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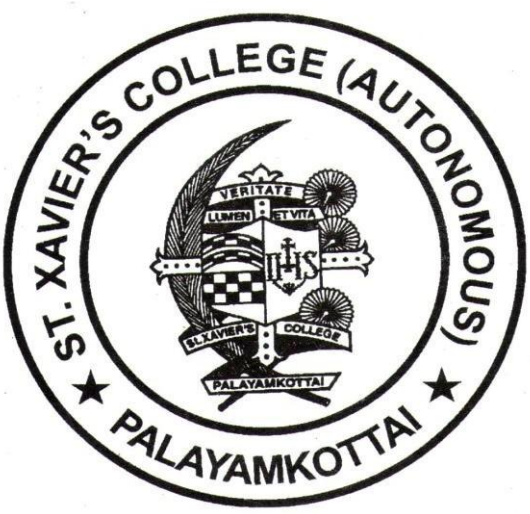
(Light and Life through Truth)



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FROM MUSE TO MYSTIC: WOMEN'S EVOLVING PRESENCE IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

Rev. Dr. Godwin Rufus S J
Principal and Associate Professor of English,
St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Palayamkottai – 627 002.

Abstract: This article examines how the literary portrayal of women has evolved through the triadic lens of the Muse, Mentor, and Mystic. This approach shifts the roles of women from inactive archetypes to proactive agents of transformation. Women have historically been identified by legendary motifs or marginal voices or archetypal figures that circumscribe their agency, such as Aphrodite the temptress, Penelope the patient wife, and Medea the vengeful mother. However, modern English literature and English translations have begun to resist, reinterpret, redefine, and recreate these stories, placing women not only as objects of mystery or inspiration but also as producers, mentors, and voices for the voiceless. This research shows how women authors have moved from the periphery to the centre of literary discourse by closely examining works by Margaret Atwood, Toni Morrison, Arundhati Roy, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and translated works by Clarice Lispector and Olga Tokarczuk.
Keywords: Archetype, Muse-Mentor-Mystic, Female Voice, Femininity, and Margin to Centre.

Introduction

For centuries, women in artistic endeavours were limited to the roles of muses, peripheral voices, or mystical archetypes, whose autonomy was restricted by mythological and patriarchal narratives. Margaret Atwood says, "You are a woman with a man inside watching a woman." Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar contend in *The Madwoman in the Attic* that "women have been objectified as the 'Angel' or the 'Monster,' both projections of male desire and fear" (17). This dichotomy consigned women to either mere inspiration or hideous insurrection, hence constraining genuine female subjectivity. These archetypes, from the patient Penelope waiting for Odysseus to the destructive Medea to the ethereal muse who inspires male creativity, have been used in stories to restrict women's power while also supporting the moral or mythological frames created by male writers. This shows how myth has acted as a "patriarchal script," giving women just a few parts (Gilbert and Gubar 23).

These depictions, firmly rooted in literary traditions and cultural awareness, have led to what Adrienne Rich refers to as the "radical disinheritance" of women, in which "the power of naming has been denied to women" (Rich 20). Women were allowed to be in tales, but they were not typically allowed to write them. If they did, their voices were generally seen as secondary or unimportant. Hélène Cixous asserts, "Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing" (Cixous 877). This demand for ecriture feminine highlights the need for women to not only exist in literature but to actively influence its discourse.

This article answers that demand by looking at how modern women authors and the female characters they create go beyond these historical limits. Through the triadic lens of Muse, Mentor, and Mystic, it tries to reveal the shifting roles of women not just as passive figures of inspiration or legendary mystery but as sovereign producers, transformational guides, and prophetic speakers. This research posits that contemporary literature increasingly puts women in pivotal roles of narrative authority, cultural criticism, and creative re-envisioning, as seen by the works of many writers such as Margaret Atwood, Toni Morrison, Arundhati Roy, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and others. This kind of change challenges established binaries and creates a literary space where the female voice is not only heard but also taken very seriously.

Reclaiming the Myth: From Margins to Centre

Contemporary female authors across the globe are methodically deconstructing the entrenched binaries that have categorised women as either virtuous muses or dangerous subversives. Their work shifts female characters from the periphery of myth to the core of narrative power, converting old tales into arenas of resistance and re-creation.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie begins her story, *Purple Hibiscus*, with a simple but powerful act of rebellion: "Things started to fall apart when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion" (Adichie 3). That one act of rebellion marks the start of Kambili's spiritual and narrative agency. She grew up in a strict patriarchal society. Bell Hooks says, "The margin is a site of radical possibility, a space of resistance" (Hooks 145). Adichie's Kambili represents that potential, and her silence becomes a furnace for change.

Arundhati Roy also shows how memory can be a battleground for women's stories in *The God of Small Things*: “It is curious how sometimes the memory of death lives on for so much longer than the memory of the life that it purloined” (Roy 6). Roy depicts women as living repositories of pain and resistance, reflecting Judith Butler's assertion that "narratives make identities legible, and thus politically potent" (Butler 90).

Penelope takes back her own legendary story in Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* when she says, "Now that I'm dead, I know everything" (Atwood 1). Penelope, who was once the perfect example of patient loyalty, becomes an acerbic critic who shows how quiet costs women in ancient writings. Adrienne Rich refers to these actions as "re-vision," which means looking back, seeing things in a new way, or coming at an old text from a new critical angle (Rich 35). Atwood's Penelope achieves just that: she goes from being a passive object to an active narrator.

Toni Morrison's writings also put women's tales at the centre of historical memory. In *Beloved*, Sethe's suffering and troubled history serve as the narrative's central focus: “It was not a story to pass on” (324). Morrison, on the other hand, insists on telling it, giving Black women the power to talk about their own survival and suffering. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar remind us that these kinds of writings are "important counter-

narratives to a male-dominated literary canon" (Gilbert and Gubar 24).

The Hour of the Star by Clarice Lispector starts with cosmic roots instead of a human confession: “All the world began with a yes. One molecule said yes to another molecule and life was born” (Lispector 11). Lispector's narrator is both a creator and an observer, mixing existential philosophy with a woman's point of view. Hélène Cixous contends, “Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing” (Cixous 877). Lispector exhibits this by transforming women from story subjects into narrative builders.

Olga Tokarczuk's Flights is another strong rethinking of female autonomy. It says, "Our bodies are the only things we truly own" (Tokarczuk 97). In a work that examines travel, migration, and anatomy, Tokarczuk argues that women's physique and awareness are fundamental to comprehending humanity. This concurs with Toril Moi's assertion that feminist literature “must incorporate the female body as a crucial site of both oppression and resistance” (Moi 54).

These authors all agree that myths are not static things that we pass down from generation to generation. Instead, they turn it into a live text that can show the many perspectives of women and take back control of the story. They realise Gayatri Spivak's aspiration of empowering the subaltern not only to articulate their narratives but also to reconstruct the historical narrative (Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, 271). These actions of literary reclamation reimagine myth not as a tool of patriarchal control but as a dynamic territory where women’s voices are no longer echoes in a male chorus but the dominant melody itself.

The Muse as Creator

In literature, the Muse has always been an unassuming figure, a lovely source of inspiration for masculine artists, but never an artist herself. Modern women authors take this idea apart and put the Muse back in her place as a creator in her own right: a woman who writes, imagines, and crafts the story world instead of just inspiring it. Adrienne Rich makes a strong point when she says, "The repossession by women of our bodies will bring far more essential change to human society than the seizing of power in any other realm" (Rich 55). However, modern women authors completely change this way of thinking by making the Muse an active producer of tales, meanings, and even entire universes.

Penelope doesn't wait quietly for Odysseus anymore in Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad.* Instead, she tells her own epic story, saying, "Now that I'm dead, I know everything" (Atwood 1). Penelope, who used to be quiet and patient, becomes an all-knowing narrator who takes back her narrative from the Homeric epic. She goes on to remark, "I've always been a storyteller." "Facts aren't everything" (Atwood 3). She rewrites myth via her stories, going from muse to writer, taking control of the tale and changing how her story, and by extension, women's roles in myth, will be remembered.

Clarice Lispector also does not like the idea of a passive muse. In

The Hour of the Star, she says, "I write because I have nothing better to do in this world." And also, since writing is a matter of life and death for me" (Lispector 16). Lispector's narrator, Rodrigo, struggles with the moral duties of being an author as he tries to write a novel about the poor Macabéa. In this context, the Muse is not a passive entity but the origin of existential creativity. The Muse is now productive, not just of narratives but of ontology itself. In this context, invention is an existential imperative. Lispector's female characters, and even her narrators, have an inherent urge to create. They won't just be mute figures in someone else's story.

Toni Morrison, as both a mentor and a muse, says in *Beloved*, "Sethe," he says, "me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow."

She shakes her head. "You're your best thing, Sethe. You are," (273), taking back the story of self-worth and power. Morrison writes in *Sula*, "It was a fine cry, loud and long, but it had no bottom and it had no top, just circles and circles of sorrow" (Morrison 174). This shows that women are the ones who shape stories. Morrison's vocabulary becomes the act of creation itself, creating a universe where Black women are both the focus of experience and the ones who form cultural memory. "Our words are not just sounds; they are actions; they have power," Bell Hooks says (Hooks 168).

In *Americanah*, Ifemelu finds her voice via writing: "Why did people ask 'What is it about?' as if a novel had to be about only one thing?" This shows how inventive Adichie is. (Adichie 298). Ifemelu, the main character, realises how powerful her own voice is when she says, "She understood suddenly that a woman's voice is a weapon" (Adichie 176). Ifemelu is no longer just a background figure for men; she is now the main player in her own story. She uses her blog and personal thoughts to talk about race, gender, and identity. This corresponds with Gayatri Spivak's exhortation to "restore the subaltern's capacity to speak and be heard" (Spivak 271).

In *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy reimagines the muse as a poet and a political critic. She writes, "There are things you can't do, like write letters to a prisoner or fall in love with someone you shouldn't" (Roy 180). In Roy's universe, women write poems that are also acts of resistance and create linguistic and political opposition. The muse is redefined as a symbol of independence and intricacy. "He told her she belonged in a poem but never in the world" (Roy 114). Roy's ladies reject this limit; they want room in both real life and writing. Elaine Showalter says that "Women writers define themselves as creators of meaning rather than passive symbols" (Showalter 13).

In *Flights*, Olga Tokarczuk transforms the muse into a mapmaker for human experience. She says, "Maps are the simplest of all stories." "They tell us how we relate to space, to others, and to ourselves" (Tokarczuk 151). In her stories, women are explorers, adventurers, philosophers, and storytellers who navigate new intellectual and emotional frontiers instead of just being quiet sources of inspiration. This aligns with

Judith Butler's assertion that "narrative is crucial for the intelligibility of the self" (Butler 79) and “serves as a mechanism for navigating identity" (Butler 90).

Together, these writers change the Muse from something that men create to something that creates story and meaning on its own. In the new literary universe, the Muse is no longer a quiet and unassuming figure who just exists to service masculine stories. Instead, she is a woman who writes herself and the world into being.

Mentors and Matriarchs

For hundreds of years, the mentor archetype in literature has mostly been male, with characters like Gandalf, Merlin, and Tiresias. Female characters, on the other hand, have generally been witches, midwives, or remote matriarchs whose knowledge and wisdom remained circumscribed and not admired and cherished. Mentorship in literature has historically been gendered, with male mentors directing female characters, often perpetuating patriarchal conventions. Elaine Showalter says, “Women have been culturally conditioned to silence themselves, even when they possess knowledge vital for survival” (Showalter 45). Nevertheless, modern female authors are redefining this image by creating female mentors who serve as both stores of knowledge and active conduits of cultural memory, political insight, and physical autonomy.

In Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Baby Suggs changes the conventional matriarch of the home into a communal leader whose lectures call for radical self-love: "It was not a story to pass on" (Morrison 324). The unwillingness to "pass on" trauma here shows a new sort of mentoring that values healing above never-ending cycles of inherited sorrow. Bell Hooks says that "healing is an act of political resistance" (Hooks 214), and Morrison's Baby Suggs shows this via her spiritual leadership and her dedication to caring for others.

In the same way, Olga Tokarczuk changes the idea of mentoring in *Flights* to include both mental and physical aspects. "Our bodies are the only things we truly own," her narrator says (Tokarczuk 97). The body itself becomes a place to pass on information, teach, and leave a legacy. In Tokarczuk's world, female mentors teach not only with words but also with their bodies, reminding us that our bodies are texts that can be read and understood. Judith Butler's statement that the body is "a site of cultural inscription and resistance" (Butler 92) is quite relevant here since Tokarczuk's female protagonists own both the story and their bodies.

In Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*, Aunt Lydia has a complicated role as both an enforcer and a subverter of patriarchal rule. She says, "The problem with a woman standing up for herself is that she gets called a bitch" (Atwood 208). Aunt Lydia pretends to support Gilead's government, but she really works from the inside to change it by teaching the next generation of women hidden truths. Her position exemplifies Gayatri Spivak's concept that the subaltern must sometimes "speak in a borrowed voice" to endure and undermine repressive regimes (Spivak 279).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's main characters also become mentors, especially when they narrate stories. Ifemelu realises in *Americanah* that "a woman's voice is a weapon" (Adichie 176). She asserts, "Culture does not shape individuals." People create culture (*We Should All Be Feminists,* 2014). Ifemelu becomes a guide for those who are trying to figure out ethnicity, identity, and gender via her blog and conversations. Her narrative actions of mentoring correspond with Hélène Cixous's assertion that "writing for a woman must spring from the body as well as from words" (Cixous 880).

In *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy shows how women may help each other in both subtle and deep ways. Ammu teaches her kids how to be strong and enjoy things that are outside the rules of society. For example, "He told her she belonged in a poem but never in the world" (Roy 114). Roy illustrates how matriarchs convey not just traditional survival tactics but also the perilous awareness of violating limits. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar contend that these women "write the body into history" by rejecting silence (Gilbert and Gubar 29).

In *The Hour of the Star*, on the other hand, Clarice Lispector rethinks mentoring as a metaphysical act. Rodrigo, the male narrator, attempts to "create" Macabéa's tale, but Lispector's writing discreetly fights back against his power. The voice of the author becomes a secret teacher, giving readers thoughts on life, such, "All the world began with a yes" (Lispector 11). In Lispector, mentoring is not so much about teaching directly as it is about pushing readers to think more deeply about philosophical issues.

In these many works, women authors change the stereotype of the mentor and matriarch from a wise woman on the sidelines or a quiet supporter into a major figure of knowledge, power, and transforming counsel. These female mentors are no longer in the shadows; they are living examples of Adrienne Rich's idea of "the re-visionary task of women writing themselves into history" (Rich 37). They educate not just conventional information, but also how to be rebellious, strong, and think of new ways to change the world.

Mystics and Prophets

Women writers' use of mysticism has historically been seen to be an irrational area, with whispers and visions that patriarchal standards consider too much or crazy. For modern women authors, mystical experience serves as a radical mode of knowledge, a means to articulate realities that transcend the limitations of logical discourse. Hélène Cixous contends that women's writing "does not speak in linear narrative but in flashes, in disruptions, in a language of the body" (Cixous 881). This very disruptive aspect is what gives mysticism its strength in literature written by women.

In Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, mystical imagery is inextricably linked to the body and trauma. Roy adds, "It is curious how sometimes the memory of death lives on for so much longer than the memory of the life that it purloined" (Roy 6). The past takes on a ghostly

form, haunting the living with heavenly but excruciating clarity. The mystical is not simply a way to get away from things; it's also a way for women to see injustice, pain, and strength. Judith Butler says, "Narrative is the means by which the unspeakable becomes speakable" (Butler 93). For Roy's ladies, mystical perception is just this: saying what can't be spoken.

The Hour of the Star by Clarice Lispector considers mysticism as molecular, a calm, intimate awareness that resides in the tiniest parts of reality. Lispector's style breaks with conventional narrative, which is in line with Trinh T. Minh-ha's claim that "to write is to return to the body" (Minh-ha 22). Lispector uses mysticism to say that feminine creativity is a cosmic power.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie combines mysticism with strong emotions and cultural subtleties. She uses quiet not as a way to give in, but as a powerful way to fight and wake up. Kambili writes of her aunt's house in *Purple Hibiscus* with quiet respect: 'Laughter always rang out in Aunty Ifeoma's apartment, from the kitchen, from the living room, from the tiny bathroom' (Adichie 142). This happy mood, which is quite different from the strict religiousness of her father's home, shows a spiritual change that is based on the feminine domesticity. In this context, mysticism is not associated with visions or heavenly encounters, but rather with the restoration of pleasure, community, and physical autonomy, a holy experience integrated into quotidian actions. Gloria Anzaldúa writes in *Borderlands/La Frontera* that "Spirituality is tangible in the actions we choose, in our words, in the breath of our bodies" (88). Adichie posits that female characters fight the hierarchies of both religion and patriarchy via their nuanced, lived spiritualities. When women laugh and take charge, the divine takes on a new meaning. It becomes a powerful force that questions old ways of doing things and calls out a deeper, liberating truth.

In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison's mysticism connects the living and the dead, the earthly and the divine. In Morrison's tales, mysticism is a way to get back forgotten history and silent anguish. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar characterise these works as "counter-narratives reclaiming women's hidden knowledge" (Gilbert and Gubar 27). Morrison's spiritual insights, therefore, transform into acts of historical reclamation and prophecy.

In Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*, mysticism has a darkly prophetic side. Aunt Lydia's private writings show the facts that are concealed under Gilead's religious facade: "The trouble with a woman standing up for herself is that she's labelled a bitch" (Atwood 208). Her secret story takes on the character of a prophet, a lady who shares forbidden information. This prophetic role exemplifies Gayatri Spivak's assertion that the subaltern must sometimes "speak in codes to be heard at all" (Spivak 280).

These writers change the meaning of mysticism from a patriarchal term for women's irrationality to a powerful way to see and fight back. Women are no longer only characters in myths; they are instead mythmakers who change both sacred and secular stories.

Conclusion: From Inspiration to Sovereignty

Modern women's literature asserts that women are no longer only muses, peripheral moms, or mystics enveloped in quiet. Instead, they become makers, builders, artists, artisans, teachers, and seers who live in and change narratives. Morrison states in *Sula*, "The future was hers as much as it was his" (Morrison 91). The triadic framework of Muse, Mentor, and Mystic illustrates how literature has evolved into a potent domain whereby women inscribe themselves into history, so reconstituting both myth and significance. In the end, the female voice is not only heard; it is listened to. Women's tales are becoming essential scripts for rethinking civilisation and reimagining culture where there is no single story.

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IS ENGLISH BEING ESCHEWED A MARK OF EGOCENTRICS' ATTITUDE?

Dr. S. P. Vanjulavalli
Assistant Professor of English,
Government Arts College, Melur, Madurai.

Abstract: English is accepted as an international language. Though it is a global language, some countries are deliberately disinclined to consider its universal significance and give it only secondary importance. Besides the fact that it is vital in the fields of science, technology, business, medicine, and research, certain authorities deny its supremacy in various aspects. Apart from the truth that such countries have developed in various fields, they are reluctant to accept the particular language's prominence. Hence, they have tried to ascertain to the world that the progress of a country has nothing to do with the international language. In spite of the fact that the language has been shunned for many reasons, it also traces some evidence that this supreme language of imperial British colonizers has been regarded as trivial by the so-called other European colonizers and autocrats, leading to its secondary position even after their reign. Yet, the paper throws light on the undeniable growth of the English language amidst indifferent rulers.

Keywords: Global Language, Universal Significance, English Language, and Growth.

Speaking is one of the special skills of human beings. No other creature in the world is blessed with this trait. Among all the creatures, only some have the capacity to make sounds. Only a few are capable of converting the sound into speech. It is evident from history that English stemmed from the Anglo-Saxon group of the Indo-European family. When one traces the facts, it is known that the Anglo-Saxon family came from the West Germanic language group, which was derived from primitive Germanic tribes.

Every aspect of life was changing during the Renaissance. The English language achieved its proper value in the 15th and 16th centuries. It came into existence on the world map and became the language of a civilized community. Until a particular period, English was considered the illiterates' language, whereas Latin was the literates'. There were many reasons for the development of English, such as religion, literature, translation, and the Renaissance. In English Language Teaching: Approaches and Techniques (2013), Suman Bhanot says: "…Religion is the center of common people. In this connection, translation of the Bible and other religious works played a very important role in the development of English. Wycliff made the first complete version of the Bible in English in

1382. Tyndale translated the New Testament in 1525" (Bhanot 2). The countries where English is not given primary importance are checked on the historical line, and the prevailing autocracy can be traced out. Though English has spread everywhere, it is evident that some countries diplomatically set aside English either at a secondary or zero position. History shows the track record of English being eschewed by many countries such as France, Russia, Germany, Italy, and Korea.

This study brings attention to the findings of the eschewal of English, the lingua franca, by some well-developed countries, perceiving a common pattern. It is associated with the political history of those countries. When the reigns of these nations are retrospect, the trace of autocracy could be recognized as one of the possible factors for excluding English. In *The Two Logics of Autocratic Rule*, Johannes Gerschewski says, "Fraud, intimidation, and fear are the most obvious and widespread instruments with which every autocratic regime attempts to maintain control over what is happening in society. Autocrats want to eliminate the possibility of deviance among their citizens" (Gerschewski 3).

He adds that in France, even now, people are reluctant to speak English when they are approached for any response by non-native speakers. In *Why French People Correct Your French and Dislike Speaking English*, Marie writes the reason for French people's rudeness over their native language and their dislike of English. She points out that France and England often waged war and had been rivals for many years.

The dictator Napoleon Bonaparte is responsible for the enmity between France and England, as he tried to capture the entire Europe. Besides many reasons, the autocratic policy of King Napoleon, his rise to power soon after the French Revolution, and his military campaigns led to a very serious political conflict with England. Thus, the spark of enmity lit by political leaders is never extinguished. Sometimes it develops into hatred towards the language of the particular country, irrespective of its supremacy.

In Germany, the propaganda and censorship of the Nazi party are well known to the world. Hitler's Nazi party adopted the methods of overpoliticization and depoliticization, which were obviously marks of dictatorship. In the Holocaust Encyclopedia, an article titled "Nazi Propaganda and Censorship" elucidates that the Nazis breached their constitutional values of basic rights such as freedom of speech and press. It denied newspapers that opposed Nazi principles, and also monitored news in dailies and on the radio. Finally, the most notable act was the banning and burning of books branded as un-German. From this, it is apparent that

these acts led to having only the German language as their official one and English as a less-preferred language, following the ideological principles of the Nazis.

In Russia, though English was not directly opposed by Joseph Stalin, the language was not given a prominent position during his regime. After the Russian Revolution, the Russian language dominated over English. Under Stalin's regime, Russian became the official language of the Soviet Union. After this, only the Russian language was used in the field of education. Even the course of medicine was done only in Russian. However, now many universities offer courses in English. Anyways, English was not institutionalized as a commonly spoken language in public places during the dictator's rule. It is obvious that English has been considered an imperial or dominating language and not allowed to outweigh the native language at any cost, following the language doctrines of their benevolent leader or dictator, as per the perspectives of some historians.

In Italy, Benito Mussolini's fascism, which eradicated the Labour parties and the opposing political parties, advocated the principle of a "pure Italian" identity. Mussolini's government administered strategies of racial discrimination and oppression. An article published by the University of Oslo, entitled "Using Language as a Weapon: How Mussolini Used Latin to Link Fascism to the Mighty Roman Empire," states how Mussolini prioritized the Latin language and led to the subjugation of other languages with implied reference to English. It quotes the Dutch associate professor Han Lamers's research on how the Italian language, a mark of antiquity, associated with the Roman Kingdom. Mussolini's promulgation was published in Latin translation. Lamers answers the question of why an Italian leader was so particular about translating the content into an antique language. He also answers the question: "But would it not have been more natural to choose a living world language such as English to communicate with people in the future?" He replies: "From the fascist's viewpoint, Latin was probably a rational choice. They looked at Latin as a language for the future, and we should also remember that it was not regarded as a 'dead' language. It was still used by the church; poets wrote in Latin, and it had, all in all, proved to be a durable transhistorical language."

Similar to the other four countries, Korea is not an exception. It also has the same track record of dictatorship, which did not directly ban English, but controlled its growth and influence. Even Japan could not escape dictatorship during the reign of Emperor Hirohito. Though he did not command a formal ban on English, he focused only on the national language, Japanese, in order to promote wartime policy.

As per Paul Brooker's specifications in *Non-Democratic Regimes* (2009), communication monopoly is considered one of the traits of dictatorship. He argues that for an authoritarian government, it could be possible to experience some changes over a long period, scarcely taking the shape of stable democracy.

Though France has very good infrastructure and abundant human resources, it faces serious problems of unemployment, competitiveness, and low economic growth. Certainly, giving secondary importance to the English language is one of the factors for the setback. When a country's economic growth does not increase, it has to look for various strategic plans to multiply income resources. In this context, if a particular country relies only on its native language without the key instrument of the global language, it would not be possible to attain the expected or increased growth in the economy, since it becomes inevitable to navigate international trade, for which the role of a global language is significant.

As far as Russia is concerned, brain drain is said to be one of the main factors. Its demographic challenges lead to skill shortages. Russia has proven in many aspects that it is a superpower, yet its weaknesses in a few fields could be noted as pulling factors, such as shunning the international language, English. When a country has a shortage of workers, it is reasonable to invite them from other countries, which requires tolerance of non-native speakers, especially in English, because the role of communication becomes significant while dealing with laborers.

The role of English cannot be denied in various fields across the world. It could be said that the ease of the language has led to its global research and succeeded in mesmerizing the minds of second-language learners in various parts of the world. The most interesting fact is that the language consists of only twenty-six letters. With this limited number of letters, it provides different flavors of language. All four skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing, become possible for a reader through its interesting components. It is like a window to connect the world. Apart from a sense of cultural affinity to a native language, it is ideal to accept the merits of the global language. It is wiser to be receptive than egocentric.

An efficient administrator or leader should choose avenues for income sources rather than blocking them by acting egocentrically. When English is available to act as a bridge for connecting different lands, it eventually strengthens diplomatic relations. In English Language Teaching: Approaches and Techniques, Suman Bhanot says: "Learning of English shall therefore be useful for us to establish contact with all these countries easily and quickly. English occupies a very important place in the

international world...This is the reason that it is very useful and helpful in foreign trade, commerce, friendship, and political relations" (Bhanot 15). He also adds:

> Some people advocate that Hindi or regional languages should take the place of English. But can Hindi and regional languages fill up the place of English, which is second to no language of the world? It requires years of ceaseless effort to bring any Indian language to the level of English, but by that time English will become richer in quantity and quality both. (Bhanot 19)

David Crystal, in English as a Global Language, explains that if English is one's first language, the person may be proud that their language is successful. Likewise, people in other countries may not prefer to use it as the native speaker does. Everyone is sensitive when non-native speakers use their own language. He says: "Deeply held feelings of ownership begin to be questioned. Indeed, if there is one predictable consequence of a language becoming a global language, it is that nobody owns it anymore. Or rather, everyone who has learned it now owns it—has a share in it might be more accurate—and has the right to use it in the way they want." He says this can lead to native speakers' grudges against non-native speakers' usage.

In another case, if English is not one's mother tongue, the person gets motivated to learn and master it. When those people succeed, they are proud. When they live in a country where their own language's survival is threatened by English, it may annoy them. Crystal justifies that these feelings are natural. He says that these feelings lead to fear and conflict. In many countries, hunger strikes, language rioting, and language deaths are quite common and natural. He adds that without an effective base, it is not possible for a language to attain the position of a global language. Improvements in industries, commerce, finance, and technology led to an explosion of international marketing and advertising.

Crystal says that the press saw its Zenith, which was then surpassed by the broadcasting media, ultimately crossing national borders with electromagnetic ease. It made progress in science and technology and nurtured an international intellectual and research arena, establishing a milestone in scholarship and education. He elucidates that any language at the center of such world-level activity might be identified with international status. In the early nineteenth century, Britain had become the center of trade and industry. The colonization by the British spread English throughout the world. Due to this, Crystal says English had become "the language on which the sun never sets" (Crystal 10).

The finding of the study is that English being eschewed is a mark of egocentric attitude. Nobody can deny the fact that people from different parts of the world, irrespective of their various statuses, depend on the lingua franca, English, for personal as well as social development. It has reached all domains of business, technology, education, communication, and media. Relying on one particular native language does not help a country in overall development. Eschewal of an international language is eschewal of establishment. Efficient leaders and administrators must develop a positive attitude of accepting English as a tool of social construction and knowledge transmission by abandoning egocentric attitudes, because it is more important to flourish than to be narrow-minded in the name of fostering a national language.

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ALIEN'S TRANSFORMATION IN *THE HUMANS* BY MATT HAIG: A POSTHUMAN APPROACH

Reema Supriya Kujur
Assistant Professor of English,
Simdega College, Simdega, Ranchi University, Jharkhand.

Abstract: The paper examines the transformative journey of the alien protagonist in *The Humans* by Matt Haig, analysing his evolution from a rational, emotionless extraterrestrial to someone who embraces the complexities of human nature through a posthuman lens. The alien hails from a planet characterized by "purity of reason," devoid of emotions, where collective good replaces individual desires. However, exposure to Earth's irrational aspects like music, food, poetry, and human connection begins to overthrow his rigid viewpoint. The research methodologies employed are Textual Analysis and Posthuman literary criticism.
Keywords: Posthumanism, Transformation, Anthropocentrism, and Alien.

Introduction

Matt Haig's novel *The Humans* was published on May 9, 2013. *The Daily Express* reviewed it as a "humane, bittersweet, and very moving" novel. This paper is analysed from a post humanist approach, which questions the idea of "human" as the central or superior being in the universe and explores how humans interact with non-human entities like Earth, animals, machines, technology, and the environment. The novel critiques and redefines the boundaries of humanity through the transformative journey of a Vonadorian alien. It argues that posthuman existence is not solely defined by technological or biological advancement but by the embrace of uniquely human vulnerabilities, emotions, and the search for meaning beyond pure rationality, thereby challenging anthropocentric notions of intelligence and purpose.

Alien's Mission

On Earth, mathematics professor Andrew Martin had solved the Riemann hypothesis, which was a threat to the alien planet of Vonadorian. An alien was given the task to eliminate human knowledge. He had taken the place of Andrew to live a human life and complete this mission.

Initial State and Perception of Alien

The alien's initial perspective of humans was that "Human is a real bipedal lifeform of mid-range intelligence, having a deluded existence in a very lonely corner of the universe." The alien takes the form of Andrew, who, according to him, had a hideous appearance and the sense organs, "all of which take a long time to mentally absorb and accept." This highlights the initial perception of human biology as inherently flawed or inferior to

them.

The alien observed that happiness depends on shopping, TV, career, and writing a novel, which give momentary satisfaction and lead to misery. This critiques consumerism, materialism, and traditional markers of success from a non-human perspective. On the other side, Vonadorian's perceived their home as a model of utopia and as a posthuman ideal: "Where we are from: there are no comforting delusions, no religions, no impossible fiction. There is no love and no hate; only the purity of reason." The aliens had absolute rationality and technological mastery. There were no human flaws, lack of "crimes of passion," "remorse," "names, no families," and hence "no madness." This highlights the Vonadorian elimination of perceived human weaknesses. The aliens had also overcome death and fear on their planet: "They have solved the problem of fear because they have solved the problem of death; they will not die." This was a posthumanist achievement through biological and technological manipulation to "rearrange their own biological ingredients, renew and replenish them." "They never placed the desires of the individual over the requirements of the collective." This statement is ironic, which proves otherwise in the novel when he fights against another alien. The initial experience of the alien on Earth was not pleasant. He was found naked and arrested, had limited travel options, and was unable to "swallow a book."

Gradual Signs of Transformation

In the first meeting, he found Isobel as "hideous and scary." Gradually, he discovered the unexpected power of human "flaws." Poetry was discovered on Earth, and Emily Dickinson became his favourite. Art, an "irrational" human creation according to them, began to appeal to the alien, hinting at a meaning beyond pure mathematics. Listening to music made him calm and provided comfort. Music is another non-rational comfort that began to soothe and change the alien's internal state. He developed friendship with the dog, Newton. The development of interspecies connection highlights emotional bonds. The alien intervened to stop Gulliver's suicide attempt and subsequently sustained injury and miraculously healed. This was a pivotal moment demonstrating a shift from detached observation to active care.

He also took revenge on Gulliver's bullies by hacking their computers, blocking posts, and changing names. This demonstrated a protective instinct on his part. He shared physical and emotional intimacy with Isobel: "The physical and emotional relationship that the alien had with the wife seemed like magic and warmer love." This was the ultimate subversion of Vonadorian pure reason, showing the transformative power

of human connection and intimacy.

He was rejected by Vonadorians, saying that "he had been corrupted and 'infected with emotion'." The alien decided to stay on Earth forever, without any of his gifts, and wished to be mortal, "wanting to grow old and get diseases." This is the central posthumanist act of the novel. True posthumanity, in Haig's view, lies not in escaping mortality but in embracing it. "Love is scary... You lose yourself... it makes you do stupid things." The alien started to understand the meaning behind love with all its complexity, its irrationality, and its transformative power, even at the cost of "losing oneself."

Protector of Humanity

Another alien had been employed to finish the mission which he himself had left incomplete. The alien, who started loving humans, confronted the new alien and killed him. He started defending humanity. This act signifies a complete allegiance to humanity and a rejection of his former Vonadorian identity and mission. He now became a protector of human life and emotion. However, Isobel, the wife, felt hurt after knowing the real identity of the alien. "I was a killer and, to her, an alien." Before coming to Earth, he never wanted care, but now he wanted to be loved.

When the alien was asked about his planet by Gulliver, he said that "existing is different. No one dies. There's no pain... The only religion is mathematics. There are no families. There are the hosts—they give instructions. The advancement of mathematics and the security of the universe are the two concerns. There is no hatred." It sounded utopian from a purely rational standpoint, but the alien's transformation now revealed its inherent emptiness with the absence of human emotion and connection. "What if there actually is a meaning to human life? What if human life is not just to fear and ridicule but also to relish?" This question, posed by the alien, becomes the core philosophical shift of the novel. He left a "long note giving life's advice" to Gulliver. This signifies the alien's embrace of human wisdom and his role as a mentor, passing on lessons learned through his transformation. He decided to stay in another place like California and received a job there. He traveled to many countries and spent time amidst nature. These activities indicate an appreciation for earthly experiences, beyond purely mathematical or technological pursuits.

After several years, he was invited to Cambridge to lecture on mathematics and technology. This shows that he could still engage with his former world's strengths (reason, science). He went to Cambridge but kept a low profile. He saw Isobel in college but kept a distance. He met Gulliver in the park, who said that Isobel looked sad and showed that she wanted to

forgive him. They all missed each other. In the end, he wants to "live with people I could care for and who would care for me."

This is the ultimate outcome of his posthumanist evolution, prioritizing relationship and belonging. The novel redefines the meaning of "advancement": instead of merely "the advancement of mathematics and the security of the universe," true advancement is found in the richness of human experience, even with its inherent "flaws."

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TRAUMA, COGNITION, AND NEURO-AESTHETICS: AN ANALYSIS OF FILMS BULBBUL AND QALA

Sufiya Ansari
Research Scholar (Reg. No. RES/Eng/July 2023/1255)
Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Banaras Hindu University,
Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.

Abstract: This paper attempts to discuss the representation of trauma in the films, *Bulbbul* (2020) and *Qala* (2022), directed by Anvita Dutt Guptan. The discourse surrounding mental health is highly relevant in the present times. Therefore, neuroaesthetic and cognitive approaches are also pertinent for discussion. The films deal with issues of feminine identity, mythology, eco-cinema, Feminist New Wave Cinema, and other relevant aspects of contemporary society. This paper employs discourse analysis as a method to study the film texts, using trauma theories as the theoretical framework to examine the selected primary works. Hence, the paper explores the representational dynamics of the film texts.
Keywords: Indian Parallel Cinema, Social Issues, Films, and Cognition

Introduction

Bulbbul and *Qala* are two films that portray the traumatic experiences of their protagonists. Bulbbul, a child bride married to Indranil Chowdhary. She represents the traumatic experiences that women endure throughout their lives. The representational dynamics explore the traumatic experiences of a wife, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, and woman. She is not only a victim at the hands of her husband but also of society. The second film, Qala, narrates the journey of a female singer, the daughter of Urmila Manjushree. She faces several challenges in achieving her dreams. Although she meets many people in her life, none can save her. Ultimately, she commits suicide as a result of her traumatic life experiences.

Methodology

The primary sources for this study are the selected films. To elaborate on the issues presented in the films, social media sources have been referenced, such as YouTube interviews with director Anvita Dutt Guptan, film reviews by critics, and audience responses. The theoretical framework includes feminist film ideologies, subaltern voices, silenced women, and trauma theories. Additionally, a few references to quantitative reports are also considered when discussing key issues raised in the films. Therefore, a mixed approach is followed, incorporating both qualitative data for analysis and quantitative data available online.

Primary Sources

The primary sources for this study are the films *Bulbbul* and *Qala*. Both films are directed by a female filmmaker, bringing in the aspect of the female filmmaking journey and perspective. She explains that the real intention behind directing Bulbbul was to "tell a story" (Dutt 01:15–02:40).

Anvita Dutt Guptan – YouTube Interviews

To validate and justify the discussion based on trauma theories, YouTube interviews of the director and scriptwriter Anvita Dutt have been examined to gain a deeper understanding of the key issues and aspects involved in directing the films. Social media reviews by the audience have also been consulted to understand whether the films depict feminist cinema. These reviews also clarify the aspects of dedicated symbolism present in the films.

Secondary Sources

The review of literature covers scholarly works on trauma theories. The key theorists and their works include Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Dominick LaCapra's *Writing History*, *Writing Trauma* (2001), Dori Laub's *Testimonies of Trauma* (1992, with Felman), and Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (1992).

Bulbbul's Supernaturalism and Qala's Hallucinations

In the first half of Bulbbul, the protagonist remains a submissive and suppressed character. Married at a young age, she suffers marital rape not only by her husband Indranil but also by his brother Mahendra. Satya, who initially appears to offer solace, remains unaware of her suffering and later asks Bulbbul to return to her parents' house when he learns about Dr. Sudip, who tries to help her. Bulbbul represents the multiple silenced voices of women growing up under patriarchal oppression.

Satya recounts, "She was only a child when they took everything from her… and the world did not listen" (Bulbbul), illustrating the silenced trauma that haunts the narrative, aligning with Caruth's concept of trauma as an unassimilated experience (Caruth 1996). Satya narrates the story of a "witch" entering the house, thereby creating the narrative belatedness of trauma that the young bride experiences throughout her life in the haveli.

Symbols such as red skies, blood imagery, anklets, and twisted legs are used as agencies to express the unspeakable pain of a girl. Anvita Dutt employs non-linear storytelling and a fragmented narrative structure to emphasize the broken and unsettled social structures surrounding the female protagonist.

Qala, on the other hand, is the daughter of a great singer. Her father is deceased, and her mother, Urmila, is a single woman who herself has been a victim of patriarchal prejudice. Urmila becomes a catalyst, enforcing her own suppressed thoughts upon her daughter, indirectly asking her to remain subdued. Qala experiences hallucinations, internal monologues, and auditory delusions. In one scene, she gives mercury to her fellow musician, Jagan Batwal, and later washes her hands like "Lady Macbeth," symbolizing guilt, as Jagan commits suicide after losing his voice. "Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Caruth 4).

Qala undergoes emotional suffering and psychological pain. Her mother pays no attention to her, being herself a victim of patriarchal society, having accepted marginalization and normalized the inferiority imposed upon her daughter. Qala's reflection, "Even the koyal sings for its mother…and I am left alone" (Qala), symbolizes her unresolved grief and maternal neglect, highlighting the belated and haunting nature of trauma (Caruth 1996).

Qala explains nothing to anyone, enduring everything alone. Her fragmented thoughts and overwhelming emotions are expressed through her public performances, serving as articulations of her trauma. The recurring imagery of moths, hallucinations of Jagan, sonic echoes, and auditory illusions like snowfall serve to portray trauma.

The use of snow symbolizes lifelessness. Although snowfall appears beautiful, it lacks the warmth to sustain life. It recalls T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land", where warmth and vitality are absent. Qala's consistent presence in an icy atmosphere symbolizes the emotional coldness of her maternal environment.

