sultan*. Saregama, 2006.

Genet, John. *The Balcony*. Worldview Publications, 2017.

Midnight in Paris. Directed by Woody Allen, performances by Adrien Brody, Carla Bruni, Owen Wilson and Rachel McAdams, Sony Pictures Classics, 2011.

Tanvir, Habib. *Agra Bazaar*. Hindisamay, www.hindisamay.com/.

Tanvir, Habib. *Agra Bazaar*. Vani Prakashan, 2010, pp. 50, 58, 72, 79, 99, 100, 102. 103, 118.

Umrao Jaan. Directed by Muzaffar Ali, performances by Farooq Shaikh, Naseeruddin Shah,Rekha, and Seema Sathyu, Integrated Films, 1981.

Wald, Erica. "From *begums* and *bibis* to Abandoned Females and Idle Women: Sexual Relationships, Venereal Disease and the Redefinition of Prostitution in Early Nineteenth-century India." *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 46, 2009, pp. 5-25, doi: 10.1177/001946460804600102

— * —

Interdisciplinarity as Epistemic Expansion: Contextualizing the Debate in Indian Context

Anup Singh Beniwal

Interdisciplinarity as a pedagogical and epistemic practice has acquired an added focus, especially with the advent and predominance of postmodern thought and praxis. A contemporary buzzword, though in no way an altogether new phenomenon, interdisciplinarity has become a new *mantra* for the organisation and dissemination of knowledge in institutes of higher learning in India. While this has led to much-needed convergence of disciplines by denting departmental insularies, it also has tended to – wherever it has been adopted mechanically or as an epistemic fashion – obfuscate the disciplinary distinctiveness and focus. Consequently, the debate on and around 'disciplinarity', its meaning, purpose and practice, has been underlined by a sense of apocalyptic premonition, cautious optimism, pedagogical holism and epistemic utopianism at the same time. As Joe Moran has averred, today this debate has been marked by an "intense crises of knowledge identity" and has primarily evolved around the problematic of pluralist aspiration versus disciplinary coherence (see *Interdisciplinarity* for details)**.** The contemporary Indian responses to this anxiety too have evolved along with different epistemic positions.

II

The most obvious response that the advocates of interdisciplinarity forward in its defence has a Tennysonian ring to it:

> "The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
> And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world. " (Tennyson 416)

They see in interdisciplinarity an evolutionary pedagogical panacea, a continuous convergence of new practices that should replace and replenish the old and the worn out in sync with the demands of the new age and its customs. This idea is beautifully captured and reiterated by Allama Iqbal thus:

> *Sach keh doon, Ai Barehman, gar tu buraa na mane*
> *Tere sanamkadon ke but ho gaye puraane.* (Iqbal)
> I'll tell you the truth, O Brahmin,
> if you won't take offence:
> the idols that grace your temples
> have ceased to make sense. (Translation by Dalvi Web)

There is yet another epistemic pedagogical position, akin but not similar to the

one referred to above, that roots for change in response to the current knowledge anxiety. The following poetic expression by Jaun Elia, a Pakistani poet, best captures the existential ontological contours of this position:

> *Kya hai jo badal gayi hai duniya*
> *Mein bhi to bahut badal gaya hoon.*
> Why rue if the world has changed
> Haven't I too changed a lot with time. (Elia 80)

Drawing inferences from Elia's poetic insight, it can be said that knowledge construction, acquisition, and dissemination being functions of their moment, man and milieu, are amenable to change with the changes in these variables. The changing textures and structures of the knowledge mutate the nature of its understanding and, as a corollary, one's response to it requires a commensurate refit with the change. Interdisciplinarity, as a dominant praxis of our times helps realize that necessary knowledge refits.

The third interdisciplinarity manoeuvre derives its rationale from the idea of knowledge as 'historical palimpsest.' It is intricately wedded to a pluralist understanding of the self and the social. The advocates of this position envision any given knowledge domain in complementary terms, i.e., every discipline of necessity contains within it the echoes of others and that no knowledge is autonomous, enclosed or complete by itself. Each discipline is merely a stage, a transition from particular to general wherein one discipline 'diffuses' into the other to create a larger whole:

> *Meri-hasti-mein-tu bhi-shamil-hai*
> *Tu-nahi-to-hai-kya-vajood-mera.*
> You too add to my identity
> Without you what am I? (Self-composed)

This idea gives due cognizance to the variegated 'past-ness' of the knowledge domain and understands it as a historicised inter and intra-disciplinary truth. Once Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Frontier Gandhi, was asked to explain his identity. He had replied that he was thousands year old Pashtun, hundreds year old Muslim and only decades-old Pakistani – he was a cumulative outcome of his past and present. So is the case with any knowledge discipline and its sedimentation through time. It continuously diverges from and converges into new knowledge configurations in time.

There is yet another interdisciplinary-epistemic understanding that, cutting through the disciplinary boundaries, celebrates the inherently democratic, almost multicultural dissemination of disciplines in all their distinct yet symbiotic reciprocity. It roots for a simultaneous effervescence of ideas where one does

not negate or is insulated from the other but comes together and co-exists in due recognition of each other's particularity or distinctiveness:

> *chaman meñ ikhtilât-e-rañg-o-bû se baat bantî hai*
>
> *ham hî ham haiñ to kyâ ham haiñ tum hî tum ho to kyâ tum ho.*
> (Sailani web)
>
> The garden gets its meaning in the intermingling of smells and hues
>
> If one is, and the other is not, the garden simply cannot exist.

There, however, do exist views that contradict, oppose and challenge the rationale of interdisciplinarity as knowledge garnering praxis. One such position within this epistemic category holds that all disciplines are distinct in their knowledge curvatures and hence 'possess,' and need to traverse their unique paths, *dharmas* and destinations and that each one of these needs to keep its individual aspirations and enclosures intact. The epistemic-ontological essence of this argument is best expressed in Nizamuddin Auliya's poetic-spiritual wisdom thus:

> *Har-qaum-raast-raahe, deene-va-qibalagaahe*
> *Man-qibla, raast-kardam-bar-simte-qaz-qulahe.* (Bahraich 73)
> Each community has its truth path, *dharma*, and destination
> But even within this we have individual inspirations intact. (Translation by self)

The above postulates and positions notwithstanding, the epistemic-pedagogical contentions that revolve around interdisciplinarity have not been resolved conclusively in favour of any one take so far. Most of us still continue to tread the convenient pedagogical routes that tend to whimsically cut through the "pluralist aspirations" of any knowledge and its anxiety for "disciplinary coherence."In the vein of Daag Dehlvi, a prominent Urdu poet, one keeps on oscillating from one epistemic-pedagogical position to another without knowing or realising how or where to arrive at in one's quest for knowledge acquisition and dissemination:

> *kaabe kî hai havas kabhî kû-e-butâñ kî hai*
> *mujh ko 3habar nahîñ mirî miTTî kahâñ kî hai.* (Dehlvi web)

III

The contemporary pedagogical scenario, especially under the onslaught of postmodern ethos has, nevertheless, tended to shift its epistemic locus towards interdisciplinarity. The knowledge spaces of our times are marked by and betray 'interdisciplinary anxiety'. It is immediately visible in the ways conventional literature departments are being rechristened or their course-curricula are being

designed, debated and revised. All these epistemic or knowledge building manoeuvres/gestures have come to be mediated by extra-academic considerations – part political, part commercial, part contextual and part fashionable.

