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A Draupadi Who Speaks English- Legitimizing the Past: A Reading of *The Palace of Illusions*

Anupa Rose Babu

We live in the age of postmodernism and the myriads of theories that came up proclaiming the novelties in thought has taught us to be cautious of grand-narratives promoting monolithic and homogenous human experience. Postcolonialism is a discipline that analyses the apparently fine structures of these kinds of meta-narratives to topple them down and to substitute them with fragmentary human experiences. It involves the reconstruction of native cultures, rewriting of histories, recovering the voices of the hitherto unheard etc along with the process of decolonization and it is the need of the hour to bring into arena the divergent voice of Draupadi resonated by the novel *The Palace of Illusions*. *Mahabharatha* promotes homogeneous and monolithic structures of knowledge regarding certain sections of the society, especially women and the lower caste people. This article is basically about the stories that are subjected to change according to varying perspectives. It is in the postcolonial context that Derrida's signifiers are in free play. The time of *Mahabharatha* as the transcendental signified is being replaced by fragmentary narratives with different foci and *The Palace of Illusions* is one which signifier that tells us

a whole new story along the same plot lines. *The Palace of Illusions* is a novel written by Chitra Divakaruni who is an Indian American author who is currently working in the University of Houston. Her works include historical fiction, realistic fiction, magical realism, diaspora etc. It tells the story of Draupadi, who is the wife of the Panchapandavas as narrated by *Mahabharatha*. Through the first person narrative of Draupadi the writer touches upon issues like childhood, marriage, love etc. The themes acquire meaning and depth when they are contextualized in the broad spectrum of women's issues and in that sense the novel reconstructs the native culture, rewrite history and recuperates the unheard voice of Draupadi. The old story that we know through *Mahabharatha* transforms completely as she thrusts open a new space for her side of things and for her feelings. She offers her own justifications and the eyes of the reader opens up in wonder as a new perspective dawns on her.

The major aims of the presentation are three-fold: to problematize the way in which history is derived from *Mahabharatha* and to point out the oppositions from the latter text, to locate the latter novel within the context of the arrival of modernity in India and to explore two postcolonial dimensions- those of identity and language. It must also be said beforehand that my attempt is not to portray Draupadi as a woman who faced oppression at the hands of patriarchy. My endeavor is to focus on how our perception of Draupadi whom we know from *Mahabharatha* undergoes a complete transformation when we open our senses to the narrative recited by Draupadi herself and to observe how she legitimizes her actions and to analyze the kind of

justifications the novel provides against the accusations that have been raised against Draupadi for centuries.

The first objective is to problematize history. The term history in postcolonial literature is used to throw light into several factors like the appropriation of history by the colonizers, undertakings to retrieve and re-write our own histories etc. History undergoes several transformations with the varying modes of representation, that is, historiography. We know that the history of our nationalist struggle consists of many layers of representations depending on the subject position of the author. We have Cambridge historians ruling out the very idea of Colonial brutality and greed, portraying it as a petty fight between different social groups. The Marxist position views the nationalist struggle as a fundamental contradiction between the British interests and Indian interests. The Sub-altern historiography is different from both these positions. Thus, we can see that both historiography and fiction derive their forces from verisimilitude rather than from any objective truth. (Hutcheon, 155).

Mahabharatha expounds a uniform and totalising narrative and thus what is essentially lacking is an essence of plurality. This lack is fulfilled by the novel *The Palace of Illusions*. Romila Thapar in her work *Past as Present* writes, “In contemporary times we not only reconstruct the past but we also use it to give legitimacy to the way in which we order our own society.” (Thapar 3). In *Mahabharatha* what we see is the appropriation of the sub-altern communities, especially women and children. Appropriation does not mean a complete erasure of identity but the portrayal of “the other”, in this case, the female section as the society wants to see

them. That is, the knowledge constructed by the Dons decorating dominant positions through this kind of appropriation use it to control the strings of their sub-altern puppets. Thus past is used to legitimize the present injustices and wrongs. This is why it is not appropriate for Indian women to wear jeans or to go out after six o' clock. The explanation when asked is that 'it is your traditional gender role from generations. If you find it hard to work, just resign and you can be at home taking care of the house and children. After all the family does not run on the meagre amount you bring home'. Past is constructed to legitimize the present. Let's consider an example within the context of the epic. The common assumption about the status of the Vedic women was that they were highly venerated in the society. Knowledge about women was obtained from normative texts like the *Dharmasastras*. Over time our historians have realized that the text merely proclaims the ideal situation in which the society was to exist. The reality was far away and they have realized that the social inequalities kept women in the margins of history. Respect many a times, is a cunningly designed terminology to repress women's sexuality and innate strength. She is made to believe the story of the self-sacrifice of thousands of women before her and she is caught in the web of these spidery threads that asks her to uphold the tradition of centuries.

The author Divakaruni complains that there is the absence of "powerful, complex women characters" in the epic. It is largely a male world which intersects with a cosmic world which is also portrayed as following patriarchal tradition. The women characters remain "shadowy figures, their thoughts and motives mysterious, their emotions portrayed only when they affected the lives of the

male heroes.” In *Palace of Illusions*, the women are placed in the “forefront of the action.” (Divakaruni 364) The narrative uncovers a woman’s world that is laid invisible between the lines of the men’s exploits. Thus, history gets reconstructed here when Panchali poses questions like, “And who decided that a woman’s highest purpose was to support men?... A man, I would wager! Myself, I plan on doing other things with my life”(28) opening up a rift and showcasing the conflicts that was so neatly concealed within the earlier mode of representation.

The second objective is to locate it within the context of Modernity. It was with the arrival of modernity/ colonization that concepts like privacy and interiority were talked about in India. In *Mahabharatha* and *Ramayana* we read about the collective good of the society. That is the true function of the epics, to portray society in its whole. This is the reason why Sita, “pure” as she was gets abandoned by Ram on the word of the subjects that he was ruling. The concept of a “Raja” and the collective group are always given primacy over the individual. Modernity in India can be seen as a product of colonial mimicry. Bhabha projects Mimicry as a subversive force which the oppressed uses against the colonizer. The English stubbornly tried to uproot everything Indian and to replace them with the Western counterparts. This project proved to be immensely helpful to the Indians who realized with their brand new Western education that the ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity envisaged by the great English writers do not extend to them and this triggered a protest of ideologies. Isn’t it modernity that made possible a discursive field in which issues like interiority, domesticity etc can be talked about? Thus *Palace of Illusions* is

an after-effect of Colonialism. It is Indian, but not quite. It is familiar, yet foreign. A practice of talking about a person's feeling and emotions- about the inner dilemmas in a mundane world etc is strikingly in opposition with the transcendent concepts of the sages. This novel can be termed a Bildungsroman, a genre that we got acquainted with after the colonial hybridity and mimicry. The very fact that it consists of a first person narrative by a woman makes it modern. Indian women, as we know were not allowed to speak or write the academic language of the time. They spoke *Prakrit* just like the people belonging to the lower castes.

The third and the final objective is to explore two postcolonial dimensions- identity and language. Draupadi seeks to establish her own identity all throughout the novel. The task is extremely difficult for her when compared to her brother Dhrishtadyumnan. The yaga fire from which she was born from set apart her as a woman - , "... who might bring change, the way a storm brings the destruction of lightning"(Divakaruni 12) and this distinction caused her the agony of being shunned by everyone in her palace. Her father wanted a male heir who could avenge his shame. He was unwilling to grab Draupadi out of the pyre and this rejection by her own father tormented her throughout her life. There is also the process of her naming. She doesn't quite approve of her name being Draupadi, "Daughter of Drupad... couldn't my father have come up with something a little less egoistic? Something more suited to a girl who was supposed to change history?" (20). Another argument is about her second name Panchaali. While the name projects her apart as the sole "respectable" woman in history to have five husbands it also tends to claim that she has no identity apart from her husbands.

Both the name indicates the dependency of her existence on her father and husbands.

The aspect of language is something of utmost importance in our postcolonial context. The women of Vedic period along with the lower caste people were supposed to be born from *papayoni* and were considered to be of inferior birth. They were denied education of all kinds- of literature, warfare, *slokams* and *mantras* etc. Women like lower caste males spoke Prakrit. The language of learning – Sanskrit, was inaccessible to them. English replaced Sanskrit as the dominant language during Colonization and has remained the language of hegemony for quite some time now. The very fact that the epic was fully constructed in Sanskrit rules out the possibilities for representation by the people belonging to the lower strata of the society.

The question of language and identity is intimately connected with the idea of De-colonizing Postcolonial theory itself. Ketu H Katak in her essay “Decolonizing Culture: Toward a Theory for Post-colonial Women’s Texts” mentions how the theoretical works of women who are from post-colonial countries are often rejected with the reason that they do not fit the Western standards. She continues that the production of theoretical knowledge has become an “an end in itself, confined to the consumption of other theorists who speak the same privileged language in which obscurity is regularly mistaken for profundity.”(Katak 255). Thus the women writers feel the pressing urge to represent their ideas through fictional works and we can see that the novel in question is written in an uncomplicated fashion with meaning exuding through its lines

unsophisticatedly, echoing a simple charm. It is in such use of language that daily conversations are formed while we often tend to lose our ways through the obscure bafflement of theory. Our postcolonial women critics often find themselves to be caught in a position to fall into the hegemony of theory themselves, while it is the story-tellers who truly decolonize theory and through theory, the culture. Divakaruni is one such author who has succeeded in ‘violating’ the English language by transforming the Western literary form to suit the particular needs of our own culture.

One can see that *The Palace of illusions* is the product of a new age of cosmopolitanism which is constructed in English and thus opens up new doors of possibilities. *Palace of Illusions* analyses the personal history of a woman named Draupadi who was the queen in the court of Yudhishtira. She is no ordinary woman; she is someone who never truly fit into the gender stereotypes revolving around her and someone who is been greatly misunderstood due to the lack of representation in the epic. She seeks to leave behind her own mark in the world by throwing the popular conventions and stereotypes about an ideal Vedic woman. Thus one can say that novels like *The Palace of illusions* offers us hope within the cluttered lifestyles that are subjugated and submitted to believe the unitary nature of human experience.

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Feminist Discourse in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*

Lynda Stanley

Chinua Achebe's fifth novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*, was first published in 1987, some fifteen years after his fourth novel, *A Man of the People*. Widely read as a turning point in Achebe's career as a novelist, this work has been especially discussed as a re-writing of the female narratives in his earlier works. The traditional image of the African woman as a slave or sorceress, as a sex object or mother goddess on pedestal was not subject of Chinua Achebe's early novels. Women characters were not sharply drawn and they did not project the woman of Africa, pre-colonial and post-colonial, in all its dimensions. Women in the African Trilogy or even in *A Man of the People* had only minor roles. On the other hand Achebe's latest novel *Anthills of Savannah* explore the themes of power and leadership. The power of woman, springing from the mythical past and leaping towards the future, has a significant place in it.

Feminism is a political position committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism. Moi quotes de Beauvoir as saying that throughout history, women have been reduced to objects for men: 'woman' has been constructed as 'man's other'. Patriarchal

ideology presents woman as immanence, man as transcendence. Feminism thus aims at defining and defending equal political, economic and social rights and equal opportunities for men and women. Thus, Feminism looks at the distribution of power between males and females, the aim being to create a gender neutral position. It is therefore premised upon the oppression of women and seeks to emancipate them from such oppression.

Although there are various shades of Feminism like American Feminism, African Feminism, French Feminism and so on, all feminists believe that the source of women's oppression is patriarchy. Ford asserts that patriarchy characterizes the pervasive control men exercise over social, economic and political power and resources throughout the world. For Kramarae and Treichler patriarchy not only refers to the preventing of women from occupying powerful positions in society but it also creates a negative social view men attach to women. Thus, the aim of Feminism is to challenge the privileged position of men and demand that women be viewed as individuals rather than simply derivatives of their relationships to men. As such, every writer who claims to be feminist should expose and challenge patriarchy in order to create a society which is free of oppression. This is because the oppressor is consciously endeavouring to sustain the oppression indefinitely through patriarchal ideology .

Feminists also claim that women have been stereotyped and it is their concern to expose these stereotypes as well as to do away with them. Bressler notes that, women have been stereotyped as angels, demons, saints, whores, brainless housewives or eccentric

spinsters. Letherby also observes that women are considered naturally weak and easy to exploit and as the subordinate sex, women's psychological characteristics imply subordination. Thus, women have been perceived as submissive, passive, docile, dependent, lacking initiative and so on. Feminists argue that these stereotypes should be exposed and challenged because they are evident even in the literary canon. Thus, according to feminists, women must break free from such oppression and define themselves. Feminist critics thus argue that women can only free themselves through challenging the established literary canon that helped shape the images of female inferiority and oppression ingrained in our culture. This therefore implies that, a feminist writer would avoid these stereotypes and elevate the position of women rather than adopting the traditional belief of depicting them as barmaids, prostitutes, old maids or whores.

The diachronic transformation of Achebe's women, from victims of a society regulated by patriarchal cultural norms and values to independent, political conscious and self-assertive women — as we see in Beatrice, instantiates Achebe's political and literary commitment to use women empowerment as a conduit for the expansion of the public sphere for inclusive governance. The feminist phase in the novels of Achebe could only be located in his last novel as in the early ones he hardly gives women a voice to speak out their opinion. In *Anthills of the Savannah*, one whole chapter is narrated by a lady, Beatrice, from whose perspective the story unfolds. She is strong, self-reliant and has the audacity to criticize male members of the society for their orthodox and uncanny views of women. This boldness could not be found in the women of

Achebe's early novels. Beatrice accuses Ikem for being chauvinistic, even though he wrote a full-length novel and a play on Women's War of 1929. In *Anthills of Savannah*, Achebe experiments what societies can gain if women are fully integrated in the main stream of events. Two of his central characters are Beatrice and Elewa. To achieve his objectives, Achebe breathes in them the psychology to carry out his feminist instructions.

Beatrice, one of the protagonists of *Anthills of the Savannah*— the true spirit and heart of the novel – and a quintessence of Achebe's radical thinking on the political roles of women in postcolonial Nigeria (Africa). She is the blood, mind and voice of Achebe's new women (Owusu 468).

The portraiture of Beatrice finds expression in Achebe's preoccupation with creating new women, who will be part of Africa's (Nigeria's) transformation process.

The novel, centered on the involvement of three old friends with the management of a fictional African state called Kangan, deals on a variety of levels with Achebe's understanding of women's roles in a postcolonial nation. The novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*, marks the changing trend of the Igbo community towards the role and status of women. The rebellious attitude of women comes to the forefront as they get educated and become competent enough to compete with males without any feeling of inferiority. From the Feminine Phase in his early novels, Achebe makes a paradigm shift in the role and image of his women characters in *Anthills of the Savannah*. The females are in a rebellious mode and are not ready to take orders from every Tom, Dick and Harry. One such character

is Beatrice Okoh in *Anthills of the Savannah*, who adopts a Feminist approach and becomes an independent, educated and confident girl. She represents modern Ekwefi who does not depend on the approval of males for taking the decisions of her life. With the passage of time, a tremendous change is seen in the mindset of both the males and females of the Igbo community towards the roles expected to be played by women. The society, as a whole, begin to accept the power and equality of African women that resulted in the African women getting the privilege to move out of their cubby holes and enjoy their long lost liberty. The years of suppression borne by women developed in them a number of insecurities such as the insecurity related to having less time at their disposal to settle down in life as compared to the males. In the society, the differences that persisted in the image of married women and spinsters made the married status more appealing and interesting to women irrespective of the universal acknowledgement of the fact that the marital status brought domination for women. This general ideology of Igbo women is rejected and poured scorn upon by Beatrice as her perception of women and their role is fairly different from the thinking of the common ladies in the society who are not as educated as Beatrice. The people deprived of education still held the view that women should remain slaves of their husbands and fathers. Feminist critics, writers and theorists, unanimously, agree that lack of education is one of the major reasons behind the inferior position of women. Mary Wollstonecraft takes up this issue of female education in her much acclaimed pamphlet “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman”. In chapter XII titled “On National Education”, Wollstonecraft suggests that both the sexes should be educated

together so that women turn into men's companions in marriage rather than their mistresses. Kate Millett, too, is of the opinion that little or no education drags women to the floor of patriarchal tyranny. She suggests in this reference that it is only through education that females can gain an upper hand in the society, "If knowledge is power, power is also knowledge, and a large factor in their subordinate position is the fairly systematic ignorance patriarchy imposes upon women" (Millett 42).

It becomes easy for patriarchy to keep women under wraps from where they could not even peek at the world outside. Achebe's novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*, emerges from the halo of masculine hegemony and portrays modern African women in a peculiarly different image. The novel, a bildungsroman text, is about the development of Beatrice's character from innocence to maturity. This development is synonymous with the development of women's thinking and the changed mindset of the people in the society as a whole, stretching from the colonial times to the era after independence. The African society became independent not only from the colonizers but also from their own suppressed and petty thinking so as to accept woman's individuality and her independent attitude. During this era men became interested and involved in writing about the plights of women. In the novel *Anthills of the Savannah*, Ikem, one of the major characters, writes about women and is even open to changes in his perception about them when Beatrice convinces him that he is behaving like a male chauvinist because his ideology about women is not in sync with reality. According to Beatrice, women should not be assigned the role of a fire-brigade after the house catches fire.

Beatrice's childhood is spent in loneliness. She could neither become one with her siblings nor strike a chord with her parents. She is shattered on discovering that her parents were expecting a boy when she was born and that her birth has developed resentment in them towards her. She is baptized *Nwanyibuife* meaning "female is also something". Beatrice hates this name of hers and especially the first half- "female". The term "female" refers to the subjugated and the deprived lot of the society who have to live by the bindings and the restrictions imposed upon them. This resentment of Beatrice in childhood leads to her rebellious nature thereafter.

Beatrice who was not to remain in that mould, developed a different mind from that of other girls in Igbo society—as in the case of self-defeatist spinsters who indulged in pity parties with "all kinds of nonsense talk" that strongly suggested that they had been born for nothing other than marriage, thus: "Better to marry a rascal than grow a moustache in your father's compound" (they would say); "better an unhappy marriage than an unhappy spinsterhood"; "better to marry Mr. Wrong in this world than wait for Mr. Right in heaven"; "all marriage is how-for-do; all men are the same..." (p.88). In Beatrice's view, these utterances were "a... baggage of foolishness" (88). On her part, she despised marriage as an institution that demeans the value and honour of womanhood because her people believed, for instance, that "a totally reasonable wife is always pregnant" (88). For that reason, she decided to be totally unreasonable—that is, she ruled out marriage from her life, thereby discountenancing pregnancy as utter nuisance. She elaborated on her position in this way:

I was determined from the beginning to put my career first and, if need be, last. That every woman wants a man to complete her is a piece of male chauvinist bullshit I had completely rejected before I knew there was anything like Women Lib. You often hear our people say: But that's something you picked up in England. Absolutely rubbish! There was enough male chauvinism in my father's house to last me even seven reincarnations! (88).

Beatrice develops mixed feelings when her mother shoves her away after she tries to hug her, thinking that she was beaten by her father. Initially, when Beatrice feels that her father is torturing her mother she develops anger and hatred towards him but coming to terms with the fact that her mother is not ready to take her sympathy as well as on knowing that her mother, too, was not happy on her birth, she is filled with awe towards her father and her resentment towards him lessens. Her mother silently bears all the tortures inflicted upon her by her husband and being a loyal wife still yearns to fulfil all his wishes and desires. Even after being beaten up, she keeps the matter a secret and does not even confide in her children. One of the reasons of the strained relationship between Beatrice's parents is Beatrice's birth as even her mother desperately wished to have a boy when she was born. Though there is no fault of Beatrice in this matter, she still feels the pangs of it.

The thinking and attitude of the women of earlier times displeases Beatrice as those women were male-driven not only in action but also in their thinking. Their mentality was male-like and they liked to do what was expected of them in the society and their

home without taking into consideration their own liking. They had no choice and interest of their own towards anything except that was the choice and interest of their husbands. The reasons of such submissiveness of women were the traumatic beatings they went through if they failed in their efforts to please their husbands or in following the protocol of their clan. Years of subjugation led them to accept that their sex was inferior and they could only survive in the clan if they accepted the superiority of male power. The male superiority is depicted by Achebe not only in the relationship of husband and wife but also in the father-daughter relationship. The binary oppositions in the texts are fairly evident as one of the two is always superior; the male being on the dominating side. In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Beatrice's father reprimands her on acting like boys and orders her to "sit like a female!" (82) and even calls her a "female soldier" because of her interests in exploring the untrodden path.

The lesser the emphasis Achebe's other novels give to its female characters, the more *Anthills of the Savannah* highlights and upgrades the female personae. One of the male characters in the novel, Sam, the head of the State and highest in authority in the state of Kangan, retreats in the backdrop as compared to Beatrice who is depicted as more sensible and intelligent. She could sense the hostile world with which Sam is surrounded and tries, in vain, to pull him out of it during the private dinner in which she is invited to please the guests by her intelligence. Beatrice's efforts to show Sam the true picture of the American girl Lou, who is taking him (his thinking and views) hostage, also goes down the drain. On arousing

Sam while dancing, she poses a question through which she could prick the nerve of His Excellency, but the result is terrible as Sam leaves her crying on the balcony, tagging her as a 'racist'.

Beatrice's rigidity over certain things in her life makes her stand out of the crowd. She is not willing to cheapen herself even for Chris's sake. On hearing about her being invited to a private dinner by Sam, Chris states, "Let's keep all options open. It's never too late" (68). Chris is hopeful that Sam is now trying to re-establish good relations with him through Beatrice and thus he advises Beatrice to keep all options open, reducing her from a rational living being to a mere body. The basic nature and attitude of men towards women is not much different even in the modern African society. Chris, an understanding and loving boyfriend, too, does not hesitate to consider Beatrice as a sexual object, who he wishes to use to lessen Sam's abhorrence towards him. The feminists, including Millett, did not hesitate in engaging in a combat against this misogynist ideology of males and pioneered the sexual revolution. The purpose of this revolution was to bring an end to the patriarchal notions of the superiority of the masculine gender that did not quite consider females as living beings holding an equitable position in the society. Beatrice, belonging to this revolutionary phase, counterattacks on Chris's request, showing her clear stand over her unwillingness to permit anyone to meddle with her body, not even Chris. Her reply to Chris makes it clear and evident, "All options? I knew of one at least I would not keep open" (AOS 69). Other than this, Beatrice also deals with Sam's disgraceful manner of invitation head-on. She feels offended when Sam abruptly invites her and, soon after, hangs the phone without waiting to hear her gratitude. Secondly, he misinforms

her over the place where this private dinner is scheduled. This is enough to arouse Beatrice's anger and she displays her annoyance through the breach of the protocol:

My first act of rebellion which was to bring a wan smile to my face five minutes later for its sheer futility was to refuse my escort's offer to sit in the owner's corner of the black Mercedes standing in my driveway. As he rushed ahead of me and opened and held the door I simply said sorry, walked over to the other side and let myself in. The chauffeur turned sharply around on his seat perhaps to get a good look at today's eccentric cargo. When I said good evening to him on top of all that, he seemed dazed to begin with and then his bafflement gave way to a wide happy grin which pleased me very much for it confirmed that I had successfully compounded my rebellion- first to spurn a seat of honour and then to greet a mere driver first. That was when I smiled at myself and my puny, empty revolts, the rebellion of a mouse in a cage. (68)

Such acts of rebellion and annoyance displayed by Beatrice are accepted by the people around her because the modern African society depicted in *Anthills of the Savannah* had begun accepting the changes towards the equality of the sexes. The end of the novel has the naming ceremony being performed by Beatrice for the orphaned child of Elewa and Ikem. She gives the baby girl a boy's name, "Amaechina" meaning "May the path never close" and has her logical arguments ready for doing something unconventional of this sort. She convinces the people with her belief that the mother of the child should get the privilege to name him/her. The novel does not talk of the rebellion of just one girl. There are two other minor female characters, Elewa and Agatha, who portray the same kind

of rebellion; the only difference being that Elewa and Agatha are not educated like Beatrice. During the naming ceremony, Beatrice's comment of Elewa being a "shy girl" is met with a repulsive reaction from Elewa as she retaliates by saying "I no shy at all. . . I no shy but I no sabi book" (213-214). On the one hand, Elewa's feeling of inferiority over her uneducated background is subdued by the fact that she has seen and known plenty of things beyond the bookish knowledge that the privileged ones possess. On the other hand, Agatha is Beatrice's maid who has an air of her own and hardly pays heed to anyone beyond her own ideas and decisions. She does not consider herself inferior to others and hence is offended when asked to wait on Elewa; someone she considers equal to hers. Agatha dislikes taking orders even from Beatrice. Once Beatrice tells her that she is expecting someone and does not wish to be disturbed on his arrival. When the person arrives, Agatha gives Beatrice a "saucy and suggestive look" that leads Beatrice "to lock the kitchen door altogether" (106).

The significant changes in the societal norms and rituals that are more or less connected with the way women are expected to act in the society give way to the emancipation of women that has been portrayed in *Anthills of the Savannah*. All the menial tasks a woman did without ado earlier is met with hostility and rebellion by the same breed of women. This tremendous difference is the result of the liberty that a woman's mind gets through education. Women themselves begin seeing things from a different perspective. Earlier they used to feel themselves weak and inferior to the males but after acquiring knowledge and wisdom they began to realize their importance and role in the clan. They not only made their own life

worthy of living but even tried to lift-up the lives of the less privileged ones. More feelings of empathy and care developed within them for the same sex.

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, when Chris summons Beatrice, she is compelled to accept the invitation, though she does not like the way he hang up the phone on her after giving orders wrapped in the form of an invite. Igbo women are not only forced to bear such ill treatment by their own men but also by the colonizers. White men treat black people as slaves; not giving any relaxation to women.