Qala's Acting Out / Bulbbul's Working Through

Dominick LaCapra distinguishes between "acting out" and "working through" trauma. "In acting out, the past is relived as if it were fully present rather than represented in memory and inscription; in working through, one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one (or one's people) back then" (LaCapra 22).

Qala is traumatized. Anvita Dutt states that she wanted Qala's trauma to appear like a knife—something sharp and aesthetically beautiful, yet deeply harmful (Dutt). It was a sunny day, yet those memories haunted her intensely. "Qala was the Rapunzel locked outside the house" (Dutt).

Conversely, Bulbbul reclaims agency through supernaturalism—as a "witch." She is able to differentiate between what happened in the past and what exists in the present. Multiple elements—color, lighting, music, and mise-en-scène—direct the way Bulbbul works through her trauma.

Quantitative Numbers and Questions Raised

According to NCRB data on crimes against women, out of 4,45,256 cases, 31% were registered under "Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives" (Crime in India 2022). Aisha Akram, a law student at Oxford Brookes University, discusses the justice system and the consequences of the decriminalization of marital rape in India. Although various laws address gender-based violence, *Bulbbul* becomes a key text to discuss the hauntological experiences of justice in 19th-century Bengal Presidency—the Neo-Classical period.

The United Nations Population Fund report *Health and Social Consequences of Marital Violence: A Synthesis of Evidence from India by Shireen Jejeebhoy*, K. G. Santhya, and Rajib Acharya (2010) provides detailed analysis on the status of marital violence. Similarly, the Crime in India 2022 report by NCRB offers a comprehensive study of violence against women. At least 25% of women are victims of spousal sexual abuse, according to data from the National Family Health Survey (Das).

Limitation of the Study

This study does not engage deeply with Cognitive and Neuro-Aesthetic perspectives. Several theorists and their semantic approaches could be explored in future research.

The paper primarily discusses the traumatic perspectives present in the selected films and the real-life dimensions involved in the filmmaking journey. Literature often reflects the virtues and vices of society; similarly, cinema offers a realistic portrayal. Though time frames differ, core concerns remain constant. The love stories may change, protagonists may differ, antagonists may reform, but the questions of freedom, identity, evolution, and the continuous journey toward a better future persist.

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THE MIRROR OF CONTEMPORARY TIME: A READING OF SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *VICTORY CITY*

[1]Dr. D. Jockim & [2]Dr. F. Mary Priya

[1.] Assistant Professor of English, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Palayamkottai.

[2.] Assistant Professor, St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi.

Abstract: Salman Rushdie's fifteenth novel *Victory City* (2023) is a tale about a fourteenth century princess named Gangadevi who has 247 years life span. She inherits the name Pampa Kampana from her goddess and creates a city named Bisnaga which is modelled on the south Indian empire Vijayanagara that existed between fourteenth and sixteenth century. The novel talks about the creation of the city and the rise and fall of Pampa Kampana who never ages. She marries the successive kings and takes the role of a queen, minister, and regent. Consequently, she also falls from the political favour due to the change of time. Using this forgotten myth, originally written in Sanskrit, Rushdie mirrors the political and religious outcry in India and across the globe. This paper examines the portrayal of the intricacies of contemporary social inequality, religious fanaticism, and political hegemony in *Victory City.*

Keywords: Fanaticism, Extremism, Myth, Politics, and Power.

Salman Rushdie is one of the most recognized literary figures in the contemporary world. His 2023 novel *Victory City* is yet another milestone in his literary career in which he uses magical realism effectively to blur the lines between reality and imagination. This novel retells the ancient Sanskrit myth created by Pampa Kampana which reminds the reign of Vijayanagara, a south Indian empire. This paper explores how Rushdie uses his literary work to comment on the religious, social, and political institutions of the contemporary time.

Politics plays a vital role in any kingdom; old and new. The rulers, both in the past and the present are very careful in establishing their authorities. They are not very keen on the welfare of the people while doing this. In *Victory City,* the five Sangama brothers Hukka, Bukka, Pukka, Chukka and Dev shape their own empires. Especially the first two brothers, Hukka and Bukka who are involved in the creation of Bisnaga take strenuous efforts to establish themselves as kings. Hukka tells his brother, "We must become gods now…to make sure the people worship us" (17). They attempt to politicise the people to continue their rule. At the beginning, the people of Bisnaga are beyond control. Bukka says, "This is the first lesson of your new kingdom: patience. We must allow our new citizens- our new subjects- to become real, to grow into their newly created

selves" (23-24). The rulers and the ruled have different roles to play in any country. Rushdie ridicules this fact through the portrayal of these two brothers. One of them says, "Looks like even the magic seeds have one rule for the rulers and another for the ruled…If the ruled continue to be unruly it won't be easy to rule them" (24). Further, the author points out "… there is no difference between thieves and kings" (42). This is a blunt commentary on the insensitive nature of the rulers of any country who ignore the welfare of the people.

Rushdie's narrative technique is at its best when he blurs the reality of the imaginary city Bisnaga and the contemporary world. For example, the city Bisnaga is created by the magic seeds by Pampa Kampana. The brothers Hukka and Bukka witness this. However, they are aware that they cannot rule the people who do not have any past. Hence, Pampa Kampana creates their history by repeatedly telling what they were. The following passage explains the process of myth making in the novel:

> Everyone came from a seed, she told him. Men planted seeds in women and so forth. But this was different. A whole city, people of all kinds and ages, blooming from the earth on the same day, such flowers have no souls, they don't know who they are, because the truth is they are nothing. But such truth is unacceptable. It was necessary…to do something to cure the multitudes of its unreality. Her solution was fiction. She was making up their lives, their castes, their faiths, how many brothers and sisters they had, and what childhood games they had played, and sending whishpering through the streets into the ears that needed to hear them, writing the grand narrative of the city, creating its story now that she had created its life. (31)

This passage picturizes the inevitable nature of myth-making in a political context. The countries are involved in myth-making to instil patriotism and obedience among the citizens. Even, they go to the extend of creating evidences for strengthening the position of the government by propagating distorted truths.

Rushdie demonstrates the monstrous power of these myths created for political gains. "Fictions could be as powerful as histories, revealing the new people to themselves, allowing them to understand their own natures and the natures of those around them, and making them real. This was the paradox of the whispered stories: they were no more than make-believe but they created the truth" (47). When time passes, people will not be adept to

separate the myth from the truth. Thus, the people who are in power are astute in engineering the minds of the people to believe the narratives that they construct. In the contemporary times, the governments and political parties rely on social media and news channels to create narratives in their favour. Hence, the sections that have money, media and political power overpower others by creating their own narratives. Earlier, a news was blown up or killed with the help of the media for political reasons. For example, during the Emergency period in India, many news was literally killed by the government. This is done by many governments at all ages. In the recent times, the governments create truth and defend them with the help of the brutal media power. The common people are unable to separate the truths from lies and become the victims of their own beliefs. Hence, the mighty resists or distorts or creates truth in their favour whereas, the real truth perishes due to lack of institutional support.

Throughout history, the countries involve in war with other countries for various reasons. Though the effects of war are adverse, the countries continue to involve in war, even in the present times. In *Victory City,* Pampa Kampana advises the two brothers to strengthen the army to rule the country peacefully. Hukka says, "An army can be a force for peace as well as war" (18). This reminds the act of King Ashoka who multiplied his army after the Kalinga war not to wage, but to ensure peace. However, the military force will not keep the rulers away from the war; rather, it provokes them to start a fresh war to display their military might. It is alleged that developed countries like America induce wars among various countries to sell their weapons and they even mediate between countries to stop the same war. For example, the role of America in the war between Ukraine and Russia, and the Gaza war between Israel and Palestine were notable. These wars were triggered, funded, supported and attempts were made by America to stop the same wars.

The soldiers are the vital part in any war. It is important to keep their spirit alive to extract their skills during the war. Most of the soldiers, though unwilling, are forced to participate in wars for the sake of the country. The rulers reward them financially to keep them in the hunt and prepare them psychologically to stay in the war. Rushdie records the situation of the soldiers in *Victory City* as follows: "It was necessary for them to feel immortal, or, at least, to persuade themselves that crippling injury, agonizing wounds, and death were things that happened to other people. It was important that each individual foot soldier and cavalryman was allowed to believe that they personally would emerge from combat unscathed" (46). Here, human sides of the soldiers are not considered by the

rulers, rather, they are used as war machines for the political mileage of the rulers. Besides, the soldiers are caught in the web of false narratives from which they can never relieve themselves. While portraying the adverse consequences of the war, Rushdie also highlights the impermanent nature of war victories. He writes, "Maybe this is what human history was: the brief illusion of happy victories set in a long continuum of bitter, disillusioning defeats" (142). It is true that men become the victims of their war aspirations and many of them, especially at the lower level, lose their precious lives in this process.

When politics and religion are functioning at different levels, there will not be any problem in the society. However, the interference of these two in each other's space results in chaos and it triggers unrest among the people. The people are also caught between the two when their political favour and religious faith do not align with the propaganda of the government. This has been a constant problem in modern India. The rise of religious extremism in the political arena is becoming the decider in the elections. The right-wing political parties appeal to the religious sentiments of the people to garner votes. The religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities are also very keen to utilize their identity for their political gain. In this novel, Vidyasagar, the guru of Bisnaga empire influences the rulers. When the rulers fail to pay attention to him, he incites the people through his preachings to go against the rulers. Hence, the rulers do not dare to disagree with the religious gurus and even allocate lots of funds to augment religious faith. In India, the government's efforts in constructing Ram Temple in Ayodhya, the invitation of the religious gurus while dedicating the new parliament to the country over the President of India are the examples of the intertwined nature of religion and politics in the country. All politicians, even the atheists, become more religious when the elections are round the corner. Behind all these moves, the thirst for power is hidden. Most of the contestants go to places of worships to woo the voters and in some religious communities, the authorities openly influence their followers to vote for a specific candidate or party which is against the law of the country. This is like bribing the voters with money during the elections. Here, instead of the financial needs of the voters, the religious sentiment of the individuals is targeted. Thus, the religious faith is used as a bribe to polarize the people and in this process, the true spirit of democracy is defeated.

In the recent days, mass gatherings of people for political rallies, celebration of the New Year, cultural festivals like Pongal, Holi are common and they accommodate people of all status and faiths. But, mass gatherings in the name of religion like Navaratri in Isha go beyond religion.

On these occasions, the people come together on a common faith to celebrate their religion. Besides faith, the sociological aspects of these events have deeper implications. While the religious faiths are reiterated, it advocates a kind of monolithic culture. In *Victory City,* the rulers keep the people busy in such religious aspects, so that they will not raise questions against the government. "The introduction of mass collective worship was a radical innovation which was beginning to be known as New Religion…True faith the worship of God was not a plural but a singular matter, an experience linking the individual worshipper and the god and nobody else, and these gigantic prayer meetings were really political rallies in disguise, which was a misuse of religion in the service of power" (76). Rushdie comments that institutions like religion and politics go beyond the control of the creators and the followers. In this novel, Pampa who created the city also becomes the victim of such inevitability. It is said, "…every creator must learn, even God himself. Once you had created your characters, you had to be bound by their choices. You are no longer free to remake them according to your own desires. They were what they were and they would do what they would do. This was 'free will'" (152). This illustrates that one who embraces a faith hardly comes out of it to lead a normal life.

The religious people are superior in disseminating their religion. They follow many strategies to reinforce and sustain their religious faith among the people. Some religious sectors have their own core committee to propagate their ideas and they take unacceptable measures to control the opponents also. In *Victory City*, in the later years, the government has religious gurus instead of advisers. Hence, the intersection of politics and religion becomes inevitable. The Political Council: the advisor to the government was replaced by the Divine Ascendance Senate in DAS. It 'demolishes' other religious faiths. "So in place of the old tolerances, in which members of all faiths participated fully in the life of both kingdoms, there was a separation, and a sad migration to and fro between the kingdoms of people who were no longer safe in their homes" (153-154). The dissenters were silenced by 'a squad of enforcers.' Hence, it is proved that religion is not a sacred mission, rather it is a secret mission to fulfil the personal ambitions. The people at the helm of religious institutions try to polarize the people in the name of religion for political gains.

It is believed that the religious intolerance is not prevailing in the modern times. Neverthless, the sad reality is that the sectarianism and murders take place in the name of religion, even in India, in spite of the fact that India is a secular country. Whenever, some writers and activists raise

their voice against such religious extremism, they are termed as anti-nationals. Rushdie points out this prevalent sectarianism in *Victory City:*

> The party line regarding members of other faiths – we are good, they are bad – had a certain infectious clarity. So did the idea that dissent was unpatriotic. Offered the choice between thinking for themselves and blindly following their leaders, many people would choose blindness over clear-sightedness, especially when the empire was prospering and there was food on the table and money in their pockets. Not everybody wanted to love their neighbour. Some people preferred hatred. There would be resistance. (164-165)

Further, in Bisnaga, the rulers plan to shrink the space for recreation to augment the religious faith of the people. They frame rules or Remonstrance to be followed by the people. The Fifth Remonstrance Denounce the arts: "Too much attention was being paid to beauty in architecture, poetry and music, and that such attention should immediately and forever be diverted from frivolities towards the worship of gods" (63). It is the replica of Plato's banishment of poetry from his Republic. Plato is against the bad poetry, whereas in Bisnaga the government is against all art forms.

One of the strategies employed by the rulers to change history is changing the names of the places. In 2022, some of the names of places and streets were renamed in Delhi as follows: Mughal Garden to Amrit Udyan, Aurangzeb Road to A. P. J. Abdul Kalam Road etc. Since it drew a lot of opposition and criticism from many quarters, the government withdrew its decision in some cases. Such change of names is nothing but an obvious attempt to distort history and intolerance towards the sentiments of others. In *Victory City* also, similar incidents take place. The ruler tries to rewrite history by changing names: "He wanted to change the names of all the streets, to get rid of the old names that, everyone knows and replace them with the long titles of various obscure saints, so now nobody is sure where anything is any more, and even long-time res dents of the city are obliged to scratch their heads when they need m find an address" (154). This kind of puritanism is not inclusive, rather it draws invisible divisive lines between the religious faiths.

While recording innumerable visible and invisible religious, social, and political issues, in *Victory City,* Rushdie gives solution to humans for peaceful coexistence. At the end of the novel Pampa attempts to restore equality and peace among the people by taking various efforts. She says,

"We must show the whole of Bisnaga that love has triumphed over hate…that irrational anger cannot have the last word and rationality must answer it, and, yes, that reconciliation follows remonstrance" (322). It is said, "…in the end the salvation of human being came from other human beings and not from *things…*" (334). The solution given by Pampa is practical and it is applicable across ages and countries and the humans need not wait for a God to solve their manmade problems. Pampa Kampana's last words in the book affirms, "Nothing endures, but nothing is meaningless either. We rise, we fall, we rise again, and again we fall. …Death is close now. In death do triumph and failure humbly meet. We learn far less from victory than from defeat" (337). Here, Rushdie sounds existential and believes that the solution is within the individuals. It is worth registering Rushdie's philosophy "…life is a ball that we hold in our hands. It is for us to decide what game to play with it" (73). Thus, religion can be used by the individuals for peace and harmony by the individuals, and at the same time, it can be used as a destructive weapon to divide the people. It is the responsibility of the individuals to be careful to identify such predators and stay away from them for a peaceful coexistence.

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NARRATING REFUGEE LIVES: DISOBEDIENCE, IDENTITY, AND POLYPHONY IN DINA NAYERI'S MEMOIR

Aswathy S. Kumar
Research Scholar (Reg. No. 25012001004),
Department of English, Sanatana Dharma College, Alappuzha, Kerala.

Abstract: Dina Nayeri is one of the renowned voices in refugee literature. Her works offer distinct and unique voices that fight against the dehumanization of the refugee figure. Her memoir *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You* (2019) is a powerful narrative of resistance that challenges the institutionalized representations of refugee identity. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of polyphony, this paper analyses how Nayeri constructs a narrative space where multiple refugee voices speak with autonomy and agency, and how they fight against the Western expectation of "being grateful" through their unfiltered lived stories.

Keywords: Refugee Narrative, Identity, Polyphony, and Agency.

Dina Nayeri is one of the leading voices in West Asian refugee studies. Nayeri's narrative documents the lived realities of refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers as they navigate through the rigid asylum system of the West. *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You* (2019), a notable memoir by Dina Nayeri, is a powerful resistance to the institutionalized, stereotypical portrayal of refugees.

Dina Nayeri was born in Isfahan, Iran, where she spent her childhood with her mother, father, and younger brother. But the family, except her father, was forced to flee, fearing persecution by the moral police of Iran since her mother had converted to Christianity. They spent two years in Dubai and Rome as asylum seekers, and eventually settled in Oklahoma, United States. The early experiences of displacement, and life in refugee camps shaped the thematic core of Nayeri's fiction and nonfiction works. Her works examine the psychological, political, and ethical aspects of refugee existence, often drawing on her cross-cultural experiences. Though she initially gained attention for her novels *A Teaspoon of Earth and Sea* (2013) and *Refuge* (2017), it is her hybrid memoir *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You* (2019) that positioned her as a leading figure in refugee life writing.

Dina Nayeri's memoir *The Ungrateful Refugee* opens with the phrase "We became refugees" (1), echoing Hannah Arendt's influential essay "We Refugees" (1943). Arendt's essay critically examined the paradox of the refugee figure—someone who, despite being stripped of political identity and legal protection, reveals the inherent fragility of the

modern nation-state (274). Despite the world experiencing significant changes since Arendt's time, including scientific breakthroughs, technological advancements, and altered geopolitical environments, the fundamental challenges concerning refugeehood remain largely unchanged. The predicament of refugees keeps calling into question the nation-state's moral and political legitimacy by highlighting its shortcomings in dealing with human vulnerability, statelessness, and displacement.

The memoir by Dina Nayeri reveals the hypocrisy of Western society in accepting refugees into "their" country. The system continuously tries to assert that refugees are secondary citizens and that they should always be grateful to have a life in "their" country; refugees must earn their welcome through exceptional behaviour, moral purity, or emotional restraint. Through this work, Nayeri explores how refugee identities are shaped not only by trauma and survival but also by the need to be believed, judged, and accepted by host societies.

The Ungrateful Refugee departs from a conventional memoir that often focuses on victimhood and humanitarian crisis; it asserts the agency and subjectivity of refugees by giving voice to them. Blending her lived experience with the testimonies of others, Nayeri creates a polyphonic dialogue that functions as a counter-telling that critically interrogates and resists dominant Western narratives of displacement and asylum. More than being a refugee story, the memoir delves deep into the struggles of a woman navigating multiple, intersecting identities. Raised in a conservative Muslim family, Nayeri had to learn and unlearn several social norms, negotiating her place between conflicting worlds.

> "Maman and I threw away our headscarves like so much dirty tissue paper. I wore my hair in ponytails or loose, even in the streets, and she cycled through a tiny wardrobe of Western staples. After three years sweating and itching under the Islamic school uniforms and the extra-tight academic hijab, the Emirati heat was nothing—I had never felt so free" (Nayeri 27).

The narrative begins with the reminiscence of her childhood in Iran, where she enjoyed a rather prosperous livelihood. She then shifts the story to the war zone of Iran in 1980, their escape from Iran, and life as illegal immigrants in Dubai. After a brief stay in Dubai, they spent nearly two years in a refugee camp in Italy, where conditions were harsh and uncertain. Eventually, the family was granted asylum in the United States. Even if life in Dubai was uncertain, Nayeri opens up about the newfound freedom she experienced there. For a girl who was brought up in a strict Muslim

country, Dubai offered a liberating experience. Her family was later granted asylum in the United States. While this move offered legal safety, Nayeri reflects on the social and psychological exile that followed. Refugees have little or no control over how resettlement works. The host society welcomes them with well-preserved prejudices and stereotypes. Here, refugees have to be involved in the complex process of adaptation to the host country's culture while navigating their original cultural identities.

The theory of intersectionality is very pivotal in exploring refugee experiences since it is constructed not only by their refugee position but also by their gender, ethnicity, race, nativity, and class identities. Her memoir traces the intricate process of identity formation in exile, and selfhood is constantly redefined within the tensions of East and West, tradition and autonomy, belief and unbelief. In the initial days of her life, Nayeri tries to blend with American ways and tries even harder to distance herself from Iran. But later, with maturity, she realizes "refugeetude" (Nguyen) is not a cloak that can be removed but a complex identity that should be addressed with autonomy.

> "To understand, in the concept of refugeetude, that refugeeness is not a cloak that can easily be shed with the coming of refuge but might instead be a catalyst for thinking, feeling, and doing with others—for imagining justice—is politically crucial to the present moment of intensified production and criminalization of refugees. Refugeetude, then, turns away from readily available discourses of victimhood and commonplace knowledge of refugees to highlight how refugee subjects gain awareness, create meaning, and imagine futures" (Nguyen 111).

Refugees who come to a new society will be in an interstitial state of in-betweenness, where their complex identity positions are reimagined or restructured. Western media often portrays refugees through binary tropes—either as helpless victims deserving pity or as potential threats. Both representations serve to reinforce this "othering," which not only dehumanizes refugees but also complicates their cultural integration into host societies. Refugees' settling, followed by social and cultural integration, is a complex process. Their assimilation into the host society has been constantly regulated by multiple systems of social stratification. Also, their "self" is continuously impacted by the various identity positions they hold, like gender, ethnicity, race, nativity, and class identities. As Nayeri points out, Western societies reduce refugees to either grateful beneficiaries or burdens, denying them the complexity, dignity, and agency

of full human subjectivity. She calls out to refugees to become "ungrateful"—to be brave enough to reject the imposed narratives of gratitude and silence, and instead demand dignity, justice, and the right to be heard on their terms. Nayeri sees being ungrateful as a form of resistance against the system that conditions belongingness on submissiveness and narrative conformity.

Nayeri reclaims narrative agency and amplifies a multitude of voices by fusing her own experience with those of asylum seekers in European shelters and camps. Kambiz, an asylum seeker from Iran, endures a prolonged mental and emotional toll, which is cruel enough to distort his mental stability. His story unravels the weight of repeated rejections, bureaucratic delays, and isolation that refugees have to face. Kambiz's story underscores the failure of host societies to recognize the long-term psychological effects of liminality. Unlike the stereotypical "grateful refugee," Kambiz cannot perform the expected script of optimism, thankfulness, or resilience. His deteriorating condition reveals the violence of forced waiting, where one's future is dependent on opaque and arbitrary systems of verification. Olivier is a Christian convert from West Africa. He is interrogated about the authenticity of his belief. The story of Olivier has been connected with the predicament of Nayeri herself. Nayeri and her family were forced to flee the country because of her mother's beliefs. Olivier's case exemplifies the absurdity of the asylum process. He was helpless besides the authority's demands to prove the authenticity of his inner belief. The fundamental problem is the treatment of refugees as dehumanized masses without considering the in-depth trauma they have gone through.

Yuliya, another voice appearing in the narration, faces rejection due to inconsistencies in her testimony, minor lapses, and emotional dissonance that render her "untrustworthy" in the eyes of asylum officers. In both situations, the asylum procedure is shown to be not a way to help people, but a place where refugees have to write and practice their identities to suit the demands of the system.

The unheard stories of the refugees are given voice in the narrative along with the personal journey of Dina Nayeri. The dialogue Nayeri constructs in the narrative not only documents the trauma of refugees but gives them agency to mark their subjectivities. It resonates with the idea of polyphony since it features multiple perspectives. The narrative is shaped by fragmentation, personal stories, and transnational experience. According to Chris Campanioni, a notable name in migratory studies, migratory experience resists closure and demands polyphony due to its inherent

discontinuities. These discontinuities refer to the narrative incoherence and fragmented memories of refugees. Here, the idea of polyphony does not strictly adhere to the definition of Bakhtin but rather denotes the coexistence of multiple fragmented subjectivities, ultimately giving a diverse account of history. Polyphony, in its original sense, denotes the coexistence of multiple perspectives, often conflicting, each with its own autonomous voice, worldview, and truth value, none of which is subordinated to a singular, authoritative narrative (Bakhtin 6). In the context of refugee life writings, polyphony enables the representation of diverse, but not always conflicting, experiences to exist in a single space and form a meaningful dialogue, allowing displaced individuals to assert narrative agency and resist homogenizing frameworks imposed by host societies, media, or institutional discourse.

Refugee narratives remind us of the intrinsic inconsistencies of the nation-state system, revealing its failure to protect fundamental human rights. The prolonged displacement of the Palestinian people illustrates this systemic failure, emphasizing how stateless groups are ostracized and denied recognition within the global order that claims to preserve justice and sovereignty. Telling stories of life and owning the agency to narrate lived experiences as individuals in positions of precarity are ways of shaping identity, resisting prejudices, and creating spaces of meaningful dialogue, which are core to challenging the system.

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"I YEARN FOR SERENITY FOUND IN DEATH!": DEATH CONSCIOUSNESS INSELECTED POEMS OF EMILY DICKINSON AND JIBANANANDA DAS

Anish Saha
PG Student, Department of English,
Ramakrishna Mission Residential College (Autonomous),
Narendrapur, West Bengal.

Abstract: The paper undertakes a comparative analysis of the attitudes of Emily Dickinson and Jibanananda Das, towards death in their select poems—Dickinson's "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" and "Death is the Supple Suitor," and Das's *"Aat Bochhor Aager Ekdin."* Both poets led reclusive lives, found beauty in nature's bleak aspects, and presented death as courteous and alluring, rather than terrifying or sorrowful. By combining textual analysis with biographical criticism, this study investigates how death encapsulates love, longing, and transcendence in their poems, and how their perspectives align and diverge, thereby contributing to broader discussions on death in literature.

Keywords: Death, Love, Desire, Saturation, and Serenity.

Introduction

According to renowned sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman, death is "the absolute other of being", that defies imagination, reason, and all meaning-making systems, thereby "hovering beyond the reach of communication" or even perception (2). By offering imaginative representations and philosophical reflections, literature and other art forms attempt to compensate for this inherent elusiveness, which has made it a major concern for humanity since the dawn of consciousness. Death has manifested in different forms to different poets—while some, influenced by scriptural philosophy, see it as liberation, others, shaped by the devastating impact of war or political turmoil, perceive it as a harsh reality. It is often recognized as the ultimate end, whether marked by terror or sorrow. Some literary and philosophical traditions depict it as an essential counterpart to love—both demanding surrender and culminating in transcendence.

In Abhishek Chaubey's black comedy *Dedh Ishqiya* (2014), the character Khalujaan, (played by Naseeruddin Shah) recounts the seven *maqām* (stages) of *ishq* (love): *dilkashi* (attraction), *uns* (infatuation), *mohabbat* (affection), *aqidat* (trust), *ibadat* (worship), *junoon* (obsession), and *maut* (death). This philosophy is often attributed to Sufi poets, who believe that one must "die before [they] die" because "nothing is possible in love without death" (Vaughan-Lee). This complex interplay between Eros and Thanatos, as theorized by Sigmund Freud in his essay "Beyond the

Pleasure Principle" (1920), resonates in the poems of Emily Dickinson and Jibanananda Das.

Das as a Literary Successor to Dickinson

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson (1830–1886) was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, into a Puritan household, while Jibanananda Das (1899–1954) came from a Brahmo family in Barishal, then part of British India (now in Bangladesh). Despite their cultural, linguistic, and temporal differences, Dickinson and Das share some striking similarities in both their lifestyle and poetic vision. Dickinson's poetry was "incomparable because her originality [set] her apart from all others". Similarly, Jibanananda, one of the key figures in Bengali Modernism in 1930s Bengal, was "the first person who avoided imitating the diction and thought of Rabindranath" and forged an independent poetic identity (Bagchi 170).

However, this distinctiveness leaves them isolated in the contemporary literary world, while their naturally introspective and reserved disposition further deepens this solitude. Aiken comments, "Miss Dickinson became a hermit by deliberate and conscious choice" (10), and Higginson calls her a "recluse by temperament and habit" (iii). Similarly, Buddhadeva Bose describes Das as "our most alone of poets" (Seely 9). In the introduction of his Shreshtha Kabita, Das himself admitted that some people had termed him and his poetry as lonely or the loneliest, and that it was partially true. Although both poets composed nearly 1,800 poems, due to their introverted nature, Das published only 269 poems (Sengupta and Dutta 16), while only ten of Dickinson's poems were anonymously printed in newspapers during her lifetime (Leiter 369).

Most of their works were discovered and published posthumously, establishing their enduring legacy in the history of literature. Dickinson often used capital letters for emphasis, while Das employed repetition to heighten emotional effect. Both poets extensively used the dash to suggest silence, pause, and a break in thought (Mukhopadhyay 28–29). Apart from the American Civil War (1861–65), Emily's literary vision was shaped by a series of personal tragedies, including the deaths of her two "tutors," Leonard Humphrey (1850) and Benjamin Newton (1853); her parents, Edward Dickinson (1874) and Emily Norcross (1882); and her young nephew Gilbert (1883).

Jibanananda, on the other hand, experienced and was influenced by the world wars and the Bengal famine of 1943. Besides, his exposure to English education and global consciousness, as noted by Professor Narayan Gangopadhyay, not only deepened his awareness of life's turbulence and existential despair but also opened new avenues for the evolution and

enrichment of Bengali poetry (Bagchi 170). Although no definitive evidence exists, scholars such as Tarun Mukhopadhyay and Fakrul Alam assume that Das, being a student and professor of English literature, was most likely familiar with Dickinson's poetry and may have been influenced by her works. This hypothesis is supported by notable thematic similarities in their writing, especially in their unique portrayals of death.

Death as a Lived Reality: Perspectives of Dickinson and Das

Death is what Dr. Anuradha Verma calls a "flood subject" in Emily Dickinson's poetry (92). Henry Wells estimates that at least "a quarter of all her works deals chiefly with this theme" (94). However, unlike some scholars who opine that she was obsessed with death (Benfey 96), and that ultimately "the obsession became morbid" (Aiken 15), Wells presents a different perspective, contending that her poetry contains "remarkably little morbidity." He believes that, for her, death served as "the supreme touchstone for life" (93)—a view shared by other researchers, who suggest that Dickinson's reflections on death were actually an attempt to understand life "from the vantage of the grave" (Wilbur 136) or "a better way to access the world" (Schnabel 32).

From this viewpoint, Dickinson should not be regarded as preoccupied with death, but rather with life, as seen through the lens of mortality. Her deep attachment to life is evident in her exclamation to Higginson during his first visit to her in 1870: "I find ecstasy in living—the mere sense of living is joy enough" (Letters 24). It is also reflected in some of her letters, where she remarks, "It is hard for me to give up the world" (72), and admits that she cannot envision her own death "with the farthest stretch of [her] imagination" (46). Moreover, she dramatically encapsulates Kierkegaard's idea that "Death in earnest gives life force as nothing else does; it makes one alert as nothing else does" (166) in her poetry with the line, "A Death blow is a Life blow to Some" (397), suggesting that death, for some, is not an end but a deeper revelation of life.

Jibanananda's contemplation of death embodies, on the one hand, an intense personal and spiritual realization, and on the other, a philosophical introspection that engages with the self, time, eternity, and history. Professor Janmajit Roy categorizes the representation of death in his poetry into two distinct aspects: first, a personal yearning for death and reflections on its impending arrival, and second, a deeper meditation on death within the context of time, history, and the surrounding world, along with an exploration of its metaphysical mysteries (106). Whereas scholars like Fakrul Alam opine that Das had an inclination towards "morbid states of mind" (117), Roy argues that death, for him, signified silence, serenity,

and sleep (108), embodying an optimistic sense of life and a yearning for eternal union with nature (110). Roy further states that while expressing a desire for death, Das actually articulated his intense thirst for life, and labeling him as a pessimist, fatalist, or advocate of death is, therefore, as erroneous as calling Buddhism a religion of pessimism or Gautama Buddha a pessimist (109–10).

Death in Verse: A Close Reading of Selected Works

Dickinson's poem "Because I could not stop for Death" (712) personifies death as a gentleman, who, being polite and unhurried, "kindly stopped" for the speaker, taking her in his carriage on a journey "toward Eternity" (350). Interestingly, in the carriage, the speaker is accompanied by both death and immortality. Freud's Eros, which drives one toward union and continuity, evidently manifests in the poem's depiction of death, making love, as Tate observes, "a symbol interchangeable with death" (22).

The clothes of the speaker, gossamer gown, and tippet tulle, are bridal rather than burial garments, further supporting this interpretation. The carriage passes through school, fields, and setting sun and finally stops before a "swelling of the ground," which possibly indicates the speaker's grave. This transition from vitality to stillness mirrors various stages of life, from childhood to middle age to death.

In this sense, death is not merely an inevitable end to life, but also an intrinsic part of it. Once accompanied by immortality, and now dwelling in the grand scheme of eternity, the speaker feels that although centuries have passed since this journey took place, it seems shorter than a day. Another poem by Dickinson, "Death is the supple Suitor" (1445), presents death as a persistent lover who, through both "dim" and "brave" approaches, eventually wins over its subject (614).

The different methods taken by death to court its subject imply that death does not arrive abruptly but insinuates itself gradually, whereas the phrase "wins at last" reinforces its inevitability. "Troth" may refer to a marriage-like commitment to the afterlife, again invoking Freudian Eros. The concluding lines, "as responsive / as porcelain," underscore the idea that death's touch renders one incapable of responding further. However, they may also suggest that death itself saturates all feeling, leaving no further need or desire for any response.

Das's poem "*Aat Bochhor Aager Ekdin*" ("One Day Eight Years Ago") portrays a man who commits suicide without any apparent reason, but simply driven by a "rush of affection for death" (36). At the very beginning of the poem, thus, the mingling of Eros and Thanatos is evident.

The man's decision to end his life is complicated by his

> seemingly content existence—he had "no failures in love," "no yawning gaps" in "life in matrimony," and a "life unshaken ever by the fevers of the have-not." Das subtly contrasts the man's death drive with the world's primordial instinct to live: "the owl . . . longs to live; / The aged frog begs for two moments / Warming to the hope of another dawn." (36)

Although some scholars suggest that Das has criticized and condemned the man's decision in this poem (Roy 112), Dr. Asoke Kumar Misra draws a different parallel by comparing his death to that of Van Gogh, thereby refusing to call it a mere suicide. According to him, unlike the natural aspects depicted in the poem, the man has already attained everything that conventional success signifies, and has reached a point of realization where life only empties him from within. Thus, when he was expected to get intoxicated with youthful passion in the embrace of his beloved, he instead chooses to experience the ultimate reality of life—its cessation—to put an end to it all (144).

This interpretation aligns with Tate's observation about Dickinson: "She mastered life by rejecting it" (10). Ultimately, the death-mystery of the man remains unsolved, much like that of the poet himself. Das was hit by a tram on 14, October 1954, on *Rashbehari* Avenue, and succumbed to his injuries eight days later. Some eyewitnesses stated that the tram had blown its whistle repeatedly, but he did not move. Whether it was due to his absentmindedness or a deliberate, pre-planned act remains a mystery (Seely 9). Moreover, the eerie recurrence of the number eight, linking his poetry to his final days, deepens the enigma of his death. Whereas Dickinson's poems do not explicitly direct readers on what to think, but instead encourage them to visualize the situation (Tate 22), Das's speaker employs multiple rhetorical questions, prompting readers to contemplate the reason behind the protagonist's suicide.

While Dickinson's poems are filled with gentle imagery like school, fields of grain, setting sun, and porcelain, Das's poem deals with darker, more unsettling elements like morgue, spittle, blood, and excreta. Moreover, his poem is far more mysterious, exemplified by the surreal imagery of "A silence, creeping up to his window, / Like a camel's neck" (36).

However, for both, death emerges as the saturation point of life—an inevitable moment when existence has been experienced to its fullest, leaving no further desire to continue. In the poem "I have seen the face of Bengal" ("*Banglar Mukh Ami Dekhiyachi*," my trans.), Das's speaker

conveys this sentiment through the assertion that he has already seen Bengal and, therefore, no longer wishes to see the rest of the world.

Similarly, Dickinson, in "I cannot live with You," shares a comparable notion:

> Because You saturated Sight –
> And I had no more Eyes
> For sordid excellence
> As Paradise (317–18)

For both poets, the ultimate fulfillment of life is found in an intimate union with the eternal, sublime nature. Once this sense of oneness is realized, all human desires seem to dissolve. It is in this moment of transcendence that Das reflects, "Now death is a gift, these grasses will cling to my body" ("*Ekhon moron bhalo, sharire lagiya robe ei sob ghas*," my trans.; Roy 110), and Dickinson writes, "when / They died, Vitality begun." (485).

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SUBALTERN PERSPECTIVE THROUGH THE SELECT WORKS OF INDIAN REGIONAL CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS

Aswathy. C.M.
Assistant Professor of English,
Yuvakshetra Institute of Management, Palakkad, Kerala.

Abstract: The paper focuses on three contemporary Indian regional works: Sheela Tomy's *Valli*, Abraham Verghese's *The Covenant of Water*, and Shubhangi Swarup's *Latitudes of Longing*. It explores these works from the perspective of Ecological Humanities while focusing on the inclusiveness and diversity of language, literature, and culture. These texts shed light on Kerala's tribal community, Christian community, Andaman's ecosystem, coastal regions, and female voices held together with nature, memory, and resistance. It aims to investigate how the indigenous features in the narrative aspire to indulge and impart ecological knowledge, which is oral, spiritual, and also distinct from dominant narratives, deviating from Western ecocriticism.
Keywords: Ecological Humanities, Subaltern, Regional Literature, Environment, and Culture.

The urgency of the ecological crisis has given rise to new ways of understanding nature, culture, and literature. Ecological Humanities has emerged as a vital interdisciplinary space for discourse addressing environmental degradation through cultural, literary, and ethical frameworks. It seeks to reframe ecological narratives by highlighting interconnectedness, plurality, and lived experiences. Dominant narratives in ecocritical discourses often reflect Western perspectives, sidelining the lived experiences and indigenous perceptions that are closest to the environment and are mainly affected by its changes, especially marginalised communities in the Global South.

This paper aims to explore three contemporary Indian regional literary texts, Sheela Tomy's *Valli*, Abraham Verghese's *The Covenant of Water*, and Shubhangi Swarup's *Latitudes of Longing*, as ecological testimonies. These texts articulate deep-rooted ecological sensibilities, emerging from indigenous, coastal, tribal, and island geographies. The paper makes an attempt to foreground the narrative's diversity, memory, language, and land—the major elements in the ongoing struggle for ecological justice and cultural survival.

These narratives offer an alternative epistemology that bridges human and non-human worlds, memory and resistance, past and future. While these narratives are situated regionally, they transcend geographical boundaries to create a plural, inclusive ecological imaginary. These

narratives present themselves as a challenge to Western-centric ecocriticism by drawing experiences of oral traditions, spiritual relationships with land, and the embodied experiences of historically marginalised communities.

Theoretical Framework

The research draws on a fusion of Ecological Humanities, Subaltern Studies, Ecofeminism, and indigenous knowledge systems. The idea of "slow violence" by Nixon highlights the environmental harm that disproportionately affects the poor and marginalised over time. Postcolonial ecocriticism (Tiffin, Huggan) challenges Eurocentric models of nature, advocating for context-specific ecological ethics. "The denial of dependency and interdependence is a core feature of hegemonic Western thought" (Plumwood 4).

Literature Review

While Indian ecocriticism has rooted itself and is growing steadily, it often remains centered on canonical texts or philosophical treatments of nature. Regional and vernacular literatures offer a different perspective, which is sensory, situated, and grounded in lived experiences and oral traditions. Previously acknowledged scholarships on environmental consciousness in Indian English fiction have kept a limited purview over subaltern and marginalised communities' narratives, which articulate ecological relationships. Indian regional narratives employ eco-cultural pluralism. The epistemologies of Kerala's highlands, the coastal resilience of fishing communities, the unique island biosphere of the Andamans, and the syncretic religious traditions in The Covenant of Water reflect this multiplicity.

***Valli*: Ecological Memory and Tribal Resistance**

Valli is not just the name of the protagonist but the metaphor for the wild, resilient feminine principle connected to land and memory (Valli in Malayalam language primarily means "creepers" or "vine"). Set in the Wayanad region of Kerala, the epistolary novel reconstructs the history and ecology of the land through the lens of indigenous Kurichiya and Paniya communities. The rich narrative is filled with references to forest deities, sacred groves, oral stories, and traditional ecological knowledge that resist state–sanctioned deforestation, mining, and displacement.