In the past few years, especially in the wake of postmodern thought taking the centre stage and LPG (Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization) mediating all educational sites and insight, there has been an upsurge in market-mediated, multi-skill courses that are being offered by the institutions of higher learning. The interdisciplinary courses like MBA, ICT (Information and Communication Technology), Bio-Medical Engineering or Engineering Physics that are currently in fashion, happen to be the off-springs of market-oriented and technologically driven epistemic *weltanschauung*. Their upsurge and consequent downslide – unlike conventional disciplines – is a function of the vagaries of the market. Most of these have been devised as courses wherein skills were given preference over knowledge-making or wisdom, knowledge packaging became more important than knowledge acquisition, and core competence was sacrificed at the altar of horizontal cross-breeding across disciplines. As a consequence, the resultant epistemic action shifted from the basic to the applied, from the fundamentals to functionality, from the centre to the margins and 'core competences' were redefined and compromised in the pursuit of knowledge 'hybridity' and the idea of inclusiveness was hijacked by the idea of utility. The fact that interdisciplinarity as knowledge praxis works better at the margin to reinforce the core was conveniently forgotten.

The current race for the convergence of diverse knowledge has put undue pressure on conventional Humanities and Social Sciences departments to reinvent and update themselves. They have responded to this crisis through strategies that have not always been knowledge conducive. One of the ways this pressure was sought to be offloaded was by rechristening the departments in tune with the knowledge spirit of the times. Departments of English, for example, were 'renovated' as Department of English and Cultural Studies or Department of English and Foreign Languages with an obvious aim to move away from their disciplinary limitations and inter-departmental insulation to the so-called interdisciplinary inclusiveness.

The epistemic spaces thus reinvented also required a commensurate curricula refit. In most literature departments this refitting paved the way for knowledge amorphousness in the name of cross-disciplinary enrichment. All kinds of 'studies' – film studies, media studies, cultural studies, ethical and moral studies, environmental studies, to name a few – have come to piggy ride on 'literary studies'. As a result, literature and its pursuit have acquired what

may be termed as 'gunny-sack syndrome' – just fill the sack of literature with any 'study' and it still remains a sack of literature.

The question of 'what to teach' and 'why to teach that' – or in other words what to include and what to exclude from the syllabi – too often turns into an extra-academic game of ideological one-up-man-ship. The academic-epistemic deliberations are reduced into a zero-sum game of political proclivities. The political parochialism is turned into an ethical stance and an academic insight to push one's political agenda in the name of literature. As a consequence, literariness or literature as interdisciplinary epistemic and pedagogical value is vulgarised and is made subservient to the dominant power-as-'the' literary-gaze. Even if one concedes that knowledge-economies have always been mediated by power matrices of their respective times, it hardly validates those extreme practices that tend to mechanically decide the literary-epistemic worth of a 'text' merely in terms of its political hue. Such political posturing does not serve the cause of interdisciplinarity, let alone the spirit of a discipline. The idea of interdisciplinarity *inter alia* draws its justification from the fact that no text can be subjected to unilateral or absolute interpretation. This pedagogical idea calls for a co-existence of 'reading-cosmopolitanisms' and 'interpretive pluralities' even in those texts that may on the face of it seem politically antagonist to any given ideological dispensation.

The interdisciplinarity – both as an idea and praxis – thus, not only means cutting across disciplines but also recognising and respecting the inherent plurality of any text or knowledge domain. It also demands a critical and creative recognition of every single discipline as an open-ended and unbiased pursuit for knowledge. Though interdisciplinarity helps expand the cognitive boundaries of a discipline, but if practiced uncritically or non-creatively or for extra-disciplinary considerations, it has the potential to derail the very epistemic impetus.

IV

Then how should the Departments of Literature map their interdisciplinary routes? What possible paradigms and possibilities literature as a discipline *per se* makes available to its practitioners? As a literary praxis and a cognitive concept, interdisciplinarity can be employed gainfully to address some of the issues implicit in these questions.

As a knowledge domain, literature is unique in that it straddles across all other disciplines through its imaginative, narrative and discursive sweeps. Literature both draws from life and transcends it creatively and as such becomes a fit receptacle and carrier of interdisciplinary potentials that cut across fact and fiction, the lived and the thought. This unique ability of literature to subsume

within its narrative flux 'the possible and the probable' of life through its uniquely endowed imaginative-meditative reflexivity is but another way of knowledge creation. As such literature becomes and remains an ever new and overarching discipline where disciplinary boundaries blur into other disciplines to create knowledge cusps and interdependencies. This idea of literature as an inclusive but a uniquely endowed inter-discipline that continuously reveals itself anew may be gleaned and reiterated through the following poetic expressions thus:

> *hazâr baar zamâna idhar se guzrâ hai*
> *na.î na.î sî hai kuchh terî rahguzar phir bhî.* (Gorakhpuri 32)
> This path has been oft travelled
> Yet each traversal offers something new.(Translation by self)

> *ham jis pe mar rahe haiñ vo hai baat hî kuchh aur*
> *aalam meñ tujh se laakh sahî tû magar kahâñ.* (Hali 9)
> The one we crave for is unique to itself
>
> The world abounds in its likeness but can never be it. (Translation by self)

> *naqshe-e-surat ko mitta kar ashna maani ka ho*
> *katra bhi dariya hai jo dariya mein shamil ho gaya.* (Aatish web)
>
> Forget the features and appearances, seek the meaning instead A drop that merges in the river, is a river itself.

What makes interdisciplinary pedagogical praxis as amenable to literary teaching and understanding as discipline, thus, springs from its inherent interdisciplinarity both at the level of its production and reception. This unique endowment of literature comes to the fore the moment we are faced with questions such as: Is literature/story possible without society? What is society if not a narrative/ story at a certain level? As a contested cross-section of cognitive and communicative networks and discourses can literature be anything but interdisciplinary?

As a teaching discipline, literature has always enabled the convergence of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives under its rubric. This diversity and convergence constitute the disciplinary spectrum of literature across University syllabi and foregrounds literariness as an integrated, integrative, and interrogative narrative and cognitive domain. Literary narratives, in their 'truth

components' not only emerge as ways of thinking, emoting and reasoning but also as modes of inquiry into the nature of knowledge, reality and life. It is not without reason that any cognitive foray in India would begin with the communicative-narrative rider – "Let me tell you a story . . ." In short, it is the story that provides an 'originary' cognitive moment and a movement to an average Indian to organise and explain complex matters of life and learning.

It is through the coming together of the imaginative and the theoretical as a seamless cognitive tool that literature builds within itself another interdisciplinary possibility. This 'convergence' of theory and the story, or this 'intra and inter' disciplinary possibilities enter literature through a simple epistemic manoeuvre that may be delineated as: when life enters a narrative it becomes a story; when life is shaken out of the narrative it becomes criticism; and when story and criticism evolve into life perspectives across disciplines, it becomes theory. However, this wedding of theory and story needs a delicate cognitive handling to emerge as an enabling pedagogical tool. It requires reading a story as theory and in turn transforming a theoretical sight into a story. Theory, even if its roots lie outside literature, can open up an interdisciplinary window in the house of literature. Comparative Literary and Translation Studies provide literature with such interdisciplinary windows. Since comparative pedagogies open cross-language and cross-cultural possibilities for literatures, these learning possibilities – in transporting stories across languages and culture – help tame 'globalisation' as a multi-cultural and multi-dialogical possibility and praxis within literature.