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe's voice concerning the woman and her place in Igbo/African society throws up fundamental and intriguing questions, not only on the theory and canons of feminism, but also poses cogent challenges to its exponents and would-be adherents in the African milieu. To use a favourite phrase of Achebe's, it is amazing that he has somewhat escaped the impact of the vibrant cross-currents of feminist agitations of more recent decades, considering especially his long sojourn in the western world—another pointer to the man's stubborn and down-to-earth African convictions. On the flip side of this issue, the problem may be with feminism itself. To reiterate an earlier mentioned point, it is increasingly getting complicated and rather diffuse; perhaps, due to modern trends in information management; increase in socio-cultural awareness (ironically); regional rights activism; other competing trends in nationalism and globalisation; and new insights from subsets of feminist studies, like postcolonial feminism. One critical matter arising from *Anthills of the Savannah* is whether feminist ideology and activism can engender a tangible paradigm shift in the status of

the Third-World woman. Such a question, inter alia, accounts for the divided opinions on what should be the prime and proper preoccupation of the woman in Africa: her felt gender repression; or postcolonial subjugation and the pangs of national birthing.

To sum up, the portrayal of Beatrice in *Anthills of the Savannah* represents a woman shouldering the responsibility of changing the course of female emancipation. The author's attitude to women in *Anthills of the Savannah* is therefore the consequence of present African experience validating the existence of certain kinds of women enjoying a setting totally different from that of their predecessors.

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African Folklore in Toni Morrison's Fiction

Sebin Justine

Toni Morrison -novelist, playwright, liberalist, lyricist, editor, teacher, literary critic and Nobel Prize winner- stands tall as a tower. Her novels focus on the contemporary issues like race, color, class and gender. Toni Morrison, the first Black-American novelist to win the Nobel Prize for literature has published eleven novels to date: *The Bluest Eye*(1970), *Sula*(1973), *Song of Solomon*(1977), *Tar Baby*(1981), *Beloved*(1987), *Jazz*(1992), *Paradise*(1997), *Love*(2003), *A Mercy*(2008), *Home*(2012) and *God Help the Child*(2015). Being a copious writer she has published plays, critical works and essays. Anybody will be astounded by the diversity and unpredictable nature of her output. Her novels reflect a cultural schizophrenia that includes slavery, reconstruction, depression and war. They posit history or narrative as fantasy or even as brutal nightmare. She is concerned with the interrelatedness of race, gender and class. An uneasy alliance between Black men and Black women is a recurring theme in Morrison's fiction because of their common experience of White oppression. Each of Morrison's novels explores some aspect of the oppression afflicting Black-Americans. The combination of keen social observation and allusive commentary gives her fiction the symbolic quality of myth. Her world and

characters are inescapably involved with problems of perception, definition and meaning. Her novels have won critical acclaim for their blend of realism and fantasy, unsparing social analysis and passionate philosophical concerns.

From a materialistic perspective, literature is a product of the society, in which it is produced, arising from and dependent on the physical condition of that society. The source of the themes of her novels lies in the society of which she is a part and in which she is formed. Her novels are concerned themselves with the exploited and oppressed conditions of the Black-Americans. If the reader wants to sum up Toni Morrison's philosophy of life in just one sentence, it is this: "Life is Life... Precious" (63). It is the observation of Pilate, a character in *Song of Solomon*.

Toni Morrison, the Afro-American woman writer is the embodiment of courage. She speaks as a Black woman in the race-ridden American society that undervalues the voice of the Blacks. Since she is convinced that art should have meaning, she nicely blends the personal, cultural and political to portray the Afro-American social and cultural history. She possesses an exceptional gift to relate powerful yet deeply disturbing stories she imagines, employing an equally powerful poetic language. A discerning reader will easily figure out that Toni Morrison is a novelist, who guides her readers to the social and political history of America and to the realm of African myths and folklore.

Folklore is an umbrella term which includes traditional arts, legends, practices, knowledge, songs and tales. The Dark Continent is very rich in folklore. They are cultural products which transcends

its geographical and cultural origin. There are umpteen definitions and descriptions of folklore. None of them is comprehensive. These definitions challenge the notion of folklore as something that is ‘old’, ‘exotic’, ‘old-fashioned’, ‘rural’, ‘peasant’, uneducated or ‘dying out’. Though folklore connects people to their past, it is a central part of life in the present, and is at the heart of all cultures all over the world. Folklore exists in cities and villages, in families and dormitories. It is present in many kinds of informal communications, whether verbal or customary. It involves values, traditions, ways of thinking and behaving. It is about art. It is about people and the way people learn. It is traditional. Its center holds. It is made up of informal expressions passed around long enough to become recurrent in form and context, but variable in performance. As Jan Brunvand asserts, “Folklore is the traditional, non-institutional part of culture. It encompasses all knowledge, understandings, values, attitudes, assumptions, feeling and beliefs transmitted in traditional forms by word of mouth or customary examples” (68). No song, no act of creation can be properly understood apart from the culture or subculture in which it is found and of which it is a part. And surely no other discipline is more concerned with linking human beings to their cultural heritage from the past than is folklore; and no other discipline is so concerned with discovering what it is to be human. It is this that makes African folklore significant in the appreciation of Toni Morrison’s fiction.

The Africans who were shipped into America as slaves were the reservoirs of their traditional songs and stories. The African Negroes who endured the perilous journey from the western coast of Africa to America carried with them crucial aspects of their native

culture: music, dance, myths and stories. And many of the key aspects of their culture survived despite generations of captivity. Alan Dundes states in *Folklore Matters*, that “ the term folk can apply to any group of people who share at least one common factor, and that, what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions to call its own” (11). In his *A Treasury of Afro- American Folklore* Harold Courlander expands on Dundes’s definition of folklore in a more culturally specific way:

African American folklore is myths, tales, recollections, songs and other orally transmitted lore of the various, sometimes disparate Negro cultures in the new world. It includes narratives and traditions unique to particular communities as well as those that are shared by many or all, and it contains, themes of European as well as African origin.(6)

From Dundes’s and Courlander’s definitions of the folk and African American folklore, it is clear that the essential core of the African-American literary tradition is deeply rooted within its folklore culture. As Lawrence W. Levin writes in his *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*:

Derived clearly from its African roots, this oral culture existed in the music of spirituals, gospel songs, work songs, and the blues in the folktales and in the creation of folk heroes... a self-deprecating brand of humor that was also satirical and biting in its exposure of the American racial system (1).

While writing about white’s oppression and excesses, the African-American writers included their rich cultural heritage and folklore to preserve their race, identity and culture.

Toni Morrison reflects the exploitation and devastation bought by slavery on the African-Americans. She also dwells upon the cultural inheritance of the Blacks- folklores, myths, cultural tradition ancestral legacy, magic, fable, poetry, songs, music and superstitions. She believes that cultural tradition, myths and folklore are the art of self-discovery. Therefore her characters usually go back to their cultural heritage to find themselves and to have better awareness of their lives. Morrison employs a huge repertoire of myths in her novels- classical Christian and African-to depict 20th century wounds and the love that has the potential to heal them. Myths explain why things are the way they are- why the world is as it is and why things happen the way they do. Morrison's novels exemplify this truism.

Toni Morrison's literary career demonstrates the vital link between Black American folk and formal literary traditions. Her first novel *The Bluest Eye* was published nearly twenty years after Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. But *The Bluest Eye* is very much like Ellison's magnum opus as it continues on African-American folk tradition without completely abandoning formal literary conventions. *The Bluest Eye* does not simply collect and retell folktales and reiterate folk beliefs and practices. Morrison's novels do not simply replicate the dynamics of folk communities by showing how people interact with each other to shape tales, legends, rumors and folk conventions. In many of her novels-*Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, *Tar Baby* and *Beloved*- Morrison simulates the ethos of folk aura intrinsic to the texturing of the whole. As Trudier Harris states in *Fiction and Folklore: The Novels of Toni Morrison*, "A single folk belief or superstitious practice can reflect an entire community's

attitude towards a character. For example, National Suicide Day in *Sula*... is a dynamic event that reveals the whole community's attitude towards death" (11). Through careful presentation of such nuances of the folk beliefs and practices, Morrison is able to show folklore in process rather than as stationary forces. Morrison's works abounds in mystical occurrences-conjurations, superstitious manifestations and spiritual visitations.

In *The Bluest Eye* and in many of her later novels, Morrison establishes a pattern where she presents a dialectic of values that forces her characters to look at alternative ways of being black, or being male or female. For instance, Pecola Breedlove's dream about becoming a child with beautiful blue eyes is actually a fairy tale in reverse. Pecola and her mother's quest for white values are just as ruinous as the racism they have been forced to endure. On the first page of *The Bluest Eye*, a child's voice immediately reveals the novel's secret, that Pecola Breedlove was carrying her father's baby. In her victimization, Pecola resembles Philomela, the ancient mythical figure who was raped and mutilated.

Sula opens with the promise of explaining through a folk anecdote how the texts present situation developed. Morrison's narrator provides the insider's story about the origins of Bottom by complicating the trickster-myth. Traditionally a trickster-figure cheats others but is eventually cheated. In the opening of the novel, the narrator reveals that Blacks settled the Bottom high hills because a farmer promised freedom and fertile land to a former slave. But instead of rewarding the slaves' hard work with fertile land in the

bottom of the valley, the farmer tricks the slave by proclaiming the merits of the land in hills explaining that it is the bottom of the heaven.

A trickster figure in her own right, Sula Peace is named after a change of conditions according to the African Babangi language. When Sula the protagonist returns to Bottom looking ten years younger than the rest of the women of her age, the black community is immediately suspicious of her because of the difference in appearance. When their suspicions are connected to their rumor, she is changed into a witch through the evolutionary process in folklore where rumor gets solidified as legend. Morrison reinforces the folkloric elements of the novel by giving it a fairy-tale structure that is complete with ballad formulas.

The Sula who returns to Bottom after ten years is unchanged by the passage of time. She is damned for defying assumptions about how women ought to behave. She is accompanied by an ominous flock of robins; she is an anarchist, a wanderer, a veritable *femme fatale*, refusing to become wife and a mother, and seeking sexual gratification like, Lilith—the female demon in Jewish mythology. According to the African myth, a plague—like the family-shattering plague that Sula embodies will go only with the community's sacrifice, as indicated by the accidental deaths at the tunnel on National Suicide Day. She is not only a trickster. Her character shockingly resembles Queen Jezebel of the Hebrew Bible. Morrison enslaves her with a significant birth mark on her eyelid that is symbolic of her original powers of perception. Other characters in the novel—depending upon their powers of perception—interpret the birth mark as a rose, a tadpole, a rattlesnake, her dead grandmother's ashes, or

simply a scary blackthing. For them it is a mark of evil, recalling Jezebel's aggressive rule over Israel, establishing her mythic reputation as a beautiful temptress and the embodiment of feminine evil. Sula's aggressive sexual gratification includes seducing her best friend Nel Wright's husband Jude Greene. This is a scathing inversion of the modern day fairy tale romance Nel deeply values.

The three generations of Peace women—Eva, Hannah and Sula—who lived in the outskirts of Bottom as pariahs—resemble the chorus in the Greek tragedy, the Furies and the Fates who spun, measured and cut the stories of people's lives. Like these women, the World War veteran Shadrack is a source of confusion and mystery to the people of Bottom. With the desire to see his own face in a toilet bowl, Shadrack appears as Narcissus, the beautiful youth in Greek mythology who falls in love with his own image in a pool. Likewise, Sula eventually dies alone, unable to recognize the reflection of her other half embodied by Nel.

The title of Morrison's third novel *Song of Solomon* is a variant of a well-known Gullah folktale. In this folktale a group of African slaves in the New World rise up one day from the field where they are working and fly back to Africa. Although many readers associate Morrison's flying characters with classical Greek figures Daedalus and Icarus, who attempt freedom with wings made of wax, Morrison suggests that her novel draws on the specific myth about black people who could fly. Morrison's use of myth of the flying Africans is embedded in the text as a real legacy of African magical power. The novel convinces its readers that it is possible to belong to a lost tribe of flying Africans and it is possible to reclaim

this heritage by remembering the power of their stories through language. She explains that this particular myth was a part of her life's folklore, grounded in spirituals and gospels proclaiming the ability to fly to freedom as a gift. In *Song of Solomon* this gift manifests at the pinnacle of Milkman Dead's search for his past, as he discovers that his great-grandfather was part of a flying tribe. In a strong rejection of the torturous slavery, the flying African, Solomon Sugarman, flew home to Africa. The novel is infused with myths, folklore as well as classic fairy tales, fables and folk music.

When the novel opens, the protagonist Milkman Dead is searching for his freedom and identity. But he does not pursue the North star of freedom while fleeing slavery or sharecropping the cruel south. Morrison is reversing this piece of black folklore by having Milkman searching for his identity while travelling from north to south on a sort of Odyssean journey. The novel examines the transformation of Milkman, from an indifferent man into a culturally aware Afro-American, and how he embraces his ancestral roots. We are introduced to an old woman, Pilate, who keeps on singing as she is worshipping and chanting some magical words:

O Sugarman done fly away
Sugarman done one
Sugarman cut across the sky
Sugarman gone home (6).

Pilate embodies all that is truly natural. Pilate is a conjure woman. Morrison gives Pilate a magical start by describing her as being born without a naval. It is Pilate who foresees the mighty

coming of Milkman Dead. She lives close to the earth, births babies and talks to ghosts. By her pebbly voice, woodsy smell, ability to read earth and sky, and by singing folksongs about Sugarman's flight, Pilate recreates a past in which her ancestors shed the yoke of oppression. Her recreation of the past sustains the characters that live in the present. Pilate, despite being born without a naval, develops into an independent, resourceful and courageous Black woman. She is the representation of the folk and family consciousness that she demonstrates by listening to her father's ghost and befriending her brother's son, that is, Milkman.

Milkman eventually progresses from his father's values to his aunt's values as he discovers his family's true history in the south. His journey into the south eventually evolves into a positive quest because he starts out looking for gold but ends up seeking his family's legacy. By grounding Milkman's identity quest on a folktale, Morrison calls attention to one of the central themes of her fiction- the link between individual identity and community. She argues that folklore is, by definition, the expression of community and of the common experiences, beliefs and values that identify a community. Thus the Gullah tale of the flying Africans, including Milkman's own great-grandfather, represents a common dream, a common disappointment and a group identity.

Tar Baby, Morrison's fourth novel takes its title from an African American folktale in the Br'er Rabbit Cycle by reintroducing Black Women's spiritual and creative heritage. Br'er Rabbit or Brother Rabbit is a fictional character who appears in *Uncle Remus*, a collection of oral folklore compiled by Joel Chandler Harris.

According to Morrison the “tar baby” myth transcribed in southern folktales of Anansi, the trickster spider is also in the ancient African ‘tar lady’, considered a powerful mythical symbol of black womanhood because of her power and creativity in binding things together.

The novel is set in the contemporary period, and much of its action takes place in the Caribbean. Its setting, the fictional Isle des Chevaliers, is a perverse Eden that is an exotic example of the flawed garden. It features the major European American characters Valerian and Margaret Street. Their homes were built above a swamp they called Seine de Ville (Witch’s tit) that had been formed when the White invaders rerouted the river and displaced it to end twenty leagues from the sea. Although this island seems an idyllic paradise, lush and fruitful, the land is rotting and haunted by demons. In reality the island is the site of complicated racial tension on many levels.

As in the case of the myth of the flying Africans in *Song of Solomon*, Morrison gives a revised version of ‘tar baby’ folktale. In the southern rendering of this myth, the tar baby, possessing the capacity to sew things up becomes a tar baby who traps wrongdoers. According to Harris’s Br’er Rabbit folktale, Br’er Fox places a tar baby on the road to catch Br’er Rabbit. After, hitting the decoy, Br’er Rabbit gets stuck in the tar. *Tar Baby’s Son*, a gloomy traveller from Eloe, explains to Jadine Childs that White farmers place a tar baby on the road in order to prevent Br’er Rabbit from eating their cabbage. The protagonist Jadine plays the role of the tar baby and develops a romantic interest in Son. Once Son comes into contact

with Jadine, he runs the risk of having his own values negatively transformed to hers. The tar baby here is transformed back into the tar lady as she literally tries to free herself from a tar pit. Thus Jadine performs as both a tar baby and a tar lady. In *Tar Baby* that ends with the folktale mantra 'Lickety-split', all characters are portrayed in a web like tangle of tar and ladies inspired by both myths of tricksters and dueling beliefs about racial pride and uplift. Morrison's ambiguity about the novel's own elusive tar baby shows the complexity of both the evolution of myths and the perspectives of characters in contemporary fiction.

Morrison got the plot of her fifth novel *Beloved* from a newspaper article about a sensational murder case. Margaret Garner, a runaway slave, killed her daughter rather than allow her to be returned to slavery. In Morrison's novel, her protagonist, Sethe Suggs, kills her baby daughter to save her from slavery. Both borrowing from the historical story of Margaret Garner and the ancient African sources to create the ghost child Beloved, Morrison displays the qualities of love. The child Beloved is hard to recognize because Morrison looks to West African Yoruba Culture to help create this character. In the Yoruba culture, Beloved is an *abiku*, a spirit child, who is fated to a cycle of early death and rebirth to the same mother. These spirits are said to be souls who are trying to torment their parents by repeatedly returning. Usually a child who is stillborn or dies in infancy is referred to as *abiku*.

Morrison relies on the *abiku* in several ways. First, Sethe Suggs's murdered daughter is 'born' to the same mother- as signified by the breaking of Sethe's water- symbolic of amniotic fluid- when

she first looks at Beloved. Before killing Beloved, Sethe's finger nails scratch the child's head, and these marks appear on the forehead of the 'adult' woman. And, the childghost wreaks havoc in the lives of the Suggs family. In African myth, torment of this nature happens when some crime against the gods has been committed; so, the torment is punishment. Here Sethe's love for the baby girl is so much that she has to kill her. Thus Beloved revises the stories about motherhood through a pastiche of gothic horror embodied by an eighteen-year old ravenous ghost and African based belief about the powers of community. Named after the chorus in the biblical Song of Solomon, Beloved travels not only distance but also time in search of her mother.

In conclusion, let us state that this Afro-American writer not only reflects the exploitation and devastation brought about by slavery on her people but also alludes to folklores, myths, cultural tradition, ancestral legacy, magic, fable, poetry, song and superstitions. She believes that cultural tradition, myths and folklore are the means of self-discovery. Naturally her characters go back to their past heritage to discover themselves. Set against the background that blends a realistic past with supernatural elements and folklore, her novels constitute an imaginative history of African Americans. They trace events from slavery to the Great Migration through a Jazz Age, Harlem and Post War Ohio, through the Civil Rights movement to contemporary times. Along this sweep of history, readers encounter ghosts, modern day tar babies, flying Africans and characters left traumatized by the world around them. Morrison's fiction documents these characters' attempts to put their lives back

together again, to claim a sense of self that they lost. Her work, enmeshed in history and folklore, offers lessons in recovery.

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Animals in *Life of Pi* and the Ethics of Othering

Surya Kiran

The concept of ‘representation’ is pretty vast and is something that has been heavily debated upon since the time of Plato and Aristotle. While ‘object’, ‘manner’ and ‘means’ are the three important aspects to be studied about any representation, in literature the ‘means’ is more or less apparent- it is language. The ‘object’ may vary with every single text but it is the ‘manner’ that has always produced lasting impressions from the given expressions and gave birth to new discourses. This paper is an attempt to study the representation of animals in Yann Martel’s Booker Prize winning novel, *Life of Pi*. My contention is that the Western intellectual history has always been keen on ‘othering’ the animals and using the animal imagery as a mode for ‘othering’ humans. Considering Berger’s argument that “[A]nimals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them” (14), this article will try to bring out the underlying anthropocentric views of the protagonist which has used animals as a tool to weave a “better story”.

The strong religious tone underlying the narrative is the best hint one can get regarding the anthropocentric view inherent in the novel; the narrator claims at the beginning of the book that it is “a story that will make you believe in God” (Martel 9). All religions in the world are built upon anthropocentric views and an easy example to prove this would be the Creation story told in the book of Genesis in the Judeo-Christian Bible. The fact that the protagonist of the novel, Piscine Molitor Patel has got himself introduced to three religions and has had a strong and equal bonding to all of them sets the tone for the novel. Gregory Stephens has argued that the religious overlay is an attempt to fudge the boundaries between fantasy and reality, something that would enable the readers to suspend disbelief when they read the story (43). Be that what it may, the religions and the anthropocentric development of the narrative are mutually complementary, something more than what Stephens observes.

Richard Parker, the Bengal Tiger, Pi’s companion during his days in the Pacific Ocean after the ship-wreck plays a crucial role in affirming the religious faith of Pi Patel. The first few days on the life boat after surviving the shipwreck was of constant fear and hopelessness for Pi. He was expecting the Tiger to eat him up anytime, but after that initial shock, Pi had made a raft and started his battle with life and death. If that act to build a raft was an attempt from a desperate kid to survive, what made him survive in the sea for 227 days is the more interesting question in the narrative. The source of his fear turns out to be the source of his perseverance as well; Pi says, “It is the irony of this story that the one who scared me witless to start with was the very same who brought me peace, purpose, I dare say even wholeness.” (Martel 203).

The fear he had for the tiger was a product of an anthropocentric act by his father during his early childhood at Pondicherry Zoo. He was taken near a tiger which was made to starve for three days and he was made to watch how the tiger had guttled a goat that was thrown into its cage. This anthropocentric act serves two purposes in the narrative; on one hand it attributes the trait of cruelty as something inherent to tiger (and animals in general). The fact that the tiger was made to starve is conveniently forgotten; even though the story is narrated after so many years since the incident had happened, Pi, who is portrayed as a character who loves animals so much fails to point out this fact. It is very unlikely that someone who knows so much about various people who had survived in sea has not heard of humans turning out to be cannibals when made to starve.

This ‘othering’, building a cruel image for the tiger, leads to the second purpose of the narrative: strengthen the religious faith of Pi. Linda M Morra in her review of the novel claims:

...if Crusoe himself discovers religious belief and experiences a conversion because of his hardships, Pi demonstrates a kind of spiritual precocity since he has explored-even celebrated-three major religious belief systems in advance of his ordeal at sea. A religious conversion is not engendered by his sufferings; instead, religious beliefs and rituals sustain him throughout his perils. (Morra 163)

This is a highly debatable observation since we don’t find any real description about any of the religions or the religious texts he has come across in the past during his days at the sea, we are

only informed that he prayed every day. At this juncture, his belief of wholeness, purpose etc., are built around Richard Parker which in a way can be interpreted as a return to the Pagan worshipping. Bleakley explains about animal worshipping this way, “the most revered animals will be those raising strong ‘negative’ emotional response: awe, fear and anxiety. The mechanism through which religiosity is grounded is hypothesized as the sublimation of such emotions which would give rise to ‘mental images perceived as natural forces’” (74). Richard Parker has evoked all these feelings in Pi, and most of his time in a day was dedicated to look after Richard Parker. We are informed that Pi used to pray five times a day, more than ten of his activities were meant to serve the tiger, a rare case of role reversal between human and animal as Stephens calls it, Richard Parker had eventually turned out to be a ‘master’ figure for Pi. This provides a mutually complementary dimension to the narrative which swings between ‘othering’ and religion. This can be explained better using the comparison Bleakley uses to explain the how beliefs are formed: “. . . that belief in a malevolent spirit world raises emotions, which leads to images forming an hallucinatory or fantasy basis to a religiosity, which in turn reinforces the view of a world inhabited by malevolent forces, as spirits.”(75).

To elaborate further about this role-reversal, the name Richard Parker itself is an inter-textual reference from Edgar Allan Poe’s only complete novel *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*. In Poe’s story too we find a shipwreck and Richard Parker is one of the crew members who saves himself along with three others in a life boat. After spending a number of days in the sea without food or water, Parker comes up with the idea of one

person dying to save the other three. They draw a lot and for his bad luck Parker was the one who was chosen as the scape goat and others attack, kill and feed on him momentarily. If we exclude the human Pi Patel from the equation, in *Life of Pi* too we find Richard Parker with three companions, a zebra, an orang-utan and a hyena. Unlike Poe's story, the Richard Parker here feeds on the left overs of the zebra and orang-utan killed by the hyena and himself kills and eats the hyena.

When the Japanese officials approach Pi to prepare a report on the shipwreck, he gives them a detailed account of what has happened. They are very much doubtful about this story and find it very much difficult to accept the fact that a boy and a tiger survived 227 days together in sea nor are they ready to believe about the events that took place in the island. They bluntly discards his story about the island saying, "Carnivorous trees? A fish-eating algae that produces fresh water? Tree-dwelling aquatic rodents? These things don't exist." (Martel 353). This forces Pi to provide a different version of the story, which Huggan and Tiffin has identified as a narration which is "conventional anthropocentric reading Pi's interlocutors expect." (175). The question to be addressed here is with whom and how is anthropocentrism in the text related to.

The Japanese officials' demanding and Pi providing a story with humans as cannibals is an expected twist but the way Pi puts it is really awkward, "You want a flat story. An immobile story. You want dry, yeastless factuality." (Martel 358). Beyond the apparent bestiality attributed to animals, it is this statement that makes the anthropocentric view more irritating. In Pi's own words we see animals becoming tools, they are sources used to make a story

more interesting, something that can make a story more mobile and imaginative.

The second version of the story provided by Pi is significant also because it shows us an altogether different form of othering. In this story, we find zebra becoming a Taiwanese Sailor, orang-utan Pi's mother, hyena a cook and Pi himself becomes Richard Parker. The crucial point to be noted at this twist is the decrease in the number of characters. We have only four of them now. The omniscient narrator, Pi Patel, who was telling us the first story with himself and four animals has taken over the role of Richard Parker in the second version. This takes us back to the earlier mentioned scenario of Richard Parker and three others, a one-to-one parallel of Poe's story. Considering the mastery shown by Yann Martel in inflicting a role reversal between Pi and Richard Parker to develop the idea of faith in the narrative, a possibility of another role reversal is very much worth considering.