An indigenous ecological ethic where land is not a commodity but a living entity intertwined with cultural identity. "We don't own the land. The land owns us" (78). The forest is a character, alive with ancestral spirits, community beliefs, and histories, rich in Malayalam idioms and metaphors, resisting linguistic homogenisation. Language acts as a medium carrying ecological memory. By writing in Malayalam and embedding local dialects

of tribal communities, Tomy ensures that their language and experiences are not diluted or translated into dominant literary forms. The ecological imagination of Valli is inseparable from its linguistic and cultural rootedness.

Depiction of resistance in Valli, whether it be through the *satyagrahas* or the oral testimonies, complicates the idea of development. The work aligns with ecofeminists like Vandana Shiva: "Women in India have been custodians of biodiversity" (Shiva 42). The women in *Valli* serve as guardians and memory of the land, passing down songs and rituals that hold ecological significance. The voices of Adivasi communities resist deforestation, displacement, and violence. Nature is woven into people's lives, their identity, and cultural memory. The forest becomes a metaphor for both life and struggle. Juxtaposing Adivasi rituals with capitalist extraction and political agendas foregrounds ecological ethos.

Shubhangi Swarup's *Latitudes of Longing*: Island Ecologies and Earthly Intimacies

The expansive work traverses through the Andaman Islands, the Nepalese mountains, Burma's forests, and Central Asia. This cartographic fluidity reflects the work's ecological philosophy: Earth is composed of interconnected, shifting relationships rather than fixed national or human-centered boundaries. The work reflects an intimacy among geological, emotional, and spiritual spaces. The sections in the work emphasise how landscapes contain histories of violence, healing, and resistance. The Andamans, a site of colonial incarceration, also became a space of indigenous resilience and ecological knowledge. The work echoes the concerns of Dipesh Chakrabarty, who argues in The Climate of History in a Planetary Age that climate change forces one to think beyond national histories and towards a planetary cohabitation.

The island's ecosystem, with its coral reefs, monsoon winds, and indigenous tribes, creates a microcosm of the living world that shapes the characters' identities and their trajectories. "The trees sang their songs in root languages, and Chanda listened with every part of her body" (Swarup 15). Chanda shares an emotional bond with trees and spirits, grounded in sensory communion with the land. This synesthetic depiction of ecological consciousness challenges the modern tendency to separate mind from body and human from non-human.

The female and queer voices in the work are central to the aesthetic and philosophical understanding of the narrative and are not marginalised. Chanda's intuitive, embodied knowledge, as well as the matrifocal spiritual traditions, are sharp contrasts to the extractive, militaristic, and colonial

logics that seek to control nature. This gendered ecological sensibility resonates with feminist ecological thinkers like Val Plumwood and Sara Ahmed, who assert that emotions and embodiments are crucial to resisting instrumental views of nature. Through magical realism, the novel privileges indigenous knowledge, animistic cosmologies, and multispecies cohabitation, offering an expansive, inclusive ecological imagination.

Abraham Verghese's *The Covenant of Water*: Water, Body and Belief

This multigenerational narrative is set primarily in Kerala, tracing the evolution of a Christian family over several decades, all while bound by a mysterious condition that causes members to drown in water. This recurring motif becomes a metaphor for the profound relationship among the body, memory, and water—a crucial element in Kerala's ecology and culture. The narrative weaves the geography of the land, its monsoons, rivers, and coastal topography into the very texture of the story. The condition becomes a narrative device that connects personal tragedy and collective ecological history. The central figure, Big Ammachi, reflects, "Water remembers. It carries everything—grief, history, and redemption" (Verghese 314). The personification of water echoes indigenous and spiritual epistemologies that recognise non-human entities as sentient participants in history.

The narrative delves into how the medical profession's colonial legacy and modern science interact. The characters' interaction with medicine, missionary practices, and local healing traditions highlights the tension between Western rationalism and spiritual ecological traditions. They are not depicted as binaries but as interwoven forces offering partial truths. This aligns with Ecological Humanities' emphasis on plural epistemologies and relational knowledge. The narrative situates the Christian community not as an isolated or Westernised one but as deeply embedded in local ecological and linguistic traditions.

The landscape is portrayed as a covenant demanding respect, memory, and responsibility. The novel foregrounds how belief systems can foster an ecological ethic grounded in humility and care. Subaltern perspectives emerge through stories of illness, resilience, and adaptation, capturing the ecological vulnerabilities of those excluded from the dominant healthcare and land ownership systems.

Inclusion and Imagination

The three texts together offer a vast spectrum of ecological voices that challenge the homogenised idea of nature. Language, memory, and identity are entangled with land and ecology. By privileging oral traditions, folk knowledge, and regional epistemologies, the

select works advocate inclusive and pluralistic environmental ethics. The subaltern ecological imagination is grounded in historical trauma, resistance, and everyday survival. Linguistic ecology and resistance in the narratives become a landscape, bearing the emotional, political, and cultural residues of the region it emerges from.

In *Valli*, Tomy foregrounds language as inseparable from the forest. The use of tribal expressions, regional songs, and oral storytelling recreates what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o calls "the ecology of language," where native tongues are reservoirs of ecological knowledge and collective memory. When Valli sings a lullaby to the trees, she is passing down her ancestral knowledge that defies the silencing of the colonising state narrative and extractive capitalism.

In *Latitudes of Longing*, the characters are not just speaking or talking; they also listen to the land, translating languages of coral, roots, and monsoon clouds. The work tends to abandon linear syntax for fragmentation and mimics the unpredictable rhythms of ecological cycles, creating a poetics of resistance that challenges the Cartesian rationality of modern ecological governance. The interwoven scientific terminologies, folk myths, and poetic interventions create a linguistic terrain.

Abraham Verghese, while writing in English, uses cadences of Malayalam thought in the narrative. The emphasis on sensory landscapes—water as smell, memory, and sound, recreates the multilayered consciousness of Kerala's cultural memory. His use of the English language becomes an act of translation not just across tongues but across ways of knowing. The multilingual consciousness in the novel points to an ecology of epistemologies, where regional wisdom intersects with Western biomedicine and missionary histories without being erased by them.

Colonisation was not only territorial but also epistemic, seeking to impose not only an economic system but also ecological frameworks and linguistic hierarchies. As Spivak puts forth, "What must the elite do to learn to speak to the subaltern?"(284). The narratives, through their linguistic textures, allow the subaltern not only to speak but to inscribe, archive, and imagine alternative futures.

Indian regional literature, especially through the subaltern lens, holds immense potential to reshape our ecological imagination. By centering diversity in language, culture, and epistemology, this research highlights how inclusive literary practices contribute to environmental justice, climate ethics, and cultural survival. This linguistic ecology emphasises that how stories are told is as crucial as what stories are told. Language shapes ecological relationships, retains memory, and reclaims

agency. These narratives preserve the worlds embedded in languages. These narratives challenge dominant Western ecocritical paradigms by foregrounding memory, orality, and intimacy with land and water.By embedding ecological knowledge in regional languages, spiritual traditions, and gendered experiences, these texts enrich the field of Ecological Humanities. They call for a pluralistic but inclusive understanding of environment and culture—one that values multiplicity, resists homogenisation, and honours the transformative potential of storytelling. As the ecological crisis deepens, these narratives offer trails of hope, resilience, and renewal grounded in local wisdom and global responsibility.

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ECOLOGICAL HUMANITIES IN INDIAN REGIONAL LITERATURE: EXPLORING INDIGENOUS ECO-CULTURE KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES THROUGH LITERARY TEXT

Tsultim Zangmo
Research Scholar, (Reg. No. 9DENGPLEL0009),
Department of English, Delhi University, Delhi.

Abstract: Ladakh is known for its breathtaking natural landscape, and the reason for its beautiful physical world is rooted in local indigenous ecological knowledge and relations. Unfortunately, over the past few decades, this friendly eco-relation between humans and the non-human world has been destroyed, leaving an everlasting effect on its ecosystem. Native ecological knowledge is vanishing with the advent of modernity, globalization, and advanced technology. Furthermore, the shift in geopolitics in the mid-twentieth century reinforced modern culture. The literature of the time became instrumental in representing the transforming eco-culture paradigm of the region. Therefore, revisiting and exploring the indigenous eco-culture practices and knowledge through the literary text of Ladakh plays a significant role in reintroducing nature-oriented practice and culture. Indigenous ecological knowledge helps to generate environmentally attuned culture and practices.

Keywords: Eco-Criticism, Indigenous Eco-Culture, Knowledge, and Literature.

Ecocriticism is a recently developing trend in literary studies. It deals with the human and non-human world and the representations of their increasingly imbalanced relations. With the over-human intervention in nature's space, it has become more urgent and vocal to save Mother Earth. Writers all over the world are reflecting nature's voice in texts. Indigenous writers are among them, representing ecological grief and mourning. Ladakh's writers have been conscious about its environmentally attuned culture around the 1990s. This eco-fragile and eco-dependent culture has a pivotal role in mapping Ladakh's balanced ecosystem. It has been accumulated and practiced historically. The indigenous population has in-depth knowledge of its ecosystem, and their way of living has been nature-oriented. However, the introduction of modernity in the mid-20th century disrupted its balanced ecosystem. Along with modernity, the shift in geo-demography constructed a new political, social, economic, and cultural life. The drastic transformation led local and Western writers to come together to deal with local ecological conflicts. Chief among them were Tashi Rabgais and Helena Norberg. Recently, both of them passed away, but their contribution to the restoration of regional ecology is remarkable in terms of representing as well as promoting local traditional eco-cultural practices.

Along with them, Thupstan Paldan, Ghanni Sheikh, Janet Razvi, Nawang Tsering Shakspo, and Padma Angmo portray the mountains' non-human life and its significance for the smooth functioning of an ecosystem.

The beginning of English writing in Ladakh was found in the mid-18th century. Travelogue was the first genre that depicted the physical and natural landscape of the region. Later, it expanded to other forms of writing such as drama, lyric, song, translation, prose, and oral literature. The description of nature holds a pivotal role in these genres. The contrasting image of Ladakh's topography is narrated in pre- and post-colonial literature in English. William Mooncraft's travelogue entitled *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and Punjab, in Ladakh and Kashmir, in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz, and Bokhara*, writes about Ladakh's cultural and natural landscape as organic. He exhibits local ecological knowledge and practices, showing how locals' everyday activities are intertwined with nature, from eating to wearing, and constructing everything based on nature. The description of how households in villages and towns administrate helps to understand their daily activities' interconnection with land, soil, water, snow, glaciers, mountains, and animals.

For example, until the late 20th century, the main occupation was farming. Every member of the family, including children and elders, was engaged in farming. Tasks were assigned according to physical capacity. Since everyone was occupied on the farm, it was the space where practical engagement between human and non-human entities occurred. The younger generation learned how natural elements are significant to human life and to the ecosystem at large. They also learned the use of the land and soil for sowing seeds, water for irrigation and drinking, and animals for ploughing and manuring the crops. Besides this, seasonal engagement and step-by-step procedures to cultivate the farm constructed ecological consciousness.

For example, the byunglot is the transportation of organic manure to the field at the beginning of farming, a system where every household's donkey transports manure to the land. The manure is collected from each household to one of the main lands at the end of the winter season, and later byunglot is performed to transport the collected manure to other cultivated land. At the end of the winter season, every household, with the help of other villagers, digs and carries out the animal dung from their animals' living room to one of the respective main lands, which is later distributed to the rest of the cropland during the byunglot. The system of byunglot showcases the interdependent culture between humans and non-humans. It also reflects the importance of animals for organic manure and transportation.

Another main task after byunglot is ploughing, where tso, a hybrid, is specifically used for ploughing. Before ploughing, a ritual named *Saka* is performed. It is celebrated to receive blessings for the farmland and to feast tso, which is used for ploughing. In this feast-cum-ritual, every villager brings their tso to one of the main lands and serves it with a special meal. According to Tsering Angchok, a farmer from Khalsar Nubra, the purpose of this feast is to make villagers aware of tso's uses in the near future. It is also celebrated to inform villagers about the beginning of the agrarian season. After Saka, the village can plough their land on any day. On the day of ploughing, every member of the family, along with two tso, comes to the field and starts ploughing with the help of a man. While ploughing, the ploughman is required to sing a song. This song is sung to the tso to make them relax and strengthen their physical capacity. The lyrics of the song reflect how precious the tso is and its significance.

Another ceremony called *Dartsas* is celebrated after accomplishing every major agrarian task. This ceremony is celebrated to purify all evil and danger; the archery competition among the men is the main performance. The females watch and cheer them. *Bumstor* is another religious ceremony performed to cleanse impurity during the summer season. All villagers, along with some monks, participate and give a round to the whole cultivated land by carrying religious texts and god's images. The round covers the entire cropland, and on every main land of the villager, the priest prays mantras with the drum and bell. This reflects the importance of having healthy land, water, and air.

The harvest season comes in September. Barley, wheat, and peas are the main crops. Flour from these three is produced with the help of *runtak*, a local flour grinder powered by water. People grind flour for bread, *zan, kholak*, and *thukpa* making. As winter approaches, the temperature goes to below zero Celsius, and wood and animal dung are collected for fuel. Locals tame animals like donkey, horse, yak, tso, cow, and sheep, which in return provide fuel, meal, and wool for clothing. Each of these animals has a specific role in local life. Donkey, horse, yak, and tso are used for transportation. Cow, sheep, goat, yak, and tso provide milk and wool for weaving clothes. These interdependent cultures between humans and animals keep the environment's elements healthy and promote sustainable culture. The rearing of animals contributes to the sustainable culture. Besides this, the entire region's occupation is farming, except a few who work as merchants, *Onpo* (astrologer), and *Amchi* (Ayurvedic doctor). Farmers depend on soil, land, water, snow, wood, plants, crops, mountains, and animals. This interaction builds a space for understanding the

significance of the earth's other components. It is the space where locals learn the necessity of every component of the earth for survival.

Furthermore, how the community works in a village or town aligns with the smooth functioning of its ecosystem. Helena Norberg's *Ancient Future: Learning from Ladakh* ,mentions the absence of a labor system in Ladakh. Instead, families of a community work together whenever necessary. For example, if a handful of people is required to work on cultivated land, and a member of one family comes to help another family in the field, that member goes back to help them on another day. Thereby, the community serves one another whenever help is necessary in the field.

Other than this, the group of families in a village and town is called Phuspon, which contributes to every function like death, birth, marriage, Losar, and other celebrations. At least each member of the family is required to work during these ceremonies. This culture helps both wealthy and poor families perform the needed ceremonies without worrying about arrangements or excessive spending. Similar eco-attuned culture is associated with trees in Ladakh. During the spring season, locals cut branches of trees and serve them to tamed animals. The cutting of branches keeps the tree healthy and provides *talbo*, a bamboo-sized branch of the tree that is used for roofing. The tree also provides wood to make windows, doors, and glass rooms. Logs are available for roofing and other purposes. The local ecological knowledge lies in its farming lifestyle and community-based work. However, the advent of modernity, globalization, and advanced technology in the mid-20th century affected its eco-cultural life, yet there are people who still practice and promote local sustainable culture. In many villages, even in Leh town, semi-agrarian life continues. People engage with both modern and traditional jobs. This modern-cum-traditional approach results in a better understanding of sustainable development. Modernity provides advanced technology and knowledge, while traditional ways of living keep them connected with ecology.

Himalayan Institute of Alternative Learning (HIAL) is a recent eco-attuned institution founded by local environmentalist and Ramon Magsaysay awardee Sonam Angchok. This institution blends traditional knowledge with modern technology and introduces courses that enrich sustainable skill development, such as using solar energy to reduce pollution and building ice stupas to reduce water shortages during the spring season. Another institution called SECMOL is administered according to the local eco-attuned system. Along with modern education, students are introduced to the region's rich culture and skill development.

The autobiography by Ghulam Rasool entitled *Servant of the Sahib* exhibits the same eco-attuned culture in the early twentieth century, with major changes in the ruling administration and the introduction of modern culture. Along with these, the presence of Western officers, scholars, and missionaries was observed. Until the 1840s, Ladakh was ruled by local monarchs who had close ties with Tibet. In the 1840s, Ladakh was conquered and annexed by Zorawar Singh, the army general of the Maharaja of Jammu. Since then, Ladakh was ruled by many governors-general of the Maharaja of Jammu until independence in 1947. Rasool's text describes the presence of both the British and the Maharaja governor's power in Ladakh. Their presence introduced new modern cultural assets like the first modern school, first modern hospital, newspapers, writing, foreign languages, and popular literature. These aspects impacted local ecology in the post-colonial era.

Until the nineteenth century, theology and monastic education were only available to monks. Laypeople enjoyed oral literature and focused on substantiated skill development. The arrival of the British in the nineteenth century made formal modern education available to laypeople. The establishment of the first modern school with subjects like Science, Maths, Social Science, English, and Bible shifted the space and subjects of learning, which over time constructed a new lifestyle. John Bray observed that in the beginning, parents were reluctant to send their wards to modern schools; later, attitudes changed, and children were admitted.

Moreover, this change transformed the post-colonial era with awareness campaigns about the importance of modern education by his *Eminence Bakula Rinpoche*. The relationship among formal modern education, children, and the physical world had a tremendous impact on developing sustainable and eco-friendly culture. Earlier, regional children spent time on farms with their parents and learned practical skills and knowledge about ecosystems orally from their parents. These cultures built a sense of responsibility and respect toward nature's components. However, the cordial relation between children and physical entities began to degrade with modern schooling.

Tashi Rabgais discovered the impact of modern education on the local language and culture. He writes that it is necessary to learn a,b,c,d, but not discard *ka, khe,* and *ga,* the Ladakhi letters. Besides this, the maximum impact on the local eco-friendly culture occurred in the post-colonial era, especially around the 1990s. Most industrial culture began around the 1950s and saw its effects from the 1990s onward. Nawang Tsering Shakspo's autobiography exhibits modern developmental phases in Ladakh: the arrival

of the first vehicle, radio and TV station, airplane, and construction of cemented roads connecting Ladakh to the rest of India.

Furthermore, the shift in political power in 1947 and 1950s mapped a new Ladakh. Sonam Joldan describes the cultural and educational ties between Ladakh and Tibet before the 1950s. Both provinces were independent states for a long period and exchanged cultural and educational practices. Religious faith like Buddhism was reinforced with the establishment of monarchy by the Tibetan king in the 10th century. Many *gonpas,* monasteries, and *stupas* were constructed according to Tibetan Buddhism. The similarity in cuisines and lifestyle showcased the associated culture between the two regions. Moreover, the *Lopchak* and monks worked as mediators to exchange culture between the two countries. While *Lopchak* worked as traders and envoys, monks from Ladakh went to Tibet for higher Buddhist studies.

These historical relations ended permanently with the Chinese occupation of Tibet from the 1950s. The war of 1962 worsened the situation with China. With this, Ladakh lost its historically close relationship with Tibet, and the famous Silk Route connecting Ladakh to Central Asia was permanently closed. Another major cultural shift occurred between 1947 and 1962. Prior to these dates, Ladakh looked to Tibet as the center of learning. The Chinese occupation led Ladakh to look for alternative centers. Therefore, India, after 1947, not only became the motherland but also the center of new learning. Ever since, Ladakh has depended on the mainland for development. Increasing conflicts with China and Pakistan led the mainland to establish modern assets in the region such as vehicles, concrete roads, mainland cuisine like rice and dal, modern jobs such as army service, and more. In 1938, Prince Peter of Greece studied five families in Leh, and in 1981, John Crook and Tibetan colleague, Tsering Skakya studied the same families. The major differences appeared in work culture. Earlier, every family member worked on the farm; later, 50% were agriculturists, and others had modern jobs like teacher, clerk, policeman, civil engineer, manager, and army. The shift from colonial to democratic administration also paved the way for new development. Modern employment concepts, vehicles, increasing shops with outside materials, and new cemented building constructions were introduced in the post-independence era. Many villagers abandoned rural life and settled in Leh town. The reopening of tourism in the 1970s opened possibilities for modern jobs such as restaurants, hotels, and taxi services. Ladakh was developing, but its local eco-culture had been diminishing.

Another remarkable political step taken by the central government of India in 2019 was the demarcation of Ladakh from Jammu and Kashmir state. Ladakh was declared a Union Territory without a legislature. This political step has deep connections with the region and ecology. Under JK state, Articles 60 and 30 provided safeguards to its eco-cultural practices. The removal of these articles opened a gateway to introduce modern development. The region's ecosystem was already facing challenges from modern industrial development. The coming of more industrial culture resulted in significant damage to its ecosystem. After becoming a UT, local head Sonam Wangchuck appealed to the central government to provide "Sixth Schedule" for the region, believing it will protect the natives' unique culture and ecology.

It is impossible to remain primitive during interaction with modernity, globalization, and advanced technology. However, unchecked imitation of Western development leaves a lasting impact on the region's rich culture and ecosystem. In the current scenario, eco-attuned culture is essential for survival. Planet Earth is dying, and revisiting traditional eco-cultural practices is required. Courses in institutions play a vital role in reforming the wounded physical world. Regional eco-literature must be introduced to promote sustainable cultural practices and knowledge. Moreover, the community and law play an essential role in reducing nature's materiality. Laws and policies should encourage sustainable development.

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MAPPING THE INCLUSIVENESS OF INVISIBLE VOICES IN BEN OKRI'S *ASTONISHING THE GODS*

[1]Dr. V. Ajitha and [2]Dr. Lizie Williams

[1]Assist. Prof of English, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous) Palayamkottai.

[2]Asso. Prof. of English, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous) Palayamkottai.

Abstract: Derrida's theory of Decentralisation in post structuralism questions the idea of center and further negates the concern that the West is the center for ideological production. His discursive discourse rejects Eurocentrism and moves to halocentrism. Ben Okri's Astonishing the Gods discusses the significance of invisible voices that seem to enquire the global space claimed by the western intellectuals. The novel focuses on creating a liminal space that decentralises the structures of Eurocentric theoretical production and further provides an inclusion of the individuals from the periphery. Though the novel's setting remains ambiguous, Okri leads his unnamed protagonist in the novel to lead a quest towards the Third Space that dismantles the fort of hierarchy. This paper identifies that the quest towards invisibility ends up in the quest for equality.

Keywords: Global Space, Discourse, Liminal Space, and Ideological Production.

> "The concept of a centered structure is in fact the concept of a play based on a fundamental ground a play constituted on the basis of a fundamental immobility... the center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its center elsewhere. The center is not the center" (Writing and Difference 255-256).

Center or the philosophy of subjectivity has become one of the main topics of concern for the Eurocentric ideologies. The West asserts the center through Manichean dichotomy. They tend to create binary polarisation thereby they occupy a seat in the center and tries to marginalise the Other. They assume that they are historically forwarded and scientifically developed than the Third world countries and they tend to claim the position of power, subjectivity and centrality. The West weaponises logocentrism to allege structurality and exhibit domination. In order to counteract this manipulation, Deconstruction enables to rethink and interrogate the structure of authority. Jacques Derrida, through deconstruction breaks the center. He says, "The idea of the sign which has always been linked to logocentrism must be deconstructed". Moreover, he finds adverse threats when he clarifies, "The function of the center was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure – but above all to limit what we might call the play of the structure" (255). Hence, the center not only marginalises the other but also limits the free play. The affirmation of

the center ultimately frames its own power structures and recognizes superiority over the other. This is the same when it comes to different cultures. The West considers them the origin of culture and Derrida vehemently opposes this fact.

Ben Okri, the most celebrated Nigerian poet, writer and postcolonial-postmodern novelist dissents the idea of centrality when cultures are concerned. According to Okri, the postcolonials' opposition to the Western cultures invariably induces them to attempt a quest for their lost culture. He states that while the claim for a center by the West is a serious issue, the reinvigoration of the cultural consciousness of the natives is equally a crucial concern because they in turn tend to celebrate a center. As postcolonials, their motives to reinstate the native culture allows a voluntariness to undergo suppression under the supremacy of the native elites. Okri identifies that the postcolonial individuals find solace in resisting to their own nativity while Derrida in his work Positions informs the dangers of binary polarisation and the necessity of deconstruction as he says:

> We must traverse a phase of overturning. To do justice to this necessity is to recognize that in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a vis-a-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. To overlook this phase of overturning is to forget the conflictual and subordinating structure of opposition. (41)

In Nigeria, Okri identifies various ways of portrayals where the center is identified glorified. The conceptualisation of center is seen through the imagery of the ancestral gods, the masquerades, the spirits, the folktales, the paradoxical proverbs or the belief on Abikus. However, in Okri's novels the portrayal of spirits, the spirit world and the myth of Abikus seems to have got modified from the conventional beliefs of the Nigerian culture. His description in the novels rather attempting to identify the center goes beyond to a pluralistic tone. His novels are known to inquiring the intentions of the indigenous cultural consciousness. He attempts an absolute perusal of the cultural transformations of the postcolonial Nigeria by dismantling the core center.

Okri's novel *Astonishing the Gods* is written with a simple language and with lucidity. The novel's unique portrayal of characters, settings and cultures devoid of specificity and nomenclature determines uncanny. Right from the introduction of the unnamed protagonist till the

protagonist's aimless expedition in the end, Okri continuously questions the implied western epistemology. The western rationalism gets decenterd and he negotiates the cultural difference through enigmas, paradoxes and eerie subjects in the novel.

The novel begins with the protagonist's apprehension at school as he "first learnt of his invisibility" (3). He considers that he is invisible and so he is marginalised. He ultimately imagines that "he didn't exist" (3). Having come to know that he is invisible, he begins his journey from his imagined marginal space to the center. However, it is Okri who envisages that "It is better to be invisible. His life was better when he was invisible, but he didn't know it at the time" (3). The protagonist's seven years of quest for visibility end in a paradoxical island of invisibility guided by many invisible voices. It is through his experiences in the invisible land, Okri breaks down the constructed truths of the West. He clearly affirms "the destructibility of all things seen" (38).

The deconstructionist theme is invoked when the protagonist's realisation from "time can be written down in words" (3) changes to "Time itself is invisible" (47). In the same way, while the West finds pride in naming things, the protagonist identifies that "name(ing) something loses its existence" (6). While the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Sassure insists the relationship between sign and signifier as significant for a language, Okri deconstructs this ideology when he says that the land of invisibles have "words of a language that he couldn't decode, a language no longer spoken" (35). His western education becomes disrupted when he came to realise that the inhabitants of the invisible land: "... had created an educational system in which the most ordinary goal was living the fullest life, in which creativity in all spheres of endeavour was the basic alphabet, and in which the most sublime lessons possible were always learned and relearned from the unforgettable suffering which was the bed rock of the great new civilization" (28).

Okri provides a clear contrast to the protagonist's knowledge of the West and the knowledge that he attains which neither circumscribes nor glorifies a specific culture. In the novel, he venerates the concept of invisibility as he mentions, "all things invisible had a hidden glow to them" (3). He repeatedly describes the land with "invisible enchantments" (5), "initiate(ing) the new cycle of invisibles" (12), "Time itself is invisible" (47) and "invisible things are irresistible" (144). He himself says that the novel is "a meditation on invisibility" (vii). Hence, it becomes clear that he delves deeper into the theme of imperceptibility and highly regards the invisible mysteries over the visible hegemony.

Astonishing the Gods is constructed in a way that all the eight books of the novel discuss of the invisible voices that guide the protagonist. While there are interpretations that these invisible voices are the voices of the native ancestors in Nigeria, Okri exhibits reluctance to narrow down it to a particular culture. These invisible voices apparently are Okri's because through the inclusion of the voices, he attempts to pull down and demolish the foundations of hierarchy, destructuralise the known truths and the rational reality. The voices teach him multitudinous ways to become more humane, more confident and more pluralised. The voices aid him to come out of his fantasy over either the Eurocentric culture or his indigenous blood and initiate within him the seeds of assimilation of cultures. Derrida states "Freeplay is the disruption of presence. Freeplay must be conceived before the alternative of presence and absence; being must be conceived of as presence or absence beginning with the possibility of freeplay" (257-258). The invisible voices that talk to the protagonist are the attempt of freeplay that Derrida mentions in his work "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences."

The invisible voices portrayed in the novel align with Derrida's concept of "Double Gesture" and "Double Writing." In terms of cultural phenomenon, while the former term indicates the reversal of hegemony, the latter describes the dislodging of oppositional forces altogether. The invisible voices in the novel also employ the similar process. The voices not only exhibit dismantling the presence of supremacy but also persuade to look beyond and transcend the boundaries prescribed for a definite culture. The voices attempt to exhibit the idea of togetherness where the protagonist finds "no hierarchies. There were no distinctions between people, none high, none low" (133). The ambition of the voices is to "raise a little of heaven on earth, that was the glory of their promise" (134).

Okri endeavours to encompass the invisible voices in the visible world in order to create a pluralistic and egalitarian society. The transformation of the protagonist into an invisible being is symptomatic of the transformation that Okri wishes to create within the postcolonial intellectuals. His desire is well exchanged by the voice as it says:

> We measure time differently, not by the passing of moments or hours, but by lovely deeds, creative accomplishments, beautiful transformations, by little and great perfections ... We are learning to be masters of the art of transcending all boundaries. We are learning to go beyond the illusion that is behind them. (AG 150)

Further, Okri continues to testify the protagonist's adaption of the virtues of the invisible land. Through the questions the protagonist explains his

purpose of his journey. He states that his purpose in the invisible land is "TO CREATE THE FIRST UNIVERSAL CIVILISATION OF JUSTICE AND LOVE" (AG 157) and to imbibe "CREATIVITY AND GRACE" (157). Apparently, through the mystery of the invisible voices, it is Okri who assures to subvert the powers of the center. He breaks the structure of culture and transfigures the invisible voices as the voice of multitudinous postcolonials who try to come out of all forms of subordination. Through the motif of the invisible voices, he encourages transcending beyond and transgressing the limitations of the structure. Therefore, in order to establish a pluralistic society Okri destabilises the Eurocentric norms and tries to look beyond the peripheries of the conventional constructed ideologies which in turn as Okri believes would astonish even the heavenly powers.

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ZEUS, POSEIDON, HADES MYTHS REWRITTEN IN *RECORD OF RAGNAROK*

Taniska Mohanty
PG Student, Department of English and Comparative Literature,
Pondicherry University.

Abstract: Greek mythology has always portrayed Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades as the most powerful rulers of their respective domains, who rarely get challenged. In contrast, the Japanese anime and manga, *Record of Ragnarok* puts many characters, be they gods or humans, from varied historical periods and diverse religious backgrounds, standing up against these deities. The study highlights how new media interprets ancient myths in light of contemporary values and modern narrative styles, portraying that even the greatest gods can be questioned or defeated, further providing an entry point for a wider academic discourse.

Keywords: Greek Mythology, Modern Narrative, Power Structure, Reinterpretations, and Humanity

Greek mythology refers to the mythical tales told by ancient Greeks that reflect their traditional religious view of the origin and nature of the world. It includes the birth of deities, heroes, and mythological creatures, among whom the three gods—Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades—who ruled the sky, sea, and underworld, are considered to be the most powerful figures of all. According to ancient beliefs, these gods are depicted as distant, authoritative figures who rarely face any serious challenges from humans or other gods.

The recent reinterpretations of these mythological characters have started reshaping the tales in the light of modern values. One such work is the Japanese anime and manga *Record of Ragnarok*, which brings together gods from varied mythologies and puts them against renowned historical and mythical humans. This is what makes the work stand out, for it reimagines the gods as beings that can be questioned, challenged, and even defeated.

The present paper examines how *Record of Ragnarok* portrays characters who defy the authority of the three major Greek deities and analyses the reasons behind their conflict. It aims to explore how modern narrative style reinterprets ancient mythological figures and reflects present-day ideas about justice, leadership, and resistance.

Literature Review

Greek mythology began along with the emergence of the oral-poetic tradition around 1200 BCE, which is also famously known as the Bronze Age. Although it was produced long before great poets and hymn

writers such as Homer and Hesiod. The "Homeric Hymns" of Homer and Hesiod's "Theogony" are considered the best preservers of mythical tales popular during the early ages because they mainly addressed the heroic tales of the twelve deities and also the beginning of the world. Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades were seen as the most powerful rulers of the sky, sea, and underworld and as the prominent figures of all.

Modern writers and creators have started to change the way these gods are often portrayed. Joseph Campbell, a renowned American scholar, in his prominent work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, talked about how myths are not fixed—they, in fact, change and evolve with time, shaped by contemporary notions of society. The anime *Record of Ragnarok* is one such series. In an analysis made on *Record of Ragnarok*, Ofelrcne Zailer R. Gilaos explores several compelling themes of the anime. Overall, many modern stories are reinterpreting myths in order to show that supreme power should be questioned. *Record of Ragnarok* gives a new shape to the characters of Greek gods and portrays them in new roles, representing human-like characteristics. This paper examines how these new versions of the mythical characters reflect contemporary thoughts on justice, resistance, and what it means to stand up against powerful figures—even Gods.

Research Methodology

Applying a thorough qualitative approach and studying the anime *Record of Ragnarok's* representation of its characters and construction of plot, this research has been conducted through a close reading and thematic analysis. The paper mainly focuses on analysing how the anime reinterprets mythological descriptions of gods and portrays humans in a different light. The study performs a close reading approach to understand the representation of characters like Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades, who fight against Adam, Kojiro Sasaki, Qin Shi Huang, and Buddha, through their words and actions. The present paper also compares the modern reinterpretation of deities with their original descriptions according to ancient myths, which helps show how the anime reimagines their characters to reflect contemporary values like justice, freedom, and the questioning of power. The paper uses secondary sources like Reddit reviews, blogs, literary journals, and pdfs' of research papers previously written by different literary scholars on mythology and the anime, which helped in answering the research question: How does Record of Ragnarok use myth to show modern ideas about power, justice, and human capability?

Analysis and Discussion

Record of Ragnarok or *Shūmatsu no Warukyūre* is a Japanese manga series originally written by Shinya Umemura and Takumi Fukui

(first adapted into anime by Graphinica and premiered on Netflix in June 2021). The anime begins with deities belonging to varied mythologies assembling in order to decide the fate of humanity. A decision is made based on a vote and considering man's 7 million years of irreparable history, where most gods vote for their extinction. Meanwhile, the Valkyrie Brunnehilde interrupts, proposing that humanity deserves one last chance. She then suggests a one-on-one tournament between gods and humans, where humanity will be spared if they manage to win seven out of thirteen matches.

Zeus, who is often represented as the strongest and most feared god in both Greek mythology and anime, is portrayed as the head of the council. His character in the anime contrasts with his original Greek version, for in *Record of Ragnarok*, he is shown as a deity who not only fights for justice, but who also enjoys fighting and proving to be the best. He is presented in the anime as a frail man who grows muscles only during the fights and is also among the three main antagonists of the story, which again contrasts with the ancient myth. He appears to be more human-like with flaws, which lets mortals oppose him.

The opposition begins with the first win of humanity when the famous Japanese swordsman Kojiro Sasaki defeats his brother Poseidon. His victory indirectly signals to Zeus that even humans are capable of challenging and winning over the supreme authority. This hurts Zeus' ego. Thus, he fights against the strongest representative of humanity, the first man closest to God, Adam.

Poseidon, one of the three brothers who rule the sea, is shown with much pride and seems merciless. He looks down on people who are weak and underestimates mortals. However, his pride collapses when he loses a match against “history's greatest loser,” Kojiro Sasaki, whose legacy is primarily defined by his one loss. He died fighting against Miyamoto Musashi. This again marks the modern reinterpretation of the myth. Kojiro defeats Poseidon using intelligence and a proper strategy and proves that those who lack empathy for others can certainly meet their fall, regardless of whether they are gods. This can be compared to the modern-day scenario of Ukraine's resistance against the seemingly powerful Russia during their invasion in 2022. Despite Russia being the bigger nation and possessing invincible power, Ukraine never gave up, it suffered yet it never surrendered. This symbolizes a powerful victory.

Hades is the one who rules the underworld when Zeus draws the lots according to Greek myths. He makes his appearance during the 7th round of *Record of Ragnarok* to avenge his brother Poseidon. Unlike his

brothers, Hades appears as a sophisticated individual and a deity who is highly respected by both gods and humans. This contrasts with the traditional description in Greek mythology, where his appearance is described as dark and gloomy and he was not well-liked, mostly because of the joy he experienced when people received punishment for their crimes. Another feature that contrasts with the myth is his appearance. In the anime, Hades appears as a tall, handsome god with an eyepatch placed over his right eye and long, elegant silver hair, whereas in early descriptions he is described as a strong figure having long dark hair with a beard covering half of his face. In the anime, he fights against Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of China, and is eventually defeated, which again shows the power humanity possesses to challenge the center.

Another character worth mentioning is Buddha, who despite being a god himself, challenges the divine authority and fights for humanity. His opposition is perhaps the strongest against Zeus. His rebellion is more spiritual than physical. His character underlines the fact that the center cannot always be right.

What is more remarkable about this anime is how each match tells a story, setting an example of the one who is wiser and more patient. Gods, who are always described as the supreme rulers of the world, are held accountable and questioned by their own creation, eventually facing defeat. This reflects the contemporary values of the twenty-first century, where people using their conscience separate wrong from right and are more open to raising their voices against power; they challenge unfair rules and fight for justice. *Record of Ragnarok* is the kind of anime that represents more than just reinterpretations of characters. It also includes characters like Jack the Ripper, the cold-blooded serial killer who took many lives, as someone who committed crimes driven by his past traumas. Some of the modern interpretations of characters were not well received by audiences, mainly gods. For instance, the depiction of Lord Shiva was considered disrespectful because it deviated significantly from the sacred religious scripture of India. This led to numerous controversies and was eventually banned in the country.

Despite all the controversies, this anime can still be considered one of the most striking of all, for it brings some prominent questions into the limelight—Should we always obey those in power? What makes someone who stands in the center truly great? Is power more important than kindness, empathy, or justice? The gap found in the present study is that there is a lack of research mostly on how *Record of Ragnarok* reflects modern socio-political issues. The existing papers have explored its

misinterpretation of certain characters and the controversies that the anime has faced. Yet few have explored how it has represented the divine deities as flawed and humans as brave and capable enough to challenge them.

Conclusion

Record of Ragnarok or *Shūmatsu no Warukyūre* is a Japanese anime in which gods like Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades, who are always portrayed as the most powerful figures, are presented with more human-like qualities, which make their characters more relatable to the audience. Humans like Adam, Kojiro Sasaki, and Qin Shi Huang are presented as characters who possess great intelligence and are brave enough to fight against the divine council. This suggests that humans are never weak; in fact, using their conscience, they can raise their voices against wrongdoing—even if it is God—and fight for what is right.

It also conveys that one who stays at the center and holds a high position does not mean he will always be right. This concept applies to the modern world, because now people are more aware of human rights and speaking up for justice. Characters like Buddha, who despite being one of the gods, fight for humanity, are shown as some of the most influential figures because, unlike other gods, they choose what is right.

In conclusion, *Record of Ragnarok* is not just an action anime but a new exploration of ancient myths, conveying that gods can be questioned, and humans can be heroes. The anime helps the world understand that one can never be great only through strength. To become the greatest, one must have courage, kindness, and belief in oneself.

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HUMANITIES IN DIGITAL AGE: TOOLS, TRENDS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

Mr. Pritish Bhanja
Assistant Professor of English,
Gandhi Institute of Engineering and Technology, Gunupur, Odisha.

Abstract: Digital Humanities (DH), it is the use of contemporary digital advancements in traditional subjects, faith, belief, and practices. This paper offers insight into the leap-shift impact on society, besides exploring the digital tools in use. The paper also explores the intricacies of the digital tools, their advantages and disadvantages, and how tools like Rokogito, Gephi, Neatline, and MALLET have revolutionized multiple sectors, particularly academics, transportation, and public engagement. The findings suggest that DH is more than just the offerings of the age and should be judiciously used under calibrated national and international policies.
Keywords: Digital Humanities, Computational Analysis, Digitization, Digital Pedagogy, and Digital Ethics

Introduction

Digitization has left an indelible and irreversible impact on the very age itself. Likewise, humanities, once believed to be a traditional and immutable area, has also been revolutionized by it. DH represents this integration between digitization and humanities. It came into existence around the 1980s as just a computational aid. However, it has now snowballed to offer far more promising features. Since then, DH has witnessed several attempts at a pragmatic definition. Jeffrey Schnapp sees it as entirely humanities and no digital: "Digital humanities is not about the digital. It is about the humanities. The digital just enables us to ask old questions in new ways."