Further, literary studies cannot happen in a vacuum, they have to be carried out within a context that is in sync with the spatio-temporality of its episteme reception. As such literature departments have to transcend the 'Flat Syndrome" they have created around themselves in order to realize in their pedagogies the universality – their essential epistemic value – of their respective universities and that of the discipline *per se*. However, they also need to realise that interdisciplinarity is only possible at the fringes of disciplinary boundaries where transitions usually take place and need to be accounted for with some kind of epistemic responsibility and pedagogical maturity. As Departments of English, they cannot continue to bask intheir the old glories which are often epistemic residues of colonial hangovers but need to open their windows to other disciplines in a manner and through such pedagogical strategies that they are not blown off their epistemic grounds. While they need to keep the core of their discipline intact, they also need to assimilate the new or the other within their epistemic fold. One way to achieve this objective would be by establishing inter-departmental dialogues, creating interdisciplinary interfaces, and forge relationships of proximity with old and new knowledge domains. This strategy would not only help English departments to update themselves pedagogically

but also help them create new knowledge or at least customise the old in sync with the spirit and requirement of times.

However, this creative potential of interdisciplinarity seems to have been subverted by Indian academic hinterland. The way the idea of interdisciplinarity has been practised in the classroom and incorporated into the research trajectories of English Departments leaves much to be desired for its execution as a nuanced learning praxis. At times interdisciplinarity has been turned into an onslaught on the very idea of literature. Consequently, within such academic spaces one tends to end up doing everything in the name of literature, but literature. The PhD research being conducted in these departments has tended to reduce literature into mere data, at best a mechanical case study or extension of theory, history or sociology. Instead of helping retain the spirit of literature or reaffirm its identity, such studies turn it into an epistemic colony up for grab by other disciplines. Such research forays end up vandalising the spirit of literature both as a discipline and an interdiscipline. They fail to understand the nature and importance of literary imagination. They fail to distinguish between history and historical consciousness, between fact and fiction, between truth and reality, and between psychology *per se* and psychological insight as creative pre-requisites that have a bearing on the very essence of literature and literary manoeuvres such as characterization, plot development and the narrative build-up. Interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary study and research is relevant and of significance only if it complements disciplinary sensibility and helps create cognitive interfaces rather than a desire for disciplinary appropriation. A man of literature needs to teach Bhakti Poetry not as a religious text but as a poetic testament of its and our times. To read it as an extra -literary text would amount to misappropriating it within the literary praxis.

V

Literature in itself is a contested cognitive space with its own aesthetic and activist complexities. It can neither be a substitute for other disciplines, nor can it be substituted by other disciplines. However, by the very nature of its poetics and aesthetics, it becomes a very creative medium for dialogic and symbiotic interfaces with other disciplines. These potentials can enable pedagogical inter-practices by recognising cross-disciplinary importance of literary reading and cognitive practices. One such interdisciplinary route lies in investing its literary equipment – as a way to nuanced and layered reading/understanding – in other disciplines to enhance in them the pleasure of reading, the aesthetics of writing and the critical engagement with the rigours of imagination, thought and perspectives. The other could be traced through the recognition of literariness and literary knowledge as a complex interaction of *Ukta* (What has been said?),

316

Anukta (What has not been said?) and *Durukta* (What lacks clarity?), and the use of these insights for reading narratives that may belong to other knowledge domains. A close reading of the text for hidden meaning or deeper resonances – a usual reading practice in literature – enables alternate readings of any given text outside literature. It also helps recognise and harness the 'collective meaning-making potentialities' of literature and investing Social Science disciplines with these reading insights. It helps align the literary with the Social Science epistemologies in/as context-text-reader or pre-text-post continuum. This continuum finds its validation from the fact that if there is a story before a story and after it, there is also a history before and after any given history. Turning the potentials of a story into reading praxis for narratives which do not belong to the literary domain endow these other narratives with a transformative epistemic potential.

Literature and its praxis, thus, makes available pedagogical trajectories wherein information is processed into knowledge, knowledge is aimed at wisdom and wisdom is in the service of truth. Literary insights enlighten one to the fact that truth does not reside in the facts alone, it lies at the intersection of fact and fiction – and literature is a commensurate disciplinary receptacle for this liminal and multiple play of truth. It is this intersection that makes any experience both interdisciplinary and whole in literature.

VI

The contemporary literary corpus abounds in interdisciplinary imagination and creative practices. Science Fiction, Graphic Novels, Dalit Literature, Feminist Literature, Post-Colonial Literature, Protest Literature, Historical Fiction – all emerge from and depend on interdisciplinary insights for their creation and consumption as literature. These literary insights, besides challenging the conventional and outmoded systems of creative imagination and critical thought, enables one to produce innovative pedagogical methodologies that open up the existing literary notions for examination through new perspectives. But an uncritical acceptance of this literary praxis may be a bad idea. Disciplinary grounding remains a prerequisite for interdisciplinary competence.

However, there would always be a need for a reflexive form of interdisciplinarity that recognizes its own limitations and artificiality. There would always be a need to transform the disciplines, encourage communication between them or use them to create new intellectual configurations or alliances. Interdisciplinarity, thus, needs to evolve into a way of living with the disciplines more critically and self-consciously, recognizing that their most basic assumptions can always be challenged or reinvigorated by new ways of thinking from elsewhere. It is also a recognition of the fact that truth is not the patent of any

one discipline and that all disciplines need to continuously engage with the question 'the why and what of the knowledge'. And interdisciplinarity should also help us realise the wisdom of an epistemic enigma that postulates that though the parts (here specific disciplines) constitute a whole, yet it is the whole that is always greater than its parts.

Works Cited and Consulted

Aatish, Khwaja Haider Ali. www.facebook.com/243912425660178/posts/naqsh-e-soorat-ko-mita-aashna-maani-ka-hoqatra-bhi-dariya-hai-jo-dariya-mein-sha/1040247092693370/

Dehlvi, Daag. www.rekhta.org/ghazals/kaabe-kii-hai-havas-kabhii-kuu-e-butaan-kii-hai-dagh-dehlvi-ghazals

Elia, Jaun. *Yaani*. Anybooks, 2017.

Gorakhpuri, Firaq. *Urdu Shayeri Ke Naye Andaz,* edited by Prakash Pandit. Hind Pocket Books, New Delhi

Hali, Altaf Hussain. *Urdu Shayeri Ke Naye Andaz,* edited by Prakash Pandit, Hind Pocket Books, New Delhi

Iqbal, Mohammad, "New Temple". Translated by Dalvi. 2012. www.muhammadiqbalsindia.blogspot.com/2012/09/muhammad-iqbals-india-13-new-temple.html

Iqbal, Mohammad. "Naya Shivala". *Urdu Shayari: Ek Chayan*, edited by Shahina Tabassum & Kuldeep Sahil. Sasta Sahitya Mandal, 2015.

Moran, Joe. *Interdisciplinarity.* Routledge, 2007.

Narang, Gopi Chand. *Urdu Ghazal Evm Bhartiya Mansa Va Sanskriti*. Translated by Ambar Bahraich. Bharitiya Jnanpith, 2016.

Sailani, Sarsar. www.rekhta.org/ghazals/chaman-men-ikhtilaat-e-rang-o-buu-se-baat-bantii-hai-sarshar-sailani-ghazals

Tennyson, Alfred. "Morte D'Arthur," *Fifteen Poets*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

—— ∗ ——

A Review of *Aranyaka: Book of the Forest*

Ishika Tiwari

A verdurous sight; a ladle feeding ghetto the ritualistic sacrificial fire; life engendering from the hunger of the earth: that's how the graphic rendition of Vedic wisdom unfolds through Amruta Patil's *Aranyaka: Book of the Forest* (2019), the concept of which has been provided by mythologist and co-author Devdutt Pattanaik. Both the authors have forayed in the arena of mythology with several retellings of Indian myths, at large. This book is the masterpiece of the artist and author Amruta Patil who painted retellings of *Mahabharata* in *Adi Parva: Churning of the Ocean* (2012) and *Sauptik: Blood and Flowers* (2016), previously.