On giving a critical thought, one might find it difficult to accept that the second story is a product of Pi's imagination. Pi says to the officials, "You want a story that won't surprise you. That will confirm what you already know. That won't make you see higher or further or differently." (Martel 358). This is very much a problematic statement. How can a man who has suffered 227 days at the sea come up with such a story when textual evidences prove that he is not yet out of his trauma? Throughout the conversation with the Japanese officials, we find him demanding cookies and when it is given to him, he saves it for future; he is still not able to accept the fact that the days of food scarcity is over.

The spontaneity with which Pi created a new story, considering the trauma he was in, is an act that can be doubted. On the other hand, if we can take the longer story as the imagined one, it makes more sense. He has had as many as 227 days to imagine and build a story that can be presented to the society. It is a necessity for him as the second story is about human cannibalism, a case in which “the beast resides within the human, and is brought to the surface by exceptional circumstances” (Huggan and Tiffin 175). It is important to note that Pi provides some personalized statements, sentences that are impregnated with empathy, while narrating the second story. We don’t find such personalized statements towards the zebra or the orang-utan in the first story. In terms of emotions, the first part is pretty monotonous as it is filled with fear and hope, the level of sympathy or compassion found in the second story is found wanting in the first part. Strangely, both the stories end in the survival of the fittest theory, something very well explains the connection of the stories. In the first version Pi and Richard Parker survives and in the second one, Pi impersonates himself as Richard Parker and survives. The importance of the tiger in defining the strength of Pi’s faith kept apart, a man of common logic can always raise the question of why Pi didn’t get rid of the tiger? His “Plan Number Seven: Keep Him Alive.” (Martel 207), is not convincing under any circumstance considering the fact that he is always a potential threat to Pi’s life. This would force us to think that shorter story is more credible and Pi, under the disguise of keeping Richard Parker alive, was actually searching ways of survival for himself.

This, in turn, becomes an excellent parallel and a kind of re-telling of Poe’s story. Here, the Richard Parker survives, and the

deaths of his fellow travelers become a source for his survival. Bachelard argues, “The quickest way to describe a human aberration is to compare it with animal behavior.”(110). Martel achieves this in the first story by attributing all the acts to killing and death to animals, which is justified under the light that ‘survival of the fittest’ is the order followed by animals. To hide Pi’s internal cannibalism, the human beings are othered in the first story as animals which results in “[T]he animal becomes both the vehicle for the ‘seeing’ or imagining and the primary object of that ‘seeing’, while writing offers the ritual invocation of the animal familiar.”(Bleakley 80)

To conclude, I would like to argue that the entire novel is a representation of an anthropocentric view of the protagonist, Pi Patel. In this process, he decenters human beings from the narrative and “this better story puts animals back at the center of our secular and religious imaginations.”(Stephens 43), only to show them as human ‘other’.

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Reworking the Matrix of Virtual Semantics: A Postcolonial Digital Humanities Metamorphic Potentiality

Anusha A J

The Western academia's initial claims of the existence of vestiges of colonialism have been in the recent past reconfigured by certain theoretical argumentations to one of perpetual rendezvous of colonialism with the colonised. As digitality surfaces as a facet of modernisation, the colonial narratives discover templates, meticulously assemble and disseminate the fabricated knowledge via it. Postcolonial Digital Humanities is more a decolonizing project than a conceptual practice which engenders from the necessitation of incorporating race, class, caste, gender and sexuality into virtual chorography, furnishing the invincibility of social categorisation. Clogging the colossal digital *terranova* with baits clamping adherence of the fragmented self, a labyrinthine enterprise is at methodical work. Perceived by critics as the masculine adventure of the earthly colonialism, the hegemonic bind of the cybernated spans expanses of the artefacts of websites, blogs, virtual reality game zones, can position within its purview the digital film and digital televised productions. Discerning the hierarchies looming behind the programming apparatus, Postcolonial Digital Humanities envisages to expose the defunct coded Eurocentric hypermedia. In

addition, the project appropriates the aforementioned digital tools in breaking the invisible entourage. The techno-cultural renditions of archival conceptions, invasions and consumptions and automated tools for articulation of augmented reality have been participants of the cleansing blueprint. The repudiation of machinations of geopolitics of knowledge and the homogeneity repeatedly ascribed to the postcolonial, the preservation of the vernacular and the pro-speech endeavour are the signature feats. Critical appraisals of the dexterous kind muster momentum for the curative proposal.

Renegading the perceptions of the technologically imbibed anthropos is a gargantuan institutionalised hierarchy palpitating within the veil of a mediated module. Psychodynamics engineering the repercussive tentacles' tightening around postcolonial subject perpetuates primitivism in its antediluvian formulation of incapacitation of the other. The hypotexts and hypertexts saturation are a cunning elaboration coagulated to a definitive enhancement of variant spatial coordinates marking the cognitive order. Circumventing these synchronised databases frequently ensures the entrapment of colonised within the psycho political semantics of the colonial and its convoluted tryst with the self proclaimed masters. The temporality silhouetting this enterprise may have witnessed a paradigm shift in the artefacts of representations but the incentive to condescend and pursue manipulation reverberates across discourses surpassing the paraphernalia of digital or print.

Postcolonialism critically traverses the actively construed strokes of exploitation conjugated to the overlapping hermeneutics of race, culture, ethnicity, gender and the like as its locus focii. Imperialistic surcharges triggered deliberations to assuage a project

detrimental to the consciousness of the native. The indelible consequences of the aforementioned reformatory discussion, aligned in the superstructures of cultural production, reconstructed the national culture; corruptive renderings for the determined disavowal of what in Frantz Fanon's terminology catalogues as the "reality of national culture"(67). Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels fervently declared, "It is not consciousness that determines life but life that determines consciousness"(36). The perseverant and consistent engagement with the schema of obfuscation guaranteed the legitimisation of the colonisation of the psyche wherein the appropriation and reappropriation operates annihilating the indigenous, interpellating them to the subaltern. Postcolonialism extrapolates to a political project shooting out from its theoretical outcries in proverbial defiance of the modern rationality monopolist European imperialists. Suffusing the parlance of critical theory with a pseudo concrete conceptual framework over the years - from among selves categorised by the Western intelligentsia as the primitive, passive, sans intellect, and foremost sans participatory power in the dominant socio-political cartography- Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi.K.Bhabha and Edward Said. Referral to the poststructuralist grounding of the theory assures entanglements with the transdiscursive semantics of Jacques Lacan, Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida etc., denouncing the narrative as a true blue concoction of the empire writing back. The existential juggernaut exponentially increased upon pervaded by the complexities surfacing with globalisation, the proponents in the critical arena forced to demystify the subsequent theoretical conundrum. Revolutions in the psychosocial space, genesis of which

lay in the transformation of the discursive column to virtuality, necessitated novel power narratives or as Trevor Haywood pinpoints “With the introduction of any new technology we enter an initial period when the missionaries enthusiastically declare new scriptures”(50). Colonialist invasions into the billboard of digital topography sprouted permutations and combinations of biased digital artefacts and hegemonic cyberspace. Decoding the hierarchies cloaked beneath the phenotext sensible to the world has been the epicentre of theorists and thinkers or rather the theory circle that is enamoured with the positive and negative potentialities of World Wide Web 2.0. Systematic collaborations and information exchange with the architects in the fields of enquiry of new media studies, cultural studies and the like simmered cauldron of possibilities.

The transdisciplinary label of Digital Humanities situates itself as a fluid interface at the point of interaction between the human and the coded, more appropriate elaboration exudes the idea as that between the traditional discipline of humanities and metaphor for modernisation, information and communication technologies. The navigational engagements partaken by the digital citizen over the networked social space, exciting his myriad sensibilities, masks inclusion of apparatuses deeply entrenched in the fabrication of the visible form, delivering applications of data storage and retrieval, digital communications, collaborative web projects, data visualisation, data mining etc. at unprecedented levels. Consolidating the ace duos of digitized and born-digital materials of consumption, this umbrella term acts as a signpost to a discipline devoid of definitive methodologies from its own repertoire but rather draws freely from the traditional humanities disciplines including that of medicine, history,

art, philosophy, literature and social sciences, complemented by tools of computing. Kathleen Fitzpatrick explicates:

Digital Humanities as a nexus of fields in which scholars use computing technologies to investigate the kinds of questions that are traditional to the humanities or as is more true of (her) own work, who ask traditional kinds of humanities oriented questions about computing technologies (43).

The epithet network society put forward by Manuel Castells' as contemplative for contemporary hyper textual social sphere, revels in the continuous sophistication of technological installments bearing the techno-integrated physiological and psychological space it inhabits. Substantial multiplication in the availability of economically unburdening applications at the touch of your fingertips enhances the matrix of perspectives attributed to Digital Humanities. However, this computational humanist discipline surpasses the significations primarily associated with the signifier 'digital' and Jeffrey Schnapp, one of the foremost recognised thinkers of Digital Humanities, offers an elucidation of the term and the discipline in the following often quoted words:

Digital Humanities refers to new modes of scholarship and institutional units for collaborative, transdisciplinary and computationally engaged research, teaching and publication...is less a unified field than an array of convergent practices to explore a universe in which print is no longer the primary medium in which knowledge is produced and disseminated...but is not solely about the digital (in the sense of limiting its scope to the study of digital culture). Nor is

Digital Humanities only about the humanities as it is traditionally understood since it argues for a remapping of traditional practices. Rather Digital Humanities is defined by the opportunities and challenges that arise from the conjunction of the term digital with the term humanities to form a new collective singular (121).

Potentialities serenading the ever- expanding ambit of Digital Humanities subsumes to the metamorphosis of *neuvo* instruments of inquiry and meaning making: reinvigorating outdated systems; reconfiguring the peripheral markings pertaining to the social sciences, the natural sciences, arts and humanities; sensible inclination towards perfect trajectory of development for humanist scholars of the time ahead by the juxtaposition of project based learning and institutional lectures and experimentations furthering the scope, reliability, durability, visibility and qualitative potential of research.

The epistemological underpinnings of the magnetic structures of Digital Humanities are founded in the path breaking computational programming of Robert Busa who in the 1950s technically conjured up an automated attribute for computers to logically sort, list, count and word search, enabling a more comprehensive processing of exhaustive set of the digital texts. The publication of a journal *Computers and Humanities* featuring the framework of growth of an emerging specialisation shouldered the discipline. Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) and Extensive Markup Language (XML) rendered vantage points of initiation of linguistic analysis, witnessed the massive follow up of revolutionary ideas that forged a digital plain upon which our self courses through for existence. The historiography

charted the construction of World Wide Web, taking the world by storm in its surge to seed globalisation and engineered to succeed, rousing from the information retrieval feature of digitality. From the above mentioned first wave of technical experiments and inventions, Digital Humanities has been sweltering in the flames of criticism, paving way for a second wave which so far has been crowned a more generative and qualitative approach. These contemporary critical persuasions within and outside the discipline, has therefore been instrumental in its reformative replenishment as a transformative discourse for the marginal.

The recent theoretical interrogation of the information and communication technologies engages in a revelational submission of omnipotence of the politics of gender and race, forfeiting the reality of cyberspace the postcolonial subject is deserving of. Critical Race theory and Marxist theory has been at the core of analytic stride initially. The Racial Formation theory proposed by Michael Omi and Howard Winant intercepting the junctures of race, digital culture and globalisation renders ineffective for a methodical exploration of the same, as the argument of rejecting the systematised racialism is levelled against it. Postcolonial Digital Humanities has been an symbiotic initiative, employing the circuits of digitality to expose, invade and slowly position the subaltern barring the Phallogocentric/ Eurocentric hegemonic binary in the virtual panorama of deliberations. The website existing as a discursive spatial hypermedia opens up vistas for transcending the normative. Scholars Adeline Koh and Roopika Risam, the founders, having a profound sense of the computing universe, comprehend the imperativeness

of theorists like Walter D. Mignolo's considerations of the equanimity of modernity and colonialism. Twittersphere boomed with a pliant understanding of their reformatory trending threads #transform DH and #DHPoCo, reflexive of the penchant for structural and sociological change. Situating themselves as the critical navigators of the digital artefacts, luminaries in the fields of Digital Humanities, New Media Studies, Cultural Studies and Postcolonial Literature, have time and again exposed the perverse logic of coloniality. From Martha Nell Smith, Kavitha Philip, Tara McPherson and Lisa Nakamura to Peter Chow-White, Stephen Ramsay, Rishab Aiyer Ghosh and Walter D. Mignolo, critical suppositions galore, the inevitability entailing the decolonisation phenomenon is perpetually undeniable. Alondra Nelson and Thny Linh Tu's collaborative output *Technicolor: Race, Technology and Everyday Life* (2001), Anna Everett's *Digital Diasporas* (2009), Pramod K. Nayar's *New Media and Cybercultures* (2010), Lisa Nakamura and Peter Chow-White's *Race After the Internet* (2012) represent the discursive manifesto which has been part of the proceedings of structuring the contemporary praxis and theory of Postcolonial Digital Humanities. The simulation of the hegemonic social categorisation commutable the Semic and Cultural codes, enamoured the theorists into the formation of sub disciplines of Digital Literary Studies and Postcolonial Computing. While the former survives as an arena within whose purview comes the "digitisation of literary texts, preservation and representation of digital texts, computational data analysis and new ways of data visualisation" (xix), the latter rigorously pursues the wayward ramifications of structures of power and influence as deployed across cultural productions. A quixotic culturalistic

presupposition favouring the European can be enlisted as one of the latter's shortcomings. Scholars like Syed Ali make the clarion call for Decolonial Computing, a counter strike against the colonial elements, viewed with an anti-European stance. However with Postcolonial Digital Humanities, there is a broader scope of the tag 'humanities', ascribing to the humanistic value and a featuring a proposal to unsettle the power relations by decentring the dominant structures of meaning making, thereby jumping the Foucault bandwagon of understanding power and knowledge. The discursive forum of the discipline deliberates on the historical narrative has shaped up the undertakings of colonisation, postcolonial, neo-colonialism and decolonisation in the virtual entities. Secondly, it scrutinises the critical convergence of humanities disciplines including the cultural productions of performativity and non-performativity with the tools of digitisation, reviewing the construction, reconstruction and performance of colonialism. Making a motion for *neoteric* cutting edge technologies or substitute mechanisations or newly discovered variant advantages of the present technical framework that impeaches the colonial legacies, Postcolonial Digital Humanities wages a war against the turbulences conditioned by colonialism. Decolonial space in the future as targeted by the artists and scholars can materialise through the diligent persistence of grappling the 'dead/living white men's history', engaging in carving out spaces for the people of colour and women, archival architectures of existence, programming games and publishing and recovering textual corpora to break the canon. As digital topographical cartography in the forms of PCs, laptops, tablets, smartphones

flourishes, the settler-native narrative strengthens the status quo, for the consumption soars.

The content and form of connectivity perpetuate imperialism - not just cultural imperialism but technological imperialism...Empire is not simply an endeavour of the nation state – we have empire through technology and now technology industry as empire. (Walters 15)

Colonisation's rationale of modernisation is a flamboyant trap, deprived of an escape route. Awakening of the fractured self owing to the quasi- liberating anti-imperialist stature, desiderates a revolutionary predilection in the past, present and future. Decoding the inequalities in the structures of automation calls for its scrupulous examination, and in this scenario is powered by the tools of computing, marking the concept of what Derrida propounds is *Metaphysical Complicity*, the evaluation of a subject matter adopting its own contraptions.

The cosmic digital scholarship bracketing websites, blogs and the interactive social media platforms of Twitter and Face book possesses a rhetoric aggrandised by visualisation and simulation. Consumed with a passionate determination, the coded mechanism transcends the electric phase into a colonial cyberspace upon the interception of the digital terrain by the digital setter, articulating new reality for the digital native. During the period of inception of the World Wide Web, critical thinking inclined towards the availability of an unfettered space and optimistic propositions surged through. Hypertext theorist Jay David Bolter's anticipation expounds in the following use of the semantics scripting it as portal encouraging the

relinquishment of the notional excellence of the high cultural matrices as a homogeneous entity while providing lacunae for presence of “network of interest groups” (233). The aspirations for a heteroglossaic narrative were unfounded, as an island of biases strategically surrounded the assets of creation. Debates in the computing circle reverently ruminated on the formulation of the Open source software as the most effective means to further extend the myriad possibilities, reasoned to be inherent within the building capabilities of the digital tool. The comprehension of the automated hieroglyph by such a mode contrived to topple the invisible shackles of marginalisation by offering the endowments of accessibility, simplicity, affordability and transparency. The quintessentially lucid syntax featuring in the HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) and the XML (Extensible Markup Language) codes, the encoding document formats of World Wide Web, meticulously structures the textural, textual and visual canvas of the pages strewn across the web. Despite both being catalogued under the prototype of open source software granting source code pinned with a license to examine, transform and circulate to any parties, the metalanguage HTML’s *modus operandi* in presenting structured data cleaves to an algorithm of predefined presentation semantics. The systems of classifying, organising and interpreting the databases never possesses neutrality that it lays claim to, for they are ideologically inscribed at the time of production. Martha Nell Smith condemns the theory of neutrality as follows:

HTML, SGML, XML - the codes that make words and images, texts, processable and TEI conformance are supposedly gender, race and class neutral. The codes always

work, and the principles always apply, whatever one's personal identity (or so many seemed to believe). It was as if the matters of objective and hard science provided an oasis for folks who do not want to clutter sharp, disciplined methodical philosophy with considerations of gender, race and class determined facts of life...But texts are social instruments and so can never really be free from all of that messiness (4).

TEI guidelines dictated the use of cardinal 1 to signify the sexuality of the male and 2 was assigned to the female. Upon being faced with grave criticism, the item tagged as sex value has been revisioned in 2013 as the equivalent linguistic signifier. The socio-cultural and politico-economical hegemonic knowledge production arrangement resulting from the lack of technical and financial infrastructure for the conception of software applications and programs, absence of skilled programmers, uneven access, monopolistic linguistic trope of English, economic exploitation of the consumer and control over search algorithms by MNCs like Google, Yahoo! exacerbates the digital divide of the Global South from the Global North.

The critical reflections on the colonisation of the cinematic and the televised merchandise has been probed and prodded essentially as a quantum of Digital Postcolonialism and the interdisciplinary area of inquiry of Cultural Studies. Measured appearances of stereotypes (or in Lisa Nakamura's coinage, cybertypes), racial slurs and the ideological construction of the Orient in the corporate driven Hollywood cinema are tactics to consistently

stroke the superiority complex in lieu of marring the other; and these repetitive placements within the text are also the skilful means to stabilise the sign. The Anglophone films trump the visibility of the variant national cinemas, the cultural sites of resistance and revolutions, across the global circuit. Despite the recent plummeting participation of Asians, Africans and Latin Americans, especially women in the mainstream, the tag of ‘exotic’ gobbles up their identity and are demanded to undergo appropriation of the self, in terms of language, principles and behavioural patterns, making dormant their own cultural codes. Also bearing the signature of significance is the relational equation of Game studies or video game studies to the postcolonial, most often its virtual reality being an alternate reality supposition. The capitalist synapses of power meshes into the technological implements to supplant the universal psyche with symbols of covert and overt racial and gender stereotyping. Alex Galloway in *Does the Whatever Speak?* equivocates their digital imagery to a technique of symbolic racism by declaring racial coding has not gone away within recent years, it has only migrated into the realm of the dress rehearsal, the realm of pure simulation and as simulation it remains absolutely necessary (117).

The games of the mode *Tropico* and *Empire: Total War* indulge in the play of political consciousness with the colonialism and capitalism. Gender bias also stubbornly pervades the highly pro-phallic consortium of game developers, players and the visual signifier and albeit the presence of warrior woman cipher, the seamless objectification for the pervasive male gaze nullifies the earlier attributions of power, potency, fortitude, skill and intelligence.

Delinking the psyche from the manipulative tendencies of the colonial necessitates ensuring the visibility in regard to performances of decoloniality. Rebellious executions to invert the longstanding arrangement conditions no groundbreaking formulation but workable solutions meticulously pursued till the realisation of decolonial knowledge and being. Erasing the colonial virtual memory is improbable but the ramifications of incriminating the colonial power holders' exclusion of indigenous historiography, languages and artefacts bring forth an understanding of the matrix of conundrum they inhabit. Digital locales offer a discursive platform for creating, editing, deleting and thereby transforming the lived experience with what Lyotard calls an incredulity towards metanarratives. English monopoly over the web denying the existence of around 6,000 languages endangers the vernacular and the associated cultural productions. Micheal Krauss' article "Endangered Languages" (1992) served as a premonition which encouraged documenting languages in the form of archives. The empowering audio-visual features enable the recording of the manifold languages, considering the hurdles in accommodating the scripted form. Postcolonial Digital Humanities calls for the formation of minority historical records and incorporating the prolific movements and subjects, thrown to the periphery reasoned by social and gender roles. *Digitizing Chinese Englishmen: Representations of Race and Empire in the Nineteenth Century*, an archive by Adeline Koh and projects including *Rewriting Wikipedia*, *Women Who Rock*, *Fem Bot Collective* initiates the invasion of the digital territories via the drafting of collaborative pedagogical and cultural structures of resistance aided by technological advances. Smoothing the rough patches

of social atrocities, relying on transformative enterprise, begins its journey to fruition as software designs and creativity intersect in Micha Cárdenas 'mixed reality performance'. The critical label of 'decolonial art' emulates transgression. Suggestive of an expository avenue it is,

art that enacts these critiques by exposing coloniality and its injustices and contradictions, often using juxtaposition, parody, irony, or simple disobedience towards the rules of art and polite society, so that the viewer or participant is not swept up in the sublimity or beauty that is the Western ideal, but in feelings of sadness, indignation, repentance, hope, and the determination to change things in the future (Michelle 114).

Third Cinema encompasses such a decolonial creative endeavour positing a plethora of representations of the Third World, stripped of the perspective manifestations of the First World. With the relative ease of accessibility of technical resources in the digital age, artists have plunged into the foray of short film making, documentaries, animation cinema, charting archives of liberative hypermedia, disseminated through the portal of Youtube. Publishing anthologies of writings of people of colour, the modes of counter-gaming, digital graffiti and comics broaden the possibilities of the discipline.

The dynamic predilection to decolonise transpires from the desire to make visible the very essence of the structures of their being, upon the realisation of its spatial /historical passivity. Decolonisation, therefore, begins by deseeding the colonial

hegemonic sensibilities from the psyche and shaking off the bonds of decolonial aesthesis, the inferiority complex parasitically occupying the colonised's consciousness, entails the experience of coloniality. With its collaborative, progressive and subversive intelligibilities, Postcolonial Digital Humanities is an enterprising harbinger of a possible decolonial future.

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Fragrance of Nostalgia in *Black Book*, Scattered by a ‘Western’ Wind Blown Across Turkey

Christin Shaji

Please, come and join me, let us walk together through the garden, delighting in the fragrance of my fading roses (*Black Book* 133).

In Orhan Pamuk’s *Black Book*, we can find the longing for a golden past experienced by its author, expressed through the memories and thoughts of its main two characters; Galip and Celal. The fading roses symbolizes the fading memory of its central character Celal. In the novel we can see a Turkish Prince who reads and records the history of Ottoman Empire who is an alter ego of Celal. He openly states his maxim for Pamuk:

He read with impatience, hungrily turning from page to page in search of ideas that might prove useful; soon he had convinced himself that he might be able to use these ideas in his future reign and so restore the Ottoman Empire to glory.(423)

This lost glory of Ottoman Empire perished by the Western invasion is reinstated through the characters, Galip and Celal. Galip

felt that the apartment his family left before eighteen years have the same odour now also. Nothing inside the house had changed. The position of the grandmother and grandfather had been replaced by Aunt Susan and Uncle Melih. The radio's position too hadn't changed. But against this stationary life inside the home, there is another world parallel to them going smoothly outside. The waves of western modernism had changed the appearance of Istanbul and everything associated with it. The outlook of orthodox Turkish people towards the westernization and the westerners living in turkey is clearly explained through the monologue of Galip:

White Russians, and all those other debauched creatures he spends time with in the name of reporting. Englishmen who've come to our city in pursuit of the vilest pleasures; homosexuals who love serials about wrestlers but crave the wrestlers themselves even more; vulgar American women looking for orgies in hamams; conartists; would-be starlets who'd never even rate as whores in a European country, let alone as artists; officers who were kicked out of the army for insubordination or embezzlement, even; chanteuses who look like men, whose voices have cracked from syphilis. (36)

He deliberately gives the name of Aladdin to the shopkeeper. Thus he paves way for telling to the world that the story of Aladdin and the magic lamp included in the *Thousands and One Nights* doesn't actually belong to Sheherazade. The inclusion of the story was done by Antoine Galland when he published this book in French. It was told to him by an Aleppo scholar, a Christian woman named Hanna. Pamuk proves from the description of coffee house that

the setting is actually in Turkey. He establishes his claim through the description of coffee houses in black book in many instances.

Pamuk shows the world; how great is the impact of globalization in Turkey. The American comics displayed in the small shop of Aladdin exemplifies that the modernization had reached the roots of Turkey. Pamuk's high spirit of nationalism and love for what all belong to nation is displayed in the screaming shrill sound of history teacher:

Don't tear pages from your notebooks!" she'd scream in that shrill voice of hers. "I want loose sheets! People who tear up our nation's notebooks, people who destroy our nation's property-they're not Turks, they're degenerates! I'll give them zeros! (49)

He doesn't miss a chance to make remember the people, the past of Turkey. He remembers the reason for the military coup of the 1960 by an innocent reading of the old school notebook. Pamuk made the World and Turkish authorities to remember the cause and gives a strong warning.

Every detail in a detective novel served a purpose. Thus the details of past/present Turkey provided in the novel too have a purpose. It helps the quest for the lost fragrance and glory of Turkey. Pamuk used these descriptions as a mirror to the Turkish people. They have a chance to look at the mirror and can realise how they look now and to remember what they were once.

Galip is the epitome of nostalgia. To create nostalgic feeling about his old apartment, where he and Ruya had spent their

childhood days, he moved to the new apartment after their marriage. The smell of their old apartment which was a joint venture of cooking oil, onions has been contrasted with the stink smell of terrifying insect killer, which Ruya used in the new apartment. The city life style which he often hates is displayed craftily by the thought of Galip that Thursdays were hot water days in their building.