The journey of DH is extraordinary too. From calculator transiting through camera and finally landing up with computers is the outline of DH's evolution. While calculators aided humanities in computation, cameras captured aesthetics, and computers did the rest. The newer software, features, and tools used in computers are again a grace to humanities and society. Certain challenges like cyber-attacks, cyber-bullying, and digital theft remain concerns in DH.

Transformations

Humanities, as a discipline has undergone significant transformation. Digital reading and visual reading have added appeal for voracious readers, bringing many more people into the net of reading. It has precisely benefited those with hearing troubles and enabled children to learn through pictures, both static and motion. Earlier approaches like

sitting with many books or endeavouring to fetch the desired materials were time consuming and energy-draining. This has been overcome by digital repositories. Now, one can get the desired material at the click of a button, anytime.

Meetings, which always meant physical setups, have now transformed. Online meetings today are widely accepted and rewarding. This practice grew exponentially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Online classes also replaced offline classes effectively. Future modes of learning could be felt through the promising signs of online classes. Classes on Google Meet and Zoom were prevalent during the lockdown phase and continue to be used by many institutes. This allows students to learn from any location, from their desired institute or teacher. It is cost-effective, time-saving, and energy-saving.

Evaluation and assessment are no longer restricted to paper and pen formats. Online evaluation and assessment are the new norms. This method is more transparent and effective and remains a permanent record if stored in the cloud without consuming physical space. Researchers find it rewarding to use the digital tools of the age. Accessing any information is now easy. Tools like ChatGPT and OpenAI are commonly used for scholarly pursuits, assisting students with almost every manual task they would otherwise perform.

Social platforms like YouTube, Facebook, X, and Instagram are no longer limited to social connection; they now serve multipurpose functions. They are used for self-branding and visibility to prospective stakeholders. For instance, a profile on LinkedIn helps recruiters reach out to interested candidates. Information regarding seminars, conferences, and other scholarly exercises finds space on these platforms, reaching a wider audience. In fact, these platforms are now viewed as sources for information. Regular posts on relevant subjects also keep users updated.

Data mining and analysis have also become far easier. Features in Excel help compute and analyse huge datasets. PowerPoint presentations are another sophisticated feature of DH. Driverless cars are the latest in the automobile sector. Vehicles tagged with RFID cards and using GPS help track vehicles and provide beforehand suggestions. Doctors, patients, and other stakeholders reap the benefits. Medical equipment makers, pharmaceutical industries, and medical researchers use artificial intelligence and other digital tools to cope with changing demands.

In today's ever-changing scenario, DH emerges as an interdisciplinary field connecting technology with traditional domains of humanities—literature, history, theology, philosophy, and more. DH

significantly impacts faith, belief, and practices on both personal and national levels. DH is dynamic—abstruse yet vital to comprehend its potential and pitfalls. It is viewed as the integration of digital tools with humanistic expression. Moving far from earlier applications of archiving on the web or enabling cloud databases, DH now offers a plethora of services like data creation and analysis. It integrates other disciplines and uses tools predominantly developed for those disciplines. According to Liu, "Digital Humanities is not a unified field but rather a constellation of emergent practices" (Liu 11). It involves text mining, data visualization, geospatial mapping, network analysis, and AI-driven discourse studies. DH has contributed to the growth of digital literacy and technological infrastructure and expanded into other societal domains.

Key Tools in Digital Humanities

MALLET (Machine Learning for Language Toolkit)

MALLET is a Java-based package designed for natural language processing, particularly topic modelling and text classification. Researchers in literature and philosophy use MALLET to explore semantic trends across vast corpora. This tool allows scholars to identify latent patterns in religious texts, political manifestos, or classical literature.

Gephi

Gephi is an open-source network visualization platform, popular among cinematography and literary scholars. It analyses relationships among characters in literary texts, social movements, or historical figures. For instance, it maps correspondence among Enlightenment thinkers or analyzes citation networks in philosophy journals.

Neatline

Neatline is a storytelling tool that uses geospatial data and temporal information. Built on Omeka, it allows users to create interactive maps and timelines. It is particularly helpful in archaeological research, migration studies, and historical theology.

Rokogito

Rokogito, though not very popular, is a visual ethnography tool. It combines multimedia, mapping, and annotation features for humanistic fieldwork. It is used for participatory digital exhibitions and public history projects.

Advantages of DH

DH offers an array of benefits. In academics, it democratizes knowledge through open-access archives. Scholars can access digitally stored resources at their convenience with minimal expense. Tools like MOOC and other platforms promote lifelong learning. Interdisciplinary

collaboration is easily achieved through DH. Challenges faced by sociologists due to linguistic barriers or historical constraints can be mitigated using DH. History and humanities can be integrated for desired output.

DH enhances teaching and learning experiences. Classrooms have transformed from simple boards to smart boards offering myriad facilities. AI-enabled smart boards connected to the internet make learning creative and interactive. Dynamic maps, digital storytelling, and rich information repositories aid teachers and students alike. DH also boosts policy and planning. GIS mapping and network analysis assist government agencies in cultural preservation, urban planning, and transportation design informed by historical patterns.

Disadvantages and Critiques

DH carries certain drawbacks. Digital infrastructure is often designed to suit the Global North. This "digital colonialism" risks imposing Western epistemologies on non-Western cultures, resulting in epistemic injustice (Risam 60). Digital projects face financial constraints, and technology transfer faces hurdles due to national sovereignty and laws, leaving some scholars out of competent reach. Over-reliance on quantification may overlook nuance. Humanities scholarship, rooted in critical thinking and subjective analysis, risks being oversimplified when mediated by algorithms (Drucker 85). Unequal access to digital resources exacerbates existing educational inequalities, particularly in under-resourced regions, limiting who can contribute to or benefit from DH.

Societal Impact of DH

DH has an unprecedented impact on academic collaboration. Students and scholars can co-author, code, and critically analyse. Certain areas, like sustainable urban development and transportation ethics, benefit from GIS-based DH projects. Displaced people due to national projects, like dam or highway construction, can be mapped, revealing potential for corrective action. DH enables preservation of traditional practices and beliefs through interactive archives and virtual museums. Sovereignty over indigenous data and other ethical aspects is maintained through projects such as Mukurtu CMS. DH also impacts religious realms. Computational tools help analyse religious texts and archive them for instant, wide, and future use. It records changes in liturgical practices and facilitates interfaith dialogue. This digital theology revolutionizes how society experiences religion.

The Need for Regulation

Given the uncertain outcomes, DH requires urgent national and international regulations. Data ethics guidelines should regulate the use of DH. Intellectual property rights may deter digital theft and reward property owners. To bridge the digital gap between the haves and have-nots—especially global South scholars—mandatory funding for digital infrastructure and learning is necessary. As Hayles notes, "we think through, with, and alongside media" (Hayles 14). It is therefore important to ensure these media are ethically governed.

Conclusion

Digital Humanities has become the new humanities. It is warmly accepted and holds potential to revolutionize further. Tools like Rokogito, Gephi, Neatline, and MALLET signify not only technological advancements but also epistemological shifts. However, this paper emphasizes that with great possibility comes great responsibility. Integrating DH into the mainstream should be well-planned, addressing ethics and inclusivity. Issues like the digital divide and cyber-crime should not hinder users from freely benefiting from DH. Wise policies, guided by coherent local and global frameworks, are essential.

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VOICES OF TRANSFORMATION: URBAN AND RURAL DICHOTOMIES IN INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

Dr. S. Aloysius Albert
Assistant Professor, Research Department of English,
St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Palayamkottai.

Abstract: The dichotomy between urban and rural landscapes serves as a significant motif in Indian Writing in English, encapsulating the multidimensional transformations occurring in contemporary India. This paper delves into how Indian authors interrogate and reimagine these urban and rural spaces, drawing inspiration from the postcolonial space theories of Henry Lefebvre's 'production of space', Homi Bhabha's 'unhomeliness', and 'spatial romanticism' by Aijaz Ahmad, scrutinizing the unique yet interrelated experiences of urban and rural communities. This study examines the close reading of esteemed authors like R.K. Narayan, Kamala Markandaya, Rohinton Mistry, Aravind Adiga, Amitav Ghosh, Kiran Desai, Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy, uncovering persistent motifs of migration, identity, and resistance. The article highlights the changing significance of the rural as a custodian of tradition and the urban as an emblem of advancement and estrangement. Utilizing insights from literary criticism and historical analysis, the paper elucidates how these spaces are depicted not just as mere backdrops but as active forces influencing the human experience. This duality illustrates India's intricate path through modernity and tradition, providing a deep insight into its socio-cultural fabric.
Keywords: Rural-Urban Dichotomy, Spatial Hybridity, Progress, Migration, and Gender Dynamics.

Introduction

Indian Writing in English (IWE) has continually reflected the evolving dynamics of India's cultural, political, and geographical environments. From the early post-independence stories that romanticised rural simplicity to modern metropolitan novels that question globalisation, the idea of space has always been a big part of literary imagination. Rural and urban places serve not just as passive environments but as "active, ideologically charged terrain" (Gopal 12) that are both influenced by and influence historical events. These areas show how the conflicts between tradition and modernity, rootedness and displacement, and community memory and individual desire are changing.

Previous literature has often characterised the rural as a bastion of tradition and moral purity, while the urban has been seen as a centre of development and alienation. However, these binary frameworks fail to acknowledge the fluid and contentious characteristics of these areas. The countryside is dynamic and diverse, including entrenched institutions of caste, gender, and economics. Likewise, the urban environment is not only a realm of contemporary potential; it generates novel manifestations of alienation, hybridity, and resistance.

This paper uses a postcolonial spatial framework, based on Henri Lefebvre's theory of the "production of space," Homi K. Bhabha's idea of "unhomeliness," and Aijaz Ahmad's criticism of "spatial romanticism," to look at how rural and urban spaces are represented and ideologically constructed in some Indian fiction written in English. The works of R.K. Narayan, Kamala Markandaya, Amitav Ghosh, Kiran Desai, Arundhati Roy, Salman Rushdie, Aravind Adiga, and others are analysed not just for their subject elements but also for how they depict interactions among locations, identities, and histories. The paper aims to transcend the rural–urban dichotomy by emphasising the spatial hybridity that arises from these narratives, examining how writers reconceptualise India's geography as a continuum of negotiations influenced by migration, gendered experiences, economic dynamics, and postcolonial modernity. This investigation positions literature as a pivotal domain where the tangible and the imagination converge, elucidating the many dimensions of India's changing identity.

Theoretical Framework: Postcolonial Spatiality and Hybridity

This research utilises a postcolonial spatial framework informed by Henri Lefebvre's concept of the "production of space," Homi K. Bhabha's idea of "unhomeliness," and Aijaz Ahmad's criticism of the representation of spatiality in Indian English literature. Lefebvre contends that space is not neutral; rather, it is socially constructed via "relations of power and production" (Lefebvre 26). He asserts that "(social) space is a (social) product" (Lefebvre 26), influenced by power dynamics, production processes, and ideological frameworks. In India, colonial legacies, postcolonial growth, and cultural debates shape both rural and urban areas.

Homi Bhabha's concept of 'unhomeliness,' defined as "the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world" (Bhabha 13), encapsulates the transitional state of characters situated between rural affiliation and metropolitan modernity. Understanding the psychological effects of these created environments requires the concept of "unhomely." The unhomely is "the paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition," which "creeps up on you... and suddenly you are not 'at home' in your own home" (Bhabha 13). This feeling of being alone is a fantastic example of how characters are stuck between rural belonging and metropolitan modernism, or how the house itself is a place of struggle.

Ahmad criticises the romanticisation of rural India, asserting that both contexts should be analysed through the lens of class and power dynamics instead of nostalgic dichotomies (Ahmad 45). Utilising these ideas demonstrates that Indian authors do not only represent environments; they examine and recreate them, creating hybrid geographies where identities are constantly disputed.

Rural Spaces: Tradition and Vulnerability

The countryside in IWE is typically a place where people remember their culture and feel like they belong, but it is also open to systematic unfairness and modernisation. In R.K. Narayan's *Malgudi Days*,

the made-up town is "slow and simple, but it has its own problems and joys" (Narayan 34). It serves as a microcosm of traditional India, an India that seems to be timeless, where community values are important, yet the outside world keeps getting in. Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve shows how closely land and identity are linked. Rukhmani, the main character, says, "The land is our life, and losing it is like losing part of ourselves" (Markandaya 32). But the entrance of a tannery and industrial capitalism breaks this link. Trivedi says, "Markandaya's rural landscapes represent not only the problems of farming but also the strength of rural communities to keep their cultural values" (Trivedi 45).

Ahmad criticises these kinds of representations, saying that literature frequently idealises rural areas, but it is important to remember the caste and gender inequalities that still exist in these areas (Ahmad 89). Rural areas, then, are both cultural anchors and places where people fight over things, where tradition and inequity live side by side. *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy is a complex look at the idea of the rural idyll. Ayemenem, Kerala, is not just a simple hamlet; it is a "puzzling, circular, jigsaw-puzzle of a place" (Roy 57), a complex network where "the Love Laws" (Roy 33) are enforced by ruthless caste and patriarchal dominance. The river, which has always been a symbol of life and purity, is where Sophy Mol dies and Velutha is killed. This shows how history, politics, and personal lives may tragically mix in the country.

Urban Spaces: Progress and Alienation

In IWE, urban landscapes represent modernity, desire, and mobility, but they also show alienation and exploitation. In Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, the city is a place where "nothing is permanent, not people, not places, not even hope" (Mistry 208). Mumbai seems like a place of both possibility and terrible poverty, which is caused by governmental corruption and socioeconomic differences. Mumbai (formerly Bombay) is a character in and of itself; it is a place where the protagonists' lives are always in danger. The story makes it clear that in the city, "you had to snatch your share of happiness from the jaws of misery" (Mistry 145).

Political corruption and social differences have made the city a precarious "fine balance" between optimism and despair. In Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, Delhi is described as "a jungle, where only the strongest and smartest could survive" (Adiga 87). Balram Halwai says that "the gods of the city have taken over" in Delhi (Adiga 151). He sees the city as a Darwinian arena: "The moment you enter the city, you see the competition, the struggle..." "It's a jungle, I tell you" (Adiga 78). Balram's path from working as a servant in the country to committing crimes as an entrepreneur in the city is a strong criticism of the new India, where the metropolis creates a monstrous yet free subjectivity. Gopal says, "Adiga's picture of urban India shows the capitalist systems that keep inequality going and make the working class less human" (Gopal 114).

Displacement is common in cities. In *Interpreter of Maladies*, Jhumpa Lahiri utilises cities as symbols of being lost in a new place. Bhabha's concept of "unhomeliness" accurately encapsulates this feeling, as "individuals are caught between adaptation to new environments and a profound sense of cultural loss" (Bhabha 13). As a result, these cities create new identities that are ambitious, mobile, and broken. This urban experience is further complex in diasporic and cross-cultural environments. In *Interpreter of Maladies*, Lahiri frequently writes about people who feel quite out of place in American cities. This aligns with Bhabha's concept of the "unhomely," whereby the familiar environment of the new world transforms into an alienating force, and the recollection of the homeland manifests as a pervasive spectre.

Migration and Gender: Negotiating the Continuum

Migration serves as both a connection and a division between rural and urban areas. In Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, "boundaries crumble, and what seemed like separate worlds, rural, urban, east, west, merge into one confusing whole" (Ghosh 112). The narrator understands that the boundaries between Calcutta, London, and Dhaka are not real; memory, history, and pain link these places. He thinks about how "a place does not merely exist... it must be invented in one's imagination" (Ghosh 152). Ghosh illustrates that rural and urban identities are not static but rather relational, formed via the "shadow lines" that link diverse geographies. Kaul says, "Ghosh's study of borders challenges fixed ideas of rural and urban, showing how migration changes both personal and group identities." (Kaul 62).

In Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, the character Biju lives in both rural India and cosmopolitan New York, and he is stuck between two places: "The village remained a memory, fading yet persistent" (Desai 45). Biju was a ghost in the system, a whisper of a life, Desai says (Desai 112). Chatterjee contends that "neither the rural nor the urban remains static; both are constantly reshaped by political and economic forces" (89).

Gender makes this continuum more complicated. In Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*, women may define themselves in cities, but in the countryside, they are typically stuck in conventional positions. As Spivak points out, Mahasweta Devi's rural women "emerge as agents of resistance, challenging deeply ingrained patriarchal structures" (Spivak 285). Migration and gender illustrate how rural and urban landscapes are navigated via embodied experiences rather than only through bodily movements.

Resistance and Spatial Hybridity

Modern Indian English literature generally rejects the idea of rural-urban dichotomy and instead shows mixed sites of resistance and change. In *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy describes Ayemenem as "a repository of histories, some whispered, some shouted, but all inescapable" (Roy 56). Mazumdar says, "Roy's story breaks up the romanticisation of rural India by showing how caste, history, and global influences all work

together" (Mazumdar 50). Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* makes it hard to tell where one place ends and another begins: "The city swelled, overflowing with stories that the village could no longer contain" (Rushdie 183). Its disjointed story reflects India's many different geographical identities. Through such works, rural and urban areas become places where people negotiate with each other, and resistance comes not from being alone but from mixing up how space is used.

Conclusion

The examination of rural and urban landscapes in Indian Writing in English demonstrates that these environments are not static binaries; rather, they are dynamic, socially constructed areas where cultural memory, power dynamics, and individual identities converge. This research has employed postcolonial spatial theory to illustrate that Indian writers use space as a narrative device to examine broader socio-historical developments. Rural areas, sometimes romanticised, manifest in these writings as intricate loci of cultural memory that are concurrently susceptible to the brutality of caste, sexism, and economic instability. Urban places, once symbols of hope, are now shown to create alienation, fragmentation, and new ways for the rich to take advantage of the poor under neoliberal capitalism. The act of moving from one place to another makes both of these things less stable, providing a space where mixed identities might form. Migration functions as a liminal process that connects and disrupts these areas, resulting in hybrid identities that resist clear classification. Gender also interacts physically, illustrating how women's experiences in rural and urban settings are influenced by power structures while also offering opportunities for resistance and agency. Literary works like *The God of Small Things*, *The Shadow Lines*, and *The White Tiger* portray places not just as physical locales but as performative and political arenas where novel expressions of belonging and resistance are conveyed.

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NARRATING THE PRESENT THROUGH THE PAST: A NEW HISTORICIST PERSPECTIVE ON PRAYAAG AKBAR'S *LEILA*

R. Hemamalini
PG Student, Department of English,
Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.

Abstract: The paper deals with Prayaag Akbar's *Leila* through a New Historicist point of view, showing how the novel critiques contemporary India by building a dystopian future. The narrative reflects historical continuities in caste, diversity, and authoritarianism. The theories of Stephen Greenblatt and Michel Foucault are used to explore how *Leila* functions as a cultural text and responds to its time. The novel's major themes of memory, surveillance, and purity laws echo real-world anxieties, blurring the lines between past and present.
Keywords: New Historicism, Present, Past, and Time

Introduction

The debut novel of Prayaag Akbar, *Leila* (2017), deals with a dystopian society. It shows the deep influence of political changes, power structures, and the caste system. It was nominated for The Hindu Literary Prize and has won the Crossword Jury Prize and Tata Literature First Book Award. Netflix broadcasted a series based on this novel in 2018. This novel, set in the future 2040s, gives a warning for future India.

Stephen Greenblatt introduced the term New Historicism in the 1980s, which argues that literature is deeply connected to the history and power structures of its time. In Leila, one can see the caste system and laws which are controlled by the authority. The purity laws deeply affect the women of the future society. In the novel, they affect the protagonist Shalini, who has been searching for her daughter, lost at the age of three due to the mixed-blood policy that caused suffering for many in society. The author of this novel used his own life struggles in this novel. Akbar's father is a Muslim and his mother is a Christian. His own life struggles influenced him to write this novel.

New historicism in *Leila*

The novel *Leila* explores the historical context, women's suppression, gender inequality, and the caste system, connecting ancient India and future India. According to Stephen Greenblatt, "The literary work is not a closed sphere; it is part of the historical world and responds to it" (3). As per this statement, *Leila* also reflects the political and historical context of contemporary India.

The historical context used in this novel includes 'gender inequality,' where women struggle a lot. In Puthumaipithan's short story

Redemption (*Sapa Vimochanam*), the author discusses the female character Ahalya, who suffers greatly in a patriarchal society. Likewise, in this novel, the character Shalini struggles in a patriarchal society for having loved a man of another religion and giving birth to a mixed-blood baby girl called Leila. Throughout the novel, readers can see Shalini's struggle as a muted and oppressed female in a patriarchal society because of the strict laws imposed in society.

The next point is the 'caste system.' In ancient India, people were divided into four major castes: the Brahmins, priests who held a high position in society; *Kshatriyas*, the warriors; *Vaishyas,* the merchants; and *Shudras,* the untouchables. The novel also reflects the same concept. It shows the vivid image of the caste system prevailing in contemporary India and possibly extending into the future, affecting many lives. In this novel, Shalini, who belongs to an upper-caste Hindu family, marries a Muslim man named Rizwan.

Future India has changed many rules. One of the rules is the division into sectors based on Purity Laws, and another is the banning of inter-faith and inter-caste marriages. Therefore, her own society and the authority oppress and kill her husband: "They said I was Impure. That I had polluted my bloodline" (78). The idea of pollution is both biological and ritualistic, based on Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable. Bakha* is treated very badly by society because of his low caste and occupation. "Pollution! Pollution!" they shout, as if he is a disease. The word "pollution" changes based on the period or situation. In old India, people of lower classes were ill-treated by upper-class people, and if the lower-class people touched anything belonging to the upper class, it was considered polluted.

This concept is mentioned in many Indian works. For example, in *Untouchable*, as given in the above lines, and another example is *Chandalika: A Dance-Drama by Rabindranath Tagore:* "Am I impure? Is it because I was born of you that I am so despicable to the world?" (9), said by Prakriti to her mother after she gives water to the monk. Both works explore the same concept of caste but in different aspects. In *Leila*, the author shows the vivid image of the caste system by using the term Purity Law, which oppresses and punishes women who marry men of other castes or religions. On the other hand, Anand's *Untouchable* shows the same concept through the traditional caste system followed in ancient India.

Not only in literature or in the early period, but also in modern society, people continue to follow caste, and religion. For example, when people seek rental houses, they face issues; house owners often question their religion and caste. In the historical context, India and Pakistan lived

peacefully but were later separated. This is reflected in *Leila* under the theme of communal segregation and historical echo, shown in the murder of Shalini's husband, Rizwan. Khushwant Singh's novel, *Train to Pakistan* reflects the same theme: "Hindus and Muslims lived together, and now suddenly they are enemies." This statement reflects Singh's distress about how two religions became enemies. In contrast, in *Leila*, Rizwan, a Muslim, is murdered. Through this, the reader understands that, in the early period of India, Muslims and Hindus lived together, but the Partition of India changed that.

The author has not represented historical events directly but indirectly, which impacts future India. He mentions the Partition of India in 1947 when Pakistan was separated from India. The line, "The Wall was there to keep us apart. To keep us safe, they said. But from what? From whom?" (44) shows the fear people had in both nations after Partition of Indian. Jealousy developed between the nations, resulting in violence, and the killing of many soldiers. The wall represents the boundary or border between the two nations.

He also uses a major historical event, The Emergency (1975–1977), declared by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. During this period, the government took control over all citizens, creating fear of openly expressing desires and struggles. Similarly, in Leila, the Sector exerts complete control over the people, censoring the media and constantly monitoring citizens. When they discover Shalini married a Muslim man, they track them down and kill him. The Sector censors the media, allowing only content from the Sector leader, with slogans like "Purity is strength. Purity is peace" (66) and "Unity through Purity. Obedience is Protection" (44), taught to children from a young age. Citizens have no chance to see anything apart from the Sector's order.

The next main point is the Authoritarian State and Surveillance. In *Leila*, the Sector leader watches the citizens, restricting their freedom. In the Purity Camp, the Sectors re-educate citizens about their religion and caste, so they can purify their souls, repent for their sins, and begin a new family. This line explains it clearly: "Everywhere we went, someone was watching. There were guards on every corner" (66). This can be linked to real-life systems like Aadhar, which collects fingerprints, iris scans, and personal details.

Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* mentions: "The walls had ears. Even the silence was monitored" (Roy 132), showing that the state always notices and tracks people. There is no rule that some are good and others bad. In *Train to Pakistan*, Singh writes: "It was a time

when everyone watched everyone" (Singh 61), reflecting Partition-era suspicion. Thus, the author connects ancient and future India in this work.

The author attempts to create awareness through his work. Readers should understand that the world should not be misled. The novel also contains autobiographical elements. As mentioned earlier, the author comes from a minority background, with a Muslim father and a Christian mother, leading to personal struggles reflected in the characters of Shalini and Rizwan.

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CHALLENGES OF INSTILLING READING AND WRITING HABIT AMONG YOUNG ADULTS – AN EXPERIMENT

Dr. K. Sasirekha
Head & Assistant Professor of English,
Manikam Ramaswami College of Arts and Science, Madurai.

Abstract: This research paper meticulously examines the reading and writing habits of young adults. The author of this research article, with 25 years of teaching and research experience, observes the reading and writing habits of learners at the collegiate level and notes that it is persistently declining. Considering the need for 'English Language for Employability,' reading in English and journal writing in English have been introduced and exploited as daily exercises to develop communication skills in English. Since the author teaches Part II – General English for BBA & BBA (Digital Marketing), 2025–2028 batch at Manikam Ramaswami College of Arts and Science, Tamil Nadu, India, they have been identified as the control group. The control group is a mixed-ability classroom with a total strength of 43.

Keywords: English Language Skills, Reading Habits in English, Journal Writing Habits in English, Young Learners, and Employability

Introduction

The present global employment setting demands proficiency in English language skills. The need for consistent reading and writing is indispensable for academic success and later for employment. Yet, young adults, particularly college students, engaging with digital devices have reduced their reading time, which adversely reflects in their academic writing. Lack of reading and writing seriously affects the large number of learners in colleges and later impacts their ability to secure employment, since English language efficiency is mandatory in the job market. The same view has been shared by other researchers as well: "Increased reliance on digital media, short-form content, and the lack of personalized language instruction have further eroded their interest in developing foundational literacy skills in English."

In India, students who are privileged to study in CBSE and ICSE schools have been exposed to considerable reading and writing activities, whereas the mass sections who completed schooling in vernacular mediums are not exposed to general English reading and writing activities. This inadequate practice at school continues at the collegiate level as well. They neglect and are reluctant to develop English language proficiency. Analyzing this deterioration among learners, the author – a faculty member with 25 years of teaching and research experience in both engineering and

arts and science colleges – wanted to introduce consistent reading and journal writing activities.

Review of Literature

The reduction in reading and writing cannot be ignored among young adults due to the occupation of technology and digital devices. Stephen Krashen insists on the significance of reading in *The Power of Reading* (2004): "We acquire writing style, the special language of writing, by reading" (132). Further, he reiterates, "…those who read more tend to write better, with enhanced spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and acceptable style" (132). Scientific surveys prove that the decline in reading and writing practice among ESL learners adversely affects their academic performance and their communication skills for interviews and workplace interactions. This insufficiency poses a job threat nowadays. Thus, English is considered a tool for social mobilization and professional success. Pennington and Waxler emphasize in *Why Reading Books Still Matters* (2017) that traditional literary practices serve as critical tools for identity formation, empathy, and reflective thinking, all of which are diminished when reading is replaced by passive media consumption.

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has observed a downfall in writing as well. There has been a shift from structured writing tasks to informal, fragmented communication influenced by texting and social media. This change has eroded formal writing conventions, making revival efforts in academic settings increasingly difficult (NCTE Report 2009). Similarly, Gail E. Tompkins in *Teaching Writing: Balancing Process and Product* (2011) advocates that reading and intellectual synthesis emerge most powerfully when students engage actively with ideas through writing. This necessity for consistent reading and writing skills among undergraduate students motivated the researcher to introduce these activities into their academic routine.

Statement of Problems

Students who have better English communication skills score well in their semester exams and get placed in on-campus and off-campus recruitment easily. The need for skilled candidates with communicative competency is high in job markets and MNCs, whereas there is a shortage in our country.

Rationale

Taking into consideration the problems stated earlier, it is imperative to introduce reading and writing skills in English. The employability range of college students has expanded in the present century due to communication skills; hence, learners have to develop their reading

and writing skills in English.

Why Reading and Writing Skills?

Reading is a continuous process, and with reading input, learners can speak, use correct spelling, and generate accurate sentences in English. Augmenting skills in the English language is a process that moves from simple to complex ideas. When a student is found to be weaker in basic language skills, it would be a futile effort on the part of the teacher to teach advanced topics in his or her domain. It is necessary for all learners to develop self-paced reading and writing skills.

Research Design

To assess the learners' profile and measure the productivity of reading and writing activities, data were collected via Google Forms. A pilot study was earmarked from 16-06-25 to 16-07-25. The template included pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading (journal writing) activities. Learners were asked to read and write using the prescribed template (sample) as follows:

Reading and Journal Writing

Pre-Reading Activity

Date: 16/06/2025 **Read In** 11:15 am – **Read Out**11:40 am

Source of Reading: Newspaper (The Hindu 16/06/2025)

While Reading Activity

Keywords/ Glossary

Establish – (Verb) to start or create an organisation, a system, etc.

Pivotal – (Adjective) of crucial importance in relation to the development or success of something else.

Perpetuate – (Verb) to cause something to continue for a long time.

Doctrine – (Noun) a set of beliefs that is taught by a church, political party, etc.

Invoke – (Verb) cite or appeal to someone or something as an authority for an action or in support of an argument.

Cognitive – (Adjective) connected with the process of understanding.

Utopian – (Noun) an idealistic reformer. (Adjective) modelled on or aiming for a state in which everything is perfect; idealistic.

Post-Reading Activity

Summary of the passage

Provide a suitable title

I've learned that the Dravidian Movement began in early 20th century South India, driven by E.V. Ramasamy, known as Thanthai Periyar. He challenged social injustices rooted in Brahminical beliefs and advocated for scientific reasoning, aiming to build a more equitable society, particularly in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. His influential work, *Ini Varum Ulagam*, highlights the importance of scientific progress for humanity's future.

Reviewed by: (Any of your class mates)

Signature with date:

As provided above, every learner is expected to do the reading and journal writing activities on 24x7. Reviewed by have been done as a 'peer review exercise', so as to ensure reading and writing takes place as an everyday activity.

To appraise the above study, data was collected from a total of 48 students, studying from I year BBA & BBA-Digital Marketing (DM). Questionnaire was self-explanatory and relevant questions were included in simple language. Questions are the combination of both closed and non-closed patterns. The respondents were asked to provide their personal and professional details for the reliability of information. Very few questions were open ended and it was to collect the opinion and information appropriately. Suitable and different scales are equipped. Lickert scale, ordinal scale and multi-dimensional scale were incorporated to interpret the respondents' information. The questionnaire (Annexure I) integrated two sections which contained 17 questions as follows:

I. Personal and professional details (1-4)

II. Appropriate questions on reading & writing habits.(5-17)

The information collected was consolidated to find out the challenges of target group (TG).

Interpretation of Data Analysis

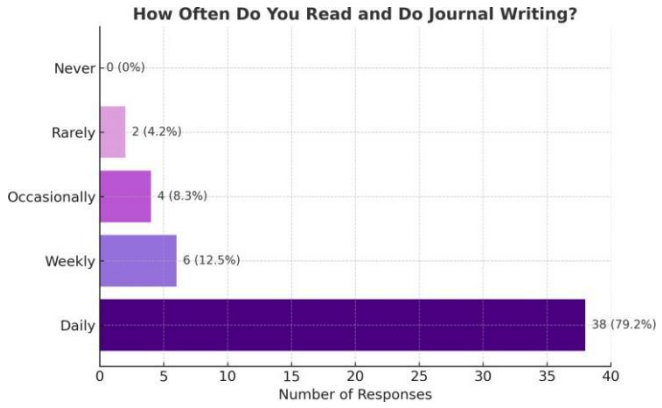

Fig. 1.1.

Fig. 1.1, analysis divulges that a significant majority of respondents (79.2%) engage in reading and journal writing on a daily basis. As catch them young, this exercise introduced from day one of Semester I is well received by the learners. However, a smaller section (12.5%) practices it weekly, while 8.3% do so occasionally and 4.2% rarely. Remarkably, none of the learners reported 'never,' which reveals that all learners' have shown positive attitude toward reading and journaling. It was followed by preferred types of 'reading material' as illustrated below:

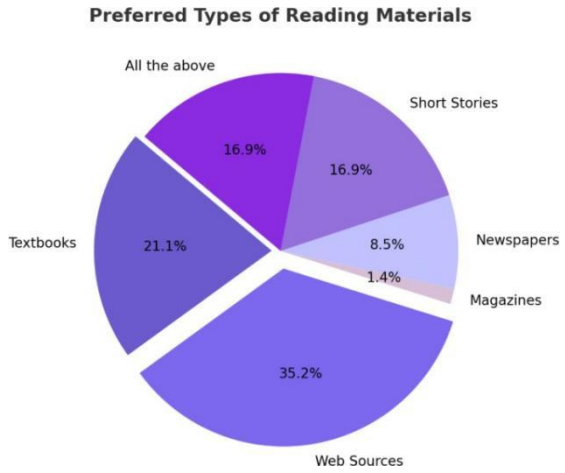

Fig. 1.2.

Fig. 1.2. illustrates that 52.1% of the learners rely on web sources to choose their reading material. It is a clear indication for the teachers to shift from conventional textbooks to digital reading forums. However, textbooks (31.3%) and short stories (25%) do not completely lose its charm among the youngsters. Once the dominant reading source was newspapers but at present (12.5%) only preferred it and the least favoured reading source is magazines (2.1%). Fig. 1.3. inference on source of reading material as follows:

Reading Material Source	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Library	1	2.1
Book Store	4	8.3
Online/Social Media	44	91.7
Friends/Family	6	12.5
Others	3	6.3

Fig. 1.3.

The above table confirms that the primary source of reading materials among the young learners are online/social media resources (91.7%) whereas the other sources of reading material has become insignificant. This finding confirms the dominance of digital sphere and a whistle blow for the teachers to engage the learners with digital content for English language development. It is followed by the analysis on 'Reading Hour'.

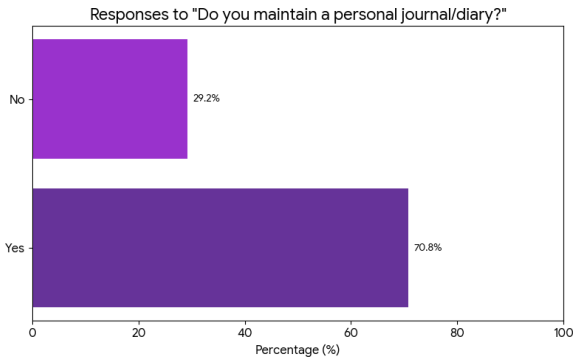

Fig. 1.4.

This bar diagram, – Fig. 1.4. demonstrates the utilisation of reading hours. Majorly (83.3%) they spent less than 1 hour to read and no respondents read 3-5 hours. This is a serious concern to be addressed for academic success and employment. Another finding is the respondents indulge in reading and writing is to 'improve the language skills'. Nobody has opted 'employability' which reveals their unawareness of English language proficiency for job opportunity. Further the study investigated the writing habits of the respondents. It shows that out of 48 respondents 34 of them are maintaining a personal diary/journal and writing everyday as per the direction of the course teacher. 37 respondents are following the systematic approach of pre-reading, while reading and post reading activities.

The next is the prominent data about the learners' reading and journal writing activity.

Fig. -1.5.

Fig. 1.5. reveals the students' engagement in reading and journal writing between 16-06-25 and 17-07-25. On the contrary to journal writing responses, this chart presents that a majority of responses were scattered and noteworthy engagement happened in the range of 15 to 20 days only. The interpretation from Q13 to Q15 expresses a fragmented engagement of reading and journal writing. However 77.1% agreed that regular reading and journal writing will hone their English language skills. This again highlights intervention and support required for reading and reflective writing to the learners. The challenges quoted by the respondents for Q15 are - lack of time (41.7%), lack of interest (25%) and difficulty in

understanding English (22.9%) and a few respondents mentioned lack of access to books (8.3%). Consolidating the data urges the need for orienting time management, motivation and scaffolding support. The next is the finding about the challenges faced by respondents for journal writing as follows:

Challenge	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)
Not Enough Time	23	47.9
Don't Know what to write and how to write	14	29.2
Lack of Motivation	10	20.8
All the above	9	18.8

Fig. -1.6.

The finding from Fig. 1.6. focuses again on the factor 'Don't Know What to Write and How to Write' insists the training required for writing. 'All the above' is opted by 9 respondents is an evidence for the need on motivation and more necessity for writing practices.

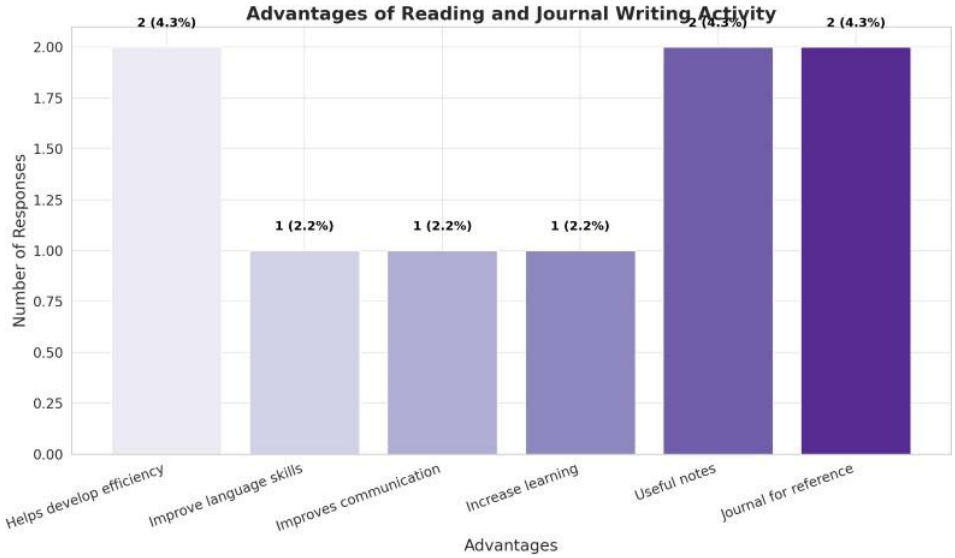

Fig. – 1.7.

Final question is open ended (Q17) and asked the respondents to provide the advantages of reading and journal writing activity. Respondents have

stated that helps develop efficiency, useful for note making, journal for reference, improves language skills, improves communication and increase learning. It implies that the learners show positive attitude and accepts the advantage of reading and journal writing activities.

Findings

The above survey made the author to understand the pressing need to orient young learners towards time management, scaffolding in reading and journal writing activities and English language awareness for employment. Everyday reading and journaling appears to be right the choice. Both teacher and learners found the tasks were appealing and useful for language production.

Limitations

It was experimented with a set of students for a specific period only. Consistent reminder and follow up from teacher only made the learners to do the activities. Learners' self-study autonomy is insufficient.

Future Scope for Research

In any higher education, research ideas/experiments cannot be included immediately but later on, relevant pedagogical practices will amend the gap. Thus enhancing learners' autonomy for self-study, shifting to digital platform, role of a teacher, social media content relevance for English language proficiency and English language skills for employment are relevant for further research.

Conclusion

The idea on reading and journaling are well received. It is appropriate that communication skills can be acquired through regular practice. The young learners shift from print media to social media for language development to be approved. Teachers should be willing to do needs-analysis to help the young learners. Growing needs of industry demands more candidates with communication skills in English. English teachers should be willing to try out more classroom experiments to benefit the learners' community.