The bigger canvas of the narrative is occupied by the forest in which the love story of Katyayani and her husband, the renowned sage and philosopher Yâjñavalkya, addressed throughout the book as the interrogative 'Y' by Katyayani, unfolds. The storyline is loosely inspired by the original tale of Yâjñavalkya and his three wives Gargi, Maitryei, and Katyayani from the *Brihadâranyâka Upanishad*; where the former two are intellectually bent whereas Katyayani is more somatically inclined, but not without a mind and wisdom of her own.

The book is divided into nine sections titled Forest, Others, Field, Grove, Rivals, Classroom, Exchange and Ladle, through which the journey of Katyayani unfolds, as an ousted woman with her abundant form and an insatiable appetite who discovers Y and cohabits with him as his wife. A few characters appear and disappear in their home from the world, to gain the knowledge and wisdom accorded by Y to his pupils, while Katyayani exists symbiotically with the forest and at points metamorphoses into *Aranyâni*, a goddess of the forests (86). This richly illustrated piece carries the chiaroscuro of tellurian tones in conjunction with its very simple and complex Vedic messages by giving the earthy, primal, organic Katyayani the lead in the meaning-making process; the author deconstructs the androcentric gaze to bring in a gynocentric one. Katyayani is everything Y is not, Katyayni the large: she with her untameable hair, large eyes like those of Goddess *Durga*, big *'pûrnâkumbhâ,'* filled pot body (80) she likes to eat and feed as well. We see her traversing her space, which is the home to her larger habitat of the forest.There she decorates herself according to the seasons, swims in natural ponds and lakes; and learns the ways of the forest.

As the story progresses, the appearance of a civilisation begins to take form based on human needs with pots for food, fasting for rejuvenation of the body, housing for shelter, farming to feed and the stories of gods and goddesses to explicate the transforming world (85).

The intermingling of the visual and verbal illuminates brilliant and thought-provoking perspectives throughout the tale, beginning with Katyayani's revelation when she affirms, "I am Katyayni the Large. The warp of my story has always been hunger" (2). The predominant theme of hunger manifests as hunger for food in Katyayani, as abstinence in the character named 'the fig', and as knowledge represented by Y, ironically instilled in the pronunciation of the alphabet, resembling that of 'why'.

The initial art strip shows Katyayani, exiled from her village on account of eating the village Devi's food because of her insatiable hunger (14), after cohabiting with Y, her space becomes the kitchen where there's violence and temptation as she breaks the necks of chicken and turns them into tempting stews (128). Hunger has its ally in desire which begins the cycle of life and death, cause and effect for all living beings and in this lies the insight of the Rig Veda which expounds on the first seed of the mind, which is desire (Singh). The interplay of binaries between the body and mind, desire and abstinence, home and outside; kitchen and classroom play to highlight the importance of the primal, basic, rhythmic and natural.

We see her insightful wisdom reflected through her stream of consciousness, "Food demands violence but violence is terrifying. Every part of a felled tree and culled animal satisfies a need" (83). Her grassroot wisdom is revealed when Y's student Upakoshala aka Uppi is enlightened after an episode in the Aranya where he is sent to graze animals by Katyayani. He comes back and falls to her feet and utters the following, "You sent me to learn what Satyakâma Jabali learned with his four hundred cows. In keeping a herd alive, fed, mated, all of life's secrets are revealed… my big lesson came from the kitchen, not from the classroom" (99). To this Katyayani naively wonders who Satyakâma Jabali is; who is a character mentioned in the *Chândayoga Upanishad.* Here Katyayani naively wishes to return to her work. This light-hearted take on the grand ideas of epiphanies and enlightenment shows the authors' efficacy at instilling deep insights into the uncomplicated parts of life.

Katyayani is far from being a great philosopher, rather she is more invested in the natural rhythms of the body in sync with nature around her which is reminiscent of ancient cultures of India, Africa, and Latin America. These earth centered practices were goddess centric, as we see in the image of the *gram devi*, the village goddess, carved from the earth which Katyayni metamorphoses

into at one point in the book as *Aranyâni,* the forest Goddess, which is a concept present in the Rigveda (Devdutt). This interplay of *purusha, the* divine masculine and *prakriti, the* divine feminine is what keeps this tale of humanity progressing (Devdutt). Katyayani becomes an allegory of the forest as well as of the primordial goddess.

By choosing her to be the narrator of the story, the authors have tried to shed light on the generally hidden, muted and marginalized women characters in ancient Indian literature and the Katyayani in the original tale. Here, the character is magnanimous, wise and abundant as she teaches not only Upakoshala but enlightens King Janak in a debate on love, while Y and 'the weaver' brainstorm about the world and philosophy (148).

Aranya, the forest,is a metaphor for the universe and how it operates. It takes its ideas from the Vedas, the erotic poems in the Sanskrit language by Amaru, tribal village art, natural sciences, and other Indian arts like weaving, pottery, and sculpting. Characters have been modelled based on different cultures and epics as well, with that of 'the Fig' from northeast and of King Janak from the much revered Indian epic *Ramayana*.

The central plot is devoid of banal tropes of fuming sages, curses and divine intervention and\ exchanged with a simple tale of love and growth. It is the meta-narrative though, that is steeped in Vedic wisdom with environmental issues, universal truths, life cycle, human nature and the mind. The confluence of the words and art on these 180 pages mirror the journey of human life with its stages of birth, life and death in a continuum. The burgeoning human thought to seek more and discover more is whetted by a will to survive.

It is a commendable rendition and unprecedented in its attempt and aim. The ease of access with which it offers an explication of Vedic wisdom through the graphic form and of the uncomplicated, yet complex tale of Katyayani holds immense potential in terms of the dispersal of knowledge to all who shall love to engage in that old game of searching for the truth and essence of life in a land of seekers.

Works Cited and Consulted

Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Yajnavalkya and Maitreyee." *Encyclopedia Britannica,* 24 December 2014 www.britannica.com/biography/Yajnavalkya.

Parakala, Vangmayi. "Not a Spin-off: Amruta Patil on Her Latest Book, 'Aranyaka'." *The Hindu*, 18 October 2019.

Patil, Amruta, and Devdutt Pattanaik. *Aranyaka: Book of the Forest*. Tranquebar/ Westland Publications, 2019, pp. 2, 14, 80, 83, 85, 86, 99, 128,148.

Patil, Amruta. *Sauptik: Blood and Flowers.* HarperCollins Publishers, 2016.

Schelling, Andrew, translator. *Erotic Love Poems from India: 101 Classics on Desire and Passion,* By Amaru, Shambhala Publications, 2004, p. 15.

Starhawk, and Donna Read. "About Marija Gimbutas." *Belili Productions*, 2003, www.belili.org/marija/aboutmarija.html.

Singh, Nagendra Kr. *Vedic Mythology.* Google eBooks, 1997, www.books.google.co.in/ books?id=jXw7-PdwZ7oC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r &cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.

Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Indian Culture. "Yajnavalkya and Maitreyee." *Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Indian Culture*, 2020, www.upanishads.org.in/ stories/yajnavalkya-and-maitreyee.

—— ∗ ——

A Review of Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi": Female Body as the Site of Power

Nawal Negi

In the nineteenth-century, the female body was deemed to be the reason why women were held incapable of participating in society, from athletics to politics. Definitions of the female body were used as a form of social control and discipline. Nineteenth-century women were taught to believe that weakness was their natural condition. Therefore they could not perform any acts that required physical or mental exertion. This dominant discourse is one where the female body is constricted by psychologically training women to accept that their body is inferior. This assures control of the female through the control of her body.