Pamuk paid homage to the pioneer figure among Turkey's mannequin maker Bedi Usta in the sixth chapter. Along with paying tribute, he exemplified the changing scenario of Istanbul through these historical mannequins. His creation was an exact replication of god's creation. Sultan sees it as a blasphemy and prohibited their use. Two decades later, the waves of western modernization and commercialization reached the shores of Istanbul. The high modernization and public violation and disregard for apparels forced and envisaged by religion is stated simply and frankly by Pamuk:

Twenty arduous years later, in the great westernizing wave of the early years of the Republic, when gentlemen threw aside their fezzes to don panama hats and ladies discarded their scarves in favor of low-slung high heels, mannequins began to appear in the display windows of the finest clothing stores along Beyoglu Avenue.(60)

The modern mannequins are exported from alien countries. The nation which prohibited the mannequins representing the patriotic scene had placed western mannequins in front of all grand department stores. The reason for the failure of Bedi Usta was his mannequins look like his fellow Turkish people. The Turks had no interest in mannequins which resemble themselves, which they are bored with.

The Turks doesn't want to be Turks no longer. They aspired to become a new person. They drew aspirations from the western mannequins displayed in the shops. Bedi Usta turned down to his dark altier and created almost 150 mannequins. Each of that art preserved how the Turks looked and lived once. Usta's son aptly said after inspecting the mannequins contains "the special thing that makes us what we are" (61). Every mannequin represents a scene, which is a part of Turkish culture. It's a fossil of age old Ottoman culture.

The waves of westernization hit the outlook and view point of Turks. It is visible in the advise of shop keeper:

He is not going to want a coat he sees worn by someone who looks like the swarthy, bowlegged, mustachioed countrymen he sees ten thousand times a day in our city's streets. He wants a coat worn by a new beautiful creature from a distant unknown land, so he can convince himself that he too can change, become someone new, just by putting on this coat. (61)

The dream of becoming other was the magnetic force that brought the Turks to the fashion stores. The impact of Hollywood movies in the life of Turks is identified and it is a major concern for Pamuk. They are the trend setters of Turkey now. Pamuk laments the deteriorated condition of his fellow people:

An American movie would come to town and every youth in the city wanted dark glasses; something would come out in the papers and all the women wanted lip gloss or all the men wanted skullcaps that made them look like imams. (45)

Pamuk makes aware his readers that even the gestures of people are related to their culture. Pamuk cited the stereotypical gestures of people belonged to different strata of the Turkish society. Pamuk severely criticized the influence of western film, which is naturally the carrier and direct product of western culture. The narrator working as the mouth piece of Pamuk cries out that:

It was because of those damn films-brought in from the West canister by canister to play in our theaters for hours on end-that the gestures our people used in the street began to lose their innocence. They were discarding their old ways, faster than the eye could see; they'd embraced a whole new set of gestures-each and every thing they did was an imitation. The way they opened windows, kicked doors, held tea glasses and put on their coats; these anonymous learned gestures, these new nods, winks, polite coughs, angry fits, and fistfights, the way we rolled our eyes now, the extraordinary things we did with our eyebrows, these new affectations might make us seem tougher or more elegant but they were also robbing us of our rough-hewn childishness. (63)

Pamuk raised Ibn Arabi(1165 -1240) from his grave and attributed him as the first existentialist. Pamuk accuses that the western philosophers actually blundered the ideas of Ibn Arabi. Through this insertion Pamuk provided a 'die lebenswelt' to the forgotten and unrecognized Ibn Arabi, whose doctrines the western scholars still failed to grasp.

It is interesting and at the same time surprising that, Galip who laments the westernization has described the three old people

whom he met at Sirkeci to the three musketeers, which are the characters of French novelist, Alexander Dumas. We have to doubt that whether Pamuk had deliberately used this comparison. He may used it to show that the westernization has reached even the imaginative power of anti-oxidant Galip.

The meaning of the word Ruya, our heroine in Turkish is 'dream'. Thus the author's expedition to find out Ruya is actually his pursuit to resuscitate the obliterated Turkish culture. The Bosphorous strait, which several times determined the course of world history became a trivial and paltry thing in the modern times. The 20 mile long Bosphorous for which the nations fought for centuries is now under the control of United Nations. Turkey bravely rejected the treaty of Lausanne and from 1936, Turkey regards Bosphorous as an international shipping lane but controls the naval trading of non- Black sea nations. The significance of Bosphorous for a patriotic man who loves its rich tradition is evident from the fact that Pamuk manoeuvres the word Bosphorous 49 times in *Black Book*. It's noteworthy that, Pamuk ten times calls the attention of his readers on the issue, "Bosphorous is drying up". He exemplifies the indifference in response between the Prime Minister and that of a fisherman on this issue. Pamuk through Celal is lamenting the wretched condition of Bosphorous, which retains a dominant position in the cultural arena of Turkey. The drying up of Bosphorous is the alter ego of the drying up of Celal's memory.

Celal's memory loss is the replica of the loss of tradition and traditional values from the Turkish society. Celal is recording and propagating the heritage and legacy of Islamic culture as quickly

as possible. He used his sleepless nights “to recultivate the drying garden of memory” (134). Azade Seyhan rightly pointed out the purpose behind the use of memory in Pamuk’s novels :

Memory is rarely about the past but instead how the past is remembered or reconstructed in and for the present . . . in *The Black Book*, Pamuk tropes the trials of Turkish modernity as an allegory of loss and disappearance at the level of both individual life and collective culture. (Tales of Crossed Destinies 149). Thus the empire writes back through the fragrant memories of Orhan Pamuk.

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Alfred Hitchcock's Vision of American Family in the 1950s Movies: A Study

Manju P.B

Family, an integral part of a nation remains its own cherished treasure. A strong family can provide the nation safety and security. In Hitchcock's American films the family is beleaguered in divergent ways. This paper traces Hitchcock's depiction of American family, central to his films as a locus of idealized fantasies but fears about merging and safety as well. It tries to explore how the family turns dysfunctional especially after the Second World War, and how Hitchcock vigorously attempts to shore up the ideology of domesticity in the aftermath of the war.

The 1950s America usually laid down in history as uni-dimensional was actually on a phase of transition in all fields. The socio-economic condition of the people and their life styles changed with the advent of television, suburbanization, increase in economic productivity as well as the extension of civil rights to minorities especially the black Americans. The disbanding of the Armed forces quickly after the war helped both men and women to be free from the military obligations and to concentrate on their families. President Harry S. Truman showered his praise on Americans thus: "No people in history have been known to disengage themselves so quickly

from the ways of war” (qtd in Lindop and Decapua 6). Five years after the end of World War II, Cold war took centre stage and it frightened people throughout the world for nearly half a century.

Cold war and domestic revival can be linked here in the sense that after the war there was an intangible but potent cultural emphasis. After the Second World War, with the onset of atomic age, coupled with fears and tensions associated with the cold war atmosphere etc, saw families retreating to affluence and consumerism and focused on rearing children to become productive citizens capable of defeating the enemy in varied possible ways. People were under immense pressure to be apolitical. Severe anti-communist crusade resulted in people with dissenting views to get punished or fired from jobs or suspiciously viewed in their communities. Ideal American family projected around the world upheld white, middle-class, suburban family raising upstanding loyal citizens who could face any emergency including nuclear war and social problems. Family roles were supposed to prevent and tackle any dangers. It was believed that a strong nuclear family with good fathers and strong wholesome mothers could prevent moral disorders or menace like unwed pregnancies, juvenile delinquency, homosexuality or any other kind of sexual deviancy. As conformity was the group norm, people were forced to succumb to the ideal of the heterosexual nuclear family to avoid problems.

Postwar American family was strong and a new change in concepts developed. Men after the war returned home as war veterans and women who worked outside had to settle for a good family life as homemaker. Lowering of marriage age led to a lot of

marriages. Traditional gender roles with ‘man as the breadwinner’ and ‘woman as homemaker’, was re-ascertained for a happy, well settled family. Women who were forced to leave their jobs after war for want of economic security got married soon which resulted in a baby boom. Early marriage for women was prevalent and there were even courses like “Mrs. Degrees” that prepared them for married life. Marriage outside wedlock was taboo. The advertisements also projected the image of woman to be good housewives and homemaker though they craved for independence. Men like women were not satisfied in their family life. The ‘gray-flannel’ jobs were not able to provide them peace of mind. The men especially war veterans felt that they have become too soft and complacent due to domesticity and they even felt emasculated. They were not able to open up their minds and articulate their frustrations.

Hitchcock’s vision of American family, a central part of his films makes an indepth analysis of the postwar family with all its nuances. *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) presents an average American family comprising Dr. Ben McKenna (James Stewart) and Jo McKenna (Doris Day) and their son Hank (Christopher Olsen). Jo Conway, an internationally reputed singer has abandoned her career in favour of her husband whose medical practice is in Indiana Polis. The entire structure of their family gets disrupted with Hank’s kidnapping. For Jo and Ben a new meaning dawns their life with the completion of the linear journey from America to Europe to London. The journey also indicates their double fall and finally when Jo sings “We’ll Love Again” when Ben and Hank descends the staircase which ends the whole kidnapping situation on a happy note. In the film Hitchcock represents a strong family-

a husband, wife and a child who never loses hope and mental strength in the midst of adversities. There is also a stronger emphasis on the relationship between husband and wife, on the strains in their marriage and on the ways they come to work together in order to recover their child. The film brilliantly unfolds an American family's unexpected encounter with darkest side of European power struggles and a horrid personal misfortune that ensues. In the narrative space of the film we find the tongue-tied exasperations of Ben McKenna, Jo Conway's frustrations both as a mother who lost her child and a Broadway performer who has lost her career and the kidnapped child Hank's wide-eyed astonishment at the nefarious spectacles opening around him—all this brilliantly formalizes Hitchcock's own encounter with America and with the possibilities of cinema.

Social Philosopher Max Lerner in his book *America as a Civilization* (1957) gives a detailed account of the 1950s American middle-class families. He wrote of the mid-1950s American family as “a caricature of itself, since it always seems to be parading its excesses” (550). American family was nuclear in form because according to Lerner it “shed in-laws, grandparents, cousins, aunts, and retainers; it handed over production to the factory and office, religion to the churches, the administration of justice to the courts, formal education to the schools, medical attention to the hospitals . . . It has been stripped down to the spare frame of being marriage-centred and child fulfilled (552). As to the American patriarch of the epoch, he “has accepted his diminished authority partly because his work takes so much of his time and energy, partly because his role fits into the spirit of his society as a whole” (555). Child became the centre of American family system by mid-1950s and the parents

hoped to fulfil their dreams through their children. The general atmosphere when Hitchcock filmed *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) was the time when Nicholas Ray's classic tale of adolescent angst *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) came out and it was a time when child was upheld as a principal family value, principal focus of interest and concern. Hitchcock's film from this can be seen as a portrayal on the American family dynamic, viewed from the perspective of two loving but slightly incompatible adult who raises a precocious little boy. But the narrative "centred essentially on the anxiety-ridden father, a man panicked about the way he looks to his wife and to the eyes of the world" (Pomerance 82-83). The central issue most explored in the film is the complex relationship between Ben and Jo, the delicate state of her emotional health and how a man who thinks he knows so much must learn the contours of his own interrelationship with others. Ben, a man who has glorified in knowing everything is robbed of his self-importance and significance as the head of the family. Here the family is saved and revived by a mother's quiet courage, and in the final image Hank is happily and safely repositioned between his parents. The lyrics "Que Sera Sera" have rightly come to stand for the American family sentiments of "We'll love Again" (Spoto 253-54). Hitchcock through this film has explored the story of a family strangled by convention.

Based on a true story set in New York *The Wrong Man* (1956), presents the life of a musician Christopher Emmanuel Balestrero (Henry Fonda) who had been arrested and brought to trail for a series of robberies he hasn't committed. Falsely accused, Balestrero usually called Manny is finally cleared when the real culprit who resembled him got arrested and confessed to the crimes.

Hitchcock's oft-expressed fear of police fills the early scenes as Balestrero endures a nightmare of arrest and imprisonment. Hitchcock's in this film attempted a more stark and realistic approach demanded by a *cinema verité*. Manny, one of the two children of an aging Italian widow, not a devout Catholic as his mother is an honest, trustworthy, reliable and competent man, a loving husband and father. He lives in a tiny bungalow in the Jackson Heights section of Queens suited for a lower middle-class. He works hard to eke out a living for that he plays a double bass in a band. In the age of prosperity in the 1950s Manny struggles. Hitchcock has tried to show that the image of America projected and idealized in the fifties was not one of milk and honey. Only the middle-class who shifted to the suburbs really enjoyed the warmth of a luxurious life. In the case of Manny life takes an unexpected turn when he goes to the insurance office to draw some money for the dental work of his wife Rose played by Vera Miles. The clerks in the office suspect him and hands him over to the police. Manny has to go through a series of procedures and tortures before getting imprisoned. By the time he gets bail he is mentally down, weary and sad. Eminent critic Robin Wood claims that "The imprisonment of Henry Fonda becomes more than a case of mistaken identity, through the very intensity of the images: the treatment of his progress, the gradual stripping away of his means of identification, his personal possessions, the reduction of a man depicted from the start as passive, gentle, slightly ineffectual, lacking any strong identity, to the total anonymity with which he is threatened, makes of it a descent into the underworld-into a chaos world underlying the surface reality, where all men are one man, where values cease to exist, where all

particularity is merged. For Balestrero, prison becomes a vision of Hell” (84). His condition is all the more pitiful when he fails to find an alibi which made his acquittal all the more difficult. In the mean time Manny’s wife Rose lost her control and the excruciating procedures of the trial brought her to the verge of a mental break down. The film presents a different tonality where we can find that Manny is not a victim of evil but the presence of an impartial, thoroughly democratic and intensely streamlined system that ruined his life. Robert Burke’s excellent black and white cinematography subverts balance and objective view point. Nothing is shown at the eye level, high and low angles of vision predominate. The subjective point of view helps viewers perceive everything through Manny’s eyes. Society is responsible for Manny’s and his family’s unexpected and unpremeditated down fall. As Donald Spoto rightly observes, “One false accusation wrecks his home and precipitates his wife’s breakdown, and the entire cinematic movement of the picture upsets every social and psychic “balance” the camera observes” (258).

The emotional stability of woman as wife and mother is tested in the family structure time and again. Hitchcock has tried to drive home the same theme/ideas of family relationship in two different ways in the above mentioned films. While comparing the two films Donald Spoto opines “Whereas *The Man Who Knew Too Much* delineated the threat to family stability abroad and examined the tenuous emotional stability of a wife under pressure, *The Wrong Man* offers an urban treatment of exactly the same theme; identical dangers-not from spies but from the chaos and compression of modern living and the diseased legal machinery-

lurk right at home, and once again the emotions of a loving wife and mother are very much at the centre of concern” (258).

Director Hitchcock and screen play writer Evan Hunter duo begins *The Birds* (1963) when a wealthy socialite named Melanie Daniels (Tippi Hedren) meets brash lawyer Mitch Brenner (Rod Taylor) in a San Francisco pet shop. In the film Hitchcock presents the Brenner family comprising Lydia Brenner (Jessica Tandy) and her son Mitch Brenner and daughter Cathy (Veronica Cartwright). Hitchcock delineates a family who faces the series of bird attacks boldly and unitedly. Through the film Hitchcock seems to convey the message that if you have good understanding and love in the family you can tackle any evil. Shallow human relationship is emphasized after each bird attack. “Shallowness” was one of the characteristics of the decade. Lydia Brenner who has lost her husband finds solace in the company of her son Mitch who comes to visit her during weekends. She is projected as a selfish caring mother who dislikes the coming of any woman into Mitch’s life. From the local school teacher Annie Hayworth (Suzanne Pleshette), we come to know that she was once in love with Mitch but Lydia hated their relationship. Lydia is a widow who endured a breakdown when her husband died five years earlier and she was terrified of being abandoned. Melanie Daniels, who is abandoned by her mother at a very young age finds love in Lydia who at first refuses to accept her. The bond within the family and with the new guest Melanie becomes strengthened during the series of bird attacks. According to Spoto, *The Birds* is “a profound meditation on human relationships and on the myopic emotional vision that informs most of them” (330). Hitchcock has tried to show that a healthy

relationship and love are important for a family. “Togetherness” in times of danger will help a family to overcome it. That is what American family did in times of danger during the war periods and in the Cold war that ensued. Supportive wife, mother, husband and children that comprise a good and healthy family is what is required for the well being of a society and nation.

Hitchcock presents a world steeped in chaos. There is no need for you to seek evil, for it will confront you anywhere, anytime. Simply sit at home and trouble will seek you, for it lurks everywhere and always awaits at your door step and it enters at a time and place least expected. Hitchcock’s ideology which operates in the films seemingly wants the spectator to realize that the entire family structure can be easily disrupted.

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The Sculptor's Reign Continues: The Worlding of Quadruped Walks

Jobin Thomas

“Until the Lion learns to write, Songs will always praise humans.”

In a popular Aesop, as a man and a lion stroll, the man will point out a statue at the gate of a mansion. The statue was of a man defeating a lion in a fistfight. As the man flaunts his superior status in reference to the statue and mentions that across history, he will always be remembered as the conqueror and lion as the defeated, the lion will reply, “only until lions learn to make statues”. Above are two narratives that speak the same theme - how human narratives advantage human over animals. Religiously licensed and socially accepted, the secondary treatment of living things except for the successors of homosaepeanshasn't undergone much of a scrutiny as our thinking is programmed across history in such a way as to prioritize humans than the real 'Others'. The implicit monophonic narrative advantage keeps human always guilt free and even amidst the occasional voices for the voice sake, our dominative attitude prevails.

This article intends to survey how the process of writing down animals as the 'Others' has been done across space and time. 'Worlding' is a neologism popularly used in postcolonial discursive

practices. It talks about the defining process of the accepted 'Other' or even making of a new voiceless 'Other'. Thus 'Third world' becomes a non geographical but discursively constructed location for the elite discourses to operate. The worlding process of animal world is much easier as marginal discourses or deviant voices are never heard. In fact the wording process of animal kingdom is mostly complete that animals as the voiceless perpetuate in literature and culture without objection.

We have already defined and set an understanding about nature and its beings; we are taught to look at anything in the shape of a snake (crawling) as poisonous, a religious sanction work in the case of snake as we are also tuned to think that the ancestor of any particular snake we see on the road is responsible for the fall of human from Eden. This idea is passed on through generations with improved vigor; when snake at large represents nature, the hatred slowly turns to everything that's in the nature.

Our selective valorization and appreciation of beings in the nature really puts the social order of ecology in chaos. When we hypothetically define a dog as 'loyal', cat as 'friendly' and cow as 'holy', it excludes a multitude of other elements in the nature. Also, it makes the definers (humans) in conflict as one individual or group may not join forces with the other in defining nature the same way. The worst of this might fall on the 'voiceless' as camps of 'representatives' fight over the hypothetical rights of the ever muted, the real rights of the 'voiceless' might be in question. This happens since the multitude of human hatred might get focused on the animals outwardly. Cow becoming a symbol of religious sanctions and

restrictions is an example of this; in an extension, ‘cow’ just becomes a tool to show the pride of one group and freedom of another. While the variety of defining process happen, the real ‘voiceless’ stays mute as ever.

Language is proven to have a male bias, having gendered terms for gender neutral situations – ‘chairman’, ‘human’, etc. Now to realize that language has a whole anthropocentric bias, we don’t have to go far; the very use of adjectives like ‘animalistic’ and ‘humane’ to define set patterns of expected behavior shows the linguistic anthropocentrism. While the autopsy of the semiotic process by which these words have acquired the present day meaning at large reveals not much; the fallacy of categorizing the behavioral pattern of animals from a cute puppy to a ferocious lion as ‘animalistic’ and generalizing the word ‘humane’ to include the behavioral expectations about a human can easily be identified. While a human who behaves unnatural can easily gets the tag of ‘animal’ to him, nowhere we have seen an animal is given the adjectival form of ‘human’ to describe *its* character. Even the pronoun usage of *it* to refer an animal can be taken offensive at the summit of this discourse. Thus language always prioritizes unconsciously the needs of human over the needs of animals.

In Hollywood, the very organization that licenses the movies to ensure that animals are not harmed in the process of the shooting is named the American Humane Association (AHA). The famous dictum – “No animal is harmed during the shooting of this film” is their trademark certification slogan. Even there the adjectival usage is questionable. The association propagates the idea that ‘we are

human, we need to be kind, we have no other option other than being kind,’ The very idea of being human and being animal are set in contrast giving moral advantage to the former. When human becomes too passionate, they say there’s an animal inside him/her, again this revelation means it’s bad to be animal, thus in the human language system, we have prejudices against ‘being animal’.

If feminist movements can argue that the male centered language can’t express the concerns of women, we should also be skeptical about the ability of human language to talk about the needs of animals. The so called ‘green voices’ or ‘eco-centric voices’ are full of subtle indications that human beings care more about their own future even in the most nature sympathetic discourses. Below is the translation of a famous green voice by Injakkadu Balachandran

Is it possible for the next generation to live here,
A wasted earth and wasted waters,
Is it possible for the next generation to live here,
Can they live here?

It’s explicit that we are bothered about the survival of our next generation than we are bothered about the sole idea of nature conservation. This may not be entirely the attitude problem, of human beings, but our language is at large incapable of showing our real concern about animals.

In her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak*, Spivak questioned the ability of Western scholars like Deluze and Foucault to empathize

with the real subaltern with the academic knowledge they earned form within the discursive system of the West. She doubts the assumed transparency of the discourses produced by these people saying that they insufficiently represent the real concern of the actual suffering. Now, applying this logic to the topic in concern, we can easily question how much of the green voices of the day actually represent the real problems of the animal world.

Even human beings talk in different languages, so it's not about linguistic disharmony we are bothered about. But human beings have a proper transaction system to dissect the differences between their languages. But when it comes to animal communication, with all our modern expertise, the real concerns of animals are lost in the act of communication since the transaction system that explains (gives meaning) to the verbal and non-verbal strategies of animals is highly anthropocentric. But this is just the failure of the sympathetic side of human, to the other side we have overt exploitation and ongoing 'worlding' process of the animal kingdom.

The recent South Indian super hits like *Puli* and *Bahubhali* show men trying to prove their physical strength by defeating animals. Human (especially male) ability is always superficially shown by engaging human in direct fight with animals. In *Puli* the hero Marudheeran portrayed by Vijay fights a badly animated jaguar to save the life of the heroine and thereby impress her. There is a long scene in which the two confront and both get advantageous positions, eventually, no doubt, the human emerges victorious. In the end, in quite an absurd scene, it's not shown what happened to the jaguar.

Maybe one can blame the fault on the below mediocre movie's lack of details, or they take it for granted that nobody care about what happened to whoever who is not a human. *In Bahubali as well, the introduction scene of the villain is by showing him having a fistfight with a huge bull which eventually he defeats with a single blow on its forehead. In another movie, also from Telugu industry, Rudraramma, a 'male disguised' female protagonist defeats a huge elephant to prove she/he is worthy enough to rule the country. All these example drive light to our monophonic thought stream- one who defeats nature or its mighty beings is supreme. From the tales of Hercules in which he defeats mythical animals to the picture of St. Varghese on the horse back defeating a snake to promote Christianity, the attitude of human to animals in general is very clear. In most of the narratives where animals are pictured, they are just there to promote the opinion about human characters coming along.*

Christian religious doctrines that rule the majority of the cultural sphere of the known world ever since Enlightenment propagates the idea that human beings are comparatively superior than the animal counterparts, and the entire nature and beings are created for the benefit of human beings. Jesus impressed his disciples by making them catch a big load of fish from the sea, thereby people realizing his divinity. A donkey was used to carry Jesus at a point of time and most of the time in parables, Lord the father and Son are mentioned as shepherds. Thus a hierarchical system is implicitly created where God/son occupies the top ladder and human who are sheep occupy the lower. So not so subtly the human-animal position in the ecological ladder is explicated repeatedly like this, almost all the stories

supplementing the same idea, developing the grand narrative of human superiority over animal world.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. Genesis 1:26

Theory of evolution says Human are the most evolved, so that grandnarrative also naturally places human above animals. We have got scientific evidences to prove that human brain is superior, sometimes bigger and more efficient than most of the animal brains. So in any paradigm, animals are always below human beings, the existing epistemology lacks the real concern for ecology as a whole. If we tend to internalize that social democracy is impossible at a larger world where all kinds of living things exist, it might get applied to subsets of species including human beings, and thus we have to adjust to the thinking that racial, religious, linguistic or any parameter based hierarchy among human beings is also true.

In popular animal narratives, most often animals serve as metaphors to bring light to the existing inequalities among human. Since animals are already treated as sub-human, the idea can get into the imagination easier. Aesop tales to modern day animal narratives of R. K. Narayan and Virginia Woolf fulfill the purpose of educating and entertaining human through the voices of animals. For fresh, detached points of view of the world, as many of the critics see it, is the real purpose of an animal narrative. It doesn't go beyond the "defamiliarisation" technique Viktor Shklovsky

suggested in his *Art as Technique* to make the artistic activity livelier. So there as well, an animal's voice is just used for the benefit of human, the "voice" is reduced to theoretically supported technical expertise of a human author, who could supposedly empathize with the life and living of animals. Thus Virginia Woolf's *Flush* and R. K. Narayan's *A Tiger for Malgudi* are reduced to mere anthropocentric experiments and not eco-centric voices as some would claim.

In postcolonial discourses, physical 'space'/land as such is another concern discussed at length in which we try to figure out the original or first people who lived in a particular place to where others migrate and colonize. Thus we claim that Australia is the land of aborigines and America of 'Red Indians'. Taking any of the modern day's occupied land, we are sure that there was someone else of a different race or religion living there. But all land was forest once, even without identifying a specific time in history when human learned to live the 'civilized' life, we can assure that most of the urbanized or rural areas were thick forests where all beings of the world lived together. Now distancing 'civilized' human from the very few communities of tribes who live along with the animals in the deeps of the forests, we can easily assume that all humans are encroachers into the land of 'animals' (including primitive human). So if we stress too much on the maxim of 'giving land back to its original inhabitants' we would be digging our own graves.