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HAND-BLOCK PRINTING IN BAGRU AND SANGANER: THE TEXTILE LEGACY

Dr. Deepa Vanjani
Head and Professor, Department of English,
PMB Gujarati Science College, Indore.

Abstract: Textiles in India have moorings, both religious and mystical, abundant and varied. Linen, silk, and cotton are symbols of an ancient legacy. A country as diverse and pluralistic as ours is imbued with textile traditions. *Bagru, Sanganeri, Kota Doria,* and *Lehariya* are household names and examples of the rich diversity of textiles of Rajasthan, a testimony of the cultural heritage of our country. The proposed paper will focus on the *Bagru* and *Sanganer* hand-block textile legacy of the state. New trends have been set; the traditions have blended with modernity, but the old and new are singing along well. Despite technological and industrial advancements, the age-old traditions of dyeing, making blocks, and hand printing on fabric have been kept alive. By employing ethnographic research methodology, facts have been collected over a period of a few months which will be used in the paper.

Keywords: *Bagru, Sanganer*, Hand-Block, Natural Dyes, and Hand-Printing.

Introduction

"India's handmade textiles are embedded in every aspect of its identity. The history of these fabrics dates back at least 6,000 years… Centuries of global trade have been shaped by the export of Indian textiles and patterns, in demand around the world. These celebrated handmade textiles even survived the threat of industrialisation, instead uniting India as symbols of power and protest." Printing, weaving, dyeing, embroidery—almost every aspect of textiles has existed in India since times immemorial. "Pliny mentions that '*Rangai Chapai'* (colorful printing) originated in India and was later spread to countries like Egypt." Despite the challenges faced during the British era and subsequently due to industrialisation, this heritage has been preserved in India. Rajasthan is just one of the states that has a huge variety of textile traditions to boast of.

The research paper follows the ethnographic research method by taking up three case studies in Jaipur, *Sanganer*, and *Bagru* respectively, to study how the tradition of hand-block printing using organic colours has been kept alive, which is a huge contribution to the continuance of the Indian cultural heritage. The printers and dyers all belong to the Chhipa community. "The term *'Chhipa'* has a history as ancient as that of dyeing, printing, and other related trades like *Chundari* and *Bandhej.* The art of printing is associated with the Indus Valley Civilization. When the *Chhipa*

community took up the craft, they used colorful threads to create intricate patterns on fabrics through the process of printing. This unique art form eventually spread from India to other countries."

Dabu Printing in Jaipur

The starting point of the study of hand-block printing of *Bagru* and *Sanganer* was the Jaipur Literature Festival. Since there are quite a few articles available on the same, the idea was to pursue the ethnographic method, as talking about the background of these textiles or their origin is not the purpose of this paper. The intent is to see how these ancient traditions are continuing in the contemporary scenario and have carried forward the cultural legacy of not just the state of Rajasthan but also of our country.

The fact that textiles have been our legacy for centuries is quite widely known. One can find references to clothes and fabrics in the Valmiki Ramayana as well. Rajasthan has many woven tales to showcase, from *Bagru* to *Sanganeri,* to *Bandhej* and *Kota Doria*.

Bagru and *Sanganer* are close to the Pink City, Jaipur. During the Jaipur Literature Festival 2025, the researcher met Nisha Nama, who had her stall at the JLF venue. Nisha is associated with the NGO SEWA. She comes from a family of descendants of Saint Namdev, hailing from the *Chhipa* Community, and is married into a family that has been involved in printing and dyeing for four generations. Her father-in-law, Raghunath Prasad Nama, was into printing and dyeing the Dabu print in Kala Dera, about 60 km from Jaipur. He was the first to introduce Dabu printing on silk fabric. Before him, his father, Rameshwar Prasad Nama, started the Dabu print enterprise. He sold the fabric at the market known as *Hathwada*, outside of Hawa Mahal, also visited by the Britishers.

The process comprised mixing indigo with black soil, wheat husk, and resin in a tank in their agricultural land. The colour that was most commonly prevalent in Dabu dyeing was grey, which is referred to as *Kashish* by the printers. This tradition is being carried forward by Nisha's husband. The researcher visited their shop called *Chaubundi* to meet her husband, Praveen, who runs the shop. He learned the art from his father, which is pre-Mughal, and continued through the Mughal, British, and modern periods. In Kala Dera, the old dyeing processes are still being followed, except that there has been a wider variety of colours now than before. "The colours are never the same as they are natural, and the weather makes a lot of difference," says Praveen. Since the colours are natural, they are not harmful and are in demand in India and abroad, particularly in

Europe. The *Chhipa* community has been traditionally involved in dyeing and block printing.

The Sanganer Story

The next visit was to Sanganer. Here the researcher met Tej Prakash, the owner of Nidhi Textiles. Again, hailing from the *Chhipa* Community, the family has been into the business for years now. In keeping with present-day demands, they have taken up screen printing as well, but the hand-block tradition is still retained. A big hall has tables with wax spread on them, on which the artisans fix the fabric for hand-block printing. The wax helps in sticking the cloth to the table. "This is where we started from, our roots, and we cannot get away from them; it is our heritage," says Tej Prakash. "It is a laborious process, time-consuming, and therefore many youngsters are not interested in it."

He then takes the researcher to meet Padmasree Avdhesh Kumar, his relative, who is renowned for his hand-block motifs and colours. He is the winner of the President's Award on two occasions, in 2008 and 2009, from the then President of India, Smt. Pratibha Patil. Kumar has highlighted his work internationally, and at the JECC in Jaipur, Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, while visiting his stall, printed a block on a piece of fabric. In fact, Avdhesh Ji has made hand-block Sanganeri prints a brand. This is the fifth generation of his family that is carrying forward the block-printing tradition. The use of natural organic colours made from flowers and vegetables is the hallmark of the printing. Every detail matters—from the motifs on wooden blocks to the colours and their blending and then designing the fabric.

The President of the All India Chhipa Community, Avdhesh Kumar, has done his CS from Kolkata, but he took up the family business as he wanted to preserve the heritage and tradition. He has travelled across thirty-two countries carrying ahead the textile legacy of our country.

He showed samples of the flora used for extracting colours:

1. *Amaltas phalli* (Cassia fistula pod)
2. *Anar ke chilke* (Pomegranate peels)
3. *Jamun ki chhal* (Indian blueberry bark)
4. *Mehendi ke patte* (Henna leaves)
5. *Harda powder* (Chebulic myrobalan)
6. *Aami haldi* (Wild turmeric)
7. *Dhawda flower* (Axlewood flowers)
8. Alum
9. *Aal ki lakdi* (Banyan tree wood)
10. *Akhrot ki chhal* (Walnut bark)

11. *Tesu* flowers (Flame of forest flowers)
12. *Lal chandan* (Red sandalwood)

Each ingredient is colour-specific and has a specific role. For example, alum is used as a mordant. Jamun ki chaal (bark of Indian blackberry) is used for grey colour, while amaltas phalli (pod of cassia fistula) is used for obtaining brown colour. Depending on the requirement, the fruit and flowers are boiled in a furnace. For Dabu prints and colours, he uses black soil, resin, limestone, and wheat husk. Also, there are different prints that have specific requirements; for instance, dammar print uses coal tar, and jhumardi print uses *kala lusht.*

Blocks and Colours of Bagru

Bagru is a hub of block printing. In many cases, the wooden blocks are also made in Bagru itself. The researcher visited Floral Printers in Bagru. The owner took the researcher to his shed, where the washing, drying, and printing of fabric are done. The washing of fabric, measuring it, and then dyeing it—all the steps lead finally to the printing. The printing is done with natural colours. The colour on the cloth is made steadfast by dipping the fabric in boilers with water heated on furnaces. For Dabu printing, sawdust is used after printing on fabric for the drying to happen (or any special resist technique) to separate the dye from the print. In the Seyali Bagru print, the fabric is usually black-crème. Bagru hand blocks use geometric prints mostly on indigo or dark-shade fabric. Most of the work is done by hand. New ideas have also been introduced. For example, block printing is being done on Maheshwari fabric, which is bought from Madhya Pradesh. Though techniques are largely the same as in Sanganer, the colours and motifs differ, with each village having its own stamp on the fabric. The colours in Bagru have traditionally been bolder. In either case, hand-block printing is an environment-friendly art.

Conclusion

"From start to finish, the whole process of hand-block printing is a labour of love. Wooden blocks are carved out to print the outline of the design, and separate blocks are used to fill the colours in the design. Each colour has its own block. The wooden blocks are then stamped more than a thousand times to create a pattern across the length of the cloth. The designs used are mostly traditional Indian motifs influenced by nature, beliefs, and customs of the region. This labour-intensive process is very time-consuming and actually tests the tolerance levels of the craftsman." The continuation of these traditions is an asset for the cultural milieu of India, something to be proud of, also for the fact that one has managed to blend

the old and the new, in keeping with the changing demands of the market and to create a huge demand for these fabrics and prints in markets abroad.

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MARGARET ATWOOD'S APPROACHES TO GENDERED SUBALTERNS IN *SURFACING* AND *LADY ORACLE*

[1]Dr. Audrey Sandrilla Pengal and [2]Dr. S. Venkateswaran

[1]HOD and Associate Professor, Department of Linguistic Studies, Yenepoya (Deemed to be University), Bangalore, Karnataka.

[2] Formerly Professor and Director, Regional Institute of English , Bangalore.

Abstract: The "other" has been looked at as the gendered subaltern even in evolved societies. Women writers have been expressing their concern for the gendered subaltern in their works and trying to find answers to the often-asked, "Can the subaltern speak?" They have been voicing the existential crisis experienced by the gendered subaltern—the woman. Margaret Atwood, a well-known Canadian writer, has also portrayed the pangs of the gendered subaltern in her works and tried to show a path for the subaltern to get emancipated in the process of their voices getting heard and becoming free. This paper attempts to find Atwood's approaches to the problem confronted by the suffering and alienated subaltern—the woman. The works selected are *Surfacing* and *Lady Oracle.*

Keywords: Post-Colonial, Subaltern, Decolonisation, The Other, and Existence.

Canadian literature, from the beginning of its flowering, has been addressing issues related to the rugged Canadian environment and the survival of society. The foundation of the Voice of Women, the first Canadian National Women's Organization in 1960, heralded a change in the focus of writers. This group lobbied with the federal and provincial governments in Canada on women's and peace issues. Women writers started writing about the conflicts confronted by women and the traumatic experiences faced by women in their struggle for existence. Also, the women writers began to have an affinity with the feminist movements that were emerging. They were influenced by the writings of Simone de Beauvoir, Friedan, and Robin Morgan, and their respective works, namely *The Second Sex*, *The Feminine Mystique*, and *Sisterhood Is Powerful*.

Women experienced double colonization during the colonial days. Even during the post-colonial period, they have been experiencing the same pangs of double colonization, which include oppression by colonial and patriarchal practices. Patriarchy was located in the exchange of women as commodities in the form of brides and slaves in the colonies. It was theorized as the most pervasive cultural ideology. Male dominance was denaturalized and established to be the result of social training that classifies youngsters as either feminine or masculine. The former was said to have positive attributes; it both defines and oppresses women. According

to Kate Millett, sexual politics are reinforced and perpetuated by the structure of patriarchy. She describes politics as the ways in which particular groups exercise power and authority over others. She critiques the ways in which patriarchy uses biological differences to normalize the power disparity between men and women, pointing to marriage and family structures as two important ways in which these inequalities are maintained. Postcolonial narratives have addressed the issue of patriarchy vs. matriarchy and the pangs experienced by the "other" in the gender binary. Postcolonial theory tends to regard liberal feminism as a type of neo-orientalism. Theorists and critics like Mohanty have tried to define a new third-world woman within the context of the imperialist perception of women and liberal feminists. It is said that women are silenced by liberal academic feminism when it tries to speak for or represent them. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, Gayatri Spivak inquires as to who has the right to speak. The term "subaltern" refers to non-elite, subordinated social groups in the context of subaltern studies, such as tribal people, the colonized uneducated peasantry, and the lower classes of the urban subproletariat. These groups are the focus of discourse, and their identities are shaped by positions that they do not hold. Even in the West, a gendered subaltern is denied the opportunity to speak. "Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the third-world woman caught between tradition and modernization" (Spivak, 1988). The gendered subaltern disappears because we never hear her speak about herself. Subalterns are those who are absolutely repressed or marginalized.

Margaret Atwood and Feminism

Margaret Atwood is a Canadian poet, author, and critic well-known for her feminist and mythological themes. Her works draw inspiration from conventional realist novels, where her heroine emphasizes the predicament of women worldwide who are oppressed by politics and gender. In her works, one finds a fine mixture of realism, myth, and parody, as well as postmodernist devices that subvert the certainties of traditional realism. Being associated with Mary Webster, who escaped being hanged for witchcraft in Connecticut in the seventeenth century, among the many women who have participated in feminism is Margaret Atwood.

Atwood frequently depicts patriarchal female characters in her novels, which is not surprising given that she was surrounded by stimulating debates from the female academics at Victoria College. For instance, despite the intersection of "The Edible Woman's" publication in

1969 and the second wave of feminism, Margaret Atwood maintains that she wrote it four years prior to the feminist movement and makes the case that it is feminist. According to Atwood, writers can only be said to be feminists if they deliberately work within the framework of the feminist movement.

Her wider humanitarian concerns with fundamental human rights, along with the way institutional oppression violates them, are what she considers to be her feminist issues. Her fiction offers an in-depth investigation of the barriers that women face in attaining the full recognition and enjoyment of all necessary privileges and human rights. The underlying concept of Atwood's writing is survival, which instructs women how to endure and how to live in a hostile, sexist, and male-chauvinistic society. She defines "survival" as pursuing dignity in the face of adversity and society, not only continuing one's physical existence.

Although she questions nationality and gender stereotypes and exposes cultural fictions and the artificial boundaries they impose on our understanding of ourselves and others as human beings, her writing is firmly rooted in her own cultural identity as a white and English-speaking Canadian woman. As she wrote in 1982: “If writing novels—and reading them—have any redeeming social value, it’s probably that they force you to imagine what it’s like to be somebody else. Which, increasingly, is something we all need to know.”

In order to establish their relationship to the world and to the people around them, Atwood's female protagonists have to reinvent themselves in a more autonomous and fearless manner. With her uncomfortable and bold inquiries about relationships between women and men, as well as between women, Atwood has always ventured into issues beyond the purview of the feminist movement. She has examined the relationships of mothers, daughters, young girls, and adult female partners. More recently, she has highlighted the struggles of both sexes when confronted by a femme fatale who is flamboyantly appealing.

Atwood highlights the limitations and blind spots of feminist ideology when confronted with the diversity and slipperiness of individual women in each novel, venturing into new and perilous ground with each one: "As for women, capital W, we got stuck with that for centuries. Everlasting Woman. But really, ‘Woman’ is the sum total of women. It doesn’t exist apart from that, except as an abstracted idea.” As a feminist and a nationalist, Atwood is a political writer in the widest sense, for she is interested in analyzing the dialectics of power and the shifting structures of ideologies.

Surfacing

Surfacing, Atwood's second and most poetic book, was originally published in 1972. When first published, it was reviewed "almost exclusively as a feminist or ecological treatise; in Canada, it was reviewed almost exclusively as a nationalistic one." At the surface level, Surfacing has a simple story. It portrays a woman's quest for identity, self-discovery, and the imbalance of power between sexes. The forest marks the beginning and end of Surfacing because, in Atwood's interpretation of literary history, wildness is equally important. The rural and urban areas of Canada are the settings for this regional fiction. A multicultural and geographically diversified society is reflected in the depiction of regional realities, which are informed by everyday experience. *Surfacing* (1972) is a psychological novel that follows an unnamed female narrator who returns to her childhood home, a remote island in Quebec, with three companions in search of her missing father. As she explores the wilderness and her past, she begins to unravel emotionally and mentally, confronting deep trauma, including a failed marriage, an abortion, and her complex relationship with her parents.

The novel is a blend of themes such as identity, feminism, colonialism, and nature. Through her psychological breakdown and eventual reconnection with the natural world, the narrator undergoes a symbolic transformation. By the end, she rejects the artificiality of modern life and embraces a primal, spiritual self—surfacing from emotional repression and cultural alienation. The novel is celebrated for its rich symbolism and poetic prose. It is a key text in Canadian literature and feminist writing.

A condition in which a person has the opportunity to act in accordance with their own desires is termed liberty. In a culture where men predominate, this freedom is limited to women. It is thought that men are superior to women. She is considered an irrational, non-intellectual, and weak being. Caught in this setup, the woman either revolts against or escapes from the norms set by patriarchal society. She seeks to establish a new order of existence by revolting against the current societal framework. She regularly rejects the rules of traditional society to escape from a condition of constraints and expectations.

She is discriminated against for being a girl, a wife, a mother, and a woman. She is driven to pursue a free path of her own choosing, one of rebellion or resistance. The majority of women's works consistently feature this attitude of opposition. A significant amount of women's literature might be seen as an inquiry into a communal idea of subjectivity that emphasizes the motif of identity in associations, not as an effort to develop an isolated

individual ego.

Women who fight for independence and freedom are Margaret Atwood's protagonists. In her works, Atwood, who draws from Canadian culture, captures the essence of women's individuality. Women lack the ability to overcome conventional roles owing to societal norms that the male-dominated society has imposed on them. They are unable to act and think independently because of their duties. They encounter several obstacles, both psychologically and physically, whenever they try to go beyond the barriers.

Surfacing has been largely viewed as an ecofeminist text. It reveals Atwood's rejection of the view that the man–woman relationship is similar to the colonizer–colonized relationship, in which men try to exploit women sexually and emotionally. Atwood focuses on the psychological dimensions of sexual politics, which can, as it does in the case of the protagonist, lead a woman to insanity.

Lady Oracle

Atwood's novel *Lady Oracle* explores women's roles and circumstances in a male-dominated society. The issues faced by women who are compelled to conform to rigid and predetermined gender roles are covered in the novel. The protagonist, Joan Foster, embarks on a quest for self-discovery and encounters several challenges along the way. Joan's division into manifold personalities that are not only discordant with each other but perform different behavioral functions highlights her inner conflict.

Throughout the novel, Joan describes the memories and anxieties of her childhood and adolescence. A traumatic experience during early childhood worsens Joan's self-doubt. The author shows Joan's frustration and her difficulty in coping with society when she is forced to embody a mothball at a dance recital instead of a weightless butterfly—the emblem of "natural" femininity. She says, "They're making me do it… I felt naked and exposed, as if this ridiculous dance was the truth about me and everyone could see it" (55). From that moment onward, Joan starts suffering from "the Miss Flegg Syndrome." She fears that she is always the wrong image in the eyes of the (m)other. Though she receives genuine applause for her mothball dance, she remains convinced that the individual attention she gets is of the wrong kind. Her sense of betrayal and desertion triggers a self-destructive reaction.

Besides Canadian culture, the story describes several other cultures. The patriarchal issues in several nations are made evident by Joan Foster's loneliness, her travels from one nation to another, and her encounters with a

variety of cultures. Joan journeys through distinct European cultures, including Polish, British, and Roman cultures.

Every nation has to cope with the problems of women. Atwood opposes the idea that women are members of distinct species with distinct functions. Through Joan, Atwood demonstrates how women's writing is categorized and gender-based. When Joan is "Lady Oracle," she feels empowerment in her other "self." She realizes that this woman, "who lived under the earth somewhere, or inside something, a cave or a huge building" (269), is Joan's inner self who voices her anger towards the restrictive forces of male domination. The spiritualist group she visited as a child with her aunt prompts her to try her hand at automatic writing. In her essay "Reconstructing Margaret Atwood's Protagonists," Patricia Goldblatt comments: "The protagonists of Margaret Atwood's novels are women who begin with trust in socially established paths, such as marriage, family, and friendship, but they become disillusioned and turn their happiness inward, regarding themselves as unworthy and as failures" (278).

According to Atwood, power and power struggles pervade our lives, not only in the public fields of politics and war but also in the private sphere of love and personal relationships. Atwood explores patriarchal structures of power in man–woman relationships through the narrative quest of her women protagonists. Moreover, she equates Canada's subjugation by the U.S.A. with that of women by men.

The protagonists are well-educated in Atwood's novels. All women characters share a curious ambivalence toward their crafts. It can be noted that Atwood's protagonists are able to acknowledge and also refuse victimization. The gendered subalterns can speak only when they get themselves situated in a context or environment where decolonisation of the mind is in place. Atwood suggests that self-empowerment of women alone can help the gendered subaltern speak, which can happen only when the ecology provides space for a balanced, harmonious man–woman relationship in which men and women are viewed as complementary and not as adversaries in a battle of sexes.

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THE NARRATIVE OF HEALING BY MEDICINE UNDER THE LIGHT OF LITERATURE

Sneha Sardar
PG Student, Department of English, University of Calcutta.

Abstract: The approach is to build a humanistic society. Language plays an astonishing part for an ill person. During the healing process, one will be confronted with various different situations. Art and literature act like an ointment to the ill person. Medicine greatly affects the human body and psyche. Popular culture also plays a role here. We need literature for having humanist doctors, and some strict rules should be imposed by the government for enriching a humanistic approach in the medical society.
Keywords: Language, Medicine, Art and Literature, Experience, and Popular Culture.

Introduction

Medicine has the power to heal the physical body of the human, and literature has the power to heal the soul of the human. The amalgamation of art and medicine will create a better world—a world where an ill person's heart and mind are cherished by the care of literature. Literature helps to develop critical thinking in difficult situations. Therefore, literature should be included in medical education.

Language is the Healer and the Killer

Language is a vocal weapon within itself. Through language, one can heal, and on the contrary, one can kill. Language plays a pivotal role in the journey of healing. Sometimes proverbs, stories, poems, or a famous quotation of a writer develop the mental stamina of an ill person. Language is one of the precious gifts of literature. On the contrary, language can be used as a weapon to kill someone from inside.

For example, if a person has cancer, the person will be killed from inside from that particular time. The word cancer is itself a sign of death. Therefore, doctors should be very conscious about the words and phrases they use in front of the patient and their family. Literature gives the right knowledge of language and phrase. Literature teaches people humility and patience.

Cultural Differences

Cultural differences are one of the reasons that create communication gaps between the patient and the doctors, which result in unsatisfactory treatment. One of the challenging areas within the healthcare system is the physician's ability to communicate with a patient from a culturally different background. Through effective communication, one can

bridge the gap between the patient and the doctors. There are numerous positive outcomes of effective communication between them. Effective communication has been directly linked to patients' satisfaction. The effect of a satisfied patient on physicians includes job satisfaction, reduced long duty hours, and fewer work-related issues. Effective communication brings about a proper exchange of information, which presents patients' past history and their condition during the treatment. For effective communication, a physician should have ample patience to listen to the difficulties of patients. Literature has the capacity to teach people how to be empathetic and tolerant beyond cultural differences. The world is divided by cultural differences, education, class, and status, but literature has the capacity to unite us beyond all these differences.

The Relationship between Medicine and Literature

The purpose of medicine is to heal the sick and release them from suffering. Medicine has the ability to change the physical structure of the human body, and it greatly affects the human psyche. It changes their whole narrative. It changes their perspective and their way of observing things. The relationship between literature and medicine is very complicated.

Experience is the Source of Narrative

During the healing process, what an ill person has faced can be used as a narrative that will help doctors better understand the patient's condition during the healing process. Different experiences help doctors to come to a conclusion about symptoms and the side effects of medicine. Through this, they can instruct people about the precautions to be taken.

Experience has always played a great role in literature. In the healing process, what a person sees and observes in a particular situation, what kind of behaviour he or she gets, and what kind of language he or she receives can be used as a narrative for creating art.

Materialistic Doctors

Popular culture and avaricious characteristics are the main reasons for producing materialistic doctors. Nowadays, treatment has become a business, and doctors are the businessmen. In most cases, doctors do not consider patients as human beings. They see them as a medium of unnecessary income. Doctors create tactics for their extra income, and helpless patients' families fall into those tactics.

The doctors' materialistic behaviour toward patients can be changed with the help of literature. Strict legal rules should be imposed by the government on doctors and nurses. The government should look into the ways of their extra income and seize those means. Restrictions should be imposed on behaviour and language.

Conclusion

Patients bring fear, anxiety, and self-pity into the examination room. It is the doctor's responsibility to provide hope. Studying art can help medical students think broadly before settling on a final interpretation. Literature has always played a pivotal role in revolution. A revolution is inevitable for humankind. Literature gives voice to the voiceless. At the end of the day, we all are human beings.

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"KHAGAM": A NOSTRUM FOR COLONIAL VESTIGE

[1] Sagnika Das and [2]Angika Das

[1]PG Student, Department of English, St. Xavier's University.

[2]UG Student, Department of Psychology, University of Calcutta.

Abstract: The research paper aims to explore Homi K. Bhabha's ideas of 'hybridity' and 'cultural negotiation' through Satyajit Ray's short story "Khagam." This study seeks to challenge the epistemological colonial power and knowledge by elucidating Ray's indigenous cultural representation. Further, the paper inspects the postcolonial class, caste, and capitalist politics towards indigenous tribal people and their culture by exploring Frantz Fanon's idea of 'epidermalization of inferiority' through the figure of Dhurjati Babu in "Khagam." Tracing from Stacy Alaimo's concept of transcorporeality, this paper aims to examine how Ray's portrayal of indigenous animism destabilizes colonial anthropocentrism.

Keywords: Hybridity, Epistemology, Transcorporeality, Indigenous, Animism, and Anthropocentrism.

Introduction

Satyajit Ray, in this appellative story "Khagam," draws elements from Indian folklore and mythology as well as from the stories of the Mahabharata. The Pauloma Parva in the Mahabharata tells the tale of Khagama Rishi, who turned his friend Sahasrapat into a snake. The friend disrupts his meditation by throwing a false snake and interrupts his process that could help him to be enlightened; hence, in anger, Rishi Khagama cursed him and transformed his friend into a snake. Besides the story of Rishi Khagam, Ray also likely gets inspiration from Naga mythology of India, where the snake was uplifted to a divine figure—an embodiment of knowledge and protection. However, Ray's "Khagam" is set in modern India and intentionally allegorizes the postcolonial world that still does not want to leave behind the colonial legacy.

The story revolves around Dhurjati Babu, his ideological clash with Imli Baba, and his pet Balkishan. Highly charged with Enlightenment rationality, Dhurjati Babu, ''an upper-caste savarna'' man, questions the knowledge system of Imli Baba. Based on his white scientific understanding, he emphasizes that Imli Baba is a fraud in the attire of a sadhu and is deceiving people for his own good. He has even fixated on his understanding of the ecological world; he guarantees that it is impossible to tame a King Cobra, and to prove his point, he takes an extreme path and kills the snake. He gains momentary success and begins to rationalize the mysticism of nature, yet at the end, he submits to that very mystical knowledge that he has tried to subvert.

From the beginning, nature and humans have been tied to an invisible string. With the rise of European Enlightenment rationality, the world became disenchanted for men, and it moved from ecocentrism to anthropocentrism. While the West raised humans as supreme beings between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, the indigenous men still rooted their faith in nature. But no sooner had the West arrived in the East than they began to reduce their culture, knowledge, and belief to a sub-human category. Therefore, colonialism not only drained the colonies economically but also destroyed their heterogeneous cultural identities. In the twenty-first century, though the Orient is no longer locally colonized, (as Fanon believes) colonialism still cages them psychologically and makes them question their own people and beliefs. The elite Dhurjati Babu, the preacher of Western scientific rationality, again and again wants to hear the mantra of Imli Baba that can tame Balkishan—not because he is curious to know the unknown, but because he tries to satirize the preaching of the sadhu. Moreover, his killing of an innocent snake also raises concern regarding a self-aware yet irresponsible colonial anthropocentric world that otherizes and subverts every other worldview which challenges the already established white worldview.

However, at the end, the transformation of Dhurjati projects how humans are nothing but mere beings in front of majestic nature. Through the metamorphosis of Dhurjati, Ray seemingly states that intelligence in human beings is an accident of history, and that does not make them a superior being, reasserting the ideals of posthumanism. Hence, this paper seeks to explore Satyajit Ray's take on the postcolonial posthumanist worldview, especially through the character of Dhurjati Babu in "Khagam."

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Indian literature is extensively getting attention from worldwide readers with its rapid shift in postcolonial and subaltern studies. Unlike other postcolonial theories, Indian postcolonial studies not only focus on colonial exploitation but also vocalize against deep-rooted casteism among the savarna Brahmanical society towards indigenous or tribal communities. While scholars like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Gopal Guru et al. explore this erasure of tribal culture from the mainstream, this paper seeks to examine the intersections of postcolonialism, casteism, and posthumanism through Satyajit Ray's short story "Khagam," which was previously analyzed by a few scholars in critical theory, opening a field to inspect.

The paper is likely to interpret Dhurjati Babu's desire to visit and discover Imli Baba's power and knowledge not to understand them, but to exploit and control them through the exploration of Homi K. Bhabha's idea

of hybridity and concept of the mimic man. Further, Frantz Fanon's idea of 'epidermalization of inferiority' helps to understand why Dhurjati Babu looks down on his own cultural beliefs and identities. Finally, with the use of Stacy Alaimo's theory of transcorporeality, this paper reimagines the world where the supremacy of the human body collapses, bringing out animism within humans like Dhurjati Babu and dismantling all the binary structures.

"Khagam": The Journey from Colonial Anthropocentrism to Postcolonial Transcorporeality

In 1972, "Khagam" first appeared in the Sandesh Patrika, a Bengali magazine primarily designed for children. The magazine was started by Upendrakishore Ray Chowdhury and later carried out by his son Sukumar Ray till his death in 1923. Satyajit Ray, however, revived the magazine in 1963. The magazine initially seemed to aim at young readers. However, much like his father and grandfather, Satyajit Ray's children's literature deals with various underlying, much more complex themes. The inquisitiveness of the chosen short story centers around the mysticism of nature reflected through the juxtaposition of binary opposites. Though Ray completely enlightens himself with Western scientific rationality, he equally embraces his roots—the enriched Eastern spirituality and philosophy. Hence, unlike the Western thinkers, Satyajit Ray consciously entwines colonial rationality with indigenous cultural philosophy, blurring nuanced binaries and espousing the hybrid reality of postcolonial India.

French-Algerian philosopher Jacques Derrida, in his lecture *Structure, Sign, and Play*, claimed that the binary structure is not neutral but hierarchical in nature, often privileging one structure over the 'other.' Thus, "Man, as the Renaissance slogan had it, was the measure of all other things in the universe: white Western norms of dress, behaviour, architecture, intellectual outlook, and so on provided a firm center against which deviations, aberrations, variations could be detected and identified as 'Other' and marginal." Hence, the eighteenth-century hegemonic Occident identified the Orient as a non-European backward state that is in need of being rescued. Yet, in most of the documented history of the East by the Occident, the Orient remained silent subjectively. However, K. M. Panikkar believed the Orient is orientalized not because it was discovered by Europe but because they made it.

Ray's work, as a postcolonial product, questions the white epistemological violence against indigenous people. Historical phenomena like World War and the Great Depression weakened European colonial dominance politically and economically in the twentieth century. Yet, after

decolonization, instead of embracing their own cultural identities, colonized countrymen like Dhurjati Babu, protagonist of the titled story, began to mimic the colonial cultural values and ideas. In "Khagam," Dhurjati Babu is one who can be called a byproduct of postcolonial hybridity. In his seminal work *Of Mimicry and Man*, Homi K. Bhabha rightfully draws from Samuel Weber's formulation and states that the authoritative colonial worldview otherizes the East as 'not wholly human,' and the colonized people enlightened in colonial rationalism grow a desire for a 'reformed and recognizable Other,' hence they begin to adapt or mimic the Occident. Similarly, Dhurjati Babu, a Bengali upper-caste man, believes, "The more scientific knowledge was spreading in the West… the more our people were heading towards superstition. It's a hopeless situation. It puts my back up just to think of it." Despite belonging to a postcolonial nation, his superior colonial gaze at the indigenous culture detaches him from his own identity. His autochthonous knowledge gives him the lenses of rationality that dismiss all possibilities of the fantastic while he also is curious to learn the mantra of the sadhu, making him a hybrid product of colonial vestige. However, in the process of rationalizing the mysticism of Bharatpur forest, Dhurjati Babu transforms into the being he has scrutinized earlier.

From the beginning, he keeps suggesting that holy men like Imli Baba are nothing but tricksters, yet he "too was curious at one time…" Hence, his interest in Imli Baba and his pet King Cobra blooms out of curiosity and a sense of superiority, much similar to Homi K. Bhabha's idea, where he over and again proposes that the mystical anonymity of the Orient attracted the Occident to the East. However, their approach to knowing the unknown was only restricted to the imperial and colonial framework. When Dhurjati Babu finally encounters Balkishan, the King Cobra who resides in its 'hole' without harming anyone, he still takes the life of the innocent only because it does not fit into his rational picturesque. Dhurjati's internalized fear or fascination towards Balkishan evidently echoes Frantz Fanon's idea of 'epidermalization of inferiority.'

Akin to Fanon's idea, in our present story Dhurjati Babu questions and mocks the belief system of the people of Bharatpur and dismisses the knowledge of Imli Baba as fallacious. People like Dhurjati Babu, an embodiment of colonial ideology, often exoticize their own culture as their adaptive white rational gaze creates illusory inferiority towards non-Western or subaltern knowledge. The sense of superiority and monopolization of knowledge is not only the consequence of colonial remnants but also a reflection of long-rooted casteism in Indian society.

Even before the colonial regime, the Brahmanical society dominated the education and knowledge structure; hence, the intellectual property of the indigenous people like Imli Baba comes as a threat to the homogeneous capitalist knowledge of the West-leaning Brahmanical society. Dhurjati Babu's arrogance and ignorance towards tribal rites, rituals, beliefs, and cultural knowledge systems make him take the life of the innocent Balkishan, the King Cobra, just to establish the superiority of his white knowledge.

However, in the postcolonial world, there is no place for any pseudo-scientific theory or racially charged casteism. Satyajit Ray, through movies like Devi, vocalized against religious dogmatism, and he equally criticized the anglophile nature of the Indians through his stories like "Professor Shanku," "Banku Babu Bondhu" (Bonku Babu's Friend), or "Mr. Pink." In the chosen narrative, Dhurjati Babu, the 'mimic man,' tries to reassert the superiority of his adaptive scientific knowledge over Imli Baba's indigenous mystical knowledge; however, he is drowned in that very mysticism at the end—he turns into the being he killed. The transformation of Dhurjati dismantles all anthropocentric colonial worldviews and blurs the binary.

In one of her interviews, Stacy Alaimo shows her concern regarding the Anthropocene and its lack of awareness among humans. Humans coexisted with nature and natural beings from the beginning of civilization and even before civilization; therefore, they inevitably had a "magnitude of effects on the planet," and humans are somewhat aware of their impact. But Stacy finds that this awareness is problematic because "it gives us the illusion that we're safely disconnected from the world we have negatively impacted. Some of these depictions of the Anthropocene are self-aggrandizing, taking pride in the magnitude of human force." So, this human versus nonhuman divide creates segregation and gives humans a sense of power that brings out a desire to control ecology. Many posthumanists even believe that intelligence or sentience in carbon-based bipeds is an accident of history, and it could crop up even in silicon-based creatures, placing humans in the broader edict of ecological complexity instead of separating them as some kind of supreme beings. Stacy Alaimo's idea of transcorporeality expresses a similar notion; she proposes that human bodies cannot be separated from natural bodies, rejecting the anthropocentric hierarchy. The loss of speech, identity, and body of Ray's protagonist is the result of his white anthropocentric arrogance. Through the conversion of Dhurjati Babu from a caste-coded savarna body to a transcorporeal body—the very body which disgusted him initially—Ray

breaks the created binaristic world of humanism and places humans in a posthumanist world where human beings are not separate superior entities but mere transformable bodies within a larger spectrum of ecology.

Conclusion

On the surface, "Khagam" can be read as one of those "Aesop's fables" with a moral lesson, but it has far deeper implications. It harshly criticizes colonial caste supremacy and anthropocentric worldviews. Through the character of Dhurjati Babu, Ray explores how the 'epidermalization of inferiority' spreads violence against one's own and neighboring indigenous knowledge systems. These colonial elite savarnas exoticize rather than explore the rites and rituals of tribal people, hence reflecting colonial curiosity towards the East—not because they wanted to learn, but because of their desire to possess the culture of the Adivasi people as property. However, Dhurjati's metamorphosis is not just a moral justice but a reassertion of ecocentrism and the establishment of a posthumanist world where the binaristic structures collapse—Occident and Orient, Savarna and Avarna, Human and Non-human. Hence, Balkishan, the King Cobra, who is not a mere snake but a voice of resistance to the exploitation of caste, class, and colonialism, rises as a posthumanist subaltern figure of justice that blurs the lines of discrimination.

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WHAT THEY CALLED MADNESS: THE FEMINIZATION OF EMOTION IN LITERATURE AND MEDIA

Gopica M.
PG Student, Department of English with Communicational Studies,
Christ University, Yeshwanthpur Campus, Bangalare,Karnataka.

Abstract: The paper examines how women's emotional expression has often been misunderstood as madness in patriarchal medical systems. It focuses on the works of Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, the character Rue Bennett from Euphoria, and the select lyrics of Taylor Swift. This study critiques the medical framing of female emotion as a form of gender-based silencing. It uses ideas from Elaine Showalter's feminist psychiatry, Susan Sontag's metaphor theory, and Michel Foucault's medical gaze. The research argues for seeing this so-called madness as a form of emotional resistance and reclaiming power.

Keywords: Medicalization, Feminist Critique, Emotional Resistance, Patriarchal Psychiatry, and Cultural Representation.

Introduction

Feelings are generally experienced suspiciously in women, particularly when expressed. Feeling in women is typically described as theatrical, exaggerated, or whimsical, and at times considered an indication of pathological disorder. Women's emotional lives are not regarded as rational and thoughtful in patriarchal societies, particularly those under medical or religious control, but as irrational, dangerous, or pathological. The ancient word mad has been a long-standing instrument of repression, discrediting and dismissing not only women's feelings but eventually their knowledge.

This research critically analyzes the fine dance of emotion and madness as it is constructed through the lens of gender and how women artists and writers resist this medicalized and cultural construction through literary and visual media. In a close critical reading of Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, and the HBO television show Euphoria's Rue Bennett, the research analyzes how women-authored narratives deconstruct the medicalization of the emotional and redefine the concept of madness into a politicizing metaphor.

Research Questions

1. In what ways has patriarchal psychiatry traditionally medicalized women's emotional expression, and how is this manifested in literature and media?
2. In what ways do Sylvia Plath and Virginia Woolf use literary devices to subvert the medicalization of women's feelings?

3. How does Rue Bennett from Euphoria represent contemporary versions of the "madwoman" figure in visual media?
4. To what extent can madness be reinterpreted as a form of emotional clarity and
   feminist resistance rather than a psychological disorder?

Historical Background: The Madwoman as a Cultural Figure

From the 19th-century hysteric to the institutionalized wife in *The Yellow Wallpaper,* women have been identified and made central to Western literature and medicine. The "madwoman" has literally become a fixture in Western culture. Early psychiatric classifications provide the roots for these diagnoses. Freud and Charcot were not the first to classify, but even by the early 20th century, subjectivity, not science, meant that women were often diagnosed as having hysteria—a condition identified in women, thought to be elemental in the womb (from the Greek hystera).

The hysteria diagnosis consequently represents more about the concerns of patriarchy and limiting agency than it does about women and any neurological features. Early psychiatry, and many of its consequences, remain wrapped up in the classifications of femininity that psychiatry demonized. Emotional intensity, acute memory, and a vivid imagination were considered reasons for mental instability in feminine contexts.

Early women who resisted the domestic role in their lives, exhibited sexual desire, or stood up to societal constrictions that created barriers to navigate around were often classified and institutionalized. This remains the legacy of culture and the cultural imaginings that build narratives around women and align mental health to their actions.

Theoretical Framework: Reading Madness as Resistance

This research uses three related theories to explore how society views female emotional expression as madness. It draws on Elaine Showalter's feminist psychiatry, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's theory of the "Madwoman in the Attic," and Michel Foucault's idea of the medical gaze. These perspectives highlight how literature and visual media portray madness as a form of emotional resistance against institutional, social, and narrative control.