The relation between men and women is illustrative of the relation between Bourgeois and Proletariat where men play the role of the bourgeoisie. Men, much like the Bourgeois, enjoy dominance over women because they are the productive labourers, but when a woman tries to enter their sphere, she is faced by harassment, psychological and physical violence, which manifests as an expression of their resentment and their need to reassert control. If gender discrimination forces women into lower-paying jobs, sexual harassment helps keep them there. Susan Brownmiller in her book, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (1975) writes, "Man's discovery that his genitalia would serve as a weapon to generate fear must rank as one of the most important discoveries in prehistoric time, along with the use of fire and the first crude axe. This single factor may have been sufficient to have caused the creation of a male ideology of rape" (19) and man's efforts to subjugate the woman is the "longest sustained battle the world has ever known" (308). Rape therefore, creates a climate of intimidation and repression. Rapes can also be comprehended through the axis of class hierarchy, where upper caste men, when perceive a crossing of boundaries on the part of lower caste women, attempt a backlash in terms of sexual assault aimed at teaching their victims a lesson, instilling fear in them to adhere to traditional norms. The same has been pointed out by Maya John in her article titled "Class Societies and Sexual Violence: Towards a Marxist Understanding of Rape" (2013), with reference to the 16th December 2012 Delhi gang-rape case. Rape, thus, becomes a medium of demonstrating caste hierarchy and power.

In Mahasweta Devi's short story "Draupadi" (1981), the female protagonist Draupadi, also known as Dopdi Mejhen, exemplifies just the opposite of the role that is assigned to her by the patriarchal society. Dopdi is a twenty-

seven-year-old, lower caste poor woman who is actively involved in the Naxalite Movement with her husband Dulna. As a Naxalite activist Dopdi becomes a threat in the eyes of the police authority, who are again privileged men possessing power.

What remains remarkable is that after having been violated Draupadi is not ashamed of her naked body. She walks naked towards Senanayak with her head held high. She turns her victimised body into a weapon to taunt the male ego. Her sex which was supposed to be a "terrible wound" (Devi 25) turns into her strength now. She chooses to find strength in her body the very site which was considered vulnerable and therefore the easiest target for her oppressors. As "she pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts" (Devi 33), Dopdi turns her brutalised body, which was the symbolic site of conquest, into a weapon to be employed against her rapist, inspiring fear in him and thus denying him the power associated with raping. She says, "I will not let you put my cloth on me" (Devi 33). Her body's status as a target is inverted with the re-appropriation of power which she comes to embody. Because of her autonomy, her nakedness becomes a slight to the masculinity of the attacker. Devi takes the resistance a stage further empowering Dopdi not only with the last word but also the power to re-appropriate her raped body.

Due to the social connotation of dishonour and loss of chastity associated with rape a woman who has been sexually violated is expected to be doomed in shame and guilt. This disposition of society leads most victims to remain mute and never raise their voice against their predators, thus giving rise to a culture where sexual repression and assault subsists naturally. Interestingly, Dopdi denies the shame imposed on her by her oppressors. The attempt of her oppressors to reduce her being to an object is nullified by the power that she comes to personify. This reveals her courage and strength in spite of being a rape victim. **"Draupadi shakes with an indomitable laughter that Senanayak cannot understand. Her ravaged lips bleed as she begins laughing" (Devi 33). By deconstructing the whole notion of shame associated with rape Dopdi refuses to be guilt-ridden and in turn enlightens the fact that the victimiser should be shamefaced and not the victim. She stains Senanayak's white bush shirt, which is a mark of his supposed civility, with her bloody spit and boldly asserts "There isn't a man here that I should be ashamed" (Devi 33), thus, reclaiming the subjectivity of her body and making it symptomatic of voice and power.

Diana Maury Robin in her book, *Redirecting the Gaze: Gender, Theory, and Cinema in the Third World* (1998), expresses her concerns with women's body fluids such as tears, breast milk and vaginal blood which help to anchor the specificity of female victimisation. They are modes of exploitation and commodification of the female body. In the story, the protagonist's **"vagina is

bleeding" (Devi 31) and "a tear trickles out of the corner of her eye" (Devi 31). The story, thus, gives a searing description of the abuse to which a female body is subjected in order to gain autonomy over it. However, the protagonist, poignant in her suffering, displays invincible courage to rise above this abuse and refuses to let herself be victimised by her oppressors.

When Dopdi is first captured by the men, she is brought under their control by their power over her body. Her body is colonised, in the sense that she has no power over it. It is only when Dopdi decides to regain control over her body, can she resist her oppression and walk naked before Senanayak, making him feel intimidated. Dopdi's naked body, which according to the overbearing colonial ethos, is supposed to be an object of shame, now only represents the meaning which Dopdi chooses to afford it with. It is noteworthy that though Senanayak might act like the colonialist, Dopdi does not show any of the characteristics of the colonised, which is meekness, silence and a tendency to follow the order of the coloniser. She protests from the periphery and her acts of refusing to wear clothes and spitting on Senanayak may be read as acts of defiance against all representatives of 'Empires'. She makes it dawn on them that he can order her to be stripped but cannot force her to be clothed. In this way, his control over her is only limited and therefore of not much consequence

According to Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, Dopdi's refusal to be shamed or diminished should not be read as a "transcendence of suffering, or even simply as heroism" (352). It is instead she states, "simultaneously a deliberate refusal of a shared sign-system (the meanings assigned to nakedness, and rape, like shame, fear, loss). It is, further, an ironic deployment of the same semiotics to create disconcerting counter-effects of shame, confusion and terror in the enemy" (352). Thus refusing to share the sign system, she also becomes unpredictable. This is significant for her emergence as an agent because, for the first time, Senanayak with all his theoretical knowledge of the tribals, fails to anticipate her moves. Her actions become incomprehensible in the systematic referential sign system of the upper caste male-dominated culture.

Conventional interpretations would like to trace Dopdi's courage at the end of the story to a feminine strength innate in women. However, it has to be remembered that she is essentially not spared an option, therefore being resilient is the only course she could take for she would never betray her people. She takes pride in her mission as a political activist and that is where her strength as a heroine comes from.

Gayatri Spivak in her "Introduction" to *Breast Stories* notes that Mahasweta Devi rewrites and inverts the episode of Draupadi from the Hindu mythology. While the mythological Draupadi was saved from humiliation by

divine intervention, Dopdi emerges victorious by reclaiming her autonomy over her body. We can therefore conclude by saying that the story eggs on women to be their own heroes rather than wait for their knight to rescue them, thus commencing a revisionist ethos. Equality between the sexes can only come into being when we stop seeing ourselves as the victim and start taking charge of our lives.

Works Cited and Consulted

Brownmiller, Susan. *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. Open Media Road, 2013, pp. 19, 308.

Devi, Mahasweta. "Draupadi." *The Breast Stories*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Seagull Books, 2010, pp. 25, 31, 33.

John, Maya. "Class Societies and Sexual Violence: Towards a Marxist Understanding of Rape." *Radical Notes*, 8 May 2013, radicalnotes.org/2013/05/08/class-societies-and-sexual-violence-towards-a-marxist-understanding-of-rape/. Accessed 28 June, 2020

Rajan, Rajeshwari Sundar. *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism*. Routledge, 2005, p. 352.

Robin, Diana Maury. *Redirecting the Gaze: Gender, Theory, and Cinema in the Third World.* State University of New York Press, 1998.