The border spaces between forests and human habitation are always conflict zones of animals and human. For an old tiger in search of prey, the human fence that determine 'border' may not make sense, so the idea of 'intrusion' is applicable only in human

understanding. The borders drawn by human are just physical markers to keep the animals away from 'human' land, not a symbol of any democratic living conceptualization. The narrative conflicts in the ideological space by 'definers' are again bringing further harm to animals. Since the section in direct conflict with nature and their sympathizers always take the anti-ecological vantage point, there is a culmination of hatred even in areas where these conflicts haven't yet reached. But people have already conceptualized that nature and its beings are always a hindrance, not for high profile 'progress' as such, but even for basic existence. Now to the other side, the empathizers of nature who advocates for closure of highways running through forests and eviction of inhabitants from these borderlands make the issue worse for animals by furthering the animosity of people in borderlands, thus 'representatives' become the indirect butchers of what they represent. This is just a specific issue that defines the animal world without proper understanding of the ecological demands.

Most of the narratives in which human and animals appear together evidently prioritize human above animals. Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book* is a story in which human presence is minimal and animals form the multitude of the characters. Their story is about a boy, Mowgli, who grows up with wolves in a forest. Though the story shows harmonious coexistence of animals and human for a majority of the plot, the typical anthropocentric privilege is evident throughout the work. We get to see the effort taken by animals (wolves) to take care of the baby, even protecting it from their immediate brother, a tiger (Sher Khan) and eventually how the physically puny human being (Mowgli) with his superior 'human' intelligence and vigor

defeats and kills the big cat thus even saving the wolf pack from future problems. Benyamin's famous *Goat Days* shows the pathetic life of the protagonist caught in an almost slave camp somewhere in Middle East. His hardships in the desert would evoke 'pity and fear' in anyone even distant from the actual problem. The book has also shown how the life of goats is in the desert, but we tend to overlook this suffering since the focus is on a human being. Thus the book talks about the unfortunate life of a man who has to live like goat for a particular portion of his life, so what about the goat which has to live the life of goat throughout its life? Najeeb, the protagonist was rescued at last, we forget about the goats, it's because we have an understanding that it's okay for a goat to live that defined "goat life", the book thus establish that there is a particular way in which goats 'can' be treated, the way in which human shouldn't be treated. Thus 'goat life' is a tragedy for human, for goat the anthropocentrically defined 'goat life' is something natural. The book is aptly subtitled as "anything that hasn't happened to you is a fiction to you", since no human even at the worst lives the life of an animal even for one day, this is kind of true in the context. That we fail to understand the real meaning of eco-centric living mostly may not be the fault of ours, we might have evolved pretty much farther than we really should have. The 'worlding' process is complete, the sculptors reign continues.

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Voices Beget Vendetta: Transgression and the Inevitable Politicization of Revolt in Anantha Murthy's *Samskara* and Mahasweta Devi's "Dopdi"

Nosheen Kapoor

When I hear the word culture, I reach for my gun and when
I hear guns, I reach for my culture - Joseph Goebbles

We live in times where such cultural mores prevail. We live in times where affiliations to causes have snowballed into a fanatic adherence to different ideologies. We live in times where a clash of ideologies persists and their critique is forbidden.. These clashes are both dynamic and terrorizing. Dynamic because they permits movement of the subject within a socio-politico milieu and terrorizing because they demand allegiances, sacrifices, a violent repression of revolutions disguised as hegemonized tolerance toward transgressive acts. Voice, (especially that is labelled as unwanted dissent) , in contemporary times, has become more of an aleatory tool used for the expansion of the available ideological apparatuses such as liberal, fundamentalist, modernist, traditionalist or post-modernist. Thus, the effectiveness of voice, as a repressed entity's reliable or perhaps only chance at a radical change is quite unreliable. For a voice to

become a harbinger of change, in this universe marred by multiplicity and its interdependence on violence, we need a radical paradigm shift. This is also because the weapon of voice, today, is potent yet it is also devoid of its constative and performative¹ functions because these functions are no longer part of its very entity but in the hands of power structures. Inevitably, we are eternally poised between binaries, their oppositions and are compelled to concede to the timeless truth that the more things change, the more same they remain. Leaving us in a society where regression becomes an obverse of progression, enslavement an obverse of freedom and vendetta, an obverse of the dissident voice.

With this pretext, one would like to investigate the strains of politicization of revolt, a dismissal of transgression in hegemonic ways and the triumph of the monolith of ideology that follows the act of subversion in the two iconic (third-world radical texts) – *Samskara* by Anantha Murthy and “Dopdi” by Mahasweta Devi. Both texts can be interpreted to champion the cause of marginalized and subaltern voices, unarguably. However, they point in another direction also, which can only be looked at with the sharp eye of cynicism and critique that highlights how these texts disallow the pleasure of attributing any tactful resilience or privileging revolutionary and reactionary efforts with a logical end. The rebels are brought to their rightful fate and dissent to its rightful juncture of non-consequence by vendetta disguised as the ethico-political and punitive idea of divine or retributive justice. Thereby, we are left with a vagueness that serves the motives of the Big Other (whether religion or state) perfectly and indefinitely delaying changes that can transform society.

Undoubtedly, the two texts fit the exemplary third world/post-colonial texts where the violence meted out to dissenting voices are portrayed in its most earnest form. However, do these texts not validate the legitimacy of political vendetta (sexual in *Dopdi* and spiritual in *Samskara*), leaving the reader with no choice, but to keep masticating the Post-colonial interpretation of these texts while overlooking the political failure of the subversive acts? Shouldn't we then raise the following question – Are not the pre-existing ideological strains of liberalism and socialism in these texts more pervasive than the ontological capacity of the protagonists as agents of change? Obviously, the circumstantial necessities of reactionary acts are more important that is why both the texts end at a sort of revolutionary dead-end. Therefore, post-colonial interpretation of the texts further leads us into ideological traps as we get seduced into hermeneutic fetishes of post-colonialism that restrict our understanding of these texts within the purview of intellectual categories of the corporal and the political.

Through the ages, voices of dissent are usually snubbed in their innocuous stages and are given no more importance than an incident of mere circumstantial violence. In the selected texts we encounter no different treatment of dissent. Dissent or revolt usually becomes a face-off between the powerful Big Other and the powerless rebel whose ultimate destiny is not the actualization of the revolution but actualization of the rebel's pre-destined violent end. Transgression becomes a mere event in the larger scheme of things that is bound to fail since its very inception and the transgressor is reduced to being an ironical clown who only disturbs the status quo. This is because rebellion itself is executed within the ideological

limits of binaries and is not sustained by the ontologically free thought and action. Consequently, dissent becomes an easy target to be timelessly and pervasively interpreted as a crime by authoritarian structures where as revolt is effortlessly politicized and eventually crushed. The texts expose the symbiotic relationship between the two apparently opposing ideologies by rendering the tenets of both revolution and democracy futile and inconsequential yet capable of orchestrating a violent vendetta. Zizek in the book, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, using Marshall Sahlin's idea, directs us to the economy of exchange between ideologies, subject, power and so on by explaining "The reciprocity of exchange is in itself thoroughly ambiguous; at its most fundamental, it is destructive of the social bond, it is the logic of revenge, tit for tat." (25)

Both the texts portray (*Samskara* more so than "Dopdi") that how subjective ontologies and reactionary ethics get engulfed by power structures and *reified* as struggle of one set of agents against other agents. When "Dopdi" attempts to fight outside the polarity of the State and the Naxal cause for the sake of ecology, she is dragged back right to the center of the opposition with the violent act of gang rape. Informing her that her gender and her cause will never be viewed as legit as long as it keeps invigorating the dangerous territory of revolt.

Whether it's religious fundamentalism in *Samskara* or the State structures – *Senanayak* and the police in "Dopdi"- both represent one or the other kind of the Big Other whose perpetuation and existence relies on transgression and in recognizing in opposition a single source of terror which is to be intolerably tolerated at best

and annihilated at worst. What this inevitably results in is an eternal perpetration of violence wreaked by suppressors on the suppressed who retaliate violently and continue to empower the state structures and instrument of violence. That is why Žižek professes and upholds the Bartlebian² gesture that sometimes the most violent thing to do is to do nothing: “because our activity supports the functioning of the power apparatus or helps it to reproduce itself – in this context, our doing nothing” or refusal to participate, can deal a blow to the power structure, de-legitimizing it, preventing its normal functioning.” (474). A pragmatic manifestation of “doing nothing” is creating a tertiary, a third space that is outside of all kinds of ideological monoliths.

In both these texts we see that the divine violence³ becomes the logical reaction to the mythic violence but these transgressive acts (hedonistic liberalism in *Samskara* and fight for ecological and ontological freedom in “Dopdi”) become incidental in perpetuating the rule of the Big Other instead of destroying it. The fate of the victims, in respective texts, is hence only an immanent reality that ultimately leaves them politicized, de-subjectivized, de-humanized and colonized not by a foreign force but a home-grown internal Big Other that sees its existence validated in oppression, revolution and finally annihilation of dissent. Moving further, let’s explore the ideological tug-of-war in these texts and the precise moments where the tertiary space created outside of binaries became a space for actual change and revolt.

Samskara vividly manifests the triumph of ideology and its hold over its subjects and not a struggle between heresy and

orthodoxy. The attempt at decolonization from Brahmanism is a misguided one because it entails its own kinds of enslavement to hedonistic liberalism. Thus, to interpret the text using post-colonial terms and tools will only forbid true decolonization because decolonization in its truest form is a breakaway from ideology whether liberal or fundamentalist. We can then say that the text is a failure of post-colonial ideals since it still functions within the binaries of power structures. Naranappa and Praneshachrya are not antagonists but an obverse of each other. Naranappa is not privileged with a higher understanding of individual liberty or ontological freedom to act outside the binary. He propagates a counter-culture of hedonism in order to defy Brahmanism with its own set of ritualistic acts and a text-bookish adherence to them. He is as placid as the Brahmins themselves; he criticizes and appears as distanced from salvation as the other inauthentic Brahmins with their Vedic knowledge. A proof of this is his death – a precursor to the tragedy that befalls on the Durvaspur Agrahara. Both the plague and Naranappa's decaying body are, thus, an embodiment of total ideological failure. However, where Murthy succeeds and the text becomes most effective in its rationalization of revolt is when Praneshacharya's existential quest begins after his encounter with Chandri and then Putta. Praneshacharya, "the crest-jewel of Vedic Knowledge" - the spiritual guide of the Agrahara is also the site of evolutionary-revolution that perhaps Naranappa wanted to stir in the hearts of the Brahmins. Praneshacharya's existential angst and his awakening is the real revolution because it emboldens him to breakaway from the Hegemonic holds of both Brahminism and Naranappa's hedonism. As Praneshacharya enters the metaphorical Trishanku – a spiritual

limbo – he is capable of questioning his own Brahminical foundations and the society’s devious interaction with the system at large. This spiritual abeyance, even though it is temporary, gives Praneshacharya a clarity and a consciousness that none of his Vedic texts could afford him until now. This is because when an individual is in the Trishanku – the limbo - it allows space and freedom to the individual to step out of the contextually charged ontology and become his own will. It is the transition and the passage through this purgatory that Praneshacharya finds in himself fearless acceptance of his sexual encounter with Chandri after the initial dilemma and returns to the Agrahara at the end in order to act on his awakening. He realizes that it is for the first time that he acted not on behalf of the community – the Big Other - but on his instincts,

But my dilemma, my decision, my problem wasn’t just mine, it included the entire agrahara. This is the root of the difficulty, the anxiety, the double-bind of dharma. When the question of Naranappa’s death-rites came up, I didn’t try to solve it for myself. I depended on God, on the old Law Books. Isn’t this precisely why we have created the Books? In every act we involve our forefathers, our gurus, our gods, our fellow humans. Hence this conflict. (109)

Praneshacharya’s Trishanku also marks the moment in the text when it finally leaves the binary of Brahmanism and hedonism and enters the spiritual realm. We are also able to note the marked transition from overwhelmingly decaying corporeality to profound spirituality in the text through Praneshacharya’s realization. As the

text progresses, Praneshacharya reaches a denouement outside of the dichotomy of heresy and orthodoxy and is now able to embrace Brahminism and his own existence within the system with a renewed consciousness bordering on cynicism. “That decision, that act (intercourse with Chandri) gouged me out of my past world, the world of Brahmins, from my wife’s existence, my very faith. The consequence, I am shaking in the wind like a piece of string.” (109)

Praneshacharya now continues his brahminism as an ethical responsibility and not merely as an obligation of the birth order. Thus, it is in this way that the text achieves its Post-coloniality and not in its criticism of Brahminism, its treatment of lower caste women or its cynical view of Brahmins since it still fuels the power structures of society to continue to exploit and undermine the oppressed or the dissident voice. It’s important to note here what Jacques Alain Miller said in “A Reading of the Seminar *From an Other to the other*”, “One might believe that there’s no heresy without orthodoxy, but one often observes that is when discourses which will later be heretical emerge that the future orthodoxies come about and that it is rather through an after-the-fact effect that orthodoxy takes hold.” (40)

As neither the liberal nor the Brahmanical discourse is privileged, no new orthodoxy, as Miller alludes to it, is formed but a new vitality in Praneshacharya is introduced. *Samskara* beautifully shows us how voices that emerge directly from authentic existential bearings become harbingers of change while the voice of dissent that is vitalized exclusively by one of the ideological binaries further fuel the ideological monoliths are violently repressed.

This short story by Mahasweta Devi also throws light on the vendetta that power structures wreak on dissenting voices. However, this story also shows the politicization of revolt which entails an inevitable destruction of the transgressor. The story begins with the police Operation Jharkani Forest undertaken to arrest two prime suspects - Dulna and Dopdi – husband and wife - in the murder of Surja Sahu, from the suppressed tribe of the Mundas. Senanayak – the head of the operation and the police force is a supporter of the Naxal cause but only in theory. He is the typical middle-class liberal whose pragmatism overpowers his support. He is described in the story, “He supported this struggle from the point of view of the field hands. Dopdi is a field hand. Veteran fighter. Search and destroy. Dopdi Mejhhen is about to be apprehended. Will be destroyed. Regret.” (33). Dulna is killed and Dopdi is “apprehended” to be tried by law. However, the prophesy of Dopdi’s comrade who tells her “your sex is a wound” (28) becomes true as she is brutally gang-raped through the night after her arrest before being presented to Senanayak for investigation, the next day. In fact, it is Senanayak who gives the command to the constables to make her speak as he says, “make her. Do the *needful*.” at the behest of which the brutal gang-rape of Dopdi is carried out as retributive justice.

The next day when Dopdi refuses to be robed, she walks up to Senanayak naked and finds herself out of the moment of her historical and gender subjectification and for the (is there something missing here) time in her life is acting for herself instead of being acted upon. “You can strip me but how can you clothe me again?”

“Are you a man?” “There’s no man here that I should be ashamed of” (35)

Dopdi’s wound – her sex (after the vulgar molestation and abuse) is now her weapon. Although now an unarmed, she is not vulnerable as she questions, intimidates and decries the supposed authority of the Senanayak as she “pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts and for the first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed target, terribly afraid.” (36-37)

Dopdi not only acts out of her context in terms of being a prisoner but also out of her gender which is now violated to the extent of its immateriality. Her ontic⁴ violent encounter does not leave her weak and subalterned but gives her a voice. The irony in the story is the act of her dissent (Surja Sahu’s murder) that leads her to this inevitable moment of violent vendetta carried out as a logical conclusion to her affiliation to the Naxal moment. However, this very vendetta is what catapults her into a personal revolt and makes her a true revolutionary that does not follow commands or falls back on her leader’s voice but uses her existential awakening to become the voice, the object of Senanayak’s search and the subject of resistance to being who is now resisted. Her encounter before the actual *kounter* is the moment where she directly punctures the authority of the State and deflates the patriarchal super ego that the State renders visible through Senanayak and her soldiers. What Spivak says in the essay, “Translator’s Preface and Afterword to Mahasweta Devi, Imaginary Maps, (from the book – *The Spivak Reader*) about resisting the multi-fold suppression of women by making an ethical choice or becoming an ethical singularity, becomes

relevant:

Mahasweta dramatizes that difficult truth: internalized gendering perceived as ethical choice is the hardest roadblock for women the world over. The recognition of male exploitation must be supplemented with this acknowledgement. And the only way to break it is by establishing an ethical singularity with the woman in question, itself a necessary supplement to a collective action which the woman might offer resistance, passive or active. (272)

The fate of Dopdi, after the rape and confrontation with Senanayak, even though, it is not how the story ends, is not hard to imagine. She will, most probably, be tried and subjected to an infinite legal turbulence for years or eventually be killed in an 'encounter'. However, she is now no longer the homogenized and defaced tribal enemy but a face that exposes the true Heideggerian Evil⁵ as Zizek suggests, an evil capable of:

The thoughtless reduction of the Other to a cog in the wheel of technological machination is not yet the wicked will to power that maintains a recognition of the alterity of the Other, precisely in order to take diabolical pleasure in conquering her resistance and witnessing her pain. This terrible fact of evil cannot be maintained technologically. (145)

Senanayak is the manifestation of the complicity that sustains the state's power by being a sympathiser, personally and a rational military head dutifully who fails to see the counterintuitive effects of

nationalism and democratic endeavors practically lived by the oppressed. He is the perfect instrument of the Big Other, he is the veritable existence of the State and that is exactly what Dopdi also questions by uttering the performative and constative statement - Are you a man? Or a cog in the State's machinery who follows without an ethical conscience and acts without a consciousness. This utterance is extremely significant because with this overtly constative sentence, Dopdi not only asserts her resistance to the idea of the man, State and gendered vendetta but is also the point where she truly feels freedom. The very act of uttering this sentence liberates her from gendered and prisoner conventions. It is the act of her *ur-willing*⁶ from being a modern subject.

Dopdi, thus, offers a critique of two major and also favorite post-colonial discourses – the State and patriarchy. However, it can also be read as a perpetuation of trauma at the hands of the State, patriarchal and colonial ethos that shatters the ontological survival of subjects and deviously brands their struggle as sedition against humanity to be rightfully and justly eliminated by barbaric acts.

The parallels that can be drawn between the two texts are uncanny. Both present transgression in their own rights and both suffer defeat at the hands of the Big Other. The agents of revolt (Naranappa and Dopdi) presented are either presented dead, futile or inconsequential. The agents of the State machinery and religion are presented as existentially vapid to bring about a change in their consciousness even after encounters that can cause a sustainable paradigm shift. The moment they think they can absolve themselves

of their ideologies, is the very moment they are most aggressively in it and giving it shape. Whether it's Praneshacharya or Senanayak they both are never out of their blind devotion to duty and are only momentarily shaken in the course of finding a resolution to an immediate problem that unravels the deep-seated prejudice of the powerful (whether liberal, fundamentalist or the privileged).

The change in perception that dissent must neither be a license to stigmatize nor an instrument to continue the hierarchal order but as a practice which not only deconstructs but reconstructs a viable universe. What Zizek inspires us to do is stop viewing “revolutions or voices of dissent as mere subversion, sedition and destruction but an upheaval and recreating of the customary so that the beginning might be restructured” (139)

For such a restructuring, what we need are voices – voices that are free from ideology to voices which are free to critique ideology, even if it is Post-coloniality itself.

A cynical view of Post-coloniality and other hegemonic discourse is extremely essential because it's important that the marginalized and the “Others” finds a place in our spiritual universe and not just our intellectual museums.

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Manifestation of Socio Political Realities in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

Francia P.A

In critical theory and post colonialism, Subaltern refers to the populations that are socially, politically and geographically outside the hegemonic power structure. “The term Subaltern has been adapted to post-colonial studies from the work of Subaltern Studies group of historians, who aimed to promote a systematic discussion of subaltern themes in South Asian studies” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 216). As a method of intellectual discourse, the concept of the subaltern is problematic because it originated as a Eurocentric method of historical enquiry for studying the non-western people of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. From its inception as an historical research model for studying the colonial experience of South Asian people, subaltern studies transformed from a model of intellectual discourse into a method of vigorous post colonial critique.

In post-colonial theory the term subaltern describes the lower classes and the social groups who are at the margins of a society. Subaltern classes may include peasants, workers and other groups denied access to hegemonic power. Subaltern literature reflects various themes such as oppression, marginalization, gender discrimination, subjugation of lower and working classes,

disregarded women, neglected sections of the society, deprived classes and many more.

Rohinton Mistry is an Indian-born Canadian novelist. He is considered to be one of the foremost authors of Indian heritage writing in English, who contributes his valuable works to the development of the Indian English Literature. He is the author of three major novels- *Such a Long Journey* (1991) which brings out the nature of the abusive power exercised by those in top levels of government, with Bangladeshi war as its background; *A Fine Balance* (1995) set during the Emergency shows the lives of four protagonists who come together and develop a bond; *Family Matters* (2000) focuses on the impact Hindu fundamentalist agitation and the post Babri Masjid riots had on the life of the ordinary citizen. Among the very few Indian writers in English he is one of the novelists who dealt with the plight of subalterns in his novels. He strongly opposes the discrimination prevailing in the Indian society in the name of caste, community, race, gender, and so on.

A Fine Balance is a detailed documentation of human dimension of the Emergency. The novel sets out to document in detail, the way in which class and caste oppression that haunt rural India and the election malpractices and misappropriation of power, affect the life of poor rural migrants as well as urban homeless. The novel is set in Bombay and framed between the years 1975-1985. These ten years were the crucial years in the history of Indian politics. In 1975 a State of Internal Emergency was declared by the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi and in 1984 the Golden Temple at Amritsar was attacked by the Indian Army, later the same year

Mrs. Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards. These ten years fall as the backdrop of the novel which traces out the lives of four main characters, Dina Dalal- a fiery tempered, intelligent and fiercely independent woman, Ishvar and Omprakash Dharji-Chammar turned tailors from the countryside and Maneck Kohlah- a young college student from the mountains, who come together to live in the madness of Bombay.

Mistry by bringing his characters from different places and social ranks of the country intend to document the varied dimensions of social reality. “Social realism is the acute awareness of the social forces that surround the individual, their power to influence the lives of men and women- for better or for worse- and the overall interaction of the individual and society” (Abbas 147). Through the story of Ishvar and Om, Mistry throws light into the lives of the untouchables who live under the rural horrors of India’s oppressive caste system. In the chapter *The Village by the River*, the readers are exposed to the cruelties faced by the untouchables in rural India. “Chopping off fingers for an unjust accusation or losing a hand or wrist for the same, being whipped for getting too close to the well; women being shaved and walked naked through the square for refusing to go to the field with the zamindar’s son” (Mistry 117). The lives of the untouchables are caught in the unjust hands of the Thakurs, Pandits, and Brahmins, who oppress and deprive the lower caste people of their human rights. The condition of the women in the village is even worse as they are doubly discriminated, first as women and second by their caste. Through the character of Roopa, Ishvar’s mother, Mistry brings out the hardships faced by the lower caste women in the society. Roopa accepts her double subalternity,

but tries to raise her family above their condition and decides to steal milk and fruits from the landowner's garden, for which she is raped by the watchman.

Roopa's exploitation by the watchman of the rich man's orchard is Mistry's harsh comment on the double standards evident even in the practice of untouchability. It is an instance of tragic irony that a high caste lustful man who would consider himself polluted even by the shadow of a low-caste still covets and sleeps with a desirable low-caste woman. The text raises difficult questions such as right and wrong in such a dubious social context. Though untouchability is considered to be a punishable offence in a pluralistic country like India, the novel tears up the mask that the society wears in the name of law and shows the reality to the readers. The horrific episode in the novel, where Narayan is killed by the Thakurs for asking his right to vote and later his entire family being burnt alive, reveal the heights of cruelty that the untouchables face under the upper class people.

After the horrific incidents Ishvar and Om migrate to the city in search of new jobs. There they are twice disempowered as representatives of the rural poor encountering the senselessness and cruelty of the city. Once in the city Ishvar and Om could only join the masses looking for jobs and shelter. They are forced to live in the jhopadpattys where they witness people living in dire poverty who are even worse off than them. Ishvar and Om make friends with varied characters, the hair-collector Rajaram, the monkey-man, Shankar, the beggar and the beggar master who rescues them from the workplace. The experiences of Ishvar and Om from the

time they landed in the city by the sea are no less poignant in description. They become easy targets for the political plans of the government and become the victims of the Prime Minister's Twenty-Point Programme.

In the long episode at the stone quarry Mistry takes his readers to a new world of urban subalterns, the world of beggars for whom Beggar Master is the protector. Mistry does not limit his canvas to the middle class, he goes even down to the world of beggars and it is through the eyes of these downtrodden he exposes the political realities of the Emergency. The living conditions in the slums and the behavior of the upper caste in the villages in the childhood days of Ishvar remind the reader of the pointed and powerful narration of Mulk Raj Anand while exposing the predicament of the untouchables in his novels. The narration of the stories of various subalterns functions to foreground subalternity in the novel.

Each of Mistry's characters from different backgrounds becomes representatives of socio-political realities and of the sufferings of the ordinary citizen in the India of 1970s. Through these characters the readers are made to see and experience the nightmare of the Emergency, who brings into the web of the novel the horrors, incomprehension and injustice of their backgrounds. Social reality is very much a character in Mistry's novel, so that rather than merely acting as background, the nature of that reality allow the characters to acquire complex dimensions. Characters are firmly embedded in their social milieu.

Mistry's realist view point and writing style shines through his portrait of the Emergency which is studded with forced sterilizations and vasectomies brought home with sinister Family Planning clinics and distribution of radio transistors, City Beautification Plan, the City Embellishment programme, Garibi Hatao! Desh Bhanavo! Which was soon referred to as remove the poor, save the country. The implementation of the programme is almost immediate, which led to loss of homes and freedom of the poor. Ishvar and Om return to their village for Om's marriage where Thakur Dharmasi recognizes Om and gets him castrated. Ishvar's leg has to be amputated because of the gangrene caused by the insanitary operation he is forced to undergo. The battle that Dhuki started against caste oppression is lost.