Elaine Showalter's feminist psychiatry claims that diagnostic labels like "hysteria" and "borderline" are not objective medical facts; they instead reflect society's fears about women who challenge or go beyond gender expectations. In Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf's character Septimus is placed in an institution for being emotionally "disproportionate." This mirrors Woolf's own experiences with psychiatric facilities. Septimus's hallucinations and trauma are viewed as signs of instability rather than

sources of insight. Similarly, in *The Bell Jar*, Esther Greenwood is hospitalized and receives electroconvulsive therapy for resisting the roles expected of a wife and mother.

In *Euphoria*, Rue Bennett's grief and identity are simplified to addiction, while the deeper emotional issues, including her father's death, go unrecognized. Showalter's theory highlights how psychiatric systems transform genuine emotions into illness, effectively silencing women who express dissent.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's theory from *The Madwoman in the Attic* views literary madness in women not as illness but as symbolic resistance to patriarchal control. The madwoman figure is not a passive victim; she is a rebel—a woman whose intense feelings and creativity challenge societal norms. In *The Waves*, Woolf's character Rhoda breaks down under the weight of emotional invisibility and alienation, while Esther in *The Bell Jar* is trapped beneath a suffocating bell jar.

Rue Bennett represents this idea in a modern way. Her fragmented narration and visual style show her rejection of a linear or controlled identity. Gilbert and Gubar's perspective helps readers see these characters not as mentally ill but as emotionally expressive individuals who resist the roles forced upon them. They are prophets rather than problems.

Michel Foucault's medical gaze theory argues that madness is not simply found but shaped by institutional control. Observation, diagnosis, and treatment do not heal—they classify and regulate. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Septimus is watched and silenced by doctors who prioritize "normalcy" over empathy. Esther's experience in *The Bell Jar* shows how the mental health system strips emotional pain of its meaning with its cold methods.

Rue, in *Euphoria*, is under constant surveillance by doctors, her mother, and even herself, yet she is never truly understood. The gaze reduces her to a list of symptoms. Foucault's ideas reveal how madness becomes a category imposed by society, arising from control systems rather than personal dysfunction. These three frameworks together show that madness is often not an inherent disorder. Instead, it can be a form of protest—a way to challenge oppressive systems that prefer to medicate, mute, or marginalize women's emotional truths.

Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, and the Medicalized Self

Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath occupy literary and personal pathways that together create a transhistorical feminist discussion of women's emotional expression as madness. Though the two women are from different times, they both had psychiatric treatment, said "no thank you" to the patriarchal systematic medical institution through writing, and

killed themselves. The creative experiences of both authors are not easily classified, shattering the illusion of the binary of genius and madness, clarity and delusion.

In Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, Septimus Warren Smith represents a deeply sensitive man, and although he exhibits behaviors that the psychiatrist Sir William Bradshaw described as not adhering to "proportion" and "conversion," Septimus's inability to conform and his psychiatric struggles are a response to the light of societal norms that Woolf eschewed. Septimus's hallucinations are not a descent into incapacity or even irrational behavior, but insightful opportunities since his trauma enabled him to see the spiritual emptiness of the world. After Septimus's suicide, it was not an act of madness but a rejection against what Woolf described as an imprisoning set of expectations, emotional conformity, and refusal of "the former life of reality" by taking the way out through death.

At the same time, the titular character Clarissa Dalloway is captivated by an investment in emotional restraint. Her internal monologue throughout the narrative evokes waves of affect—longings, regrets, and desires buried deep in the psyche—using a modernist stream-of-consciousness format that also simultaneously acts as its own revolt against rational and linear thought throughout a tightly constructed bifurcated structure in which Woolf posits a split self: Clarissa, the social woman with a chronological investment in emotional restraint, and Septimus, the repressed truth-teller punished for "showing too much feeling."

Woolf extends this critique in *The Waves*, where characters such as Rhoda decompose episodically under the pressure of being emotionally untranslatable into the world around her. Rhoda, who ultimately commits suicide, collapses perception and construction. The inability to cognitively anthropomorphize separation from actuality through language leads to a dissociation which is called erasure. The polyphonic narrative form Woolf employs shifts perspectives. The fragmented thought mimics the chaos that diagnostic medicine relies on and does not seek to reproduce. Woolf, however, instead of diagnosing it, aestheticizes it.

In a like manner, Sylvia Plath's output—especially *The Bell Jar, Ariel*, and her late poems—maps the features of an emotional breakdown in a society that refuses to allow women to be valid subjects. *The Bell Jar* is more than a novel about mental illness; it is a condemnation of a culture that requires women to stifle themselves emotionally, be sexually prescriptive, and be obedient to the domestic sphere. Plath's semi-autobiographical narrator, Esther Greenwood, does not descend into

madness; rather, she descends into crisis brought about by impossible expectations of society. She constantly moves between binaries: pure and sexual, intellect and femininity, ambition and agreeing. Her bell jar metaphor makes palatable the weight of culture: "Wherever I sat / on the deck of a ship or at a street café in Paris or Bangkok / I would be sitting under the same glass bell jar, stewing in my own sour air." This is a cultural and psychological suffocation; it is not Esther who is mad—it is the world that demands she behave as if nothing is wrong. Plath's work, especially *Ariel,* elaborates on this exploration through the imagery of death and rebirth. In "Tulips," she writes: "The tulips are too excitable; it is winter here. Look how white everything is, how quiet, how snowed-in." Here, the speaker desires to feel numb not because she feels nothing, but because the world wants her to feel nothing. The tulip—an emblem of color, liveliness, and emotion—becomes intrusive. The quest for peace is really a desire to disavow the emotional performance expected of women. In "Lady Lazarus," Plath performs the speaker's suicide as a display and as resistance: "Dying is an art, like everything else. I do it exceptionally well." This is not confession but confrontation. The speaker offers a taunt. She disdains the voyeuristic culture that allows people to watch women suffer, judging and sensationalizing their breakdowns. Plath, here as with Woolf, performs madness to regain control of a narrative.

Even in her gentler moments, Plath disrupts expectations in how readers interpret her. Plath writes, in "Edge": "The woman is perfected. Her dead body wears the smile of accomplishment." The tone is chill, calculated, and unsettlingly resolute. There is no hysterical finality declared. The emotion that Woolf and Plath express takes on a measured lyricism; even the supposed illogic of madness makes sense and morphs into form—an art form rather than a disorder.

Woolf and Plath expose the double bind of women's emotions: they lead to numbness or a kind of appropriation if they are repressed, and if fitfully embraced, they will be categorized as pathological. Both Woolf and Plath's texts illuminate the mechanisms—medical, social, and discursive—through which women's voices are silenced. Yet through fictional and poetic form, they shout to make louder-than-life interpretations of their lived realities. Their suicides will undoubtedly be sensationalized by reviewers, but within a feminist critique, nothing is ever complete. They are ruptures of a world that cannot tolerate their truth. Rather than be categorized as cautionary tales in a line of literary genealogical emotional resistance, Woolf and Plath stand not as warnings to be heeded, but as critics of a world that sought their silence.

Sylvia Plath and Virginia Woolf: Poetic Madness and Gendered Pain:

Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and *Ariel* and other poems do not represent madness as individual dysfunction, but as a response to the cultural restrictions on women. Esther Greenwood in *The Bell Jar* is suffocating under the pressure of social roles—between wanting and the subservient woman's role. Her breakdown is not proof of illness, but of a world with no room for emotional nuance.

In "Lady Lazarus," Plath acts out her pain not as weakness, but as renewal and resistance. She explains: "I rise with my red hair / And I eat men like air." Here, the speaker takes control of her body and her fury, standing not as a victim but as a figure of mythic vengeance. Madness is performance and protest. Survival is a means of resisting a culture that watches women spin apart and averts its eyes.

Virginia Woolf also resists repression of emotion through form and character. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Septimus Warren Smith is oppressed by psychiatric power and authority, which insist on "proportion" and reason. Like Esther, Septimus perceives too much, feels too intensely, and is ruled out of bounds as mad. Woolf employs stream-of-consciousness to break down the distinction between perception and pathology and to imply that madness is really a kind of emotional truth.

In *The Waves*, Woolf's character Rhoda communicates in broken, poetic speech that cannot be controlled. Her ultimate suicide, like Woolf's own, is commonly interpreted as a tragedy but, as a feminist, it is an abhorrence of a world that stifles women who feel too much. In tandem, Plath and Woolf compose madness not as a failure but as perception—a literature of resistance against psychiatric and cultural erasure. Their work speaks for what society would rather treat with medication or turn a blind eye to.

Rue Bennett in *Euphoria*: Gen Z and the Aesthetic of Collapse

Rue Bennett, the protagonist in *Euphoria*, is a representation of the madwoman of today: a madwoman formed by trauma and addiction, but also by experience with digital culture, racial identity, and generational estrangement. The sequel of Rue's suffering is pathologized within the series, but her narrative voice and her frequent fourth-wall break grant her an unusual narrative authority. Importantly, Rue's suffering is not abstract; it has weight in her lived experience—loss of father, substance dependence, queer identity, and experiences of racial trauma. Afforded the social conditions under which Rue's grief and caring emotions can be separated from her identity as an addict, they are commonly truncated by others to a relapsed identity, just as psychiatric systems tangentially reduce women's

stories to DSM-5 symptom checklists. Euphoria does not romanticize Rue's suffering, but it also does not give it the grief or stigma of failure. Like Woolf and Plath before her, Rue's so-called madness is not evidence of a mind at risk of decompensation but a brave unveiling of an increasingly nihilistic world.

Madness vs. Male Melancholy: The Gender Divide

A productive comparison can be made in terms of how male emotional meltdown is represented. When male characters like Jay Gatsby, Hamlet, or The Joker experience breakdowns, they are characterized as interesting, tragic, deep, or philosophically driven characters; their madness is romanticized. Alternatively, women hardly get to experience the same privilege—when they break down, it is hardly seen as impactful or profound. They become cautionary tales or punchlines. This discrepancy builds upon Showalter's assertion regarding madness in women as weakness and madness in men as indifference. Hence, female emotions must reclaim their rightful place as insight and not simply gendered illness.

The findings of this research show that female emotional expression is often labeled as madness in patriarchal cultural and medical systems. By examining Virginia Woolf's Septimus, Sylvia Plath's Esther Greenwood, and Rue Bennett from *Euphoria*, the study suggests that what gets classified as mental illness often reflects a refusal to conform to societal norms rather than personal failure. Using ideas from Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, and Michel Foucault, the paper illustrates how madness is shaped by social factors such as institutional control, cultural fear of female independence, and attempts to suppress nonconformity.

However, literature and media challenge these views by presenting madness as a form of emotional truth and feminist resistance. These characters are not broken; they are pushing back against roles and systems that demand silence, turning madness into a strong story of survival and rebellion. Literature and television have redeployed the madwoman not as a victim of internal chaos, but as a witness to structural violence.

What patriarchal powers have assigned to madness is often a response to actual conditions of grief, oppression, pressure, and silencing. Instead of simply shunning emotion, women writers and performers have engaged it through resistance. As one encounters Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, and Rue Bennett through feminist and poststructuralist critique, one can see that culture is engaged in new definitions: the woman who breaks down is expressive and awake, not disordered or weak. She sees the cracks in the world, and she cannot look away. Her emotion does not discredit

her—it sheds light on a violent system that prefers she stays silent. In a world all too willing to pathologize emotion, this paper contends for reframing: madness is sometimes the only sane answer to a mad world.

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"IF I MUST DIE": POETRY AND RESILIENCE IN GAZA

Dr. Brian Mendonça
Assistant Professor of English,
Carmel College of Arts, Science and Commerce for Women, Nuvem, Goa.

Abstract: One of the compelling preoccupations of literature is how it comes to terms with conflict. Gaza is a war zone where the conflict continues unabated. Amid the specter of death and destruction, poets have written about what it means to be under fire. Alareer Refaat wrote the poignant poem "If I Must Die" weeks before he perished with his family in the incessant bombardment. Yet the poem ends with a positive note, imploring that his death should not be in vain—it should be a tale. Hate must be replaced by love. Poet Mosab Abu Toha wryly lists what one must do while expecting an air strike.
Keywords: Gaza, Poetry, War, Resilience, and Death.

Introduction

Perhaps one of the greatest tragedies of our time is the systematic and sustained annihilation of people, a community, and its institutions. Every day brings reports of women and children being bombed in their homes for no fault of theirs. While the world gazes in silence and collective inertia, it is the artists, poets, and musicians who have taken up the cause of the Palestinian people. It is necessary that these voices be heard—so that history may judge for itself.

Writers and their families have been killed and maimed where they slept, questioning the assault on unarmed civilians. Their only weapon is the word, and the urgency to write them is ever-present, as they may be killed as they write—or commit this final act of defiance. Nevertheless, instead of the spiraling hate that one expects, one sees a sense of equanimity. As they witness the dismemberment of their bodies and cities, they raise an epitaph for those who have fallen. In a kind of keening, they grieve over the embers of what was once their habitation, their space to live, their foothold on life. This paper is an attempt to see history through poetry or poetic prose. These are the words that will remain—even if the poets do not.

Intervention

The topics are many and diverse. Poet Doha Kahlout writes from Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip. She feels abandoned, assuming the world thinks they have gotten used to it: "This perception allows the world to rid itself of guilt about Gaza. . . Sometimes short-lived rescue efforts reach us, and at other times, the world listens to our death stories with either astonishment or objection" (10).

She provides a primer for survival: "In order to survive, you must know how to seize opportunities, to overcome the fatigue of your feet, to ignore your rough black hands, and to exhale the black smoke from your lungs" (67).

Displacement

Displacement is a central theme among writers in Gaza. Beesan Nateel says the "windows of hope" through which her grandfather looked, hoping to return to their land, have been "assassinated" (12). Amid the bewilderment of the bombing, Mohammed Al-Zaqzook scoops up his family and heads from Hamad City for the relative safety of the Khan Yunis camp. He ends with, "Every raid would leave a large number of martyrs in its wake, turning entire families into items of breaking news" (19)."I try to cry, but my eyelids are a desert for the tents of displaced refugees," writes Mayar Nateel (23). Hounded from one place to another because of the constant shelling, Yousri Alghoul's wife pleads, "Yusri, I don't want to die here. Let's move to my family's house in Jabalia camp, in the al-Jurn area. It's much safer than Gaza and its camps. I want to die with my mother" (28).

When others suddenly die and you continue to live, it is nothing less than treason—"the treason of living without you" (31), in the words of Bahaa Shahera Rouf. Fida Abu Maryam pines for the home she left behind: "We left our home by itself—with a picture of my mom, the sounds of our songs, a cup of coffee on the table, a wedding photo . . ." (70). Perplexed about where to flee to, she muses, "We left our home by itself, seeing that the bags we evacuated with were too small to contain it" (70).

The Nakba of 1948, when the Palestinians were displaced from their homeland, is often invoked—only to witness another, according to Haidar al-Ghazali (79). Referring to the current situation as "a tale of a diaspora and an ongoing Nakba" (73), Ghazali adds, "It wasn't a matter of chance to relocate to a 'safe zone'—as defined by an Occupation toasting their blood for 75 years—while being in an ambulance, witnessing shredded bodies burning on Salah al-Din Road" (81). Fida Abu Maryam writes, "From November 2023 to May 2024 I moved between five houses" (72). "A country forgotten in immigrant bags," is how Hashim Shalula puts it (103). Fatima Hassouna searches for the "remnants of [her] history, [her] place in this world" (118). In a surreal séance with her mother, she is "waiting for her hands to lift me / to hand me over to the [washing] machine, / to let it strip away the weight of displacement" (120). A vivid account of displacement is offered by Ruaa Hassouna from Rafah, who describes the change in their living spaces from a spacious dwelling with

five rooms to the life of a nomad with "nowhere left to belong" (127). Going through her "seventh displacement due to the war," Dunya al-Amal Ismail, who was active during the first Intifada, finds solace in "the lonely palm tree that has endured the fatigue of war and life, resting against the vastness of space" (137).

Resilience

Death is never far away. Mayar Nateel is afraid that she will be blown to bits "and my father won't be able to collect my remains in a black bag" (58). "I am trying to survive with the two shirts that I remembered to flee our house with. I am trying to survive with an intact body, not consumed by hunger," she says (57). "Sorrow is a gift given to us by the world / we are its eternal children who never grow old," Hind Joudah writes wryly (59). In deep symbolism she declares, "Dear world / We are your salt lakes," because for too long they have been shedding tears (60). "All those who have been ripped to shreds have died. I am still being shredded, yet I remain alive," writes Fatima Hassouna stoically (83).

Palestinian poets like Ghassan Kanafani, who was killed in a car bomb in 1972, and Mahmoud Darwish, regarded as Palestine's national poet, are read as inspiration for the besieged city (LaBarge 2024).

Thirsty for knowledge, Basma al-Hor "run[s] to the exit from this cage, towards a mind that rejoices in the vastness of the Earth" (87). Although he may perish, Anees Ghanima implores, "Leave just one flower upon my grave / . . . await the funeral processions of my friends . . . / let it be proof of their life" (100).

Measuring her words, Anees Ghanima declares, "Today, I rise . . . / Today I cast across all distances . . . / this lineage chooses to live" (156). Ordered to move south of Gaza, Muhammad Ghaneem finds solace in his grandfather, who was 13 at the time of the Nakba (158). He says, "We go around in circles, prayers, supplications; we have become dervishes" (159). The metaphor of dance helps them to stanch their pain.

The teenager Sara al-Assar bids adieu to all the members of her family as she waits for death. She envisages her leave-taking to her older brothers, who she seldom sees: "Don't be afraid if we meet our deaths, but don't forget us. I don't want you to cry because my heart has no wish to see you sad. I want you both to have a life where you can both do whatever you want" (92).

During the bombardment, they comfort each other. Ramin, who has lost her family due to the bombing, leans her head on Husam Marouf's left thigh. When Marouf's house gets bombed, Ramin dies. Still, Marouf continues to feel severe pain in his thigh (99).

Despite the fact that "every centimetre I tread over has become a grave" (103), Hashim Shalula writes, "But a sea within me was saying: / futility is temporary; / the dust will infiltrate beyond the borders of the siege" (102). Dodging the tanks, Nahil Mohanna exults in the fact that "We had a new lease of life for the fourth time" (112). But for those who have disappeared, each day is torture for their families as they wait for closure. Yet they continue to hope—day after day—sometimes till even the 200th day, as witnessed by Hanna Ahmad (143).

Memories

In a world inured by war, Ahmed Mortaja fears the time when "it will become normal to bomb a house . . . It will become normal for a child to die" (35). Palestinian poet and journalist Raed Shniowra looks on Gaza City after the ground incursion in 2023 and writes, "With my own eyes, I watched the city dying, falling, being pulverized, ground to bits, marred beyond recognition as it was turned to rubble and dust, its blood spattering me in the face. But I didn't cry. My eyes didn't shed a single tear" (40). Shniowra references the "flour massacre," which occurred on Gaza's seacoast on 29 February 2024, when more than 100 unarmed Palestinians were shot dead while trying to reach trucks carrying flour. Curiously, this epochal event is elided by Nahil Mohana when she describes the preparation for kneading and baking the flour ("as white as the moon") in Gaza on 28 February 2024—skipping to the air-dropping of food in Gaza by Jordanian planes on 1 March 2024.

Song

Mahmoud Jouda references the songs of the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum ("This Is My Night") in the Rafah camp (52–53). One of the girls sings the song of the Egyptian singer and actress Shadia, viz. "Tell the Sun not to Blaze so Bright. / My Darling is Leaving in the Morning." Rafah, on the southern boundary of the Gaza Strip, shares a 12 km border with Sinai, controlled by Egypt. Jouda dwells on the significance of the song sung at weddings and funerals in Palestine, viz. "He closed his eyes and held out his hand for henna."

At Rafah, he sees a beautiful girl singing it for her groom. A little distance away, he sees an elderly woman mournfully singing the same song, stroking her husband's shrouded face. Full of the joy of life, Mayar Nateel strolls by the sea with her family on Al-Sudaniya Beach, listening to Umm Kulthum's voice "ring[ing] along the Corniche cafes" (56). It shows that songs have no boundaries. Music sustains them. Distraught that his girlfriend Lynn has died, Bahaa Sharera Rouf recalls she loved listening to the Egyptian band Cairokee (165). Their song "Telk Qadeya," written in the

aftermath of the October invasion of 2023, exposes the complicity of nations in the Gaza genocide (Grira 2024).

Epilogue

Overwhelmed by the tents on the beach in Gaza, Muhammad Taysir leaves, only to hope that on his return they will not be there (135). Yet the tents are still there, and the seagulls are disoriented about who has taken over their seashores.

Batool Abu Akleen is clear about who she wants around her when she is buried: "I want a grave in a cemetery / with neighbours who have wrapped themselves in life, / flirted with it, / planted a kiss on each of its cheeks, then slumbered" (173). This is just what Mostafa does when he marries Aisha in Rafah, in a lyrical story by Aseel Salama (168).

To choose to hope is courageous, and that cannot be denied to the Palestinian people. Mahmoud Alshaer has the last word: "I have a story to tell about the genocide—how it destroyed all the worlds that we once knew inside the Gaza Strip; how, by managing our lives, we built temporary worlds while the genocide continued; and how we will always choose life and hope for the end of the war and the return of life" (179).

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INTERSECTIONALITY AND GENDER: UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF THE MARGINALIZED GROUPS IN TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED*

Dr. Priyadarshini S
Asst. Professor and HOD, Dept. of English,
NSS Hindu College, Changanacherry, Kerala.

Abstract: Intersectionality can be considered a frequently researched term in connection with gender studies. The word comes from the works of Black feminist writers who portrayed the inequalities and injustices done to women and classified themselves as marginalized and oppressed. It argues for a large-scale intervention on the part of society to address the intensifying gaps in racism, sexism, and other forms of inequalities that have existed from time immemorial.
Keywords: Intersectionality, Trauma, Memory, and Psychology

Intersectionality, a framework developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, highlights how various social and political identities like race, gender, and class combine to create unique experiences of discrimination and advantage. Intersectionality emerges from Black feminists and activists who were usually excluded from the privileged layers of society. They were often given a secondary role by mainstream feminist and social activists.

Marginalized fiction echoes the voices of those who have been historically silenced by various factors, including denial of basic rights and privileges, and offers readers a perspective of the world without uniformity. By connecting with the feelings and aspirations of underprivileged individuals, readers develop an empathetic understanding toward marginalized communities. Marginalized fiction challenges both traditional and cultural stereotypes and seeks a greater understanding of marginalized communities.

As we delve into the psyche of authors and their works, one finds striking themes of marginalization and intersectionality, especially in the works of American novelist Toni Morrison. She won the much-acclaimed Pulitzer Prize for *Beloved* in 1987. Morrison's Beloved offers a powerful narrative that provides realistic insights into the traumatic experiences of marginalized individuals. The novel focuses on the partially healed and still-open wounds of African Americans, drawing attention to the suffering of enslaved women during and after the horrors of slavery in the United States. It is a story of resilience and faith, portraying the rebuilding of lives after trauma.

The novel's narrative portrays how the Black community was trapped within the ensnaring grip of slavery and racial discrimination,

suffering injustice and trauma under its dominance. The socio-cultural and psychological effects of slavery on the Black community are explored, highlighting the destruction of cultural values and identity and the ruinous impact of racial discrimination on individuals and cultural groups. The protagonist's journey, in particular, showcases the horrendous realities faced by enslaved people and the challenges in finding freedom and rebuilding their lives even after gaining it.

Beloved, the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of Toni Morrison, navigates the theme that Black women are the main victims of slavery due to several factors—cultural, social, economic, and psychological. Throughout their lives, they face innumerable burdens of race, class, and gender discrimination that push them further toward the margins. Morrison delves into the intersection of race and gender, showcasing the struggles of Black women navigating a society that marginalizes them in all spheres of life. Intersectionality plays a crucial role in *Beloved* by understanding the complex struggles faced by the protagonists, particularly Black women, due to slavery.

In *Beloved*, the characters, especially Black women like Sethe and Baby Suggs, undergo multiple forms of oppression simultaneously due to their intersecting identities of race and gender. They are victims who face not only systemic racism, which lies at the core of slavery, but also sexism within a patriarchal society, further exacerbating their marginalization. Black women were subjected to the physical and psychological brutality of slavery, including sexual exploitation, while simultaneously being denied agency and freedom due to their gender.

Morrison's *Beloved* analyzes narratives that often overlook the experiences of Black women by focusing solely on either race or gender in isolation. The novel highlights the nuanced impact of the heritage of slavery on Black women, particularly on their experiences of motherhood and other human relationships. It also reveals how historical trauma continues to shape their lives in intense and complex ways. The novel explores how Black women navigate their roles as mothers, daughters, and sisters while breaking the fetters of slavery and confronting the challenges of freedom. Race and motherhood intersect significantly in the narrative. Despite immense hardship and trauma, Morrison's characters demonstrate resilience and actively work to reclaim their agency and identity. Baby Suggs, after gaining freedom, becomes a pillar of strength and support for her community, offering solace and spiritual healing to other Black individuals grappling with trauma. The depiction of resilience, empowerment, and the intersection of race and gender is a powerful aspect of Morrison's work,

providing an important framework for understanding the ongoing struggles of Black women in America.

Beloved showcases the profound impact of intersectionality by highlighting how the simultaneous and interdependent forces of racism, sexism, and historical trauma shape Black women's experiences. By exploring these intersecting oppressions and the characters' responses, Morrison challenges readers to consider the complexities of identity, inequality, and the pursuit of freedom in the context of American history. Morrison adds flesh and blood to Sethe's experiences as a slave, universalizing her trauma and enabling readers to understand her mental anguish from her perspective rather than judging it by conventional societal norms. The author provides a historical counter-discourse aimed at subverting attempts to misrepresent or distort the history of Black people and challenges prevailing narratives that overlook or diminish their experiences.

Exploring different aspects of trauma, memory, and intersectionality in Beloved, the narrative delves into the complexities of both psychological and cultural trauma. The experiences of Sethe, haunted by the murder of her child, "124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom" (1)—run throughout the novel as haunting memories. Her daughter, no longer alive in this world, was the result of a valiant decision: a strong choice made by a mother to protect her unborn child from atrocities across generations. The novel illustrates how individuals grapple with the devastating effects of the past, highlighting the significance of acknowledging and confronting traumatic memories as a step toward healing. "To Sethe, the future was a matter of keeping the past at bay" (42). The desire for a "better life," ironically a life devoid of fear, is the only luxury she has ever dreamed of. Yet even this dream becomes elusive as she realizes the difficulty of living a normal life without fear.

Morrison's works celebrate the resilience and perseverance of Black women, portraying their capacity to overcome seemingly unbreakable fetters. "Freeing yourself is one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another" (95). The novel emphasizes the significance of communal support and the powerful bonds within the Black community as crucial for overcoming challenges and nurturing the wounded self. "I want you to touch me on the inside part and call me my name" (116). *Beloved* offers a profound exploration of the experiences of marginalized people, providing unique insight into the dehumanizing realities of slavery. The novel illuminates not only the external oppression but also the deep psychological wounds that have become almost part of the lives of the

oppressed, with enduring effects on individuals and communities. By emphasizing the stories and perspectives of those on the margins, Morrison creates a narrative that fosters empathy, critiques dominant historical narratives, and celebrates the resilience and strength of the human spirit.

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NO MORE KEEPING EYES ON THE GROUND: RAGONING AS A SITE OF RESISTANCE IN *WHEN WOMEN WERE DRAGONS*

Chaithanya Elsa Achankunju
Assistant Professor of English,
Mar Thoma College for Women, Perumbavoor, Ernakulam, Kerala.
(Affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam)

Abstract: The paper studies dragoning as a tool of resistance against the repression of female lives. It also explores how amplification of female agency is achieved through the revision of European myths on dragons. Additionally, the paper examines how state power and science attempt to sabotage and invisibilize dragoning.
Keywords: Resistance, Agency, Power, Dragoning, and Performativity

Through the representation of women and dragons in Kelly Barnhill's *When Women Were Dragons*, the paper studies mass dragoning as a tool of resistance against the repression of female lives. It also explores how amplification of female agency is achieved through dragoning. Furthermore, it examines how rejecting one's human body and embracing the mystical body of a dragon liberates a woman from heteronormative and patriarchal social structures. The paper also explores how state power and state-controlled science attempt to sabotage and invisibilize dragoning.

When Women Were Dragons by Kelly Barnhill follows Alexandra, growing up in America during the 1950s, witnessing events with social, political, and cultural significance. The novel also details Alex's resistance against stereotypes and prejudices toward women's freedom and education. The novel centers around the fictional event of mass dragoning in 1950s and 1960s America, a period marked by radical social transformation through the Civil Rights Movement, the Cold War, and post-World War II economic expansion. This era witnessed the rise of social consciousness over individual rights, equality, liberty, and the questioning of gender roles.

The image of the ideal American woman in the 1950s was often that of a happy housewife. This skewed perception "naturalized" heteropatriarchal conditions. Reiteration of and conformity to established popular images of gender can significantly impact an individual's sense of self. As Judith Butler writes, when gender is "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (33), gender performativity can undermine the varied interests of a human being.

Conformity to the image of an ideal woman (e.g., a happy housewife) can limit female agency by controlling and restricting true aspirations. For instance, Bertha, Alex's mother, in the novel, despite being a "mathematics magician" (Barnhill 22), chooses to be a housewife, caring for her almost insensitive husband and young daughter, confining herself to domestic space and household chores. She chooses not to dragon despite the indirect references to her elder sister Marla's requests; instead, she remains committed to her maternal duties. Her husband attempts to suspend her agency with his narrow perspectives on female education and his erroneous belief that women are happiest being housewives: "What use is a college diploma for a person who is perfectly happy keeping a lovely home? Foolish use of money…" (28).

Agency is a significant concept in feminist studies, as women are often denied the ability to exercise independence and free will due to oppressive social systems and structures. "In an immediate sense, agency appears to be a straightforward idea denoting the ability of individuals to have some kind of transforming effect or impact on the world… although agency is a universal capacity, it is socially realized in a variable and unequal fashion" (McNay 39). The pressures to conform to heterosexual relationships, marriage, domestic responsibilities, and family obligations, along with being denied opportunities to pursue higher education despite intelligence and interest, are suffocating. These factors motivate women to liberate themselves from oppressive structures and exercise autonomy. Thus, dragoning becomes both the process and product that allows women to live the life they desire.

Dragoning liberates women from the performativity imposed on the body. Butler states that "the body is not a mute facticity" (129). Instead, the body is a site of repeated gendered acts. The decision to reject the gendered female body and embrace a dragon body—beyond the paradigm of masculine intelligence and capability—is subject to invisibilization. The state does not permit broadcasting news of dragoning and refuses scientific studies on the act, disciplining and punishing those who attempt it. Only one of three national news broadcasters attempted to show the film, but it was censured immediately by the FCC (fined for dissemination of obscene and profane material) and forced to suspend operations for a week before having its license reinstated. It is assumed other films existed but were either confiscated or lost over time. Too embarrassing, too inappropriate—they were dragons, "tainted… with feminine stink" (39–40). Such topics were silenced.

The gendered violence of silencing is adopted by the state because dragon bodies lie beyond its control: "…a national silence persisted… It was the silence that led to official censure, blacklists, fines, occasional jail time, the shutting down of scientific journals, and the destruction of careers" (40). Public policy frames dragoning as problematic because the state institutionalizes patriarchal systems and normalizes certain representations of gender. When women transform into dragons, they lose citizenship but gain liberation from expected gender roles, including marriage, childbearing, and domestic labor. The agency acquired through dragoning offers powerful resistance against the subjugation and deprivation of individual rights and liberties: "The women, tired of living suppressed lives, found their gaze drifting elsewhere—beyond the limits of the house, beyond the limits of the yard, beyond the limits of daily tasks… They found that their vision had widened to contain the whole sky, and beyond the sky. The more they looked, the more they longed; and the more they longed, the more they planned" (57–58).

Despite the antagonistic efforts of the state to invisibilize female dragoning, the dragons "showed up in ladies' sewing circles," "attended labor meetings," "marched with farmworkers," "joined anti-war committees" (252), and participated in "interplanetary exploration" (293). Catherine MacKinnon's radical feminist stance asserts that the state is male: "The law sees and treats women the way men see and treat women. The liberal state coercively and authoritatively constitutes the social order in the interest of men as gender—through its legitimating norms, relations to society, and substantive policies" (161–162).

Dragoning was considered "too shocking," "too embarrassing," "too… feminine" (43). "It was… like any other taboo subject—cancer, miscarriages, menstruation—spoken of in tight whispers and vague innuendoes before changing the subject" (43). People hesitated to accept dragons, believing they would disappear if ignored. Instead, more girls "stepped out of their skins and set their teeth against the sky" (276). Dragons demanded citizenship rights, including access to education. The state, not neutral, forbade science from studying dragoning and refused collaboration with scientists: "…sharing clinical findings and laboratory data" (5). Epistemic injustice was committed, as alternate narratives on dragoning were suppressed by media and state claims. In the novel, Dr. H. N. Gantz's scientific attempts to study dragoning were suspended; he was dismissed from John Hopkins University, interrogated by the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

As more dragons return to familiar spaces, assert their rights, and exercise agency, the state can no longer deny them. The dragons experience "unabashed joy" (318) through their transformation. They "litigated cases in front of state and district courts, arguing on behalf of others who, like them, were once denied a voice. They took jobs as social workers, park rangers, scientists, engineers, philosophers, farmers, and schoolteachers. They were impressively adept as builders, and were in high demand as their strength, dexterity, flight, problem-solving, and ability to breathe fire made them veritable Janes-of-all-trades" (329). Thus, dragons achieve autonomy, independence, and agency, surpassing the ideal female image in terms of body, gender, sexuality, social roles, domestic abuse, workplace discrimination, and access to education and employment.

Alexandra and her mother Bertha do not dragon, even though Bertha could. While Bertha follows conventional gender roles and succumbs to cancer, Alexandra pursues higher degrees in mathematics despite a biased academic environment. She rejects heterosexual relationships, unlike her dragooned aunt Marla, and lives with a woman of her choice. By resisting repressive power structures, she exercises agency and establishes a life of her own choosing. Biological sex is no longer considered natural; instead, Butler argues that it cannot be separated from culture and social norms. Conventional understandings of the female body as the determining factor for gender performativity are rejected. Most women in the novel embrace a majestic, mystical dragon body through free will, exploring immense possibilities of the self. By moving beyond socially, culturally, and politically constructed paradigms of gender, women experience the liberty to live lives not predetermined by customs, rituals, rules, or expectations, engaging in constant negotiation with themselves. Continuous confrontation with discriminatory and biased state systems occurs as they exercise agency.

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IMPACT OF ENGLISH EDUCATION SYSTEM AND THE 'BHADRALOK(S)' OF NINETEENTH CENTURY BENGAL: A STUDY OF MICHAEL MADHUSUDAN DUTTA'S *EKEI KI BALE SAVYATA*

Ananya Ghosh
PG Student, Department of English Language and Literature,
Adamas University, Kolkatta.

Abstract: The objective of this paper is to investigate the impact of the newly imposed English education system by the British colonizers in nineteenth-century Bengal, which reformed urban societies and resulted in the evolution of the dominant elite known as the 'Bhadralok.' The primary text for investigation is *Ekei Ki Bale Savyata* (1860) by Michael Madhusudan Dutta. It serves as a guideline to understand the cultural practices of the nineteenth-century Bengali 'Bhadralok,' who began to evolve with the introduction of the English education system initiated by Macaulay's Minute (1835). To contextualize the Bengali 'Bhadralok,' references include Sukumar Sen's *History of Bengali Literature* (1992), Sushobhan Sarkar's *On the Bengal Renaissance* (1979), J.H. Broomfield's *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society*: *Twentieth-Century Bengal* (2018), and Sumanta Banerjee's *The Parlour and the Street: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth-Century Calcutta* (1989).

Keywords: English Education System, Nineteenth-Century Bengal, 'Bhadralok,' Colonization, and Indian Modernity

Introduction

Macaulay's Minute (1835) played a major role in introducing English education in India. Being the capital of British India, the city of Calcutta enjoyed immense exposure to new educational and cultural influences. This new education system gradually reformed the upper strata of urban Bengali society, resulting in the evolution of an elite middle class, often referred to as the 'Bhadralok.' The term 'Bhadralok' was commonly used in the late nineteenth century to describe the Bengali middle class who held superior social status compared to the masses. Very few intermediate classes existed to bridge the gap between the lower and higher castes. These 'superior' people were considered 'respectable,' distinguished in their speech, dress, eating habits, housing, and general behavior.

The English sahib(s) provided many opportunities for the 'Bhadralok(s)' in eligible professions such as teaching, medicine, and law. Consequently, it was essential for the Bhadralok to learn English, the language of the ruler. Pursuing higher education abroad, often called bilat, became a popular aspiration. Michael Madhusudan Dutta himself traveled

to Bilat to study law. This paper explores the impact of English education, which claimed to bring 'modernity' to India, on the Bengali 'Bhadralok(s)' through Dutta's *Ekei Ki Bale Savyata* (1860). The paper also examines Dutta's social commentary on the practices and attitudes of the Bhadralok. According to Sukumar Sen, Dutta had great exposure to both Indian and European literature. Initially, he wrote in English but later composed works in Bengali, enriching literature in both languages. His poetry revolutionized Bengali literature by adapting and drawing inspiration from European and Indian classical works such as Dante, Milton, Homer, and the Ramayana, thereby shaping a literary taste among contemporary Bengali students with a global perspective.

The paper adopts a qualitative analysis of the text, contextualized within the evolution of the 'Bhadralok(s)' and the influence of the English education system in nineteenth-century Bengal. Commentaries by Sukumar Sen, Sushobhan Sarkar, J.H. Broomfield, Sumanta Banerjee, and Poromesh Acharya provide critical insights.

Nineteenth-Century Bengal and the 'Bhadralok'

According to Sushobhan Sarkar, nineteenth-century Calcutta, as the epicenter of British India, witnessed several important events, including the introduction of English education, new land policies, reformist movements, the Indigo Rebellion, and the First War of Indian Independence. Sukumar Sen notes that this period, marked by significant political, social, cultural, and educational changes, led to the Bengal Renaissance. As the administrative and commercial headquarters of the British Raj, Calcutta saw the establishment of railways, telegraphs, ports, and other industrial features.

Sumanta Banerjee highlights that the British administration required clerks and laborers, creating employment opportunities for those exposed to English education. The elite, with proficiency in English and familiarity with Western literature and culture, began occupying prestigious government positions, including the Indian Civil Service. This fulfilled the objective of Macaulay's Minute to create a class of Indians "Indian in blood and color but English in taste, opinions, morals, and intellect," serving as intermediaries between British rulers and Indian masses.

J.H. Broomfield, in *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society*, observes that English education became the hallmark of white-collar employment and membership in the Bhadralok community. Institutions like Hindu College (now Presidency University, 1817) and Calcutta University (1857) marked the beginning of Western education in Bengal. To become a Bhadralok was also to be 'respectable,' blending Indian and Western cultural values and

establishing a unique hybrid identity.

Dutta's *Ekei Ki Bale Savyata*: A Study

In his play, Michael Madhusudan Dutta critically comments on the practices into which the young Bengali 'bhadralok(s)' were engaged. The young 'respected' Bengali 'bhadralok,' the protagonist of the play, Naba, displays his desire to climb the social ladder by mimicking the British sahibs. As mentioned earlier, with the presentation of Macaulay's Minutes, towards the middle of nineteenth century, the city of Calcutta (present Kolkata) witnessed the advent of various educational institutes, like Hindu College (current Presidency University) that promoted the English education system in Calcutta and gradually started replacing the traditional Indian education system of *tol*(s) and *pathshala*(s). This new education system also brought a new language training for the Indians by promoting English (the language of the ruler) as a means to climb the social ladder. Thus, Naba the protagonist of this play is often seen to use various English words including slangs in his speech along with Bengali words. For instance, in many occasions he uses English words like, "trifling" (23) "memory" (24) and so on. Also, his fellow friends use many English words with a mis-pronunciation for example for "speech" they pronounce "espeech." Dutta has also portrayed this as an attempt from Naba's end to establish his identity as one of the sophisticated 'bhadralok(s).' Thus, being able to speak English like the colonizer was one of the ways to prove the eligibility to become the member of the Bengali 'bhadralok' community. English language here is shown as a symbol of modernity which highlighted the influence of western culture in the Bengali community. According to Poromesh Acharya, the language of the colonizer was beginning to appear as an opportunity for advancement in life and the symbol of being able to cope up with the changing world.