—— ∗ ——

A Review of Premchand's *Godan*

Tushar Sharma

Premchand's *Godan* is a literary exemplar which encompasses within itself all the socio-political, economic and cultural dimensions of the emerging twentieth-century modern India. The novel as a realistic depiction of that temporal slot delineates numerous societal issues related to feudalism, increasing capitalism, caste segregation and gender inequality, etc., especially in rural India. As both a progressive and idealist writer, Premchand envisages a world that would strive for human equality beyond any socio-economic constraints and materialistic pleasures. But in *Godan* he represents a socio-realistic world which stands on a liminal ground due to the pre-existing conventional and the emerging monetary institutions in a rural society.

Premchand deploys the Oudh/Awadh taluqdari region in the novel which works as a critical microcosm to bring at centre the insights from the agrarian society of India. Within this region he portrays the grim existence of the peasantry class who are being doubly exploited on a daily basis by their own internal conflicts and the Zamindari system. The text unfolds the tragic death of its protagonist Hori who is at the receiving end of this system. His desire to possess a cow only lands him in a position where is even more indebted and suppressed owing to the unfair tactics played by the zamindar, the mahajan, the hypocritical Brahmins and the "Panchas".

At that time the tenants not only had to pay the land revenue but also illegal cess like the "nazarana", unfair fines or penalties to different authorial institutions. For instance, Hori had to arrange the money for "Shagun" to be given at the religious festival held at the Raisahib's house. He also took multiple loans to bear the illegal cost given to the police inspector to save his brother Heera. He also has to pay the penalty incurred by the village panchayat when he and his wife Dhania provide shelter to their daughter-in-law from a distinctive caste. In addition to this, there were also internal conflicts between farmers resulting from their jealousy and family disputes. For example, Hori had to leave his share of the land and house for his brothers due to their family dispute. Later, his brother Heera also poisoned his cow due to his immense jealousy for him. Through Hori, Premchand represents all the peasants who met various degrees of torture and whose desires only left them more indebted and pushed them in a severe crisis leading them to their death.

Godan as a multidimensional text does not resist itself to take up the plight of rural women. The rural women in the text are a product of doubly

marginalized oppression resulting from the patriarchal and caste-based entities. They are victims of frequent domestic violence, rejection and their own internalization of traditional feminine values. For instance, Punia is often physically abused by her husband Heera; "He made straight for Punia, dragged her away and started lashing her. Punia howled" (25). Dhania, though vocally assertive in her marital relation with Hori, is still a victim of his indifference for her. It is evident when she says, "I've seen worse. If Heera beats his wife, he loves her also. You only know how to beat, not to love" (26). Then Jhunia, a widow and a lower caste "Ahiran" woman is left alone after being impregnated by Gobar to face the panchayat's conviction. Similarly, Siliya another Dalit woman is also rejected by Matadin-a brahman, who fears his own community. Lastly, Rupa was given off to a middle-aged widower to compensate for Hori's loan.

Within the complex and class-stratified structure of the Awadh villages, Premchand also takes a sharp insight into the agonies of the upper caste or the zamindars. The novel briefly explains how the lopsided capitalism implanted by the British colonialism also affected the zamindars. Rai Saheb in his conversation with Hori calls himself a "victim of circumstances" and narrates how he and other zamindars led a hypocritical lifestyle. The zamindars that sucked the blood of their own people (peasants) followed the British officials like a shadow and had to pay them revenue as well.

In his socialist vision of an emerging modern India, Premchand in *Godan* consistently uses an urban-rural critical paradigm. He saw in modern urban India a period of reformation with the arising national consciousness, education, new women, medical science and other growing sectors. Representatives of these are characters like Dr Mehta, Malti and Gobar.

Malti is the only reformist feminine persona in the entire novel. She is a well-acclaimed doctor who has received her education from Europe. Unlike the other rural women she is very assertive and independent and engages herself with Dr Mehta to perform all social activities in order to serve the poor. The awakening of the spirited questioning is first reflected in Gobar. Despite his lack of education and rural affliction, he does not believe in any traditional value system as his father Hori does. He questions the very base of this dominant Zamindari system. Premchand portrays in Gobar what he himself witnessed happening in the entire nation, the initiation of the rebelliousness but not the radical rebellion. However, Gobar flees from his own village, which was not an act of defiance but escapism. But his rebelliousness sprouts only through the urban domain, after coming to Lucknow he begins to understand the very foundation of class, nation, the power and oppression of social conventions.

Lastly, Dr. Mehta, a liberal philosopher, is probably the only character who best embodies Premchand's socialism. He is a social visionary who aims to see a classless society, free from all of the monetary constraints. For instance, he asserts critically "I believe in the theory that the rich and the poor will always be with us. And that is as it should be. Wiping out distinctions will lead to social chaos" (47).

Many critics have argued that though Premchand exposes the very exploitation carried on by the institutions like the Panchayat and Biradari, he remains associated with the idea of community and the ties of traditions. For instance, despite all the exploitations by institutions Hori dies an honourable death and Gobar continues to live amidst the capitalist and industrial life of the city. To this argument it can be said that Premchand had equivocal or dubious views. On one side he desired the tranquility of the rural life and on the other he was highly motivated by the reformation taking place in the urban space. His socialist concern lies deeply at the ills of the land-based property and monetary functions taking place at that time. As articulated by Geetanjali Pande, for Premchand "the need for change was imminent. His faith in utopian solutions had petered out and he knew 'a change of heart' will not work. Morals will not change till property relations do and he repeatedly talked of property being the basis of all the ills. And yet even in *Godan* change is hoped to be implemented through *administration* and *ethics.* But the administration would move only when there is pressure from below." (766-767)

Works Cited and Consulted

Bald, Suresht Renjen. "Power and Powerlessness of Rural and Urban Women in Premchand's 'Godan': How Powerful / Powerless Are Indian Women?" *Journal of South Asian Literature*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1986, pp. 1–15. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/40874081.

Pande, Geetanjali. "Godan as a Historical Document." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 41, 1980, pp. 760–769., www.jstor.org/stable/44141904.

Prabhakara Jha. "The Moment of Godan." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 18, no. 19/21, 1983, pp. 931–936. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/4372134.

Premchand. *Godan.* Trans. Jai Ratan and P. Lal. India: Jaico Books. 1991. pp. 1-339.

— ∗ —

A Review of Jasbir Jain's *Interpreting Cinema: Adaptations, Intertextualities, Art Movements*

Somdatta Mandal

Film studies now has become a full-fledged discipline with several theoretical approaches lined up behind it and has a strong foothold in serious academics. Films are now read from various perspectives as text, as a serious novel is read over and over again, since every successive reading/viewing yields additional insights into their meaning. *Interpreting Cinema: Adaptations, Intertextualities, Art Movements* (2020) by eminent academician and scholar Jasbir Jain is a collection of sixteen essays which explores the academic aspect of film studies and has a wide range of primarily Hindi films for discussion crossing decades, genres, and cultures. The essays in this volume take up adaptations from fiction and drama both from within the same culture and across cultures and explore the relationships between cultures and mediums. There are individual essays on relationships, theoretical frameworks, and art movements, reflecting the intimate connection between critical theory and filmmaking.