As the result of incapability of Om and Ishvar, Dina has to close her sewing shop and she goes bankrupt. Dina is the symbol of the "new woman" who refuses to be acquiescent and submissive and does not accept the stereotypical feminine role assigned to her. She marries Rustom Dalal whom she loves dearly against her brother's wish and on that cruel night, when her husband dies, she behaves in a very dignified manner. "No wailing, no beating the chest or tearing the hair like you might expect from a woman who had suffered such a shock, such a loss" (Mistry 52). Dina refuses to buckle under pressure and resolves to rebuild her life without being economically dependent on a man. She emerges as a strong, progressive and an independent woman. She hires Ishvar and Om and starts working for Au Revoir Exports.

Dina fights for her independence and individuality but she faces continuous failures and threats by society. In the end she loses her battle of independence and is forced to live with her brother as an unpaid domestic servant. Mistry stresses the fact that in post colonial India the plight of the common people is no different and it requires improvement and freedom from exploitation and injustice

Maneck who suffers from the loss of his beloved ones is a victim of economical development. In the name of modernization the lush environment of his Himalayan town is polluted, his father's cola company is shut down. There is another shock that awaits Maneck, when he comes back to India from Dubai in 1984, for his father's funeral, he becomes a witness to mob violence and arson against Sikhs in New Delhi, as Mrs. Indira Gandhi has been assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards.

Later through the newspapers Maneck learns about his idealistic activist friend Avinash who was killed in the police custody during the Emergency and his three sisters who hanged themselves to death after their brother's murder. Maneck undergoes a psychological trauma when he comes to Bombay to meet his old friends who are reduced to a new type of urban subalternity, as beggars. Devastated Maneck throws himself in front of the train. Maneck's every loss is a loss of the Indian middle class family, whose morality, hopes and desires, he embodies. His death at the end of the novel is shocking but insightful of the losses that the Indian middle class has borne and still continues to suffer. His suicide is a statement of despair; of sympathy with the humanity gone awry that he has seen closely, a manifestation of existential anguish.

Mistry sews a quilt of fiction with the four characters serving as four corners spread over a period of less than a decade. The four main characters converge in Dina's apartment as refugees from contracting caste, gender or social roles. Dina's apartment becomes an idyllic place where different people from different caste, culture, religion and social rank mingle and emerge as a new family. Mistry has portrayed a galaxy of characters efficiently and elegantly in his novel. By portraying a cross section of Indian society especially those who are called riff-raff, he tries to draw the real picture of India.

Mistry's fiction deploys a precise writing style and sensitivity to the humor and horror of life to communicate deep compassion for human beings. His writing concerns people who try to find self worth while dealing with painful family dynamics, difficult social imbalance and political constrains. The core of the novel lies in the characters of Dina, Ishvar, and Om who strive to maintain balance in their life even after encountering worst situations.

Thus, *A Fine Balance* is the finest and most intense of Mistry's four novels where his concern and compassion for the poor, the destitute and the powerless becomes a political statement. It is a novel where the middle class and the anonymous, faceless working class meet, sympathize with each other and bond in friendship. Cruelty and tyranny abound in Mistry and there is neither an attempt nor a desire to give solutions to the social and political problems. He just brings out the gruesome socio-political realities into the light to his readers. The contemporary Indian society does not need any unplanned economic growth, all it needs is equality, justice and basic

rights for the underprivileged and the marginalized. “In the end, it’s all a question of balance” (Mistry 229).

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The Need for a New Theory from the Perspective of Aidoo : Challenging De Beauvoir

Nima Ataei

Marriage, from time immemorial, has played a cardinal role in the personal and social life of human beings. It has been scrutinized and considered minutely by philosophers and writers from the ancient Greek Aristotle and Plato to the much more recent scientists and researchers. This institution, however, is a vitally determinant factor in the lives of women in particular, and has been scrupulously surveyed by feminist critics ever since the inception of feminism as a school of thought.

Written in the 1940s, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is rightly to be regarded as one of the first feminist works to study woman and its position and role in the society from such varied angles as biology and sociology while building on and seizing on the ideas and theories proposed by earlier philosophers and thinkers. Marriage constitutes one of the noteworthy sections of this iconic book. Moreover, it paved the way for the later feminists: Germaine Greer and Judith Butler to name a few.

The Ghanaian female writer Ama Ata Aidoo, is one of the first African women to start writing literary works in the period soon

after the decolonisation of African countries. As an African woman writer, she deals with the problems women of her continent face in their everyday lives. To her, as a woman, and like many other female writers, the institution of marriage is of immense significance. This paper intends to mull over some select literary works by Aidoo, to discover how far the writer's approach to the institution of marriage is in compliance with that of Beauvoir's. Aidoo, in her interview with Maria Frias, is vociferous about her feminist inclination while most of other African women writers abhor being known as feminists. Nevertheless, her ideas are not in full agreement with those of the French feminist.

Beauvoir's approach towards marriage is explicitly suggested in the very first sentence of the chapter "The Married Woman" which is read: "The destiny that society traditionally offers women is marriage." The recognition of this social institution as a destiny implies the points that marriage is a must and that, as a fate, it is beyond the control of women who are condemned to succumb to it as a reality of life. It is also inferred that it is more of a requirement from a mighty society than a personal choice. Although, the writer examines the position of women in a way which, at first may seem to be true mostly of the past societies and historical periods, she reminds her readers of the fact that "even today," the unmarried women "suffer from" the situation they are in. (451)

The picture of marriage and married woman Beauvoir sketches is such that it represents woman as a commodity and an entity rather than a human being. The French feminist states: "woman, integrated as slave or vassal into the family group dominated by fathers and brothers, has always been given in marriage to males by

other males.” The situation for women, it seems, has not undergone any change in the course of time as Beauvoir continues: “In primitive times, the clan, the paternal gens, treat her almost like a thing: she is part of payments to which two groups mutually consent.” (452)

Beauvoir then refers to an extraction from Emile Zola’s *Pot-Bouille* where the girl in the story is encouraged and persuaded to get married, and claims: “This shows the girl becoming absolutely passive; she is *married*, given in marriage by her parents. Boys *marry*, they *take* wife” (454). Boys not only have a higher social stature but they are financially better off which makes girls marry to secure a more comfortable life. This financial advantage enables the boy to stripe the girl of almost everything she has, and hence relegating her to a state of being a commodity to be exchanged. Accordingly, the boy possesses the girl. The French philosopher maintains: “He is economically the head of the community, and he thus embodies it in society’s eyes. She takes his name; she joins his religion, integrates into his class, his world; she belongs to his family, she becomes his other ‘half.’” (454)

Beauvoir renders financial motivations as an influential stimulus for marriage of girls even in the more progressive societies. She declares: “Even when she is more emancipated, the economic advantage held by males forces her to prefer marriage over a career.” There is still a reason why a girl should prefer to get married than to find a job. The explanation the writer makes divulges the existence of sexual discrimination in the job market. This inequity has its roots in socio-political contexts of various societies. She proceeds further to say: “women’s professions are so unrewarding and badly paid; marriage is a more beneficial career than many others.” (456)

From the discussion made so far, it is followed, in crude and brief terms, that women, according to Beauvoir have are seen and regarded as passive members of the society ranked lower to men. Nevertheless, women, according to the writer, are expected to be active when it comes to the matter of arranged marriage. Girls are instructed by their parents or guardians to be quick in grabbing the chance when they meet a potential suitor. Even in such incidents of activeness, the girls' sentiments and aspirations are left unnoticed and neglected. In this regard Beauvoir argues: "Her decision is usually accompanied by calculation, distaste and resignation rather than enthusiasm. 'If the young man who proposes to her is more or less suitable (background, health, career), she accepts him without loving him. She will accept him without passion even if there are "buts".'" (459)

Aidoo however, as a devoted feminist in the Black continent, portrays female characters and situations in her literary writings that contradict those depicted by the French feminist. The play *Anowa* is the story of an eponymous character; an African girl who refuses to marry any of the suitors her parents approve of. One day she meets a boy named Kofi and resolves to marry him against her parents' opposite views. They embark on a journey which brings about considerable changes in Kofi's behaviour, and which leads to their committing suicide.

One of the foremost features of *Anowa* is her stubbornness and ability to decide on her own. Once she has chosen the man she wants to marry she goes to such a length that answering her mother who believes "marriage is like a piece of cloth," she defiantly—and

somehow rudely—says: “I like mine and it is none of your business. . . . this is to be my marriage and not yours.” (77).

Anowa chooses Kofi as her husband while in her society it has traditionally been the duty of a girl’s maternal uncle to decide whom the girl would marry. In a discussion between Osam and Badua, Anowa’s father and mother, on their daughter decision to marry Kofi the father tells his wife: “She would not allow herself to be married to any man who came to ask for her hand from us and of whom we approved. . . . I am not the one to decide finally whom Anowa can marry. Her uncle, your brother is there . . .” (76).

Nonetheless, Anowa dares to choose her husband, marking a sharp contrast between herself and the girls as portrayed by Beauvoir who are exchanged like a “thing.” Her marriage is not a case of a trade between two men: neither her father nor her uncle is involved in the matter. Her passions are not left unnoticed as she takes a decision on the basis of love. To recapitulate, Anowa is not passive, but active and aware of her desires and aspirations.

The Dilemma of a Ghost is another play by Aidoo. It tells of Ato Yawson who has been to the US to gain higher education. He chances to meet and fall in love with an African-American girl named Eulalie. They marry and both return to Africa. However, Eulalie’s Western background which come in contrast to African social setting, causes disagreement between her and her in-laws which, in the end, is resolved when Ato’s mother intervenes using her traditional wisdom.

Eulalie aims at finding her roots and identity. Although the story begins where they have come back from the US, it is easily

inferred that Eulalie chooses her husband knowingly and purposefully. She knows well that her ancestors were brought to the US as slaves, so she has a sense of belonging to Africa. She wishes to live in her ancestral land which is why she does not hesitate to marry a man who can take her home.

Eulalie, in a similar way to Anowa, is not treated as a commodity, nor is she traded between two men. Marriage to her is a way home. Once in Africa, on an occasion, she engages in a soliloquy with her mother's voice. This is where she tells her mother: "Ma, I've come to the very source. I've come to Africa and I hope that where're you are . . ." (24). Her sole aim of getting married to Ato is obviously a sort of reunion with her ancestors and motherland. Although, the play does not focus on Eulalie's past life in the US, beginning from where the couple has already arrived in Africa, a brief examination of the essay titled "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," by Kimberle Crenshaw makes the fact known that racial and gender inequity have well been in place even in the late-twentieth-century US. This explains why Eulalie, as an African-American girl leaves the United States for Africa in search of her actual home and origins:

EU. I'm optimistic, Native boy. To belong to somewhere again . . . Ato, can't your Ma be sort of my Ma too? And your Pa mine? And your gods my gods? Shall I die where you will die? (9)

This statement makes her objective and approach towards marriage, clear. She is able to decide on her own. Moreover, although

it is not disclosed whether or not she is employed, it is immediately inferred that she has not get married out of financial constraints or her need of guardianship of any male.

To Aidoo's female characters, marriage, although a crucial matter, is not given the first priority. Eulalie is an example of a girl who marries to achieve her target. Sissie of the novel *Our Sister Killjoy or Reflections from a Black-Eyed Squint* is another such figure. Sissie is given the chance to visit Europe. The novel is to a large extent her observations. Astonishingly, Sissie instead of adopting western culture or getting acculturated, asks her African compatriots not to remain in Europe and help their own countries revive itself after a long period of colonialism.

She prioritizes nation-building over marriage which comes as a surprise to most of members of her society. Sissie's lover lives in Europe, nevertheless she chooses not to start a married life in Europe. In the final section of the novel which is in epistolary form, she writes of her people to her lover: "They say that any female in my position would have thrown away everything to be with you, and remain with you: first her opinions, and then her own plans" (117). It is, therefore, seen that she is not the kind of person to easily throw away "everything. She expresses her idea and attitude towards life in a passage which can rightly be regarded as the writer's slogan:

Both my mother and father had not been to school at all. So no one could accuse them of having got acculturated. They definitely had not been overseas and therefore were not westernised. And since none of them had ever lived anywhere

near a modern town, they could not possibly be urbanised. Given all of that, if they didn't know how I should have been brought up as an African woman, then who does? (117)

For Aidoo's characters, economic constraints are never a motivation for marriage. The short story "Choosing" one of fourteen short stories of the collection of short stories titled "*The Girl Who Can*" and *Other Stories*, is a case in point. In the story, the female character is a young girl who is known, throughout the saga, by the jobs she takes up. She is a writer who can hardly make ends meet, therefore she starts a teaching job, but due to inflation, the salary she receives soon shrinks and leaves her, once more, in poverty. She keeps trying various jobs and every time she fails for some reason or the other. In the end she returns to her mother to receive some good piece of advice. The mother pacifies her and advises her to take up her first career as a writer, since it is the job she is able to do the best way. The story is noteworthy in that the protagonist experiences poverty and despair.

To Aidoo, even racial differences do not hinder girls from getting married to the one they love. The short story "Outfoxed" of the collection "*Diplomatic Pounds*" and *Other Stories* is of prime importance in this respect. Essaba, the protagonist of the story, is a young girl who is planning to travel abroad for further education. Her mother, as a conservative and tradition-bound woman, has opposite views. The mother believes: "a woman is nothing unless she gets married: no matter what else she achieves in this life" (51). Nevertheless, Essaba leaves for Europe where she meets and keeps dating a European white man named Paul. They marry and live a

happy life and Essaba gives birth to two children. After eight years when she comes back home to show off her children to her mother, she finds her mother dead. She regrets that her mother cannot “see a prosperous me and my children who are more handsome and prettier than she could ever have imagined” (58).

From the discussion made so far, it is learnt that for the African young girls depicted by Aidoo, marriage does not bear the same position as it does for the European young women depicted by Beauvoir. The African girls are easily distinguished for their activeness, independence and free will. They are not treated as “things,” and they marry the one they love not the one their fathers or uncles suggest.

This difference results from a distinct setting and context. Colonialism, slavery and racial injustices inflicted upon the black continent have made Africans have contrasting experiences. As the scene differs in African society and literature, a need for a new philosophy and idea is felt. This is why in the latter half of the twentieth century, after most of the colonised countries gained independence, such schools of thought as Postcolonialism emerged and some subdivisions were added to the already existing critical approaches: Black feminism and Third World feminism.

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Nativism through Magic Realism in Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome*

Nimmy Maria Abraham & C. Kannan

In *The Calcutta Chromosome*, Amitav Ghosh has given a fictionalized account of the factual history of the research done in India by the Nobel Prize winner, Ronald Ross on malaria during colonial period. The history is fictionalized by a narration based on magic realism. The narration with magic realism in the novel leads to nativism. Nativism refers to the “perpetuation or revealing of an indigenous culture as opposed to acculturation” (Kumar 121).

The plot is narrated through shift between past, present and future which intertwines colonial and postcolonial period through magic realism. The novel begins with an Egyptian character from future called Antar who is working in New York. His best companion is his advanced computer called Ava. Ava becomes the first medium of magic realism in the novel with scientific traits that binds Antar with his native culture. “She was programmed to simulate ‘localization’. Ava had been speaking to him in the appropriate rural dialect of the Nile Delta” (Ghosh 13).

Once, Antar gets puzzled by a damaged identity card. With the help of Ava, he finds the identity card to be that of Murugan who was a former Life Watch (a public health consultancy)

employee, with whom Antar had a long informal conversation years ago. He disappeared from Calcutta in 1955. The novel is written in the same year. The narraton of the whole novel is based on the progress of research done by Murugan on Roland Ross' study on malaria. Murugan, tries to prove the role of Lutchman and Mangala, two native Indians, in the success of research done by Ross on Malaria. Murugan, can be called as a representative of Indians who take the effort to renovate the damaged native identity of the east which was faded by the advent of western cultural invasion.

Roland Ross, the real British scientist from the colonial past of India, had a controversial past regarding the Nobel Prize given to him. An Italian scientist, Giovanni Battista Grassi was also chosen as a nominee for the research done on malaria. The hearsay is that due to the influence of Ross on the panelists, he won the Nobel (Esch 137, 138). In the novel the Italian scientist is replaced by an Indian woman who belongs to the lowest of caste of Hindu caste system. The intention of Ghosh might not be to ridicule Ronald Ross but to give voice to the marginalized sect in India.

Murugan finds a gap in Ross's research. He guesses someone else's influence in the research. Murugan, from New York moves to Calcutta to find the truth. Mangala who is portrayed as the mysterious one is "the other mind" (Ghosh 32) in the research of Ross. She pretends to be a sweeper, who is actually a member of the secret group striving for immortality. Mangala directs Roland Ross in his research without his knowledge. Roland Ross exploits Lutchman, an Indian dhooly bearer, for his research, without knowing the fact that he belonged to a mysterious group of "counter-

science” striving for immortality, with Mangala as their head. “All he (Ronald Ross) knows about Lutchman is that he’s a “dhooley-bearer”: in other words the British government pays him to shovel shit” (65). Here the identity of Lutchman exists only in relation to the British government. A Dhooly bearer is a person who carries bed on their shoulders with patients and wounded soldiers on it.

The fictionalizing process of the historical fact through magic realism is developed through fantasy traits given to characters, real world setting, hybridity of west – indigenous cultural intersections, metafiction, political critique of dominant forces, themes of postcolonial discourse, and the presence of unreal elements as if the natural part of the real. The fantasy element can be identified in connecting the past with the present. It is Phulboni, a character from the present, also a writer who narrates the story of Laakhan. Murugan meets a journalist called Urmila in Calcutta who is actually “the chosen one” by Mangala for her “vessel.” She represents the mainstream people in India ignorant of the marginalized native identity. Through Urmila being “the chosen one”, the marginalized and silenced identity of Mangala is hailed along with the mainstream society. Thus while Lutchman and Mangala was marginalized in the colonial past for a western scientific research, the two becomes foregrounded with their native role in the same research in the present. So the novel can be considered as an attempt to deconstruct what is considered to be the centre. The major fantasy element in the novel is the action of Mangala in both the past and the present. In the colonial period she was just a sweeper whereas in the postcolonial period her identity was hailed to that of a goddess by breaking the barriers of cast, creed and the dominant westernized

discourse of science. Though she seems fantastical to other characters she is really harnessing the other characters in a logical path. She was suffering from syphilis. For gaining immortality, she starts experimenting on malaria. She induces malaria parasite on pigeons. Later Ross does his experiments on the same pigeons affected by malaria unknown of Mangala's role in it. Thus she has been ahead of Ross in the research. She secretly treats patients. When she induces malaria from pigeons to the patients, they started showing the personality traits of the donor. She infers that it is the Calcutta Chromosome, (the name by Murugan), which is responsible for the transference of personality traits. It was the loop hole for her to gain immortality through incarnations. It was for this intention that she identified the chromosome which exists in brain that can be transmitted through malaria. Calcutta Chromosome can be considered as the symbol of the instinct of ethnicity one carries in his/her mind. The change in the personality trait implies a return to native identity from an acculturated identity. The experiment on pigeons is also a reference to the popular witch craft in Bengal (Tiwari 58). Thus the novel legitimizes the so called superstitious belief. The incarnation is a reference to Hindu mythology of rebirth (58). The novel is an attempt to foreground the Indian spiritual beliefs by backgrounding the western rational science. Mangala has not discarded the rational side of western science. Like Caliban who learned his master's language, Mangala borrowed the British scientist's techniques to achieve something Indian in nature. So like Murugan who was moulded by western science, Mangala is also influenced by the same. But both of them strive for such goals which will contribute to their own native identity.

Like Urmila, ie the “the chosen one” by Mangala as her “vessel” Roman Halder, the companion of Sonali who works with Urmila, is the vessel of Laakhan. Urmila herself is not aware of Mangala’s presence in her. Urmila is the representative of those Indians who are unaware of the spark of ethnic identity in them. Urmila lives in a period where there is no space for ethnic minorities. Calcutta Chromosome was as Murugan says a “technology that lets you improve on yourself in your next incarnation?” (62). As Ross was making use of Laakhan, his laboratory assistant, Mangala was making use of Ross for her immortality. Said explained that orientals are depicted as “feminine” and “eccentric” in nature. By showing Mangala’s relevance in the research, the novel gives an answer to the orientalists.

The novel has shown justice in documenting the real research done by Ross in the particular places of India in the particular historical periods. The historical fact is blended with fiction for showing the relevance of nativism in the midst of globalization. Murugan who likes to be called in the anglicized ‘Morgan’ is in search of the the native Indian elements hidden or faded in the research on malaria. In other words his journey from New York to Calcutta can be interpreted as his shift from Morgan to Murugan. The name ‘Morgan’ shows the blend of the west and indigenesness. He is intellectually moulded by the western science but he strives for indigenesness.

The four stratas of colonial social production explained by Ranajit Guha are the dominant foreign group, dominant indigenous group on all India level, dominant indigenous group at the regional

and local levels and the subaltern constituting the rest of the population (Spivak 26). Mangala and Laakhan represent the subaltern. Mangala, represents the subaltern women in India who wants to break the barriers made by patriarchal caste system. John Thieme conveys that *The Calcutta Chromosome* deals with the alienation of the subalterns. Mangala and Laakhan, are from the very lowest rank of Hindu caste system. Rather than gaining immortality, it can be said that Mangala strived to escape from the marginalization due to caste system. At last her dream got fulfilled when she was worshipped as Mangala bibi, despite of the caste she belonged to. Mangala is a synonym for the dark goddess Kali who is worshipped as the goddess of death and rebirth (Tiwari 58). Like Kali, Mangala becomes the agent for the destruction of acculturated identity for the rebirth of native identity.

Metafiction in the novel consists of narration by Antar from future on Murugan of the present, the narration of ‘controversial’ research by Murugan and the story of Phulboni on Lutchman. The metafiction directs the shift from an acculturated identity to native identity. There are three kinds of magic realism identified by William Spendler. They are metaphysical magic realism that denotes a sense of estrangement, ontological magic realism which focuses on matter of factness, and anthropological magic realism that shows the binary of native world view versus western rationalism (Luc 122, 123). The metafiction in the novel while Murugan narrating the story of Ross and Phulboni on Lutchman, focuses on the anthropological magic realism. The damaged Identity Card seen by Antar, a character from future, is the symbol of the damaged identity when the dominant western rationalism rejected the native world view of

Murugan. For the New York society, Murugan is expected to think like a person of western scientific knowledge. Like Lutchman in the colonial India who was expected to be the servant of British government, Murugan shares the same fate by being chained by the western dominant rules of knowledge. Like Roland Ross fails to identify the real identity of Lutchman, the dhooly bearer and Mangala, the sweeper, the New York science society failed to acknowledge the statement made by Murugan on Ross. According to Said, Europeans consider the East uncivilized as they have super natural beliefs without rationality, as opposed to the so called logical sense of the West. The resurrection of Lutchmann and Mangala, can be interpreted as an urge to keep the identity of ethnic minorities stable in the westernized post colonial India. . Postcolonial mainstream Indians are westernized identities who believe ethnic minorities as uncivilized and irrational beings. Phulboni, is a link between colonial and postcolonial India. His real name was Saiyad Murad Hussain. He is proud to identify himself with a tribal community by taking the name “Phulboni”. Phulboni himself can be called a nativist since he gave up his institutionalized religious name for the sake of a tribal community. It is Phulboni who introduces Laakhan through his stories. Again Phulboni’s narrative can be seen as a tribal narrative, which is in sharp contrast to the scientific document of Ross. Murugan says “Lutchman was all over the map, changing names, switching identities” (50). Lutchman represents the marginalised, and ignored people in colonial as well as post colonial period.

The novel depicts the knowledge of marginalized ethnic minorities in India as superior to the dominant western science. The quest of Murugan Calcutta implies his quest for identity an which is

not influenced by the dominant western world. Murugan becomes the witness for how Mangala and Laakhan, representative of the marginalized Indians in colonial period, made their effort to make their identity stable forever. Laakhan and Mangala were not the members of an institutionalized community, organization or religion like the main stream people in India. All their deeds were secret. Mangala directed Ross to develop his research even though he was unaware of her role. Mandakini V. Jha in her article, “On Western Indian Encounter: Caste as “Other””, describes how the colonizers made a negative image of Indians. For the colonizers, “it was “scientific” to treat Indians as unvirile, irrational, and socially atomized, thus unfit to govern themselves” (Jha 132). Mangala’s control over the research done by Ross is a reply to this orientalist discourse.

The history is framed by the colonizers. It can be called a hegemonic narrative. History is always in the hands of dominant power which is framed in their favour. According to Edward Said, historical documents on the East are always biased by the West. The rejection of Murugan’s article named “Certain Systematic Discrepancies in Roland Ross’s account of Plasmodium B.” and thereby losing his membership from the New York based science society shows the bias of west. “Recent theorists and historians of science, however, have helped to expose the fact that science is culturally located, with its own biases and interests.”(107). Murugan says: Ross “wants everyone to know the story like he’s going to tell it; he’s not about to leave any of it up for grabs, not a single minute if he can help it” (152)

The narration using magical realism glorifies Indian rituals, customs and beliefs. The disappearance of Murugan, Urmila, Roman Halder and Sonali is at a point when they realize a change in their belief. Murugan disappeared after finding the presence of Mangala and Laakhan in his own time. For Urmila it happens after identifying Mangala in her. Roman Halder is sacrificed for Laakhan. These disappearances can be interpreted as the disappearance for the appearance of the marginalized native identity. Antar's quest for knowing the reason for Murugan's disappearance ends when Ava, Antar's computer, finds him in an asylum as a psychiatric patient. One way of commenting on his pathetic situation is that his urge to convey his statement on the malaria research of Ross might have made others to put him into asylum. Like his lost membership in science society in New York due to his article against Roland Ross, he lost his identity as a normal human being when he stood for the silenced ones.