The play begins with the characters of the play, Naba and Kali were discussing about lives and a sabha (social circle), which a group of certain young Bengali 'bhadralok(s)' entitled the Liberty Hall. The apparent intention of the sabha was to discuss the social issues and to appear with critical comments about the society. Naba, envisioned this sabha as the place, where everyone's voices could be heard as a symbol of collective quest of freedom. The freedom was expressed by using the place to celebrate their cultural heritage through music, dance and consuming alcohol . To have a circle like this was also a common fashion among the Bengali intellectuals which was again restricted among the elite Bengali 'bhadralok' community. In order to be a part of the said elite circle, Naba and his fellow friends thought that such a sabha was necessary, though at

the same time the practices in this sabha seemed to be not to be intellectual in nature, for instance, two notch girls seemed to be the regular visitors of the sabha. The necessity of these women in the sabha was justified by citing the example of the presence of English women in the parties along with English men. In this same instance, one could see that Naba and his company regularly engages in the consumption of alcohol in the company of the women folk mentioned earlier, which again gets justified as the habit of the English men and women drinking alcohol together in one another's company (18-19). On many occasions, Naba along with his male company engages in conversations, where these women become the sex objects and gets commodified in their eyes as the objects of pleasure. As the reader or the audience of the play it was not very difficult to understand the economic class of Naba, as the activities he is engaging in were expensive in nature. Dutta sarcastically comments on the desire of climbing the social ladder by mimicking the other and getting alienated from oneself. Apart from the characters like Naba the playwright also engages in the critical assessment of many other characters from the different stratas of the nineteenth century Bengali society.

This binary of western and traditional cultural practices fueled between the young and the old members of the same families. The elderly members of society seemed to be conservative and tends to remain close to their traditional beliefs and practices, whereas, the young members with sometimes limited and sometimes immense exposure to the English education tend to show more love and respect for the western cultural practices, as they were trained to accept it as the superior one and also identified it a medium to reach in the closest possible proximity of the colonizer (8-9). It could be very interesting to note that, at the same time these elderly members of the family take pride in the English exposure which they have ensured for their sons, but resist when the son rejects the self in order to embrace the other. A similar conflict has been presented by Dutta in this play. Naba, never relates the true picture of his sabha to his father. His father appreciates his sons efforts of initiating an awareness about India's strive towards freedom. His father seems to be under the impression that Naba and his friend have learnt to speak against injustices after getting exposed to English education and thus, have learnt to utilise it in a fruitful manner. This play depicts a period of social change and shifting of norms, here traditional values are being challenged by emerging 'modern' attitudes. Father figures like Naba's father felt proud in their 'outdateness' under all circumstances. When he is happy with Naba's 'progressive' ideas. he submissively feels proud of his traditional beliefs

and cultural practices, whereas when he resists he feels the same way but possibly in a vehement manner. It may also signify the blending of indigenous and colonial influences. One must also notice that despite the sense of pride in both Naba and his father, though are of different kinds, Naba seems to be scared and thus, careful that his father must never come to know what happens in his sabha. He even once engages with his fellow friends and plots to murder Babaji as he seems to have developed doubts and may report the same to Naba's father. On the other hand, Naba's father though very proud of his son's 'progressive' ideas also seemed to doubt his sons activities and deputes Babaji to find out the facts. This again may lead to the cultural and social negotiations that are discussed earlier.

In this work, Dutta has created characters such as Naba, who showcases aspirations and ambitions of the younger generation of nineteenth century Bengali 'bhadralok.' Nabo adopted western customs and manners without fully integrating them into the genuine cultural context of his community. It can be also taken as a critique of those 'respected people' who adopt foreign ways without understanding their underlying values. The play has junctures where the Bengali 'bhadralok' commented on the 'Negro' as an inferior race, just as was the habit of the white English colonizer, thus, displaying traits of racial discrimination. For instance, in the encounter between the Babaji and the British Surgent (spelt in the play as surgen, which was probably the contemporary Bengali pronunciation). This Surgent was the representation of the British administration, who on the other hand refers to Indians as the 'Negro,' making his attitude of racial discrimination quite evident. According to the play, this Surgent is not at all hesitant in accepting bribe from the 'Negro' (13). Such moments captures the corruption within the colonial administration, when often boost to be one of the best administrations in the world.

Conclusion

The play explores tensions in nineteenth-century Bengali society as European influences challenge traditional norms. Culture is not static; traditions adapt and evolve. Dutta critiques the blind adoption of English education and Western customs by the Bhadralok, highlighting the potential alienation from one's own culture. Naba's experiences illustrate this negotiation between indigenous values and colonial influence.

Michael Madhusudan Dutta himself once adhered strongly to European civilization, changing his religious faith and distancing himself from his culture. In one poem, he writes: "হেবঙ্গ, ভাণ্ডারেতববববধেতন; / তাসরব, (অরবাধআবি!) অবরেলাকবে, /পে-ধন-হলারভিত্ত" (O Bengal, you

have such gems to offer, though I have neglected them while greedily seeking someone else's wealth). This excerpt reflects his later regret for initially neglecting his own culture and language. *Ekei Ki Bale Savyata* continues this reflection, offering a critical perspective on the English-educated Bhadralok(s) of nineteenth-century Bengal.

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TRANSLATION AS CULTURAL BRIDGE: GIVING VOICE TO THE MARGINALIZED IN A DIGITAL WORLD

R. Anitha @ Vanitha
Assistant Professor of English,
Sri Ram Nallamani Yadava College of Arts and Science,
Kodikurichi, Tenkasi, Tamilnadu.
(Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli)

Abstract: Translation Studies explores how languages bridge cultures and identities. This paper examines the role of translation in giving voice to marginalized communities and preserving cultural narratives. It highlights how translation goes beyond words, shaping meaning and understanding in diverse contexts. By studying literary translations, this research discusses the inclusiveness and diversity that translation brings to global literature. It argues that translation is an essential tool for cultural dialogue and shared human experiences.

Keywords: Cultural Exchange, Digital Tool, Inclusivity, Marginalized, and Mediation

Introduction

In the modern digital world, translation has become more than the conversion of words from one language to another. It serves as a cultural bridge, connecting people, ideas, and identities across borders. This paper explores how Translation Studies connects the voices of marginalized communities with digital tools that are reshaping translation practices today. It also highlights the translator's responsibility as a cultural mediator and discusses the ethical and practical challenges of translating texts with deep cultural and political meaning.

1. Translation as a Cultural Bridge

Translation is often described as a bridge that connects different worlds, enabling the flow of stories, ideas, and knowledge across linguistic and cultural barriers. Susan Bassnett observes that translation is "a means of cultural survival" (102). This is particularly true for indigenous and minority communities whose stories often remain confined to their local languages. Translation is not merely about conveying meaning; it reshapes and reinterprets it. When a text moves across linguistic boundaries, it enters new cultural, social, and historical contexts. The translator's choices determine how these contexts are balanced, making translation a deeply cultural process.

2. Giving Voice to the Marginalized

One of the most powerful roles of translation is its ability to amplify historically silenced voices. Marginalized communities often lack

access to global platforms. Through translation, their narratives reach new audiences, challenging dominant perspectives and enriching global literature. For example, African and Dalit literatures have gained international recognition through translation. Texts such as *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and Bama's *Karukku* offer insights into experiences of colonialism and caste discrimination. Translators must remain sensitive to the social realities these texts depict and avoid diluting the original voice. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak emphasizes that translation must not erase the unique cultural context of subaltern voices, describing it as an act of "intimate reading" (Spivak 181).

3. Translator as a Cultural Mediator

A translator is not merely bilingual but acts as a cultural mediator, understanding the values, beliefs, and idioms of the source language and conveying them effectively in the target language. Basil Hatim and Ian Mason describe this as a constant negotiation between linguistic equivalence and cultural relevance (12). For instance, translating proverbs or idioms requires deep cultural knowledge. A Tamil proverb like "அடி வாங்கியும் ஆசிர்வாதம் வாங்கு" (even get blessings after being beaten) carries cultural nuance that is difficult to translate directly. The translator must decide whether to adapt, explain, or retain such expressions.

4. Challenges in Translating Cultural Contexts

Translating texts reflecting marginalized experiences presents unique challenges. Many indigenous languages contain words and concepts without direct equivalents in dominant languages like English. Literal translation risks misrepresentation, while excessive adaptation can erase cultural specificity.

The debate between "domestication" and "foreignization" is central here. Lawrence Venuti argues that domesticating a text makes it more accessible but may erase its cultural difference, whereas foreignizing preserves uniqueness but may alienate unfamiliar readers (15). For example, Perumal Murugan's *Madhorubhagan* (One Part Woman), rooted in Tamil rural life, faced local bans but gained international attention through translation. Translators navigated sensitive cultural themes while preserving the story's authenticity.

5. Digital Tools: Transformation and Tension

The digital age has transformed translation practices. Tools like Google Translate, AI-assisted translation apps, and online glossaries make translation faster and more accessible. However, these tools often fail to capture context, emotion, and cultural depth. Machine translation struggles

with literature that relies on subtle nuances, wordplay, and layered meanings.

Crowdsourced translations have grown in popularity. Online communities translate web novels, manga, and folk stories, helping marginalized literature reach global audiences. Yet, quality control and ethical considerations remain concerns. Translators may lack sufficient cultural knowledge, leading to misinterpretations. Despite these challenges, digital tools have empowered translators from marginalized backgrounds to publish works independently through self-publishing platforms, blogs, and open-access journals.

6. Case Studies: Translation in a Digital World

6.1. Indigenous Languages Online

Initiatives like the Endangered Languages Project create digital spaces to translate and document dying languages. Maori and Ainu communities have used online tools to translate oral histories, preserving them for future generations. These efforts demonstrate how digital platforms can empower marginalized voices when used responsibly.

6.2. Fan Translations and Grassroots Movements

Fan translation communities play a significant role in making East Asian literature and media accessible worldwide. While these translations often lack professional oversight, they foster cultural exchange. However, fan translators face legal and ethical issues when working without authors' permissions.

6.3. AI and Literary Translation

AI-assisted translation has advanced but remains inadequate for literature. For example, AI may produce awkward or flat translations of poetry, losing rhythm and cultural connotations. Human translators remain essential for interpreting emotional undertones and cultural references.

7. Ethics and Best Practices

Responsible translation requires ethical awareness. Translators must:

- Respect the source culture and author's intent.
- Avoid cultural appropriation or misrepresentation.
- Provide context through footnotes, glossaries, or translator's notes.
- Engage with native speakers or cultural experts whenever possible.

The MLA Handbook (9th ed.) reminds researchers to credit both the original author and the translator, recognizing the creative labor involved in translation (112).

8. Building an Inclusive Translation Ecosystem

To truly use translation as a cultural bridge, the global literary community must address translation asymmetries. Most translation flows are still one-way, from dominant languages like English to others. Literature from African, Asian, and indigenous languages often remains untranslated. Supporting translation scholarships, funding independent translators, and creating digital archives for marginalized texts can help reverse this imbalance. Conferences and collaborative networks are also vital for sharing best practices and fostering cross-cultural understanding.

Conclusion

In the digital era, translation stands at the intersection of tradition and technology. It remains a powerful tool for giving voice to the marginalized and building bridges between cultures. The responsibility lies with translators, scholars, and readers to ensure that this bridge remains strong, ethical, and inclusive. Translation is more than words on a page; it is an act of cultural negotiation and respect. By embracing human insight alongside digital innovation, translation can continue to enrich global literature, celebrating the diversity of human experiences.

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RE-IMPOSING BEAUTY STANDARDS: AN ANALYSIS OF INDIAN TV ADVERTISEMENTS THROUGH THE LENS OF INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

[1.] Dr.S.Vijayalakshmi and [2.] Dr.E.Sahaya Chithra

[1.] Assistant Professor of Visual Communication, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Palayamkottai.

[2.] Assistant Professor of Artificial Intelligence, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Palayamkottai.

Abstract: Traditional Indian forms of art and skills, such as literature, paintings, drawings and sculptures historically served as channel for transmitting meaning and definition of beauty across generations, alongside rich tradition of indigenous beauty practice. The contemporary landscape, however sees of mass media increasingly incorporating cultural elements to re-impose specific physical beauty standards. This study investigates the social reflection of these advertisements specifically portrayal on an appearance, cultural symbols, and values. To provide a comprehensive understanding of cultural context and its implications for contemporary beauty norms, the study critically engages with the framework of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). Employing content analysis, this research analyzes advertisements from the top ten beauty product brands marketed in India.
Keywords: Cultural Studies, Indian Knowledge System (IKS), Physical Beauty, TV Advertising, and Content Analysis.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Concept of Beauty

Beauty is recognized as something that gives pleasure to the aesthetic senses, especially to sight. The outer beauty is described in terms of physical attractiveness. Universally, a natural balance of the body's symmetry and its harmony with nature leads to an emotion that makes the beholder feel good or attract. The perception of beauty varies from person to person; from time to time. This change in perception can occur due to various reasons. It depends on how a particular culture conceives the idea of beautyand on an individual's idea of beauty, lifestyle, and social status. In general, beauty is perceived based on a community's beliefs to which he or she belongs.

Historically, beauty is depicted in the form of paintings that talk about the different perspectives of beauty based on time and culture. A personification of people and their beauty have been expressed in various forms like art, architecture, poems, and paintings. According to Liubov Ben (2016), the mention of beauty in humans in terms of WHR (Waist-to-Hip Ratio) can be traced back to 500 BCE to 400 CE). Even in literature and art,

sharp features, well built with symmetric proportions and youthful, soft and smooth skin have been described as the essence of beauty in men and women.

Ancient Greeks used the term 'Kalos' to define beauty which means good. However, the word 'Kalos' was used to define a broad term of beauty ranging from physical to material. Following this, the Greek Philosophers such as Pythagoras and Plato came up with different ideas to describe beauty mathematically, giving an objective view of beauty (Marico, 2018). Aristotle described beauty as a virtue. Pythagoras (569-475 BC) found a strong connection between mathematics and beauty when introducing the concept of golden numbers or the golden ratio to measure beauty based on aesthetical standards. In geometric terms, the concept of beauty is measured based on different proportions of length and height, which provides visuals that are pleasing to the eyes. Any object that falls within the golden ratio is said to possess great attractiveness. Based on this golden symmetry of the golden ratio, most of the architecture in the ancient Greek period was built (Seife Charles, 2000). The classical idea of beauty in ancient Greek was defined from the concept of beauty defined by these philosophers, and it was profound in many sculptures of men and women at that time.

When ancient Greeks identified beauty in terms of virtue and mathematical calculations, Romans defined the ideal beauty from the 'western standard'. However, in the Gothic era, beauty was considered sinful based on the aesthetic canon of beauty which required a woman to have a skin as fair as possible. This involved treating skin in harmful ways. This concept was rejected in the later renaissance by humanist thinkers who considered beauty as a product of rational order and harmonious proportions. Following the renaissance, in the Age of Reason or the Age of Enlightenment, Scottish Philosopher, Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) argued for ‘unity in variety’ and ‘variety in unity’. Following him, in the eighteenth century, John Keats opined that 'beauty is truth’ and ‘truth is beauty’. The concept of beauty was studied by psychologists and neuroscientists in the 20th century and they analyzed the concept of beauty in the form of aesthetics.

The concept of beauty and the standards set to measure physical attractiveness vary worldwide. In Korea, beauty is set by skin standards .Thus, people who appear pale with double eyelids, and having a 'V' line face are considered to be beautiful. Similarly, small faces and 'X' and S shape bodies with long slender legs are found to have more physical attractiveness in Korea. Cosmetic Surgeries have become a common scenario in Korea. While Korea sees the V-shaped face as its beauty

standard, the United States of America has set its standard for beauty by having a long flowing hair, tanned skin and wrinkle-free face. Similar to Korea, beauty surgeries have become common in the United States, especially among celebrities and television person.

In U.K., a slim body, tall and toned flawless skin with fake tan is considered as beauty. In Contrast to this, South Africans consider as heavy body as a beautiful, especially women. Due to this reason, female babies are constantly fed by their mothers to achieve their ideal weight. In China, Japan, and Thailand, people having pale skin are considered beautiful. Hence people from these countries prefer not to walk in the street under the sun. In the Arab world, beautiful eyes and well-dressed men and women are considered icons of beauty (KhyatiRajvanshi,2015).

1.2. Indian Concept of Beauty

From the time of Monarchy to the present day, India has a long history of beauty standards. It is reflected widely in paintings, drawings, sculptures, and architecture. Since India is a multicultural country, the concept of beauty varies according to the culture followed in each State.Also, different standards for beauty prevailed during the rule of various kingdoms especially in the Mauryan kingdom. It is evident from the representation of women figures from the 4th to 2nd century B.C. (Dhavalikar 1999). The images primarily represent women having big breasts, wide hips and slender legs (Bracey, 2007). Similarly, braided hair, round hips and thin waistline were characteristic features of women depicted in the Shunga Period. Later in nthe Sanchi period, importance was given to the 'S-curve'for hips.

The journal of Ayurveda, from the National Institute of Ayurveda, Government of India has mentioned the usage of various ayurvedic herbs which were used in the pre -Vedic and the Vedic period that helped in enhancing a person's beauty in its article 'Beauty aids and Cosmetics in Ancient Indian Literature (2011). Dr G. Prasad et. al. (2011) mentioned that the vast literature from the pre -Vedic and Vedic era have various mentions on enhancing an individual's beauty. It also talks about, conditioning the skin, body perfumes, massage, and cleaning. Vysasakar, the author of Kamasutra, has mentioned natural products and extracts that can help maintain the body's beauty for both men and women. He also referred to natural products for face, skin, hair and lips, such as turmeric, saffron, red lead and collyrium (kajal). Additionally, he talked about the importance of wearing ornaments for both men and women to build up external beauty. These traditional practices of applying these natural cosmetics at home continued as a regular practice from one generation to another. Almost all

marriages in India highlight the significance of outward appearance through jewels, ornaments, and the use of natural beauty treatments. The importance Indians give to fair skin can be seen through matrimonial advertisements, most of which often mention that a bride with fair skin is preferable (Gelles, 2011). Fish-shaped eyes with dark kajal, long and dark hair are indicators of beauty, along with eyebrows shaped like a rainbow. Unlike women, there is no mention of beauty in eyes or hair for men except for the appearance of a good physique like a warrior, which is considered the most preferred image of beauty for a man (Gelles, 2011).

2. Review of Literatures

2.1 Concept of Beauty

The origin of beauty concept goes back to B.C 403, wherein it is derived from the word 'Kalokagathi' (Kalos means beautiful, handsome, pretty (outwardly), and 'Aagtho' means good honest, noble, courageous and worthy admiration (Marija-Ans Durrigl,2003). In ancient Greece, goodness and thoughtfulness were considered aesthetic values. According to Plato and Sappo, beauty refers to virtue, will and the ability to look upon it as beauty. Adler MJ VanDorenC (1959) further described beauty as fairness, honesty, uprightness and handsomeness. HBredin, (1986) chooses a different dimension to state the nature of beauty as a body of reflection of mind in terms of one's attitude, wherein he includes laughter also as beauty. His concept of beauty incorporates happiness, wisdom, dignity, physical attractiveness, love, self-realization and authenticity. In brief, true beauty does not come under one umbrella since its relevance lies in the hearts and minds of those who come across it.

TatasKiewicz (1970) states beauty as an object that would induce satisfaction to a suitable perceiver. Merleau-Ponty(1964), points out that anything could be described as beauty if it satisfies the senses and comes out from various sectors in the way people and objects interlink . Social constructivists stress an ever-changing, traditionally relative nature of beauty (Kubovy, 2000). Positive value and desirable goals are the definitions of beauty (Santayana, 1896/1955). Beauty is defined by Rolf Reber et al., (2004), as a link between inputs and admirably effective expressions. But Desi Prianti (2013) stresses that beauty is an external appearance such as body, looking young with a fair complexion.

Geoffrey Jones (2011) opines that globalization means westernization or Americanization. At the global level, being fair-skinned and wide-eyed are the standard criteria for determining beauty ascribed to an individual; the same is made applicable as necessary norms for determining beauty at the ramp (Van Esterik, 1996). Jones, (2010) states

that Chinese women used western shampoo and related cosmetic products to look fair and white–skinned on the cover page of beauty magazines (Angela mak's,1997). Similarly, in Japan, the western influence is found to be more when it comes to beauty. For advertisements of unique products and luxury items, only the western models are directly preferred (Engstrom Erika, 1997). Likewise, in Ghana, only white-skinned people steal the show for cosmetic advertisements, thereby not reflecting the local trend (Chisholm, 2004). It is believed that in West Africa, fair-skinned women are more attractive and economically settled in life. Racial stereotypes were popularized while advertising and it is viewed as compounded by western modernization. In Western Europe, the perception of beauty is appreciated in isolation of either the eyes or the lips of the women, and both are never clubbed together for appreciation (Mann,1968 and Jones,2010). Being inherently beautiful is not a sin, but once it gets the undue influence of artificial makeup in the name of westernization, it loses its originality and is prone to adverse effects (Valhouli, Christina, 2004). Beauty cannot be standardized for definition's sake. To believe that there is a standard definition is absurd. It is in the eye of the be holder (Valhouli& Christina,2004). The influence of the tinsel world goes far, and it creates a celebrity cult. People believe that this is the direct route to stardom, especially for women (Desi Prianti,2013). Kottak,1998 gives a different opinion that beauty products were nothing new in the 19 th century; instead, they are much elder by a century or more. He further states that the concept of beauty was in existence in the past only for biological needs to augment one's physical appearance, attraction and reproduction.

2.2. Indian Concept of Beauty

In the primitive days in India, the idea of beauty was mainly derived from Hindu Gods and Goddesses like Lord Siva and Goddess Parvathi. Accordingly, beauty was squarely identified with a narrow waist, wide eyes, and long hair regarding ladies and a warrior-like appearance to men. The artificial beauty was predominantly compared with natural beauty, reflecting significant hip, buxom breasts and narrow waist (AkashSelvaraj, 2014). At the next phase, it had different dimensions in terms of 'portrayal of beauty wherein the beauty of the body was the reflection or the extension of the beauty of the face. Accordingly, beauty was denoted through captivating paintings, murals, pictures etc. In the art and architecture throughout India, the classic example is being Ajatha cave paintings (History 200 BC to 700 AD). Elegance and grace dominated and redefined the sense of beauty from time to time; at one time, the kings and princes fell prey to the type of beauty reflected through black skin,

too(AkashSelvaraj,2014).

Colonialism in Asia reflects that white skin females are considered beautiful (Eric,2008), thus automatically paving the way for the western standard of beauty (Wagatsuma,1967). This fair skin helps them get social status, job prospects and economic prosperity (Ashikari, 2003; Goon and Leslie, 2004).In line with the above, in the Indian perspective, fairness is considered as beautiful (Franklin 1968; Hall,1995). Eric (2008) sums up more on Indian culture as white skin is deemed to be positive and a symbol of happiness, beauty, purity, and power. On top of this, the white skin and a white face are considered beautiful; it is deemed suitable with the family in a social context. The pale-skinned people were treated as noble and elite. It also meant power and superiority In India, utilizing this pitch, Lever Brothers has virtually built an empire by introducing as many fairness products as possible, clearly advertising that these products are for bright skin adding a catchy slogan, "extra fairness cream" (Arif, 2004 and Islam et al., 2006). Naturally, the parents are induced to advocate these products for their daughters (Arif 2004). Dark skinned people were viewed as labourers and field workers, those who work under the hot sun (Eric, 2008). In the same way, in the South Asian film industry, the heroines are fair and beautiful and the heroes are expected to be honest and handsome. In Indian beauty contests, the winners are incredibly tall, slim and honey-coloured. But Goon and Gravens (2003) say that fairness and paleness are two different perceptions.

2.3. Indian knowledge System(IKS) and Beauty Standards

Singh and Kumar (2019) discovered the relationship between IKS and beauty standards, through various factors. Their research findings reveals that inner beauty and self –acceptance .the same researchers also revealed that IKS helps to preserve the culture it can also promote cultural heritage. Studies also reinforce that holistic well-being and the importance of physical, mental and spiritual well-being .they also explored that importance of cultural diversity and inclusivity and beauty education which is talked about holistic beauty education and self awareness.

3. Objectives

- To do IKS-informed content analysis on TV beauty products advertising in India
- To identify and understand the cultural re-impositions and values of beauty standards in TV advertising
- To identify with how TV advertising shapes and reflects society beauty standards in India

4. Research Questions

1. What are the beauty standards and cultural symbols recalled in the TV beauty products advertisements?
2. In what ways do these advertisements impose the cultural setting and values for ideal standards of beauty?
3. How is Indian Knowledge systems (IKS) perspectives connected with the standards of beauty of those brands?

5. Theoretical Approach

This research utilizes the following theoretical frameworks:

- Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS): this study incorporates a deeper understanding of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and beauty standards.
- Cultural Studies: This research adopts a cultural studies perspective to explore the depiction of beauty standards, cultural symbols, and values within television beauty product advertisements.
- Critical Discourse Analysis: This research employs critical discourse analysis to investigate how language and visual elements are utilized to construct and perpetuate ideals of beauty and cultural values.

6. Methodology

The current study employed a content analysis approach. Analysis has been done on 10 brands of beauty products, such as L'Oréal Paris, Pond's, Nivea, Maybelline, Lakmé, Garnier, Revlon, Himalaya, Dove and VLCC TV ads aired on popular Indian channels. Among all beauty products, this study chose whitening skin and hair products alone. Those ads will be analyzed and find out the representation of beauty standards, cultural symbols, and values, using a coding scheme informed by IKS and cultural studies.

7. Discussions and findings

7.1 L'Oréal Paris

L'Oréal PariS emphasizes beauty standards such as fair skin-complexion, straight hair and slim body shape, but the advertisements use Indian models and settings which re-impose with Indian culture. It conveyed the values to focus on beauty, youth and individuality. Hence, it reflects the Westernized beauty standards which are meant to neglect the Indian knowledge system (IKS), which is connected with diverse Indian beauty traditions.

7.2 Ponds

This beauty product promotes beauty standards as fair and smooth skin and, in terms of appearance, as youthful. Ponds advertisements also use Indian models and cultural festivals, but in terms of values, it

emphasizes beauty, youth and fairness, which communicate the message of IKS neglected to showcase fair skin tone, youthful appearance, which reinforces the western context and ignores the importance of inner beauty and self-acceptance in Indian culture.

7.3 Nivea

These products' beauty standards are focused on a soft, smooth and healthy appearance and use Indian models and plots in an Indian cultural setting. Sometimes it may be neutral and maximum universal. These products' advertisements value stress about health, wellness and self-care. These values recall the IKS perspective but remain standards connected with Westernism.

7.4 Maybelline

Maybelline Beauty Standards: Promotes bold, vibrant makeup looks and a confident attitude. And it is used in Indian models and cultural settings as cultural symbols, but often with a modern, urban twist. It promotes values as to emphasizes individuality, self-expression, and confidence. In terms of IKS Perspective, Maybelline's emphasis on individuality and self-expression aligns with Indian values of diversity and pluralism, but its beauty standards remain largely Westernized.

7.5 Lakmé

Lakmé's beauty standards emphasize traditional Indian beauty standards, such as long hair and fair skin tones, and they use Indian models, cultural settings, and traditional Indian clothing for their admiration, which is connected with Indian cultural symbols, and its values connected with cultural heritage. This ad incorporates with IKS on traditional beauty standards and cultural heritage and aligns with Indian values of cultural preservation and tradition.

7.6 Garnier

This is hosted by top Indian cinema celebrities whose beauty standards promote things such as natural, effortless beauty and healthy appearance. When it comes to cultural symbols, connected with models and settings are Indian-based, but sometimes it may have universal appeal. It covers the values through its advertisements are natural health and beauty and sometimes well-being too. Its values connect with the Indian context of IKS perspectives but with a maximum western context.

7.7 Revlon

This product advertisement is portraits bold, vibrant makeup deliver a message of a confident attitude to beauty standards. Their making includes Indian models and a cultural setting as a cultural represents cultural symbols. - Beauty Standards: Focuses on bold, vibrant makeup

looks and a confident attitude. But a few times they may show off modern and urban. Its values emphasize individuality, self-expression and confidence. In these advertisements, the IKS perspective emphasizes individuality and self-expression, which is aligned with Indian values of diversity and pluralism, but its standards remain Westernized.

7.8 Himalaya

The Himalaya undergoes natural, herbal beauty and a healthy appearance as beauty standards. They have used Indian models in their advertisements and also Indian-based cultural settings and Indian clothing for those models, which are connected with cultural symbols of Indian cultural heritage, and they communicate natural beauty, health and wellness as a value of the Indian knowledge system.

7.9 Dove

Dove TV advertisements promote real, natural beauty and self-acceptance as beauty standards and, in their making, they used Indian models and Indian culturally based settings like home, but in other respects they also showed universal appeal. Their products value stresses natural beauty, self-acceptance and individuality.- Beauty Standards: Promotes real, natural beauty and self-acceptance. Through their advertisements they highlighted IKS perspective on self-acceptance and natural beauty with a pipeline with Indian beauty standards of self – awareness and inner beauty.

7.10. VLCC

Beauty Standards VLCC focused on traditional Indian beauty standards in terms of long hair, but in skin tones is the western context of fair skin tone. It showcases Indian models in traditional clothing and the setting as Indian culturally based settings. It emphasizes the values of Indian beauty, traditional and cultural heritage, but VLCC highlights Indian beauty standards and cultural heritage, which align with Indian values of cultural preservation and tradition.

8. Conclusion

Based on the discussions and findings, the following conclusions have come up from this study.

The majority of television advertisements are for beauty products in India promotes and spell out Westernized beauty standards, which are fair skin tone, straight hair and slim body and which are not accepted in an Indian context because, in India, it has diverse beauty traditions and standards. It also promotes cultural homogenization and ignores the diversity of Indian cultures such as various skin tones, hair textures and body shapes promote uniform beauty standards. These advertisements also reinforce stereotype beauty standards for both men and women.IKS is used from a marketing

perspective rather than to reinforce the Indian cultural heritage.

9. Implications

Advertisers must follow the cultural sensitivity and be aware of the diversity of Indian culture, which helps to promote the inclusion and diversity of Indian beauty standards. Indian knowledge-based systems should be incorporated in the right way, such as self-acceptance, promoting inner beauty and holistic well–being. There is a need to address the regulatory bodies that can monitor the advertisements and their concepts and to provide sufficient media literacy to understand the beauty standards and help to accept the inclusion and diversity of beauty standards in an Indian context.

10. Limitations

The limitations of the studies are that the sample size was limited to 50 advertisements for television and took only the top 10 brands, cultural context not to be generalized and methodology followed as content analysis which may be subjective and limited by the researcher's interpretations.

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RORTY'S PLURALISM AND ITS BLIND SPOT: A PRAGMATIST CASE FOR AN INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY

Aliya
Research Scholar,
Department of Philosophy, Aligarh Muslim University, Uttar Pradesh.

Abstract: The paper explores a neo-pragmatist's vision of society with special reference to Richard Rorty, offering a viable approach for cultural pluralism, emphasizing 'solidarity over foundational truths.' However, his approach comes with a significant limitation, its exclusion of religious discourse. Although Rorty has seemingly championed an open, evolving and compelling democratic societal framework, his insistence on secular civic observations marginalizes religious voices, treating them as one's private matter rather than as crucial contributors to public discourse, limiting the depth of democratic engagement in a world where religious identities remain central to many societies. So, the paper critically engages with Rorty's pragmatism, drawing on the neo-pragmatists' such as Jeffrey Stout and Cornel West, who have advocated for a more inclusive approach. **Keywords**: Democracy, Pluralism, Pragmatism, Religion, Stout, and West.

1.0 Introduction

For a long time now, pragmatic philosophy has presented a strong case against foundationalist methods in epistemology and political philosophy. Pragmatists have created frameworks for democratic engagement that put social progress and problem-solving ahead of ideological purity by placing more emphasis on practical implications than on metaphysical truths. Richard Rorty is arguably the most significant contemporary pragmatic philosopher, whose neo-pragmatism has changed discussions about democracy, knowledge, and truth in the post-foundational age and has had a big impact on discussions surrounding democracy and pluralism, today.

As part of his philosophical endeavours, Rorty thoroughly criticised conventional philosophical reasoning, especially epistemology. As a "debunking" of epistemology, pragmatism rejected the pursuit of fundamental methods for acquiring knowledge and defined truth in terms of how well it solved problems. By undermining assertions of ultimate knowledge and highlighting the contingent nature of language, the self, and the community, this anti-foundationalist position paved the way for pluralism. The democratic society envisioned by Rorty's neo-pragmatism prioritises solidarity over the pursuit of fundamental truths and by denying

any claims to ultimate knowledge or universal truth, his method provides a sophisticated framework for negotiating the challenges of cultural plurality. In a society that is becoming more varied and where traditional philosophical frameworks find it difficult to accept pluralism, this view has proven especially appealing. Rorty reframes democratic engagement as a dynamic, changing endeavour that takes into account a variety of identities and cultural narratives by emphasising solidarity above fundamental truths as he writes in "*Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*" that "the citizens of my liberal utopia would be people who had a sense of the contingency of their language of moral deliberation, and thus of their consciences, and thus of their community. They would be liberal ironists…people who combined commitment with a sense of the contingency of their own commitment" (Rorty 61).

However, Rorty's pragmatism does have one major blind spot, and that is the absence of religious discourse from public discourse. Rorty advocates for a flexible, open democratic system, but he is adamant about keeping religion out of the public eye and so, excluding religious voices from it. Rorty argues in his well-known essay "*Religion as Conversation-Stopper*," that religious debates in public undermine democratic discourse and that we ought to impose the privatisation of religion, as he contends that "The main reason religion needs to be privatised is that, in political discussion with those outside the relevant religious community, it is a conversation stopper" (Rorty 171). This restriction is especially troublesome in a society where religious identities continue to play a significant role in the moral and political commitments of many people. When we take into account Rorty's larger philosophical convictions, the tension in his method becomes clear, for he has a fundamentally foundationalist approach to religion, viewing it as fundamentally problematic for democratic discourse, even though he rejects foundationalism and welcomes contingency in the majority of areas and this contradiction restricts the inclusivity of his democratic vision and undercuts his pluralistic endeavour.

While Rorty champions secular civic engagement as essential for democratic cohesion, Jeffery Stout admits that his relegation of religion to the private sphere marginalizes a vital source of moral and civic agency for many communities. Thus, this paper critically examines Rorty's position on religion and democracy, contending that his rejection of religious discourse compromises his larger pluralistic goal. Furthermore, comparing Rorty's strategy with Jeffrey Stout's and Cornel West's more inclusive pragmatisms,

the paper attempts at showing that a truly pluralistic democracy needs to make room for a range of viewpoints, especially the religious ones. Instead of marginalizing religious voices in the public domain and deem it as a "conversation stopper," the paper argues that when religious discourse is treated with the same practical openness that Rorty promotes in other areas, it may significantly advance democratic discussion

2.0 Pragmatism and Cultural Pluralism

Pragmatism offers an account of pluralism merely by demarcating a fine line between truth and justification, reflected through the well-known works of both early as well contemporary pragmatists. We can find several variations of the pluralist canon in pragmatism literature, but our sole concern is to demonstrate and work upon the social and political arrangement of pluralism which lies under the purview of cultural pluralism: "Cultural pluralism as an explicit social philosophy arose in the U.S. around the time of WWI, as part of the influence of William James" (Callaway 221). William James, though not in a political sense, but as a metaphysician is found as a committed pluralist, as Dewey remarks, "The term pluralism is very recent in English, and James has probably done more than anyone else to give it currency" (Dewey 204). In his work, "*A Pluralistic Universe*" he depicts universe "as a home to a diversity of things strung together but never fully absorbed into a continuous whole, a work always unfinished and continually in process" (Friesline 95). This approach was then, later on carried forth by a number of James' student like Horace Kallen, Alaine Locke, and etc. as has been mentioned by John Dewey. Moreover, of those who drew inspiration, worked upon the "political implications" of James' line of thought, Dewey is one the of the most celebrated case, referred to as an "epistemic pluralist" by Cornel West, and argues that even though Dewey is often been blamed of "scientism," he didn't believe "scientific methods to be applicable or appropriate to all areas of life." Rather, Dewey maintained that "there were various "ways of knowing" each with its own procedures and mechanism of justification. Science would be one way of knowing, but art or religion could be another, and none of these can claim any privileged access to truth or reality" (West 98). One must note that Dewey's approach shouldn't be limited to intellectualism rather, it's linked to his commitment towards democracy, for "democratizing knowledge by recognizing diverse ways of knowing, is one step towards democratizing society" (Friesline 95).

However, the term "cultural pluralism" came into usage after the publication of Horace Kallen's book "*Culture and Democracy in the United States*"(1924) in which he argues that immigrant communities should be

allowed to preserve their identity and autonomy and thus, his views is best referred to as "at the proto-separatist extreme of cultural pluralism" (Hollinger 163). In a similar vein, although the term "cultural pluralism" saw its inception in the writings of Kallen, it was further employed by the African-American philosopher and a recently recognised pragmatist Alain Locke, a prominent figure, famously referred to as the "midwife" of the Harlem Renaissance. Like most African-American intellectuals, Locke places a strong emphasis on "race" and "race consciousness," and views race primarily as a cultural construct rather than been defined by biology, "primarily a matter of social heredity" and thus, for him this leads, "if soundly developed, not to cultural separation but to cultural pluralism" (Harris 213). Louis Menand argues that, Horace Kallen and Alain Locke, students of both Dewey and James developed and made respective contributions to the discourse of pragmatism and cultural pluralism in the twentieth century and further states that, "James drew no particular political conclusions from his pluralism. But Kallen and Locke and Bourne saw that if the universe is multiple and unfinished, then a society like the United States in 1915 – particularly an ethnically heterogeneous society – might be understood as multiple too" (Menand xxvii). Additionally, Menand also observes that the contemporary revival of pragmatism, marked with Richard Rorty's philosophical outlook, has been energized by cultural pluralism.

Rorty's pragmatism marks its emergence by rejecting foundationalism and essentialism, more specifically, "debunking epistemology." And, instead of asking questions like "whether or not our knowledge corresponds to reality," Rorty's pragmatism seeks answers to questions like "'How can we make the present into a richer future?" (Rorty 30) and this is how Rorty's pragmatism is connected to the discourse of cultural pluralism. Rorty's philosophical career is marked by significant philosophical as well cultural shifts from modernism to postmodernism, recognizing a varied range of social and political issues, breaking off from socially constructed narratives - in terms of either, gender, sexuality, religio-ethnic identities, and etc. – which calls for his idea of *philosophical pluralism*: "I shall use the term 'philosophical pluralism' to mean the doctrine that there is a potential infinity of equally valuable ways to lead a human life, and that these ways cannot be ranked in terms of degrees of excellence, but only in terms of their contribution to the happiness of the persons who lead them and of the communities to which these persons belong. That form of pluralism is woven into the founding documents of both utilitarianism and pragmatism" (Rorty 268). Rorty's stance on

pluralism prioritizes solidarity over truth signifying that democratic societies should focus more on minimizing cruelty and broadening the range of individuals whose interests we take into account instead of looking for metaphysical underpinnings for our political as well as moral deliberations. Ramin Jahanbegloo notes that Rorty's philosophy "was a result of border-crossing and dialogue with other cultures [...]. As a pluralist, Rorty realized that there is no such thing as a single homogeneous culture that functions as an isolated horizon. In other words, he was convinced the future of our global civilization on this fragile and vulnerable earth is de pendent on our ability to live together –with our diversities– if not in harmony at least with a capacity of dialogue and mutual understanding." Thus, the recognition of cultural diversity and stressing over the importance of conversations of differences appears to posit Rorty as an advocate for an inclusive democratic discourse: "Pluralism is the attempt to make America what the philosopher John Rawls call 'a social union of social unions', a community of communities, a nation with far more room for difference that most" (Rorty 252).