The first chapter "Interpreting Cinema: A Retrospect and an Analysis" provides information on how we can read cinema. Focussing on the issues of the usage of time and space, camera-eye, light, and sound that are discussed by western film critics like Andre Bazin and others, the essay illuminates us with the progressive idea of love and romance beginning from Hindi films of the 1940s and 50s right up to more recent productions. It talks about other issues like setting, realism, use of songs, family, and religion, all of which have great significance in the Indian context. The second chapter "Travelling Memories: Between Word and Image", continues with the discussions presented earlier and also how with the opening up of the discourse, terms such as narrative, representation, audience, theoretical frame, and art movement acquire a new dimension. Despite being labelled as a mass culture due to the advancement of technology, films are fast creating different levels of audiences. After discussing multiple remakings and intertextualities of Sarat Chandra's *Devdas* (1917) and Mahasweta Devi's and Kalpana Lajmi's rendering of *Rudali* (1993)*,* the author discusses several cross-cultural adaptations like *Omkara* (2006),*Maya Memsaab* (1993)*, Bride and Prejudice* (2004)*,* etc. and emphasizes how the movement from novels into films, and films into novels works both ways.

The third chapter "Theatre into Film: Adaptations and Cultural Formations" discusses several Shakespearean adaptations in Hindi films, and the next chapter continues with the idea of intertextuality as revealed in film songs. These

intertextual references move both across the linear chronicity of the film narrative, becoming ways of interpreting and expressing desire, and also outwards into audience memories evoking audio-visual memories of a period in the past. Since songs in Indian films have served various functions on different occasions, such intertextuality functions differently from literary intertextuality. Rajinder Singh Bedi's Urdu novel *Ek Chadar Maili Si* (1962) and its film adaptation which, though loaded with cultural significance, did not receive the reception it deserved is discussed in detail in the fifth chapter. "Histories of Violence: Little Narratives Countering Master Narratives" discusses the recurrence of terrorism in films. Taking the Punjab militancy as a case study, through films like *Maachis* (1996) and *Amu* (2005), the sixth chapter traces its rise, fading out, dormant currents, and the way it has affected life and attitude in Punjab. Between 1954 and 1981, we find a large number of filmmakers turning to the mid-nineteenth century milieu, a period which marks both the high point of a cultural renaissance and the disintegration of native power centres. So, in the next chapter the author analyses Sohrab Modi's *Mirza Ghalib* (1954) and Satyajit Ray's *Shatranj Ke Khilari* (1977) as two films discussing issues of failure, exile, and loss, among other things. We are told how by shifting the focus from Premchand's perspective, which literally holds the past responsible for our present woes, Satyajit Ray creates a counterdiscourse at once more complex and balanced. It also mentions two other such period films located in the years between the 1830s and 1850s, namely *Junoon* and *Umrao Jaan* that went on to receive several awards. Was it mere nostalgia or some other post-partition factors that triggered such interest in recreating the past remains unclear.

In "Constructing the Nation through the Semiotics of Difference" the author's focus is on the semiotics of difference, marks the shifts not only in the perception of difference, but also in terms of patriotism, moral values, national solidarity, self-reflection, and guilt while constantly moving between reconstructions of masculinity and femininity. By placing this difference of the body, mind, and identity in the national discourse, she tries to trace the move from *Mother India* (1957) through *Upkar* (1967) and *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro* (1989) to *Faana* (2006) and *Maine Gandhi Ko Nahin Mara* (2005) in both literal and metaphorical terms. *Mother India*, with its nationalistic fervour, draws a mixed response. The heights of grandeur (and sacrifice) and the human tragedy involved set off contrary responses as hope and despair jostle each other. *Upkar,* though less artistically made, is in some ways a continuation of the debate initiated in *Mother India*, but it takes a different course. Directed towards didactic nationalism, there are constant juxtapositions of national fervour and patriotism with black marketing and corruption. Together, these films trace the conjunction of popular attitudes and the moments of change brought in by Nehruvian socialism.

Deepa Mehta's 'Elements' trilogy, *Fire* (1996)*, 1947: Earth* (1998) and *Water* (2005)*,* is the content of the following chapter. In terms of filmmaking, Mehta journeys from the present to the past, step by step, looking for roots, causes, and explanations. The author rightly points out how for all practical purposes, the films are women-centred, but the female body and its sexuality are delinked from procreation. The trilogy reflects on Deepa Mehta's relationship with India and the author categorically tells us that the director's concern for a Western viewership (if it is there) has not affected her concern for aesthetics, and the trilogy, despite its artistic flaws, work in continuity for the diasporic director. Incidentally, Deepa Mehta has herself refuted the idea that her target audience is in the West. Moving from film to film, Mehta's relationship with herself has clearly evolved as it has with the culture of her origin.

Women's issues are central to every society primarily because they go on to define all human relationships and social constructs. In the next chapter aptly entitled "Body as Text: Women Transgressors and Hindi Cinema," we are shown how as far as Indian cinema is concerned, the focus remains on women's beauty or their bodily exposure. By giving examples of films like *Mirch Masala* (1987)*, Tamanna, Panchvati* (1986)*, Aastha* (1997)*, Astitva* (2000)*, Rihaee* (1988), and *Paroma* (1985), made by different directors, we are shown how even if they use formula situations, they handle women's issues with great sensitivity and shift from cliched symbols and statements to create denotative signs which generate complex responses. We find that the body, the will controlling it, its sexuality, or the violation of it through seduction or rape, its procreative competence or barrenness, its location within space, all acquire meaning which can either reinforce conventional perspective or produce a counterdiscourse. Each film, in its own way, discusses issues of victimhood, rebelliousness, and transgression in different ways. Even films like *Mrityudand* (1997) and *Lajja* (2001) that use all the formula motifs and ingredients of mainstream cinema like songs, dance, violence, and rhetoric in a liberal measure also try to problematise women's issues.

As a kind of continuation to the issues discussed above, the next chapter "Reclaiming the Body: The Gender of Creativity" discusses how women need to reclaim their right over their bodies if freedom of choice is to have any meaning. Generally speaking, Hindi cinema has created a male tradition, indulged male fantasies and obsession, and pushed women to peripheral roles and projected them as objects to be gazed at. It is against this background that the author discusses several films which look at the nature of creativity and where gender plays a vital role in the very basic formulation of respectability and success. The author shows us how films like Guru Dutt's *Pyaasa* (1957) and *Kagaz Ke Phool* (1959), Shyam Benegal's *Bhumika* (1977) and *Sardari Begum* (1996), and Vijay Anand's *Guide* (1965)*,* at some level or the other, all deal with the

nature of creativity and the struggle of the creative artiste: poet, dancer, singer, actress, and director. They also critique the notion of respect, and success as measured in material terms, and the exploitative tendencies present in society. Together these films critique the institution of marriage which confines a woman, as also the romantic relationships which subdue them. Spanning a period of nearly forty years these films raise several questions which are relevant to both film theory and feminist perception. So the author asks what messages do they send to the female viewer and society at large? Are there any judgemental structures present in these films or do they merely narrate a story?

Films are not only a cultural representation but also a means of cultural production. Their appeal to large and mixed audiences provides an effective means of political criticism and raising social consciousness. Films become the unconscious of the nation as they reflect upon the power relations, political conditions and social disturbances using the individual psyche as a medium of expression. Another conceptual category important for film arts is environmental space. Interaction between space and individual is an important part of the semiotics of the film and signifies its meaning. We find that space plays an important role in many realistic and modernistic films. Titled 'Urbanscapes, Shifting Cultures and the Film Narrative' the next chapter discusses several films focussed on Lahore, Mumbai and Delhi and shows us how urban spaces do not duplicate each other but instead tend to link their representation with the thematic thrust, the culture the city has inherited and moulded through the interaction of disparate forces. The author tells us that there are also countless films like *Do Bigha Zameen* (1953), *Naukri* (1978)*, Gaman* (1978)*, Rihaee* (1988) and others depicting the rural-urban migratory pattern of our country and each one deals with space in a unique way.