Magic realism is an apt tool as a resistance in the postcolonial situation. There are some critical paradigms through which the postcolonial discourses are moulded. The critical paradigms in the novel are native – nat paradigm and the unrepresented territory paradigm. Native – nat paradigm “studies the regional or native culture mutilated by the colonial exploits as well as retrieving the original form on decolonizing process” (Arora 32). The unrepresented territory paradigm is “the critical mechanism that voices the repressed voices of the subaltern and those who were considered inadequate for articulation” (32). Since Mangala and Laakhan belong to the lowest caste of Hindu caste system, their

culture is silenced. It is not only the dominance of western discourse that marginalizes native culture but the mainstream elite.

According to Said post colonial discourse reacts to the authentication of western knowledge which is essential for the rebirth of nativism. Murugan says Ross wants everyone to know the story like he's going to tell it;" (Ghosh 152). Murugan's fate to be in asylum and his lost membership in New York science society due to his article against Roland Ross, echo the words of Said: "Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action" (Said 89). Sudheer K Arora asserts that postcolonial discourse is "domination of resistance and the resistance of the domination" (Arora 34). Mangala's control over Ross is the domination of the resistance and her "counter science" is the resistance of domination which was ultimately to establish her own immortal identity. Thus an attempt of resisting acculturation is done through magic realism by deconstructing the so called western rational knowledge. Magic realism as a postcolonial tool presents "an alternative reality" (D 'haen 287) by giving space for the marginalized. The research on malaria from a native cultural and spiritual perspective for the incarnation of Mangala Beevi was the alternative reality presented through magic realism. The "counter science" of Mangala beevi can be interpreted as a reaction to orientalism.

By utilizing history and characters belonging to mainstream the narrative technique of magic realism foregrounds the identity, beliefs and customs of the marginalized natives. After all, the novel gives an insight that there are so many ways of understanding truth. What one needs to do is not to under estimate an effort of somebody

to attain knowledge or truth just because it is quite different from that of the means followed by the mainstream people. One's identity should not be a barrier for expressing his or her ideas.

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The Dark Esplanades of Cross-Cultural Rifts in *Things Fall Apart*

Resmi R.

Postcolonial literature is a body of literary writing that retorts to the intellectual discourse of European colonization in Asia, Africa, Middle East, and elsewhere. It mainly deals with the problems and consequences of the decolonization of a country, and of a nation, especially the cultural and political independence of previously suppressed colonial peoples. Prime aspect of the Age of Imperialism was the “scramble for Africa” during the 1880s and 1890s. The Europeans became greedy for Africa’s natural resources, resulting in their onset into Africa and their unfavourable conquest of the land. During this period, many European countries set colonies in Africa. The “civilisation” of the “savage” societies as a humanitarian act was one of the strategies adopted by the colonial power to establish their superiority over the colonised. It most often led to the ultimate obliteration of the native culture and the related aspects. Soon, African states got dominated by European power of all sorts: economic, political and social. African writings, especially novels, are at once literary pieces, a social protest and a vehicle of political reaffirmation. They portray the poignant postcolonial African reality in all its varied shades and designs.

Writers like Chinua Achebe, in their works have marked out the characters of their fictional heroes as leaders of the struggle

against colonial and neocolonial forces. Eurocentrism identifies Europe as the core of civilisation and of humanity. The relation between the colonisers and the colonised has a Manichean structure, where the former are “the exemplary” ones and the latter “the evil” ones. All the positive qualities are attributed to the white men as opposed to the evil qualities that are represented by the blacks. In order to give back to his people the pride that they once had, the famous Nigerian author Chinua Achebe wrote his first novel *Things Fall Apart* (1957). The novel that is set in the 1890s portrays the collision between the customary culture of the Igbo people and Nigeria’s white colonial government. Achebe’s novel demolishes the formulaic European portraits of the native Africans. He has taken extreme care in patterning the intricate, advanced social institutions and artistic traditions of Igbo culture prior and subsequent to its contact with Europeans.

Achebe depicts the opulent African culture, their superstitions, festivals, language and religious rites through the Igbo society. It is a response to, as well as a record of the harrowing consequences of the Western capitalist colonialism on the traditional values, resident Igbo culture, and religious institutions of the African people. In this novel, Achebe who grew up under the colonial rule “writes back” to European writers and the falsification of Africa and Africans in their writings. Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* is an emblematic postcolonial novel in which the author renders the African Igbo culture as possessing of not only their configuration of leadership and government, but also as a group of multiple systems one might expect to find in common Western civilisations. This paper is an attempt to bring into light, the postcolonial elements in *Things Fall*

Apart, that shadow the hopes and aspirations of the community to which Achebe belongs, with special focus on the central character in the novel, Okonkwo and the clash between the native Igbo culture and the Western culture.

Things Fall Apart draws a clear frontier between the colonizer and the colonized. In his article, “The Novelist as Teacher” (1965), Achebe dwells upon, “the disaster brought upon the African psyche in the period of subjugation to alien races” (Roscoe 122). It traces life in the Igbo village of Umuofia, Nigeria, just before and after its initial contact with European colonists and their Christian religion. The backdrop of the novel is a small illusory village, Umuofia, populated by the Igbo people, in the outskirts of Nigeria. The hero Okonkwo is introduced in the opening of the novel itself. He is depicted as a proficient cultivator, combatant, leader, and a regional wrestling champion, who attempts to uphold his traditions and customs.

Okonkwo exists for the exaltation of his precursors and their system. He is a go-getter and an inflexible clan member trying to overcome the legacy of his puny father. He has earned two titles in his clan; and his three wives, two barns full of yams, and large living complex — all speak of his personal triumph: “Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond” (3). He is tough, industrious, and devoted, unlike his father Unoka. His eminence as a man is amplified through an account of his father’s failures. He never exhibits any kind of flaws, and has attained the name, titles, and the stature which he has always struggled for in his life through sheer perseverance. The clan does not judge men on their father’s faults, and Okonkwo’s status is based on his own

achievements. According to Igbo customs, “Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered” (3). *Things Fall Apart* as a postcolonial transcript clearly unveils a range of particulars about the nineteenth-century Iboland and the Igbo culture including their sacred beliefs, scheme of government, and the values they inculcate on the society, family and individual through Okonkwo’s experiences. This offers the readers with an assessment of Igbo life, especially their culture during the precolonial and postcolonial period. *Things Fall Apart* focuses on the clash between traditional Igbo society and the culture and religion of the colonists. This clash occurs at alternate levels- individual and societal; emotional and intellectual.

First part of the novel presents various ceremonies of the tribal people. The complete hierarchy of gods and deities ranging from the personal god “Chi” to the greatest god “Chukwu” in Iboland is presented in the beginning. The shrine of an Igbo man used to have the wooden images of “chi” and his ancestral spirits. Then there are other deities like “udo”, “egwugwu”, and “idemili”, who protect the village and the clan. “Ani”, the earth goddess is responsible for all the fertility. The natives believe in the omnipresence of god and they pray to lesser gods and deities in order to reach the highest god, “Chukwu”. The rules that the Igbo people pursue revolve around what behaviour is deemed agreeable by the gods. Okonkwo’s impulsiveness and rigidness, however, often pit him against the laws of the clan. For instance, when Okonkwo beats his second wife Ojiugo out of thoughtlessness, forgetting that it is the Week of Peace, the priest of “Ani” addresses Okonkwo’s disrespect

to the goddess, and calls for necessary punishment. For Okonkwo and his people, religion and government are intertwined.

Achebe's portrayal of the Igbo culture is important for he does it in an unbiased manner. He has portrayed the native society honestly with the celebration of culture and tradition on one hand and the failings and superstitions on the other: "Children were warned not to whistle at night for fear of evil spirits" (9). Similarly, when a man gets afflicted with swelling in the stomach and the limbs, he is not allowed to die in the house: "He was carried to the Evil Forest and left there to die," (17) which show the traces of superstitions. It is only with the permission of "The Oracle-the Oracle of Hills and Caves," that the Igbo people make their choices. They label the oracle, "agbala".

Igbo culture is depicted as a complex weave of traditions in beliefs and behaviours. Without these traditions and rituals, the lives of the Igbo people cease to have any kind of significance. Several legends and myths as "the earth and the sky," (53) "the mosquito and the ear," (75) and "the tortoise and the birds" (96-99) have also been presented in the novel. Most of the text in this novel tries to feature the uses and functions of the intertwined Igbo myths and proverbs which the Europeans fail to decipher. Achebe makes his characters utter these proverbs when they address each other. He strongly believes that "among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly; and proverbs are the palm oil with which the words are eaten" (7). Here, proverbs are compared to palm oil, which is an inevitable aspect of the tribal culture. Men constantly go to collect it and women use it in their daily chores without any fail..

The use of language shares the function of myths. This shows the impeccable stature the proverbs and myths attain in the Igbo oral convention.

Second part of the novel takes place during Okonkwo's exile from fatherland Umuofia to his motherland, Mbanta. He accidentally kills one of his kinsmen with his gun in Umuofia which results in his exile. This part of the novel also heralds the commencement of the British colonisation of the natives. To some extent, European influence is seen within the novel even before the arrival of the missionaries and British military personnel within Okonkwo's homeland. This influence is presented through a number of European items that are embraced by the Igbo culture such as snuff and a snuff spoon, and also weaponry including machetes and guns. Ironically, even before the physical presence of the British, which eventually causes the destruction of precolonial Igbo culture, it is the malfunction of a European weapon, Okonkwo's gun that paves the way for his exile.

Achebe has written the novel in English but has integrated into the prose, a rhythm that conveys a sense of African oral storytelling. From its earliest moments itself, both the personal and the societal destruction of Okonkwo and Igbo people are linked to the European influence. In an effort to show the spar between the two cultures, Achebe presents traditional Christian symbols and then describes the clan's contrasting reactions to them. For instance, in Christianity, locusts are symbols of destruction and ruin, but the Umuofians rejoice at their coming because they are rich source of food. The arrival of the locusts comes directly before the arrival of

the missionaries in the novel. Igbo people in the novel are sceptical to change and to them, the whites are aliens because their origin is unknown to them. They are unaware of the concept of Christianity because it is something that existed outside their culture and language. Igbo have known only Umuofia to be the only place in the world, and they disregard anything outside their territory, since it is non-existing according to them. This convinces the white missionaries that the Igbo people are primitives. They sanction themselves the permission to civilise the natives even though the so called “primitives” do not ask for their help to get “civilised”.

People of Umuofia are separated into two groups immediately following the arrival of the white missionaries along with a District Commissioner in their land: the Igbo followers and the followers of the white missionaries. The missionaries question Igbo religion claiming that the gods and ancestors who have been worshipped for generations are not true gods: “Your gods are not alive and cannot do you any harm. They are pieces of wood and stone” (133). To them, “There is only one true God and He has the earth, the sky, you and me and all of us” (132-33) and whose name was Jesu Kristi. This claim begins to divide the people, as the missionaries convince some to convert, while others refuse to give up their beliefs, traditions, and rituals. Okonkwo’s own son chooses to join the Christians, and is rejected by his father as a result. Okonkwo says to his other children, “You have all seen the great abomination of your brother. Now he is no longer my son or your brother” (156). This shows Okonkwo’s true feelings for his culture. Converts to Christianity choose to abandon their own religion,

traditional ways of life, gods, and fellow people to follow the white man, his god, and his ways.

Things Fall Apart is all about the perplexity, disarray, and disorder of the traditional Igbo culture that suffers at the hand of the white men. The views about life that the white men have are totally unlike the outlook that the Igbo have. Those things that seem absolutely appropriate and acceptable in traditional Igbo culture do not appear so to the white missionaries. They want to quickly change certain “inappropriate” elements of Igbo culture, which actually are the binding forces of the Igbo. For instance, the Igbo culture wants the “real” man to wed two or more wives, which is accepted by both men and women. However, the white missionaries are against polygamous marriages. White missionaries also disapprove of the Igbo’s discarding of twin babies as evil, the separation of *osu*, or social outcasts due to diseases and disabilities mutation of *ogbanje* children, who are believed to be the spirits of children that die in young childhood and then return to haunt the mother’s womb time after time.

One of the first changes that the white missionaries bring about immediately after their arrival is to replace the traditional Igbo judicial system and courts. The courts are spearheaded by the oldest man in the village, whose insight and intelligence is trusted in the power of their ancestral gods to guide them to give rational and unbiased ruling. European culture slowly unwinds the cultural thread that has bound Igbo people together until then: “He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart” (160). The choice made by the rulers of Mbanta, Okonkwo’s motherland, to allocate land to Christian missionaries to build their church turns

out to be the worst mistake the Igbo could ever make. The missionaries turn out to be very keen about imposing their culture on the Igbo. They become unable to see the destruction that they cause to the native culture. The change in religious beliefs causes a chain reaction of cultural changes as many traditional social practices, governing rules, practice system fall apart. Through the presence of the whites and their impact on the daily lives of the people, Achebe effectively demonstrates the destruction of the indigenous culture.

Part three of the novel shows Okonkwo's return after seven years of exile from Mbanta to a much changed Umuofia: "Umuofia had indeed changed during the seven years Okonkwo had been in exile. The church had come and led many astray" (157). This sparks depression in Okonkwo as he realises that his society is falling apart, and all his endeavours have come to nothing. He wants to take a stern action against the invaders, but it is not supported by his kinsmen. He realises that the British have hired many Igbo people to serve as government envoys and clerks. Moreover, the whites have heaped in much support from the Igbo people over a period of time. When one of the converts unmasks an *egwugwu*, one of the nine founding spirits of the Igbo clan, the natives take an active stance in response, but they are castigated by the District Commissioner through the white judicial system. Okonkwo is one among the six men who gets beaten up and punished while awaiting the payment of a fine exacted against the village. After their release, a meeting is held in the town market of Umuofia, where the messenger sent by the District Commissioner to break up the gathering is killed by Okonkwo. He hopes to inspire his people to take up an active stand against the new leadership. But no one joins the fight, and the

crowd disperses, which shows their clear submission to the new ways.

In response to the killing of his messenger, the District Commissioner seeks out Okonkwo for punishment, but finds that he has hanged himself. Okonkwo's death symbolises the despair, and ultimate defeat of his people and culture. It also shows his unwillingness to surrender himself and culture at any cost. After Okonkwo's death, Achebe focuses on the thoughts of the District Commissioner, who plans to write a book about his experiences of bringing in civilisation to various parts of Africa. He is very happy to get a new material for his book in the form of Okonkwo's death: "The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him" (187). He intends the book's title to be "The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger", which is absolutely contradictory to the valiant life of Okonkwo.

The title *Things Fall Apart* has been inspired by William Butler Yeats' poem "The Second Coming" (1921). Achebe uses the quote from the poem in the very beginning of the novel: "Turning and turning in the widening gyre/The falcon cannot hear the falconer/ Things fall apart/the centre cannot hold/Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world" With reference to this poem, the title addresses the idea that colonisation has brought chaos, anarchy, and devastation as opposed to its claims of establishing order, control, and creating a culture among the native people. Through the novel, Achebe fully acknowledges and depicts the precolonial and postcolonial Igbo culture especially through the rise and fall of Okonkwo, the central character and the cross-cultural conflicts.

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The Power of the “Other Tongue” in Postmodern Indian Literature

Gincy P. Kuriakose

Lord Macaulay through his *Minute on Indian Education* designed the “class” of “interpreters” who were carefully chosen to write the destiny of generations of Indians.

I feel with them, that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. (Macaulay 8)

Language, we find after several decades of independence, was the most fatal weapon from the arsenal of the British Empire on Indians. Indians are left colonized linguistically and culturally, creating a chaotic internal politics of identity, denial, suffering, and arrogance. In this context, may we remember a historic plea preceded the *Minute* of Macaulay by “the father of Indian Renaissance”, Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Lord Armherst,

When this Seminary of learning was proposed, we understood that the Government in England had ordered a considerable sum of money to be annually devoted to the instruction of its

Indian Subjects. We were filled with sanguine hopes that this sum would be laid out in employing European Gentlemen of talents and education to instruct the natives of India in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful Sciences, which the Nations of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world. (Roy 2, 3)

Macaulay may not have fancied a perennial linguistic and cultural suppression of Indians, instead he opined on the easiest, practically possible option affordable for his government. The short term benefits were for the socially and economically forward class of India who assimilated knowledge through the “other tongue” and disseminated it to their immediate surroundings. Neither Raja Ram Mohan Roy nor Macaulay had even a remote idea on the influence, the “othertongue” would exert on generations of Indians. The language of the “interpreters” became the language of judiciary, bureaucracy, and national politics after independence. The power of other tongue effected through adaptation in regional scenarios continue to redefine and update the “taste”, “opinions”, “morals” and “intellect” of the Indian masses. The “interpreters” started to have the bearing of the colonizer and they interrogate and ridicule the rest of the Indians. When the South didn’t agree for Hindi, It became a smooth channel for the coronation of English as the official language to boast of the colonial legacy.

The mastery of the foreign language formulated new power structures in communication, employment, business, social order, politics, education, entertainment, and in general resulted in imbibing

a new form for the nation and the national. Individual acquires identity by his involvement in a language and the same language determines the nature of the identity. The association with a foreign language gives an alternative identity for the individual and the individual becomes a foreign element in native premises. The foreign element is observed by the native community in two contexts: of suspicion, fearing the new form that may make new inroads and the compromise that has to be put up with; of admiration, fascinated by the new form that may be attained through self-conceived or society determined conditioning measures with perseverance.

Salman Rushdie, in his book *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing* claims the supremacy of Indo-Anglian Literature over the rest of Indian literature: “the ironic proposition that India’s best writing since independence may have been done in the language of the departed imperialists is simply too much for some folks to bear” (Rushdie 251). The statement shook the Indian, national conscience and it equally raised the issue, or need for attaching bourgeoisie identity to the writers of Indo-Anglian literature. Here becomes relevant, the question of power factors that generate from the Indo-Anglian writing.

As always power is with the superior, and superiority is attributed in a hierarchical order in all realms. The hierarchy on the basis of wealth, health (mental & spiritual), colour, race, religion, numbers or quantity, language, knowledge, beauty, physique and so on. In each category there is a hierarchy of power from top to bottom. In India considering the hierarchy of languages, Hindi, being the most spoken native language of Indian population, decided as

the national official language. Hindi is being spoken by one-fourth of Indian population, again these speakers; most of them, speak dialects of Hindi. To challenge this, non-Hindi speakers has English, the foreign language as their official language. Hindi was implemented to the Indian only after Independence but English was already there for over a century.

English exerts power in India, as the language of the educated, the elite, the upper class, the privileged; the same hegemony is attributed to Indian writing in English. But it's quite unfortunate that an immensely rich, varied and intricately complex Indian writing is adjudged not in par with a comparatively low percentage contribution of writing in English. Equally baffling is the question of the identity that these writers adore and adopt for themselves. Writers like V S Naipaul and Jhumpa Lahiri resent their identity as Indian English writers. They wanted themselves to be known as original English writers; ironically their themes and locales portray Indian exile life. Others like Rushdie pretend as first world writers from third world; the power of being proficient in the foreign language enabled them to be so.

Post modernism is defined as “a late 20th-century movement characterized by broad skepticism, subjectivism, or relativism; a general suspicion of reason; and an acute sensitivity to the role of ideology in asserting and maintaining political and economic power” (Encyclopaedia). Postmodernism is associated with deconstruction and post-structuralism: characterized by a self-conscious use of earlier styles and conventions; a mixing of different artistic styles and media; and a general distrust of theories. Post

modernism, unlike Modernism presents “fragmentation”, “incoherence”, and “provisionality” in human life as nothing to lament about; but something to celebrate or embrace.

The point of relevance here is the application of post modernism in Indian literature. Again the hegemony of the west is responsible enough in discharging philosophical theories for the otherwise theoretically impoverished third world. This is an evident case of the passive exercise of power of the west over the east. Do we really need theories from west nations to write accordingly? Do we have to attach our new literary outputs in relation to the current theories of the west and have to find loop holes to connect them? This is the dilemma of the critics and writers of the third world, and this is all the more exasperating for critics and writers who consider English as their suitable medium of expression.

Indian literature is still hanging on to poetry while in the West; fiction has taken several evolutionary modes, after being the popular and emphatic form of literature for decades. But it doesn't mean fiction is superior to poetry and therefore Indian literature is inferior to European literature. The situation worsen when Indian writers in English backs the claim and mimic the western themes, form, and setting. Indian English writers find themselves as alien to Indian literature; they follow footsteps of their “western veterans”, the neo-colonial hybridity in lineage. For the west, Indian literature is Indian English literature; they continue to pat on the post-colonial hangover of these new generation writers; their acceptance and admiration of western culture and tradition; their imitation of western literature and critical theories; their confused nationalism, identity

and lineage, in short the west-focused literary genre. This post-colonial romance is two-sided, when Indians boast of their colonial legacy; the English is satisfied with the prevailing neo-colonialism.

The postmodern Indian literature is diverse, huge and is a blend of poetry, novel, criticism, essays, travelogues, autobiography etc.; while postmodern English literature has been linear with novel and different versions of novel. This is proof enough to say that the theorists while proposing their theorems never go for taking into consideration the realities of the third world except Indian writing in English which falls as one among the regions of writing. Reading Indian literature in the background of western literary theories falls short in absorbing the essence of the work. On the other side, absence of an English translation and the lack of criticism based on western literary theories tend to refute relevance for a piece of writing.

At the outset the claim seems to be bizarre. “Othering” is the alienation of a group, a subject or an object into the position of the ‘other’; it is equally the stressing of one’s identity through the suppression and negation of “the other”. The term “othering” or “to other” is widely applied in the fields of post colonialism, feminism, human rights, minority issues etc. Indian English writers face “othering” because of the presence of a dominant group of native writers; at the same time they tend “to other” Indian writers in regional languages. Statements like postmodernism stands not to lament “othering” but to celebrate it would be more puzzling. The “other tongue” writers appear as more potent because of the power factors attributed to them. A parody of the western theme, form, motifs and literary theories can’t entitle for destruction of “othering”.

“Fragmentation”, “incoherence”, and “provisionality” are universal truths of the present. There is no point in crying over these; rather the strength lies in identifying the self with the immediate world around.

Postmodernism and post colonialism are related terms as these literary movements share common objectives in literature. As noticed by Roger Berger,

Postmodernism is simultaneously (or variously) a textual practice (often oppositional, sometimes not), a subcultural style or fashion, a definition of western, postindustrial cultures and the emergent or always already dominant global culture. At the same time, post colonialism is simultaneously (or variously) a geographical site, an existential condition, a political reality, a textual practice, and the emergent or dominant global culture (or counter-culture). (192)

In postmodernism language is a tool to obtain authority. Most of the postcolonial novels explore how language is used for the continued control and submission to the colonizers. Both postmodernism and post colonialism examine an “emergent or dominant global culture” and therefore there is only a thin line of difference between the two movements. Postcolonial movement has a geographical aspect and existential concern associated to it differing from post colonialism. Post-colonial writers engage in the deconstruction of both the “other tongue” and the “othering” of the self into a European identity. That’s the reason why Indian writers, writes to “conquer English, may be to complete the process of making ourselves free” (Rushdie 17). The dismantling of colonial identity or

the acceptance of a newly deconstructed hybrid identity is one usual theme of post-colonial literature. Rushdie feels that, postcolonial writers are involved in the rewriting of history using the “other tongue”. He states, “What seems to me to be happening is that those peoples who were once colonized by the language are now rapidly remaking it as they are carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers” (64).

Postcolonial writing in India is not just attributed to Indo-Anglian writing alone, it's applied to the whole of Indian literature. Indian literature is often critically read as symbolic or allegoric or connected with the colonial times, but this shall not be true in all cases. It is unacceptable to term the massive Indian literary output after Independence as Post-colonial literature. Post colonialism is one aspect seen and projected by the western and the native critics, ignoring the diverse Indian literature for the literature in the “other tongue”.

We could name a large number of authors in Indian regional languages who successfully employed many techniques and approaches in writing with a variety of themes, motifs, manners and genres of expression. Kannada literature is one such, which alone bagged eight Jnanpith awards, the most prestigious literary honour in India. Kannada literature is rich with themes of rural life, Dalit issues, caste struggle, emigration to European countries, feminism etc. Girish Karnad a Jnanpith awardee is always fascinated in employing history or mythology as his theme and his works explore its relevance to the modern society. U R Ananthamurthy, another notable writer of Kannada presents the psychological aspects of

people in his works; also his writings examine challenges and social changes happened to Brahmin families of Karnataka and the bureaucracy of Independent India. In Kannada literature, for a brief period, a humble form of literature called *Pragatishila* (progressive literature) gained popularity during the early part of 20th century; it was fiction intended for common man.

Bengali literature in India produced many well-known literary figures including Rabindranath Tagore. "Hungryalism" a notable movement in Bengali literature influenced poetry, fiction and painting; and the writers of the movement are known as of the "Hungry generation". This cultural or artistic movement challenged the set notions of writing and remarkably contributed to the development of the language to better express aesthetic feelings in literature and painting. A phenomenon of the 1960's, they questioned the centrality of literary evolution. While Indian literature has explored its own path the power of the "other tongue" rejected its recognition in world literature, and reiterate Indo-Anglian literature as Indian literature. However literature of other countries like France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and most of the European countries has been vibrant and may be except for one Shakespeare outshines English literature to bring in novelty and variety to literature.