3.0 Marginalisation of Religious Voices: Rorty's Blind Spot

Rorty's critique of absolutism might leave certain individuals to question if at all they're actually part of his pluralistic vision, for despite being a pluralist and democratic, acknowledging human diversity, his vision is rarely religious. So, his approach towards religion reveals a significant limitation in his all-inclusive democratic vision. Rorty has been heavily rebuked for his understanding of religion in the public domain, in his essay "*Religion as Conversation Stopper*" a response to Stephen L. Carter's essay "*The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion*" he has made the case that religious discourses lead to democratic deliberation, and shouldn't be included in the discussion of public policy: "This compromise consists in privatizing religion - keeping it out of what Carter calls 'the public square', making it seem bad taste to bring religion into discussions of public policy" (Rorty 169). Rorty's observation on religion demonstrates a contradiction within his pluralistic framework. Where on one hand he advocates diversity and inclusivity across varied fields while on the other hand, he draws a firm line when it comes to religion. Hence, such a selective approach to pluralism raises considerable concerns over the reliability of his philosophical project.

Although, in his later essay "*Religion in the Public Square*" he tried to modify his previous stance, asserting that "So, instead of saying that religion was a conversation-stopper, I should have simply said that citizens of a democracy should try to put off invoking conversation-stoppers as long

as possible. We should do our best to keep the conversation going without citing unarguable principles, either philosophical or religious. If we are sometimes driven to such citation, we should see ourselves as having failed, not as having triumphed" (Rorty 148-9). However, throughout his several other writings it is apparently evident that he still can't think highly of religion, and that he envisions his utopia to be simply secular: "a strident secularism that denounces religion as something we need to "get over" if we are to have a truly liberal politics and culture" (Curtis 215).

Furthermore, Tracy Llanera in her paper, "*The Law of the Land Has God's Anointing – Rorty on Religion, Language and Politics*," notes that Rorty's issue with religion is associated to "the conversation-stopping mechanism that accompanies its authoritarianism. The authoritarian claims of religious language short-circuit the ability to reason critically and engage non-religious reasons in public discourse" (Llanera 47). However, such a characterization risks reducing almost every religious discourse to authoritarian claims, undermining the diversity of religious expressions and their significant contributions to democratic deliberation, as Jeffery Stout points out that Rorty even though a staunch critique of essentialism, he has entangled himself into the language of essentialism when he speaks on religion: "Rorty's generalized anti-clericalism seems to be in tension with his anti-essentialism. Just as the original version of his secularism appeared to presuppose that religion is essentially a conversation-stopper, his current anti-clericalism appears to presuppose that ecclesiastical organizations and the professionals associated with them are essentially disposed to create ill-will" (Stout 543).

4.0 Integrating Religion and Democracy: Jeffery Stout and Cornel West

In his work "*Democracy and Tradition,*" Jeffery Stout admits to the idea of democracy which stresses over public discourse which considers religious expressions as a part of its political deliberations. His democratic vision is firmly rooted in his pragmatism which he defines as "the philosophical space in which democratic rebellion against hierarchy combines with traditionalist love of virtue to form a new intellectual tradition that is indebted to both" (Stout 13). Furthermore, although he identifies himself as a non-religious individual but at the same time, unlike Rorty, rather than making huge pronouncements on religion and its inclusion in the public sphere he argues that, "I…see religion, in its public as well as its private manifestations, as ever-changing mixture of life-giving and malignant tendencies. I welcome into public conversation any fellow citizens who share the desire for justice and freedom, be they religious or

not. Because my proximate goal is to befriend all such people, the only forms of religious ideology I am interested in denouncing are the ones that wittingly or unwittingly block the path to justice and peace" (Stout 544).

In a similar vein, yet with a more radical approach, Cornel West takes his departure from Rorty's secular pragmatism and advocates "prophetic pragmatism" which "analyses the social causes of unnecessary forms of social misery, promotes moral outrage against them, and organizes different constituencies to alleviate them, yet does so with an openness to its own blindness and shortcomings" (West 1750) and, is "complemented by a democratic faith defined as a Pascalian wager on the abilities and capacities of ordinary people to participate in the decision making procedures of institutions that fundamentally regulate their lives" (Friesline 112). West's philosophy as has been expressed in the Bible, is ""an ethic of love" and he "envisions himself a modern-day prophet" advocating on behalf of the wretched of the earth." Thus, such a "prophetic" dimension can be seen as more action-oriented pragmatic approach, concerned with addressing social injustices, and advocating for a democracy that is not only inclusive but emancipatory, at the same time. His pragmatism also acknowledges the fact that religious discourse shouldn't be confined to ones' private sphere rather, it's a source of moral as well as civic engagement, and by incorporating religion into public-political discourse, West's "prophetic pragmatism" offers solutions to overcome social injustices, that Rorty's "secular pragmatism" tends to overlook.

5.0 Conclusion: Towards an Inclusive Pragmatist Democratic Model

The paper has critically analysed Richard Rorty's neo-pragmatist approach to cultural diversity, paying special attention to one of its major drawbacks: the dismissal of religion from public sphere. Even though, Rorty's pragmatism provides useful guidance for navigating diverse societies by valuing solidarity over truth, acknowledging the subjectivity of our beliefs, and promoting a wider range of moral considerations however, his position on religion demonstrates a concerning paradox in his otherwise pluralistic framework. Furthermore, his portrayal of religion as a "conversation-stopper" and insistence on privatising religious matters - defining religion as a fundamentally detrimental democratic discourse - counter with his anti-essentialist stance, as analysed and demonstrated through Jeffery Stout's arguments and thus, erodes his pluralism. So, this limitation illustrates the need for a more inclusive pragmatist democratic vision which can further accommodate diverse perspectives and expressions, both secular as well as religious hence, a safe democratic

account.

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பாலைநிலத்து மக்களின் தொழில் - ஓர் ஆய்வு

1.பே.இரா.விஜயா மற்றும் 2.முனைவர்.ச.விஜயலட்சுமி

1.பே.இரா.விஜயா உதவி பேராசிரியர், தமிழ்துறை, தூய சவேரியார் தன்னாட்சி கல்லூரி, பாளையங்கோட்டை ஆயடை ஐனு : எதையலய8அயாகை;பஅயடை.உழஅ

2.முனைவர்.ச.விஜயலட்சுமி, உதவிப் பேராசிரியர், காட்சித் தொடர்பியல் துறை, தூய சவேரியார் கல்லூரி, பாளையங்கோட்டை:

ஆய்வுச்சுருக்கம்: பண்டைத்தமிழகத்தில் பண்பின் அடிப்படைவில் பகுத்து அறியப்பட்ட ஐந்துவகைத் தமிழர் நிலத்திணைகளில் ஒன்று பாலைத்திணை. குறிஞ்சி முல்லை ஆகிய நிலத்தினைகளுக்கு இடையிலமைந்த பாழ்நிலப்பகுதி பாலை ஆகும். சங்ககால மக்கள் இன அடிப்படையில் குழுக்களாக வாழ்ந்து வந்தனர். அக்குழுக்கள் தங்களது வாழ்வாதாரங்களை அமைத்துக் கொள்ள தங்களுக்கென ஒவ்வொரு தொழிலை பின்பற்றினர். பாலைநிலத்து மக்களின் வாழ்வாதாரம் அவர்களது சூழலை மையமிட்டே அமைகின்றது. மேலும் அம்மக்களிடம் வாழ்வதற்கு ஏற்ற நிலச்சூழல் அமைப்பு இல்லாமையால் பல்வேறான தொழிலில் ஈடுபட்டனர். அவ்வாறு செய்கின்ற தொழில் சில சமூக அங்கீகாரத்திற்கு ஏற்றவையாக இன்று பார்க்கப்படுவதில்லை. ஆனால் சங்ககால சமுதாயம் அம்மக்களின் தொழிலை ஏற்றுக் கொண்டுள்ளனர். அவர்களின் தொழில் எவ்வாறு அங்கீகரிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது? எதனடிப்படையில் அவை ஏற்றுக் கொள்ளப்பட்டுள்ளது என்பதையும் ஆராயும் நோக்கத்தில் இத்தலைப்பை அணுகலாம்.

திறவுச்சொற்கள் : பாலைத்திணை, தொழில், சங்ககாலம், வழிப்பறி, சூறையாடல், இயற்கைசூழல்

முன்னுரை

ஈராயிரம் ஆண்டுகளுக்கு முன்னர் வாழ்ந்த பாலைதிணையை சார்ந்த மக்களான மறவர், எயினர், எயிற்றியர்கள் வலிமையானவர்களாக காணப்பட்டனர். அவர்கள் வாழும் சூழலில் எவ்வகைகலான தொழில்களை பின்பற்றி தனது வாழ்வாதாரம் அமைந்தது என்றும், அவர்கள் செய்யும் தொழில் அக்கால மக்களிடம் முறையாக ஏற்றுக் கொள்ளப்பட்டுள்ளதா? அல்லது குற்றமாக பார்க்கப்பட்டதா? எனும் நோக்கில் அணுகுவதே இவ்வாய்வாகும்.

பாலைத்திணை

முல்லையும் குறிஞ்சியும் முறைமையில் திரிந்து
நல்லியல்பு இழந்து நடுங்குதுயர் உறுத்துப்
பாலை என்பதோர் படிவம் கொள்ளும் 1

என்று பாலைத்திணைக்கு இலக்கணம் வகுத்துள்ளார் தொல்காப்பியர். பாலைநிலம் வறண்டநிலமாகவும் புல்லாற்றும் கடலோரமாகவோ அல்லது பாலைப்பரபோகவோ காணப்படுகிறது. வெப்பம் மற்றும் வறட்சி மிகுந்த மணல் நிறைந்த ஒரு பால்நிழப்பகுதியாக பார்க்கப்படுகிறது. விரிந்து பரந்த நெடிய மணல் பரப்பாக உயிரினங்கள் வாழ்வதற்கும் பொருத்தமற்ற சூழலலாக பாலைத்திணை பார்க்கப்படுகிறது.

வெண்பாவிற் பொள்ளும் கவின் கொண்ட மாவே
நும்மூர் உவந்த வையையுந் தீர்ந்தாய்!
எம் ஊர் உவந்த வையையுந் சேர்ந்தீர் 2

சிலப்பதிகாரம் பாலைநிலம் என்பது தனிநிலம் அல்ல. மழையின்மையால்

வறண்டு காய்ந்து போன நிலத்தின் இயல்பையும் அலகையும் காட்டுகிறது. என்று விளக்கம் தருகிறது.

பாலை நிலத்து மக்கள்

பாலைநிலம் சங்க இலக்கியத்தில் பிரிவுநிலம் என்று அழைக்கப்படுகிறது. இங்கு வாழ்க்கை கடுமையானதும், இயற்க்கை வளங்கள் மிகக் குறைவானதும் ஆகும். பாலைநில மக்களாக தொல்க்காப்பியர்

உளாநிலை இயல்பின் பாலை எனப்ப
இடையர் காணவர் வேற்றுமை நோக்கி
வழிபடு வழி படு தம்மு மியல்பு.3

தொல்காப்பியர் கூற்றுப்படி பாலைநிலத்தில் இடையர் மற்றும் காணவர் ஆகியோர் வாழ்கின்றனர். மேலும் பாலைநிலத்து மக்களாக எயினர், மறவர்கள் என காணப்படுகின்றன. இந்நிலத்தின் தலைவர்களை விடலை, காளை என்று அழைக்கப்படுகின்றனர்.

பாலைதிணை மக்களின் தொழில் பற்றி அறிஞர்கள் கூற்று

க.கைலாசபதி 4

சங்ககாலச் சமூகம் திணை கருத்தாக்கத்தை அடிப்படையாகக் கொண்டிருந்தது. எனவே பாலை நில மக்களின் தொழில்கள் (வழிப்பறி சூறையாடுதல்) அந்தந்த நிலப்பகுதியின் சமூக அமைப்பு மற்றும் வாழ்வியல் சூழலுடன் நெருக்கமாக அமைந்தன.

பி.எல்.சுந்தரம் 5

பாலை நில மக்களின் தொழில்கள் அவர்கள் தங்கள் கடுமையான சூழலுக்கு ஏற்பத் தங்களைத் தகவமைத்துக் கொண்டவை ஆகும். அவர்களின் கொள்ளை மற்றும் வழிப்பறி போன்ற செயல்கள், அவர்களின் அடிப்படைத் தேவைகளை நிறைவேற்றுவதற்கான ஒரு வழிமுறையாகவே இருந்தது.

பி.எல். சுவாமிநாதன் 6

பாலை நிலத்தின் வறண்ட நில அமைப்பு விவசாயம் செய்ய இயலாத சூழலை உருவாக்கியது. இதுவே பாலை மக்களை அவர்களின் பாரம்பரியத் தொழில்களிலிருந்து விலகி, மற்றும் வாழ்வாதாரமாக வழிப்பறி மற்றும் சூறையாடலை மேற்கொள்ளத் தூண்டியது என்கிறார்.

பாலைநிலத்தின் தொழில்கள்

பாலை நிலத்தின் தொழில்கள் பற்றி திவாகர நிகண்டு கூறுவன,

பாலை நில மக்கள் எயினர், மறவர் தொழில் களவு, வழிப்பறி7

இதில் பாலை நில மக்களான எயினர் மற்றும் மறவர்களின் தொழிலாக களவு மற்றும் வழிப்பறி குறிப்பிடப்பட்டுள்ளது.

உயிரினங்கள் வாழ்வதற்கு தகுதியற்ற, நீரற்ற வறண்ட தன்மையும் வெப்பமும் நிறைந்ததால் விவசாயம் இன்றி வேறு எந்த தொழிலும் இன்றி வாழும் அம்மக்கள் செய்யும் தொழில்தான் என்ன? என்று நுணுகி ஆராய்வோமானால் அம்மக்களின் தொழிலாக சூழலுக்கு ஏற்ப தனது தொழிலை மாற்றும் பண்புடையவர்களாக பார்க்கப்படுகிறது. வேட்டையாடுதல் மற்றும் போர் செய்தல் போன்ற தொழில்களில் அம்மக்கள் ஈடுப்பட்டுள்ளனர். இதனை காட்டிலும் அம்மக்களிடம் பிரதான தொழிலாக பார்க்கப்படுகிறது. வழிப்பறியும், கொள்ளையடிப்பதாகும். இதனை ஆறலை மற்றும் சூறையாடுதல் என்றும்

இலக்கியத்தில் காணப்படுகிறது.

பகற்சூறை யாடல் பாலைக்குக் கருப் பொருளே 8

அகப்பொருள் என்று இலக்கணங்களில் சூறையாடுதல் பற்றி காணப்படுகிறது.

சூறையாடுதல் என்னும் தொழில் ஒரு நாகரீகமான பண்புள்ள தொழிலாக நாம் பார்க்கமுடிவதில்லை. ஆனால் சங்க இலக்கியத்தில் அது ஒரு கட்டமைப்புடன் கூடிய வாழ்க்கை சூழ்நிலையின் பாகமாக இருந்தது. பாலை நில மக்கள் இத்தொழிலில் ஈடுபட பல்வேறு காரணங்களாக அமைகின்றன என்பதை இலக்கியங்களில் காணமுடிகிறது.

இயற்கை சூழ்நிலை

பாலைநிலத்தின் இயற்கை சூழ்நிலையை முல்லைப்பாட்டில் கூறுவன

முல்லையும் பூத்ததும் புன்செய் புடைகொண்டதும்
மலை வரவு கேட்டு மகிளிருக்கும் மகில்வு 9

என்ற பாடலின் முல்லை நிலத்தின் வளம் மழை பெய்த பின் பூத்த மலர்கள் பசுமையான புற்கள் ஆகியவை மழை இல்லாத காலத்தில் நிலம் வறண்டு பாலையானதை கூறுகின்றது.

பாலை என்பது நீரின்றி வறண்ட நிலம், இங்கு விவசாயம் சாத்தியமில்லை ஆகவே வாழ்வதற்கு ஆதரமான உணவூட்டலுக்கு வழிப்பறி செய்யும் கல்வர்களாக இருந்துள்ளனர். பாலை நிலத்து மக்கள் வழிப்பறிகல்வர்களாக சமூக அங்கீகாரமற்ற ஒரு தொழிலை தங்கள் வாழ்க்கையில் பின்பற்றுவதற்கு இயற்கை சூழ்நிலை ஒரு காரணமாக அமைகின்றது. எவ்வாறெனில் குறிஞ்சியும், முல்லையும் திரியும் போது தான் வறண்ட பூமியாகிறது. வறண்ட பூமியில் வாழ்வதற்கு வேறு தொழில் இல்லாமையால் அம்மக்கள் வழிப்பறிக்கு உட்படுத்தப்படுகிறார்கள்.

வறுமை மற்றும் பசி

பாலை நிலத்து மக்கள் உடல் வலிமையானவர்களாக இருந்தாலும் அந்நிலத்தில் தனது உயிரை கொடுத்து வாழ்வாதாரம் அமைக்கும் இயற்கை சூழ்நிலை அமையவில்லை என்று அறிகிறோம். இதனால் இம்மக்களின் நிலைமை வறுமையை நோக்கிச் சென்றது. இதனால் பாலைநில மக்கள் வறுமை நிலையை போக்குவதற்கும், தனது வாழ்வை செம்மைபடுத்தவும் வழிப்பறி எனும் செயலை தொழிலாக மாற்றினர். இதனையே

வறுமை கூர்ந்து வாடுங்காலை
புலி பசி தின்ற தசைபோல்
வலிதுடை மறவர் வழிகெடக் கடந்து 10

என்ற புறநானூற்றுப் பாடலில்

பசியால் வாடும் புலியின் நிலையை போல, வலிமையான மறவர்கள் வழிப்பறி செய்கின்றனர். இதன் மூலம் பாலைநிலை மக்களின் இத்தொழிலை செய்ய காரணமாக வறுமை அமைகின்றது எனலாம். இதே போன்று சங்க இலக்கியத்தில் கலித்தொகை வறண்ட பாலைநிலத்தில் உள்ள மக்கள் நிலையைக் காட்டுகின்றது. எவ்வாறெனில் நீர் இல்லாமல் தவிக்கும் வழிப்போக்கர்களின் நிலை கொடுரமாக இருக்கின்றன. அவ்வாறு இருக்கும் போது மறவர்களும் இதுபோன்ற நிலைக்கு ஆளாகிப் பசியால் வாடும் போது தான் அவர்கள் கொள்ளையடித்து உயிர் வாழ்வதற்காகவே என்று கூறுகிறது.

சுரை அம்பு மூழ்கச் சுருங்கிப்
புரையோர் தம் உள் நீர்
வறபேப் புலர் வாரு நாவிற்குத்

தண்ணீர் பெறாஅத் தருமாற்று அருந்துயரம் 11

என்ற பாடலில் மூலம் அறியலாம்.

பாலைத்தினை மக்களின் தொழிலான வழிப்பறிச் செயல்கள் பசிப்பிணியால் ஏற்பட்டவையே என்று அறிய முடிகிறது.

<u>சூறையாடல்</u>

பாலை நில மக்களின் முக்கியமான தொழிலாக சூறையாடல் இருந்தது. இதனை தற்காலிகத் தொழில் எனவும் கூறுவர். சூறையாடலை

வறியனாயினும் வல்வினையில் செறியுறச்
சூழ்ந்தாரை தன் வினையால்
கொறிக் கொடி போக்கினான் கொள்குவோம் 12

என்ற பாடல் வழி அறிய முடிகிறது.

இதனையே தொல்காப்பிய புறத்திணையியலில்,

வென்றிஎன் செயற்றிய கோன்மரம் வெய்தன
வின்றிஎன் காமம் வெய்தன 13

என்ற பாடலில் மன்னர்களின் போரின் வெறியையும் அதில் வரும் சூறையாடலையும் பற்றி கூறுகிறது. எனவே போரில் சூறையாடல் ஒரு அங்கிகரிக்கப்பட்ட செயல் என பார்க்கப்படுகிறது.

சங்க இலக்கியங்களில் சூறையாடுதல் எதிரி நாட்டை அடக்கி, அவர்களின் செல்வங்களை கொள்ளையடித்தல் என்பது சில பகுதிகளில் புகழ் பெறத்தக்க செயலாகவும் வீரரின் பொருளை உயர்த்துவதற்கான கருவியாகவும் இலக்கியத்தில் காணமுடிகிறது.

வாளநாட் கடந்து வடநிலம் போய்
வென்றி யானை வலஞ்செய் கொடி
கடுஞ்சின வேந்த தமையடி யீர் பூட்டி
அடுபொருந் தீச்சோறு அளைந்தனனே 14

இதில் சேரமன்னன் வடநாட்டிற்கும் சென்று போரிட்டு அங்குள்ள பொருள்களை சூறையாடுதலை விளக்குகின்றது.

மேலும் வேட்டையாடுவதிலும் சுற்று வட்டாரப்பகுதிகளில் பயணம் செல்பவர்களிடமிருந்து பொருள்கள் பறிப்பதையும் சூறையாடுதல் என்றும் கூறுவர் இதனை,

கடல்வாய் இருளிக் கானல் மறைக்கும்
மணற்சேர் பாலை மண்ணினுள்
இலங்கும் துகளின் எழிலி தழிஇ
மழைபடு நுதலாள் ஒக்கலின் முனை
தெறிப்பவர் போல, தேரும் பாணும்
துருப்பிடித்து, எதிர் கொள்ளா மக்களை
நாடி நாகர் நாடெடுக்கும் 15

என்ற பாடலின் பாலைநிலமக்கள் சமூக முரன்பட்ட தொழிலாக அமைகின்ற சூறையாடுதலை வழிபோக்கரிடம் நிகழ்த்துவதாக அமைகிறது.

சங்ககால போரில் ஒழுக்கத்தில் சூறையாடுதலும் இடம் பெறுவதை காணமுடிகிறது.

மேலும் பாலைநிலத்தில் வாழ்ந்த மக்கள் வாழ்க்கையை ஏற்று வாழ்வதற்கு

சூறையாடுதலை ஒரு பாதையாக பயன்படுத்தினார்கள். மேலும் இது அவர்களின் பிழைப்புத் தொழிலாக மாறியது.

வழிப்பறி செய்தல்

பாலை நில மக்களின் தொழிலில் ஒன்று வழிப்பறி செய்தலாகும். வழிப்பறி என்பதை பிறரிடம் வலிந்து கைப்பற்றுதல் என்றும் கூறலாம். பாலைநிலத்தில் பயணம் செய்பவர்களிடம் ஒருவித அச்சம் ஏற்படுகிறது. ஏனென்றால் வழிப்பறி செய்தலே அக்காரணமாகும். பாலைநிலத்தில் பயண செய்வதன் மூலம் ஏற்படும் கடினத்தன்மையை நற்றினையில் காணலாம்.

வறல்வாய் ஓமலி மாவுதவு
குன்றம் பலவுங் கடந்து 16

என்று பாடலில் வறண்ட நிலத்தில் உணவு கிடைக்காததால் மக்கள் தவிப்பதைப் பற்றி கூறுகிறது.

அவ்வாறு பாலைநிலத்தில் கடினதன்மையில் வழிபோக்கர்களை கொன்ற அவர்களின் பொருள்களை கவரும் செயல் குறுந்தொகையில்

கொலைஞர் கூவும் அம்பகம்
வனைந்தனன் வஞ்சினம் 17

என்ற பாடலின் வழி வழியாக செய்தலை அறிய முடிகிறது.

பண்டைய தமிழர்களின் பார்வையில் சூறையாடல்

பாலை நிலத்தில் வாழும் மக்களின் தொழில் சூழ்நிலைக்கேற்ப மாறுபடுகிறது என்பதை அறியமுடிந்தது. அதனால் அம்மக்களின் தொழில் சூறையாடுதல், வழிப்பறி என்றே பேசப்படுகின்றது. இதனால் தான் பண்டைய இலக்கிய இலக்கணங்களில் இத்தொழில் பதிவாகியுள்ளன. தொல்காப்பியத்தில் பாலைத்திணை கருப்பொருளில் அம்மக்களின் உணவு சூறையாடலால் வரும் பொருள் என்றும் தொழில் வழிப்பறி, நிரைகவர்தல் என்றும் இருப்பதைக் காணமுடிகிறது.

பண்டைய தமிழர்களிளை பொறுத்தவரை பாலைநில மக்களின் இத்தொழில் நேரடியாக ஏற்றுக்கொள்ளப்படவில்லை. மாறாக அந்த கால சமூக வாழ்க்கையின் ஒரு அம்சமாகவே பார்க்கப்படுகிறது. இத்தொழில் அம்மக்களின் வாழ்வாதார வழி என்றும் கூறுகின்றனர்.

அக்கால மன்னர்கள் இத்தொழிலை நேரடியாக ஆதரிக்கவில்லை. ஆனால் சில வேளைகளில் மன்னர்கள் தங்களது வீரர்களிடன் எதிரிகளிடம் சூறையாட அனுப்பியதாகவும் பதிவுகளில் காண கிடைக்கின்றன. மேலும் அரசனின் வெற்றி, வீரத்தின் சிறப்பு மற்றும் பகைவரின் அடக்கம் எனப்படும் பார்வையின் சூறையாடல் ஒழுக்கம் மீறியது அல்ல. இது பகைவரை துன்புறுத்தும் ஒரு போர் உத்தியாகவும், அரசரின் புகழை ஆதரிக்கும் ஒரு பின்புலமாகவும் சாதனையாகவும் அமைகின்றது.

இதனையே பதிற்றுப்பற்றில் பின்வருமாறு விளக்குகிறது.

வெற்றியானை தருவித்து பெரும் பொருள்
ஈட்டி பகைவர் நாடு கடந்து 18

என்ற பாடலில் சேர மன்னன் பகைவர்களின் நாட்டை வென்று பெரும் பொருள்களை கொண்டு வந்ததையும் போரை சூறையாடுவது மன்னர்களுக்கு வீரம் மற்றும் செல்வம் ஈட்டுவதற்கான வழி என்று பார்க்கப்படுகிறது.

சூறையாடுதல் போன்ற செயல்கள் மன்னர்கள் பார்வையில் எவ்வாறு அறமாக பார்க்கப்பட்டன என்பதை பொன்முடி தனது நூலில் **போர்களத்தில் எதிரி நாட்டுச் செல்வங்களைக் கவருவது வீரம் மற்றும் வெற்றியின் அடையாளமாகக் கருதப்பட்டது.**

எனவே தான் பாலை மக்களின் இது போன்ற செயல்கள் அரசால் தண்டிக்கப்படாமல் சில சமயங்களில் மறைமுகமாக அங்கீகரிக்கப்பட்டன என்று கூறுகிறார்.

மேற்குறிப்பிட்ட வகையில் பார்க்கும் போது பண்டைய தமிழர்களிடம் பாலை நிலத்தின் மக்கள் செய்யும் தொழில் மன்னரோடு போரிடும் போது ஒருவகையில் ஏற்றுக் கொள்ள கூடியதாக அமையினும், ஒரு சில இடங்களில் சமூக ஒழுக்கத்திற்கு புறம்பானதாக ஆராயப்படுகிறது இதனை,

அற்றார் அழிபசி தீர்த்தல் அவாரின்
அற்றது அறம் என்பதில்லை
சுற்றார்க்கு சுழ்ச்சி தரினும் குற்றம் குற்றமே 19

என்று ஔவையார் பாலை நில மக்களின் சூறையாடுதல் என்பது நியாமான ஏற்றுக் கொள்ளக்கூடிய செயல் அல்ல என்று கூறுகிறார்.

ஒருவன் வறுமையால் பசிக்காகத் தன் பசி தீர்க்கச் சென்றால் கூட அடுத்தவர் சொத்தை அநியாகமாக எடுத்தால் அது அறம் அல்ல அதைச் செய்யும் காரணம் எதுவாக இருந்தாலும் அது குற்றமே என்கிறார் ஔவை மூதாட்டி.

அப்போது பாலைநில மக்கள் சூழலுக்கு ஏற்பதான் இத்தொழிலை ஏற்றனர் என்று கூறுவதை ஔவையார் குற்றம் என்கிறார்.

ஆகவே பாலை நில மக்களின் தொழில்கள் அக்கால சமுதாயத்தில் பரவலாக ஏற்றுக் கொள்ளப்படவில்லை.

முடிவுரை

பாலைநில மக்களின் தொழில்களை பற்றி ஆராயும் இக்கட்டுரையில் பண்டைய தமிழர்களிடம் தொழில் என்பது அந்தந்த இனக்குழுக்களோடு தொடர்புடையதாக காணப்பட்டது. அவ்வகையில் பாலைநில மக்களாக காணப்படும் எயினர், மறவர்கள் தொழில் சற்று முரண்பாடாக அமைகின்றது. அறத்திற்கு மாறாக, சமூக பண்புகளுக்கு எதிரான ஒருவகை தொழிலை பின்பற்றி வாழ்ந்துள்ளனர். அவர்கள் செய்கின்ற அத்தொழிலை அக்கால மன்னர்கள் ஆதரிக்கவில்லையென்றாலும் ஆனால் அவர்கள் தண்டிக்கப்படவும் இல்லை. களவுத்தொழில் பிறரை அடித்து துன்புறுத்தி வலிந்து கொள்ளையடித்து பாலைநில மக்கள் தங்கள் வாழ்வை நடத்தியுள்ளனர். அவர்கள் இத்தொழிலை செய்வதற்கு காரணம் அவர்கள் வாழும் நில அமைப்பு காரணமாக கூறுகின்றனர். மேலும் அறம் சார்ந்த நியாயம் பாலை நில மக்களின் தொழிலாக இலக்கியங்களில் பார்க்கப்படுகிறது. சங்ககாலம் பொற்காலமாக விளங்கினும் பாலைநில மக்களின் வாழ்வாரத் தொழில் அக்காலத்தில் சமூக சூழ்நிலைக்கு ஏற்புடைய தொழிலாக பார்க்கப்படுவதில்லை என்பதே நிதர்சனமான உண்மையாகும்.

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THE EXISTENCE AND CONSUMPTION OF THE MIDDLE CLASS IN MANUSHYAPUTHIRAN POEMS

[1]S. Vijay and [2]Dr. G. Gurusamy

[1]Research Scholar (P6001), Madurai Kamaraj University.

[2]Assistant Professor, Arul Anandar College, Karumathur.

Abstract: Literature is a linguistic artistic activity that is conceived and formed in the subconscious through the experiences of the inner and outer world of man, depending on time and circumstances. The living conditions of the people in Indian history and the power to acquire material possessions are closely related to each other. The poems of the twentieth century, which are characterized by the social dynamics of modern collective capitalist ownership, discuss the individual conditions of the middle class operating in the urban environment. The aim of this article is to examine the life dynamics of the middle class in modern capitalist units through Manushyaputhiran poetry in the background of sociology, anthropology and Marxist theory.

Keywords: Modern Capitalism, Middleclass, Urban Environment, Privatization Policies, Free Markets, Modern Bourgeois, and Consumerism.

India's capitalist economic development can be classified as the feudalization of the monarchy, the European colonial industrialization, the capitalist privatization following the colonial period, and the globalization of the modern capitalist market group. After facing the artificial famines of the 1970s and 1980s due to capitalist crises, Colonial countries including India were forced to implement capitalist plans. The period from 1980 to 1991 can be considered the alternative planning period of Indian capitalism, and the period from 1991 to 2014 can be considered the globalization period of India. The Indian economy moved towards new goals with new plans, such as global trade without government intervention, free markets, unlimited capital accumulation, and open economic markets, as manifestations of globalization. In contemporary times, these policies have had a great impact on India's economic policies to the extent of creating a new class.

The Indian nature of globalization, including the hybridization of feudalism and colonialism, can be understood as traditional capitalism. Modern capitalism can be defined as the twenty-first century social system that, although different from the previous capitalist system, has consumerist foundations along with traditional capitalist characteristics within the capital accumulation projects.

Modern poetry played an important role in the subtle discourse on the elements of people's living conditions in the last two decades of the

twentieth century. In particular, Manushyaputhiran poems talk about the urban middle class, who have received some opportunities for existence with education for capitalist work programs, material possessions for self-consumption, and employment. They have recorded the collective functioning of the middle class in the modern capitalist environment, common sense, and individual feelings.

Understanding the contemporary middle class through Manushyaputhiran poems will lead to new discoveries. Manushyaputhiran poems consider consumerism as the focal point of the middle class and the modern capitalist program. In Manushyaputhiran poems, the middle class is identified as the super-consumer group, the targets of this consumerist process.

Modern capitalism has shaped the middle class to the point where it believes that the consumerist world is the liberation of the people. Globalization is a grand plan to accumulate surplus production using the capital resources and cheap labour of third countries and turn the Eastern countries into sales markets. Modern capitalism, with its free trade, unlimited capital movement, global markets, advertising markets, brokerage capitalism such as stock trading, capitalist group project activities and legal permits for these, has subjected the middle class to repeated exploitation.

The Middle Class, Consumer Success and Craze

Consumption is a basic need for life that any human being should have. But in modern capitalism, consumption has been transformed into a social unit of evaluation that goes beyond need. Consumerism can be called the appropriation system that is characteristic of modern capitalism. Colonialism broke the social structures and property limits of landownership, spread appropriation, and justified exploitation. Similarly, modern capitalism has generalized consumption as an alternative to capitalist crises and developed the idea of appropriation into a craze.

In modern capitalism, many economic units of calculation are defined by the consumption capacity of the people, that is, their purchasing power. The modern capitalist advertising world has shaped the environment in which mass consumers are known as valuable individuals in society. Modern capitalism operates with the middle class with purchasing power, who are subject to the mass consumption plan, as its centre. The working class spends a lot of energy on consumption in its attempt to become the middle class and the middle class to stabilize its existence. “There is no one who does not complain that this city has changed us. I came to this city to change” (M. K.: p. 151) Manushyaputhiran expresses the fact that the city’s consumption craze has spread to the rural middle class and the mind-set that

consumption is a form of development is prevalent. The creation of large cities has strengthened the possibilities for the integration of consumption, forcing rural people to migrate to the cities.

Credit Cards as Traps of Consumerism

Advertising markets built by new information technologies determine the living needs of the middle class, which is dominated by consumers, and provide products for them. Moreover, modern capitalist markets have created the attraction of consumption through credit cards, Prime Customer Registration, and special offers for them.

Manushyaputhiran describes credit card schemes as "sticky cards to kill rats. They are the most cruel inventions of man," and credit card holders as "users of sticky cards." He continues by saying that "no effort is made to kill the trapped rats" and that "they gradually die of hunger and thirst, unable to free their legs" (M. K.: p. 289), describing the characteristics of the middle class trapped in the conspiracies of credit card consumerism.

Manushyaputhiran subtly explains the situation where people are trapped in paying monthly instalments on credit cards and lose their dignity, saying, "When the debtor comes... the father of the debtor turns into a lizard on the wall... the wife into a cloth on the flag... the children into cockroaches... the sister into a fish in the fish tank... they turn into a fish" (M. K.: p. 353).

Over-consumption Group Dwellings

While modern capitalism has an environment where labour and wages are determined according to market conditions due to educational and scientific developments, the old capitalist program of labour exploitation has been transformed into consumerism in modern capitalism. The caste identities that were strong in the land-based society should have been distorted and destroyed by the unlimited commercial characteristics of consumerism. However, in the Indian social space, they have taken shape as consumer groups. Compound villas and townships have been created in cities and function as land-based caste groups. The tendency to live in these dwellings and the lifestyle of fellow human beings has made city life stressful.

Manushyaputhiran describes such a situation as, "We must be buying or selling something here. Otherwise, the earth will stop spinning and the gods will stop breathing" (M. K.: p. 400) and "People are rushing to buy things at huge discounts. Is this world going to end tomorrow?" (M. K.: p. 400) and portrays the living conditions of corporate villas in modern capitalism where one himself becomes a commodity and a consumer.

The Middle Class and Apolitically

All social developments over time have minimal relaxations and new openings in some of the foundations that existed in previous social systems. Through these developments, the middle class, which has been somewhat successful in the modern privatization effort, has gained sufficient awareness of the concepts of self-respect, equality and social justice and has acquired a sense of movement coordination.

Consumerism and technologies have become powerful tools of modern capitalism to dismantle the capitalist-working class thinking and coordination constructed by the left as the centre of capitalist resistance. Due to these characteristics, as a continuation of consumerism, public welfare thoughts for social collective life have been abandoned and selfish thoughts have taken shape. However, as a true manifestation of consumerist crises, general social thought also arises from time to time in the human subconscious. A tendency has developed to express any kind of political concept from selfishness with arrogance.

The consumption and identity fixations of modern capitalism have deprived the middle class of its ability to speak its politics directly. Manushyaputhiran points out that the middle class is a society that engages in covert and parody politics, saying, “People think through memes (parody). The words of the book have disappeared. Suddenly, a new language has been born in the world. They become explosives with a chemical mixture and explode.” (M. K.: p. 367).

Manushyaputhiran poems, which refer to the evolutionary nature of modern capitalism and the restless struggles of opposition movements, say, "The cat was actively searching for the mouse, and the mouse was cunningly changing its paths and locations" (M. K.: p. 398), and "The cat and the mouse sat side by side and read the agreement between them, hugging and kissing each other tightly" (M. K.: p. 398), announce the emergence of the middle class as a new class within modern capitalism that has lost not only capitalist opposition but also the ability to identify exploitative practices.

The ability to create sufficient gaps with ideological politics and integrate it into the personal relationships of individuals who carry that idea is an important common characteristic of the middle class. However, the caste identity associations of the landed estate and the religious groups that are cultivated in the urban settlements lead to an apolitical nature that excludes the middle class from the general social politics and fulfils the contemporary needs of individual sects. “The sewer goes to the neighbour’s yard… I stood silently” (M. K.: p. 114). Religious institutions confirm the

movement that links the apolitical nature of the middle class with consumerism and the vestiges of landownership. Since villages have landed structures and urban prototypes, these characteristics are more strongly expressed in villages than in cities. The role of religious institutions and the role of modern religious organizations in strengthening capitalist structures are significant in India. The middle class itself is the client and protector of traditional religious institutions and modern religious capitalists.

The Middle Class and Modern Capitalist Education

Feudalism denied literacy. Capitalism spread education for production. Modern capitalism has also commodified education and has secured the possibilities of consumption through education. After 1991, the state extended its educational contribution beyond the arts to industry. Not only mass production engineering but also skilled labour for small-scale production warehouses has been created. The education sector has been reduced from a knowledge sector to a sector of labour and consumption decentralisation. The success of modern capitalism and the apolitical nature of the middle class have been confirmed since the capital market commercialised education, which provided understanding that worked against capitalism.

After the implementation of globalisation, scientific education was used to create workers for factory skills, cheap human resources. Modern capitalism created a generation that was drawn into engineering vocational education due to the lure of advertising and the social tension built around employment. Manushyaputhiran describes those who got caught up in the business of education without sufficient understanding as “the cursed fish that somehow found the thorn in the bait and bit it.. It is begging underwater, not knowing how to swallow the thorn in the bait” (M. K.: p. 633).

Modern Capitalism Consumer Crises

Modern capitalism has declared the free nature of the consumer space as freedom. The human mind has been infected by consumerism to the extent that people who are buried in it take pictures of their food before even eating it and post them on social networking sites. The mentality that considers mass consumption as the only goal of life and an activity for social value is suitable for markets. The middle class is trapped in modern capitalism, where the market has been transformed into education, profession, cultural event, ritual, and way of life. “I have jobs seven days a week. I have duties that make me feel guilty. I need a day off. To overcome my shame.. To understand a rejection.. I commit suicide..” (M. K.: p. 714) Manushyaputhiran poems sharply depict this.

Research Findings

• By subtly and generally presenting the lifestyle characteristics of urban people as novel material, Manushyaputhiran poems stand as a mass poetic discourse within the context of modern capitalist developments.

• Manushyaputhiran poems have approached the Indian environment after the global agreements with a critical approach. The state dependence on privatization and legal protection, the creation of advertising markets and the linking of human values with consumption units are also somewhat understandable.

• The evolution of modern capitalism, the middle class and modern capitalist consumerism projects are approached as social phenomena with an apolitical nature. Although the reader does not have the opportunity to gain political clarity through the poetic dialogues that Manushyaputhiran performs, he is able to consume social dynamics to some extent.

• Among twenty-first century poems, the movement of Manushyaputhiran poems has little impact on the reader's mind because it is largely composed of self-conscious characteristics and the aesthetic practice is semi-synchronous with social contradictions.

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