Masculinity has ordinarily been associated with power and authority, but the tenderness which surfaces in the father-daughter relationship reflects a different aspect of masculinity which is usually camouflaged by the strict exterior. In the essay 'Fathers and Daughters: An Enigmatic Bond' the author focuses on fathers who are outside the range of power and cannot exercise a patriarchal authority. She examines films like *Daddy* where the father is an alcoholic, *Tamanna* where the foster father is a hermaphrodite, *Pitaah* (2002), where the father is caught up in the feudalistic rural society in which he is at the bottom rung and has no social authority, and *Main Aisa Hi Hoon* (2005), where the father is autistic. Apart from commenting on the nature of masculinity, the importance of the girl child, there is often a reversal of roles where the daughter takes on the protector's role.

Chapter Fourteen discusses the idea of surrealism as expressed in a 1956 film *Jagte Raho* which is a different kind of experiment in terms of narrative

and quite different from Raj Kapoor's early romantic films or where he portrayed the Chaplinesque figure of the tramp. It is a psychological probing of the malaise which has overtaken modern life. The next chapter reviews feminist theory by studying in detail Nagesh Kukunoor's 2006 Hindi film *Dor* which looks at the emergence of new modernism rooted more firmly in contemporary cultural specificities. The last chapter "Exteriorising the Self: Film Autobiographies" is an interesting area of film studies. The autobiographical form, in itself, is a complex genre with multidirectional thrusts as it wavers between self-reflection and public projection. Within this broad category, film autobiographies written by actors, directors, lyricists and scriptwriters have taken different forms and have come into being through various means. The author tries to answer several questions that are raised about the nature of film autobiographies which are so different in form and content that they cannot be brought under an individual rubric. In trying to locate the purpose of writing or telling, she takes up several texts namely Hansa Wadkar's *You Ask, I Tell*, Kishore Sahu's *Meri Aatmakatha*, Balraj Sahani's *Meri Filmi Aatmakatha* and Shaukat Kaifi's *Yaad Ki Rahguzar* for detailed discussion. In conclusion, we are reminded that autobiographies form a parallel account of the making of films and are of immense help in recording film history. In them lies a valuable source for film history, in addition to their literary value and the values which made their subjects what they are or were.

Dedicated to the memory of Girish Karnad, "an intellectual who had the generosity to share and the sensitivity to reach out to others," this book will be of interest both to the lay reader and the serious researcher as it comments upon the significance of the film medium and opens new avenues for discussion. After going through the various essays, we become even more convinced that a film, even of the commercial category, is more than mere entertainment. There are so many hidden layers and agenda that come out from them and the author points out several such examples for us. The vast range and references to different kinds of films spanning so many decades speak of the erudition of the author to a great extent. Another plus point of the book is, of course, the innumerable back and white photographs that accompany most of the chapters, a must for any book on film studies. It is a must-read for everyone interested in film studies for sure.

Works Cited and Consulted

Jain, Jasbir. *Interpreting Cinema: Adaptations, Intertextualities, Art Movements*. Rawat Publications, 2020.

—— ∗ ——

List of Contributors

Abhilasha Sawlani
Research Scholar, Dept. of English, Ashoka University, New Delhi.

Adiba Faiyaz
Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh.

Akansha Shukla
Research Scholar, USHSS, GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi.

Anmol Sahni
Composition Instructor – PTL, Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA.

Anup Singh Beniwal
Professor, USHSS, GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi.

Avani Bhatnagar
Assistant Professor, Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies, New Delhi.

Chetna Karnani
Research Scholar, USHSS, GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi.

Chetna Nassa
Research Scholar, USHSS, GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi.

Hiba Ahmed
Research Scholar, Dept. of English, University of Delhi, New Delhi.

Ishika Tiwari
Guest Faculty, SOL, Shri Teg Bahadur Khalsa College, University of Delhi, New Delhi

Jaishree Kapur
Research Scholar, USHSS, GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi.

Kanika Puri
Research Scholar, USHSS, GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi.

Kirti Sachdeva

Research Scholar, USHSS, GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi.

Kusum Deswal

Research Scholar, USHSS, GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi.

Mahim Sharma

Assistant Professor, Maharaja Agrasen Institute of Technology, New Delhi.

Manali Dogra

Research Scholar, USHSS, GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi.

Mandavi Choudhary

Research Scholar, Department of Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies, University of Delhi, New Delhi.

Naresh K. Vats

Assistant Professor, USHSS, GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi.

Nawal Negi

Assistant Professor, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, Assam.

Neeti Singh

Associate Professor, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat.

Nikita Sharma

Research Scholar, USHSS, GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi.

Nilanjana Ray

Research Scholar, Dept. of English, University of Delhi, New Delhi.

Obinna Ibezim

Head, Department of English and Literary Studies, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Nigeria.

Prerena Kush

Research Scholar, Dept. of Humanities, DCRUST, Murthal, Sonepat, Haryana

Rekha
Professor, Dept. of Humanities, DCRUST, Murthal, Sonepat, Haryana.

Sakshi Sundaram
Research Scholar, USHSS, GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi.

Sami Ahmad Khan
Assistant Professor, USHSS, GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi.

Shaival Thakkar
Assistant Professor, Christ Academy Institute for Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, Karnataka.

Sheena Lama
Independent Research Scholar.

Shibangi Dash
Research Scholar, Dept. of English, University of Delhi, New Delhi.

Shivani Bhatt
Research Scholar, Ambedkar University, New Delhi.

Somdatta Mandal
Former Professor of English, Visva-Bharati University, Shantiniketan, West Bengal.

Srishti Sharma
Research Scholar, USHSS, GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi.

Tej N. Dhar
Former Professor of English, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, J&K.

Tushar Sharma
Independent Research Scholar.

— ∗ —

CALL FOR PAPERS FOR THE NEXT ISSUE

Indraprasth – An International Journal of Culture and Communication Studies is a Refereed/Peer-Reviewed Journal published by the University School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Delhi. The journal intends to contribute to the development of critical thought in the areas of Literature, Culture Studies, Communication Studies, Translation Studies, Media Studies and Film Studies. Contributions for 2020/21 issue are hereby invited on a rolling basis.

Manuscripts for submission should follow the latest MLA style (MLA 8) and should be sent to the Editor at journal.ipu@gmail.com (in MS Word). Contributors should send a brief bio-data including their institutional affiliation and contact details accompanied by a 100-word abstract and a disclaimer stating that this is an original work and not published or sent for consideration. All papers submitted for publication will be reviewed by referees. For any query please contact :

Manpreet Kaur Kang -   journal.ipu@gmail.com

Word Limit: Research Papers: 3500-5000 words
                  Book Reviews: 1000-2000 words

Authors will be notified about the acceptance of their papers as soon as the report is received from the referees. The editors will not enter into correspondence about material considered to be unsuitable for publication.

Subscription rates: ₹ 150/ issue for individuals; ₹ 450/ issue for institutions.
 Overseas: $ 10/ issue for individuals; $45/ issue for institutions.

Method of payment: Cross Cheque / Demand Draft in favour of Registrar, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Sector 16 C, Dwarka, New Delhi-110078

Address for correspondence:
Indraprasth: An International Journal of Culture and Communication Studies
University School of Humanities & Social Sciences
Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University
Sector 16 C, Dwarka, New Delhi-110078 India.

Note : Views expressed in the Article/Essays/Reviews are solely of the authors.

University School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University
New Delhi-110078
India