Genuine and thorough comprehension of Otherness is possible only if the self can somehow negate or at least severely bracket the values, assumptions, and ideology of his culture. As Nadine Gordimer's and Isak Dinesen's writings show, however, this entails in practice the virtually impossible task of negating one's very being, precisely because one's culture is what formed that being. (JanMohamed 84)

JanMohamed bluntly asserts the “state of being” of the self. In his view the self is a resultant of his immediate “ideological and cultural influence” distancing the individual from even a remote sensibility of identity. The very idea of individuality vanishes. Indo-Anglian literature then may be interpreted as an outcome of the said “influence”. Hume’s materialism offers a further examination of the “state of being”, “[Hume offers] an extreme yet logical consequence of the empirical definition of the mind as the passive receptor of sense experience; with no activity of its own, the mind is simply the reflex of the continuous and multiple registry of sensations”. (Burwick 128)

Evidently the postcolonial romance of the colonizer and the colonized could be a natural outcome; where the colonized honoured and admired the colonizer with a forgotten, deeply embedded fear of oppression; and the colonizer long for a post-colonial loyalty and belongingness from the colonized. Indo-Anglian writers are begotten vehicles of this post-colonial romance, where the former master occasionally gifts its forlorn subjects with international recognition and adoption. The postcolonial writers in Indo Anglian literature projects themes like, hybridity, identity crisis, magical realism, fragmentation, and a non-linear narrative drawing resemblance with the “other tongue” counter parts or in tune with the western critics. Writers like V S Naipaul, and JhumbaLahiriis eager to shed their Indian identity, which the English thrust upon them; Salman Rushdie claims English as superior to the Indian, presenting himself as the native colonizer from among the colonized, reminding us the Psyche of the retired Judge, Jemubhai Patel of Kiran Desai’ s *Inheritance*

of Loss; while, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai respond to English with English, countering the neocolonialism; interestingly a late generation of Indian writers including Arvind Adiga, and Chetan Bhagat finds English as another Indian language.

The postmodern reality of Indian literature is the advent of Indian literature which is as diverse and rich as its culture, tradition and ideology. But the authorities of power least bother to notice the change; and instead behold Indo-Anglian literature as the representation of Indian literature for the world, against an eloquent blend of regional literature. Again literature doesn't alone mean fiction as in the postmodern Indian writing in English. The disruptive significance we grant to the "other tongue" may be reconsidered; in fact English may remain as another Indian language of communication and expression. But the impression, the culture and the ideological surroundings create for both the educated and uneducated alike is the inevitability of the "other tongue" for the realization of an enlightened self.

The power factors and aspects of the "other tongue" will not subside till another language acquires the imperial status, which may not be a reality for the present but can't be denied at all in a distant future, either when language loses its power factors or when another power equation arises to suppress the current. However, in the present let's retrospect and debate the effects the "other tongue", has drawn on the postmodern Indian literature.

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India Sastra: A Critique of the Western Concept of the Nation in the novels of Shashi Tharoor

Prasanth. V. G. & Sr. Marykutty Alex

The concepts of the nation and nationalism have predominated the Postcolonial debate as intricately intertwined historical developments that attempts to assimilate colonialism, imperialism and conquest on one hand and neo-colonialism, diaspora and globalisation on the other. These diverse developments would make sense not in isolation but in their totality despite number of inherent contradictions. It becomes relevant to explore the historical, social and political background that has contributed to the development of the nation and how they get fictionally represented in works of literature. Such an analysis becomes inevitable in the context of the study of the nation in the light of the writings of Shashi Tharoor. This paper focuses on the three novels of Tharoor – *The Great Indian Novel*, *Show Business* and *Riot* – which in different ways focus on India as a nation with its glorious past and contemporary sordidness. Shashi Tharoor's preoccupation with India is not entirely exposed through the works of fiction alone but

the voluminous collection of essays bear testimony to it, including the latest book *India Sastra*, published in 2015.

A state in its simplest form is a territorial political community that is run by an independent organised Government and a nation-state is marked with a cultural self-identity that we call a nation or nationality. Any such forms at present are in a predominant form of state organisation and possess a sovereignty and a legitimacy. The advantage of the nation-state is that, once consolidated around a particular nationality, it attempts to attain a stable form of state organisation. It can be defined as a geographical area that has been identified as deriving its political legitimacy from serving as a sovereign nation. It is interesting to observe that while the state is a political and geo-political entity, the nation is a cultural and ethnical one but the term nation-state makes it possible for the two to coincide geographically.

A nation is a large group of people who are linked by a similar culture, language, and history. Members of some nations share an ethnicity, like China and Japan, whereas other nations consist of ethnically diverse groups of people, like the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and Singapore. However, the members of a nation consider themselves as connected and fellow members of the community are often regarded as part of an extended family. Members of a nation usually take pride in being a part of a larger entity than individuals and they celebrate the glory of a nation. Scholars disagree on what counts as a nation and nationhood that at times transcends geographical boundaries: there are some groups that consider themselves as part of a nation even though

many of them lie scattered in different parts of the world and there are other members of a nation who frequently differ in a variety of ways, including speaking different languages and participating in different cultural practices. Therefore determining what constitutes a nation becomes an altogether subjective perspective. Similarly the division between an ethnic group and a nation seems to be esoteric as once the ethnic group begins to view itself as a nation, it becomes one. A state is also a political unit that has sovereignty over a particular piece of land. Sovereignty is the ultimate power within a territory and the state has the power to make laws, defend its borders, and enact policies. The state also exercises a monopoly on the legitimate use of force: No group within its borders, however powerful they may be, can use force legally without the permission of the state so the political scientists use the word state as a synonym for sovereign governments.

Nation as we conceive today as a nation-state is not the sense that it carried along in the past: it has derived from the Latin word *natio*, meaning a local community, class, tribe or people. Raymond Williams observes that the nation as a term is radically connected with the word native, establishing the intricate link with the locality. The nation as a concept in the present day terminology has begun to emerge after the World War II where every successful attempt to assimilate power has been firmly grounded itself on the national terms. The discovery of the essential link between nation and imagination marked a decisive movement in the emergence of the studies of the nation. In 1983 Benedict Anderson made a breakthrough in the history of nation studies with his epoch making *Imagined Communities* in which he constructed the nation not as

an inevitable product of sociological factors such as language, race, religion and history but as an “imagined political community – imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (15). Anderson argues that the nation is a community constructed through the imagination as the people scattered over the country have limited chance to meet or know each other. Such an imagination is made possible by the capitalism and the novel that was the “technical form for ‘re-presenting’ the kind of imagined community that becomes the nation” (Nayar 77). The print media and forms of art like cinema have amplified this notion further by strengthening the concept of oneness among the people.

Anderson’s argument that it is the convergence of capitalism and print technology that has created the possibility of a new form of imagined community is challenged by Homi. K. Bhabha who argues that the nation came into being as a system of cultural signification as representation of social life and identifies nation as one of the major structures of ideological ambivalence within the cultural representation of modernity: “The ambivalent, antagonistic perspective of nation as narration will establish the cultural boundaries of the nation so that they may be acknowledged as containing thresholds of meaning that must be crossed, erased and translated in the process of cultural production”(4).

The modern concept of nation state was relatively unknown in Europe prior to 1500, where most of the people neither thought of themselves as being part of a nation nor hardly moved out from their villages to a larger world outside. The Thirty Years’ War, fought throughout central Europe from 1618 to 1648 between Protestants

and Catholics, laid the legal foundation for the nation-state. The war involved different nations of Europe, including many small German states, the Austrian Empire, Sweden, France, and Spain. Despite a lethal battle, the Catholics were not able to overturn Protestantism. The treaty that ended the war, called the Peace of Westphalia, decreed that the sovereign ruler of a state had the sole power over all elements of both the nation and the state, including religion. It laid the foundation of the modern idea of a sovereign state.

In most countries that experienced some form of direct colonial rule, nationalism emerged as a political and intellectual movement embraced by a broad spectrum of social elites. Nationalist leaders of varying backgrounds shared a common interest in extricating the nation from colonial rule and in establishing an independent nation-state with a distinct unified national identity. In most cases, however, the common bond that had been crafted during the course of the independence movement was subsequently challenged by the divisive tendencies – some new, some historically entrenched – after national independence had been achieved. This, in turn, made the erstwhile unified bond of nationalism difficult to sustain. An increasingly common type of divisive force has been the rise of multiple internal nationalisms, often within a common ethnic frame, calling for special rights or secession.

India represents a success story of diversity management in the wake of its complex mosaic of sub national identities constituted along a multiplicity of axis – religion, region, language and caste – that has been granted constitutional and ideational recognition without

compromising the authority and effectiveness of the centralised state system and without abrogating democratic rules and practices. The proposition that unity in diversity is a central organising principle of the Indian national imagination is the unquestioning starting point from which assessments of India's mosaic nationalism develop their positive programmatic agendas. The configuration of India as a multi-ethnic nation-state has been accomplished by what Alfred Stepan calls the holding together of a particular federal structure. He distinguishes this from the coming together federalism of United States, where national unity, the decision to form a federation, was a product of a contracted agreement made by the state units. According to Stepan, the fact that the Indian federation survives in the absence of such foundational voluntary bargain and moreover, that it survives as a flourishing democracy is what makes India an exemplary success story against the "coercive effort by a non-democratic centralising power that underwrote the putting together federalism of the USSR" (22).

The question that is quite pertinent at this point is how and why has the ethnically diverse society of India been able to endure as a unitary policy for more than half a century. This question is of considerable relevance in the present global context, where discussions on how best to accommodate, recognize, tolerate and otherwise manage sub-national diversity assume renewed interest. It becomes important to note a significant anomaly in the present Indian context. The postcolonial Indian state does not appear to have undertaken a national identity project comparable to the deliberate and centralised project of nationalization undertaken in certain countries.

Shashi Tharoor in his preface to the 2007 edition of the *India from Midnight to Millennium and Beyond* quotes Mahatma Gandhi who described India as a “house with all the doors and windows open through which the winds from around the world would blow, without sweeping Indians off their feet” (xviii) in order to describe the inherent receptivity with which India as a country has accepted the diverse cultures in its soil. Further he attempts to illustrate that the Indian nationalism has been the nationalism of an idea, the idea of a nation emerging from an ancient civilisation, united by a shared history and sustained by pluralist democracy. Such an Indian mind has been shaped by the remarkably diverse forces like ancient Hindu tradition, myth, and scripture, the impact of Islam and Christianity and two centuries of British colonial rule. Observers are often astonished by the survival of India as a pluralist state but the fact is that India could not have survived as anything else: “pluralism is a reality that emerges from the very nature of the country; it is a choice made inevitable by India’s geography and reaffirmed by its history” (India 9). As a result, nothing can be taken for granted about India, not even its name, for the word India comes from the river Indus, which flows in Pakistan.

Tharoor traces the inherent duality apparent in the very construction of India left by the two hundred year old Colonial rule by the British who brought in the railways, the posts and telegraphs, a national administrative system with a well planned capital city, libraries, museums, and the English language, as instruments of British imperialism, intended in the first place to facilitate and perpetuate British rule, and only secondarily to benefit those among whom these were introduced. It is also true that the British gave India a political

unity it had not enjoyed for centuries but the British also sowed a political disunity rooted in sectarianism that India had never experienced before in its long and tumultuous history.

The independent India is a country that has embraced all religions alike as it emerged as a nation after a prolonged struggle for freedom where secularism played a pivotal role in building nationalism. There is a subtle difference between the concepts of secularism as it is understood in India and the West: in India it is understood as the profusion of religions with no one religion preferred over the other, against the notion of absence of religion as it is constructed in the West. Tharoor traces this unique sense of the term to the tradition of the nation's plurality when he observes: "The singular thing about India was that you could only speak of it in the plural. This pluralism emerged from the very nature of the country" (India 52).

Tharoor's first novel titled *The Great Indian Novel* is "an attempt to retell the political history of twentieth century India, through a fictional recasting of its events, episodes and characters" in the epic *Mahabharata*. (*Bookless* 15). He uses the *Mahabharata* as an ideal vehicle to affirm and enhance the cultural identity of India as a reflection of pluralism, diversity and openness of its kaleidoscopic culture. As far as the title of the novel is concerned, it is a literal translation of *Mahabharata*: *Maha* meaning "great" and *bharata* meaning "India" or the land of the legendary king Bharata on whose name this nation is founded. Together they can be read as "Great India" and for Tharoor the *Mahabharata* has come to stand for so much in the popular consciousness of Indians: the issues the

epic raises, as well as the values it seeks to promote are central to an understanding of what makes India a typical pluralist nation.

Tharoor's second novel *Show Business* explores the nuances of Indian cinema and its nexus with the political machinery in the post Independent India during the 1970s. Thematically it presents the real as well as reel life of a megastar in the Bollywood film industry, Ashok Banjara, whose rise and fall in the film industry is ironically counter balanced with his political and personal tragedy. The novel brings to focus the contemporary reality of Indian cinema with the satirical overtones elucidating the corrupt machinery consolidating its grip in the Indian political scenario only a few decades after the birth of an independent nation. As Diksha Sharma observes: "having emphatically commented upon the wide ranging consequences of the Indian polity after independence in *The Great Indian Novel*, he provides an intensive view of the country's political environs by focusing on a few politically oriented characters in *Show Business*" (162).

The film world symbolises the idea of India's plurality in way unparalleled by any other forms of art. *Show Business* is yet another attempt by Tharoor to comprehend India after *The Great Indian Novel*, by using a potential metaphor of cinema with its brilliantly orchestrated colours. The effective use of irony enhances a wider signification to both these novels and in *Show Business* it springs from a contrast between the type of exploitation of the country by the British initially and then by the native political leaders. Political Independence for the nation has not percolated enough to the grass roots and for the common man it is just a substitute where the native

has replaced the Westerner. Further the novel exemplifies the widespread degradation of moral fibre especially of the politicians as illustrated in the story of Kulbhushan Banjara and his eldest son.

His third novel *Riot* narrates the story set in 1989 at Zalilgarh, a small town in Utter Pradesh where an American student and social worker named Priscilla Hart falls prey to the Hindu-Muslim riot that breaks out over a religious controversy in the wake of the attempted demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya. The story of the novel is narrated through the varied media of journals, transcripts, interviews, letters exchanged between the main characters and extracts from their personal diaries and scrapbooks, avoiding the conventional pattern of narration. By employing these multiple voices, Tharoor attempts to construct a novel of ideas by focusing on the construction of a religious identity of India. It has been an extremely difficult task to define any such thing in a country where the history dates back to the times of the mythology and beyond to an unverifiable past. So a simple love story of Priscilla and Lakshman when set against the plurality of religion and culture, attains an altogether new dimension and generates immense complexities or riots. Religious hatred and cultural conflicts are the central themes within which the entire story revolves round: the former created by the age old conflict between Hindus and Muslims in the country, ignited further by the Ayodhya issue and the latter outlined by Lakshman's conflict whether to be an Indian or Western in his attitude towards love.

The concept of the nation of India emerges in the novel through diverse and often contradictory narratives provided by

different characters. Ram Charan Gupta, the local Hindu leader and a prospective candidate for the next parliament election, provides the anti-colonial perspective in his arguments with Randy Diggs but adopts a pro-Hindutva stance in the case of Ayodhya issue. Professor Mohammed Sarwar on the other hand voices the historical and rational opinion on the issue. Lakshman makes the secular and erudite contribution to the religious and political questions from the point of view of a District Administrator. Randy Diggs adopts the coloniser's biased views on India along with Rudyard Hart and Katherine.

India makes big challenge for many as it strikes as maddening, chaotic, inefficient and seemingly unpurposeful as it muddles through into the twenty-first century. However the Indian mind has been shaped by remarkably diverse forces: ancient Hindu tradition, myth and scripture, the impact of Islam and Christianity and two centuries of British colonial rule. India's survival as a pluralist state has surprised the world but India could hardly have survived as anything else: "Pluralism is a reality that emerges from the very nature of the country; it is a choice made inevitable by India's geography and reaffirmed by its history" (Bookless 97).

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Vernal Strokes by Latha Prem Sakhya- A Review

Sheena Kaimal N

Life is to be lived to the fullest, enjoyed and celebrated to the last drop. The collection of poems, *Vernal Strokes* by Latha Prem Sakhya reminds us of the wonderful surprises and bounties that life has in its store house. The *Vernal Strokes* is Sakhya's third book; the first being *Memory Rain* (2008), a collection of poems and the second being *Nature at My Doorstep*(2011), a collection of poems, musings, sketches and paintings. *Vernal Strokes* is published by Patridge India, a Penguin Random House Company, in 2015. As the name suggests, the 102 poems in the anthology celebrates the vernal freshness of life. The entire set of poems portrays the rhythmic changes of life, but the underlying rhythm is the rejuvenation and ecstasy of the sprouts in the spring season. The "Words from My Heart" are

Words squeezed out of ecstasy and agony-

To paint the purplish blue sky

The angry clouds driven by gale;

To sketch the beauty of nature

And her passionate reprisals;....

Life in its all encompassing splendour, beauty and warmth is seen throughout. The poet wants “To regain the golden days of childhood”. Life is seen through the innocent and surprising looks of an infant. “Reminiscence” speaks about the warmth and rejuvenating influence of childhood memories.

The poet narrates the harsh and painful realities of life in so many poems. “Girl”, “Why are You So Crazy?”, “Dreams”, “Airy Dreams”, “Love or Fantasy”, “Fortress”, “Relationship”, “So Near Yet So Far”, “Vain Love”, “Wailing Banshee”, “Where is the Gentle Shower of Love?”, “Hurt”, “Shards”, “Patching Up”, “Wild Woman” etc. show the pain of a lovelorn woman in search of true and ideal relationship, in search of fulfilment in love, never being reciprocated. Though the world befools a woman in her attempt at self-affirmation, the poet is optimistic. “Why are You so Crazy?” ends on a note of acceptance.

And the smile bedimmed by clouds dark
Rains down washing the grit and grime,
For the rainbow to shine accepting life.

The poet never gives up hope as can be seen in “Airy Dreams”

“Ideal love makes the beloved bloom
Like a flower,
And to waltz to the song,
Twinkling in the lover’s eyes”

The positive note can be seen again in “Your Love for Me”,
Yes-your love makes me see
The hidden colours of the shining sun,
Hear the silent notes in the songs of birds,
Spy the invisible hues of flowers,
Absorb Nature’s music, its infinite notes
And to sweep into my heart
The ever-changing beauty of Nature.
Yes, your love has given me
A new lease to my life.

The poet finds consolation in the Divine Love. There is always an undertone of optimism. In “Wailing Banshee” she writes,

Even unreciprocated love had her charms;
Ensnared in the warmth of loving freely.
Giving only, never receiving, never wanting
Celebrating the thrill of loving, for the sake of love.

To the poet, love is “Christ the Lamb”. She never believes in worldly love. In “Stolen Pleasures” she says that material pleasures are

As evanescent as dew drops,
Or play of light on a cloudy day,
Cannot be treasured and cherished.

Fool she is,

Who yearns to nurture such pleasures!

Begetters of pain and sorrow.

The images of the “roots of the tree/ Desperately clinging to earth” and the “Ivy, intertwining,/ Clinging passionately/ To the stout trunk” portray the vain attempt of human beings to find bliss in material possessions. For the poet the ideal love is “Phoenix-like,

Resurrecting in a friendship perennial-

Is watered by unconditional love,

And sustained by the Almighty sun.” “Did I Tell You?”

There are times when the poet longs to be in the hands of death. In “Temptation”, she writes about death as an “edenic possibility”, a “perfect relief” and a “welcome solution” for all problems, even though she knows that “it is sinful”. In the poem “Black Knight”, she visualizes death as a black knight who will cradle her soul “in his arms tenderly”.

In her search for true love or the ideal love the poet’s self gradually expands and merges with the supreme self. The universal self which subsumes every living and non living in it can be seen in her motherly affection displayed in “Tiny World”, “My Child”, “Camaraderie”, “New Nest” etc. Nature, the flowers, trees, birds, streams, sky etc. are all manifestations of one and the same self. “The Crown of Creation”, “Notes of Joy”, “The Rill”, “Evening Sky” etc. celebrate the beauty of Nature. In “Nature’s Magic Spell”, the poet writes,

I sat ensconced

In nature's magic spell.”

In “Minnows” the poet wants human beings to learn lessons from nature. She writes,

Unlike man-worrying and fretting,

What morrow holds for him?

Forgetting to live in the present,

Forsaking the joy and the thrill of living.

Nature teaches human beings the universal law of brotherhood. The image of the tree in “Tree” is a

Perennial emblem of prayer-

A symbol of love and tolerance.

Giving space to young saplings,

Allowing creepers to intertwine,

Sans caste, creed or procession-...

Bound only by universal law-

Live and let live,

Ever conscious of mother earth's bounty.

Sharing generously-...

A prototype of universal love and brotherhood-

A tree is a paradigm for warring humanity.

The pain and agony of nature in its lost glory can be seen in “Earth Mother”, “What am I Now?”, “Wild Furies”, “Anguish” etc. In the Foreword to *Vernal Stokes* Dr. Sujeesh C. K. writes, “The poet is ashamed of herself as a representative of the betrayers, defiling and destroying the earth....However, there are occasional moments of a sense of relief and security which tells us that many of the human children of Gaea Earth do care for her and siblings” (xxi-xxii)

The empathetic and humane attitude of the poet can be seen in poems like “Aylan Kurdi” and “To Irom Shormila”

The poems though present an image of a shattered self or a caged bird or an imprisoned womanhood ends with the blissful freedom given unto her by the Divine.

A sudden vision of unlimited horizon
Opened, releasing the trapped bird
To fly to heights unknown.

The anthology ends with a highly positive note. In “Colours of Eternity”, the poet partakes “in the heavenly joy” with the help of the “omniscient presence”. In the poem “Light”, the poet writes that her conversation with God eases her pain. She is released with the light of faith. It consoles and comforts her. In the last poem “Infinite Love”, the poet speaks about God’s love which helps her to reach the shores of safety.

The pain disappeared;
So did the nerve-racking fear;
Despair vanished,

Leaving behind

The naked, mire bespattered

Blood sodden, contrite soul;

Drenched in gratitude and praise.

Your infinite love once more proved,

Strengthened, the slushy, sin burdened soul-

Striving and struggling persistently

To erase imprints,

Human errors engraved upon it-

By the inexorable flow of worldly life.

The image of Aurora, the Goddess of the dawn, seen in many poems shows the hope and optimism in the poet.

Latha Prem Sakhya's *Vernal Strokes* reminds one of John Keats and his "Ode to a Nightingale". The poems are melodious harmonies poured out in a state of trance. The universal love, the infinite and overwhelming love towards everything and the perception of beauty in all things around distinguish Prof. Sakhya's poetry. The blending of the self with the universal self, the all encompassing affection, empathy and the realisation that everything in nature is the manifestation of the Divine confer Sakhya's poems a touch of glory and optimism. The poems celebrate the true meaning of life.

Poets Corner

Breezy Feelings

Jose K J Kollamparambil

Spectral machine
Over my soul
Trampling, rankling
A few drops, some
In loneliness,
Tears of desire.
Destiny prevails.

Far, far away
In the cold breeze,
Below the height's stars
The hot oozing
Of pain, memory
And, burning breasts
Full, round, hard,
Hot
In passion;
And softening heart
Thoughts flashing, coil and recoil
All my desires.

Words
Feelings
Passion,
All forbidden.

But I feel, have
Her golden lines
Lashing across
My senses, desires.

Shadow

Jose K J Kollamparambil

The lights of the golden city
Pervading my human body
Decayed into its slimy blood
And bored a deep hole
In the soft realms of my heart.

The yellowish leaves
On my itching body
Travelling down
Surprised the brown girl
In the shadow of the night.

The walls of the old Vedas,
Like ghosts in the moonlight
Haunts our mighty Vyasa
And the mantras of sages
Transpire into Tantric delight.

And as I drew a line
With my finger tips
I saw the equator
Between her slimy globes,
And wild fire crept over me

Now; I, the old prince,
With my broken lust,
Feel shadow after the body.
How! Beneath the heavy words
Dances my own shadow.

Housewarming

Kavitha Gopalakrishnan

The ritual of housewarming...
Milk overboils, overflows
the vessel that holds it.
Waited for it then.

Everyday after this day
This ritual has become ritualistic
And everyday after this day
Renew memories of it.

I keep the vessel on the stove
Light it and wait
For the milk to froth and boil
But in vain.

Plan and chalk events for the day then
Prioritize it
Work it out
All in the head
Cud chews it...
The milk has not yet boiled.

No time to wait and watch
Fill the bottles, pack the tiffins
Just when my nostrils pick
The smell of burnt milk.

Overboiled, overflowed
remnants that I now begin
to scale and scrub.

List of Contributors

Anupa Rose Babu, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Deva Matha College, Kuravilangadu.

Lynda Stanley, Dept. of English, All Saints' College, Thiruvananthapuram.

Sebin Justine, Research Scholar in English, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam.

Surya Kiran : Research Scholar, Dept. English, University of Hyderabad.

Anusha A J, Dept. English, Govt. Women's College, Thiruvananthapuram.

Christin Shaji, Department of English, MA College, Kothamangalam.

Manju P.B, Assistant Professor, Department of English, University College, Thiruvananthapuram.

Jobin Thomas, Asst. Professor, Dept. of English, St. Marys College, S. Bathery, Wayanad.

Nosheen Kapoor, Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh.

Francia P.A, Research Scholar, NGM College, Pollachi, Tamil Nadu.

Nima Ataei, Department of English University College, Thiruvananthapuram.

Nimmy Maria Abraham, Research Scholar, Central Library Research Centre, Kannur University.

C. Kannan, Retd. Principal, Govt. College Elerithattu, Kasaragod.
Resmi R., Lecturer in English, Govt. Arts and Science College,
Nagaripuram P. O., Pathirippala, Palakkad.
Gincy P. Kuriakose, Research Scholar, R&D Centre, Bharathiar
University, Coimbatore.
Prasanth. V. G., The Head & Associate Professor, Dept. of English,
R. Sankar Memorial SNDP Yogam College, Koyilandy. 673305.
Sr. Marykutty Alex, Associate Professor, Dept. of English,
Nirmalagiri College, Kuthuparamba, Kannur.
Sheena Kaimal N, Head and Assistant Professor, Dept. of English,
Sree Sankara Vidyapeetom College, Valayanchirangara.
Jose K J Kollamparambil, Associate Prof. Dept of English,
Newman College, Thodupuzha.
Kavitha Gopalakrishnan, Asst. Profesor, Dept. of English,
Baselious College, Kottayam.