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UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
RANCHI UNIVERSITY, RANCHI

UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Ranchi University, Ranchi

The University Department of English, Ranchi University is one of the premiere centres in the East Zone imparting higher education and advanced research in the areas of English literature, Linguistics and English Language Teaching. Students and scholars from Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha and different parts of Jharkhand have been pursuing their studies and research works specially in the area of English language.

This Department started after the inception of Ranchi University in 1960 in the Old Building on Main Road, Shaheed Chowk, Ranchi, where the present Administrative office of the University is situated. It was shifted to the present premises in Arts Block D, Morabadi Campus in 1975. At that time this was the only university in the Jharkhand region.

Initially the Department started with a strength of 40 (20 + 20) students which increased gradually to 250 (125 + 125) at present in the M.A. Programme. In addition to it, the Second Shift for the M.A Programme was introduced in 2015 with the intake capacity of 240 (120 + 120). Retired Teachers and NET qualified scholars have been enlisted to teach along with regular teachers of the Dept.

Earlier, the M.A programme had 16 papers with examinations being conducted for 8 papers in each of the two years. In 2011-12 the Semester System was introduced with 24 papers. MA (English) CBCS Pattern containing 16 papers has been introduced from 2016-17. One year (two semesters) M.Phil programme was introduced in the year 2012.

The Dept. has also had a Ph.D. programme right from the beginning. In 2014, a regular Pre-PhD Coursework Programme was introduced following the UGC Regulations 2009. There has been a substantial increase in the number of research scholars pursuing PhD programme. Initially the focus of research was based on the topics of British English Literature, but now it has widened to include Linguistics and English Language Teaching and Literature in English from across the globe – American, and Commonwealth Literature. The Dept. at present has become a pioneer centre for study of Linguistics and ELT in this region.

The Department was inducted with Special Assistance Programme (SAP) by UGC during 2012-17 in the thrust area "English Language Teaching in Jharkhand". A series of activities were undertaken to assess and improve the ELT scenario in the State.

An annual academic journal entitled "Journal of English Studies" is being published regularly by the Department since 1995. It contains the writings of the teachers and the scholars of the Department. The credit of publishing the Journal for the first time goes to the then Head Dr. D. K. Chakraborty.

The Department is proud to have a team of properly qualified, experienced and committed teachers. Most of them have been educated from the top national institutions. Recently a new language laboratory equipped with latest softwares, public address system and accessories has been set up in the Department to enhance the professional competence of the faculty, scholars and students.

The Department has consistently produced teachers for schools and colleges in thregion and across India. Many of our alumni are working as administrators / managers in Public Sector Undertakings, Central / State

Governments, Banks and other organisations. The Department has been sincerely striving to excel academically and to cater to public needs.

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From the Editor's Desk

This is the volume XII, No 1 of the Journal of English Studies. On this joyful occasion, the Editorial Board of the Journal and the University Department of English thank and express gratitude to all the contributors, members and others who have made the publication of this journal a success.

A good research discovers the invisible behind the visible, and unifies the apparent diversities to an organic whole. Research creates new knowledge; it is the backbone of growth and development of mankind. At the same time, it is highly expensive in terms of economic resources as well as committed minds. With growing awareness of the importance of quality research and skill development in India and keeping in mind, the research scholars in the University Department of English geared up their interest in such research. The research articles included in this volume reflect our attempt to elevate the standard of the papers to a higher level. It is an attempt to cover articles from all the areas of English Language and Literature and English Language Teaching.

We express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to all the members of the Editorial Board who went through the articles and suggested measures to improve on their content, quality and presentation. I also want to express my gratitude to our colleagues, Dr. Kiran Mishra, Dr. Shubha Rohatgi, Dr. Bonani Chatterjee, Dr. Panchanan Mahto, Dr. P. Sahay, Dr. Vishnu Charan Mahto, who spared their precious time and went through the typescripts of the articles minutely.

Managing financial resources to publish an academic journal without support of the Government or the University is a Herculean task. We are fortunate to get the enthusiastic support of our contributors and subscribers that make it possible for the journal to appear in the present form. We are committed to enhance the quality of the research articles.

S.M.P.N. Singh Shahi

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Ripeness is all : A Look at the endings of Shakespeare's Great Tragedies

Dr. Yamuna Prasad, Retd.
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Aristotle' while discussing the structure of a drama talks of three stages : beginning, middle and end. Thematically these stages correspond to the phases of evolution in human life also. Life means learning and learning means an evolution. Life is not and should never be static. Auro bindo talks of the evolution of the soul. Vivekananda writes that a man's life is not final but a stage in evolution towards merging in God not to be reborn and caught in the process of birth, death and rebirth. Here my point is that in the process of living a man must attain ripeness and he must return to his zero status before giving up his body which we do not find in cases of the protagonists in Shakespeare's great tragedies.

A.C. Bradley says that Shakespearean tragedy is a story of suffering¹ but suffering is not an end but a means to purify and realize the self and attain self recognition. Hence the questions : Does suffering make the tragic protagonists of Shakespeare wise and ripe, make them look within and enable them to attain self recognition and redemption or it leads them to greater despair and defeat ? Does it expand their hearts and minds or just puts them in greater bondage getting them more involved in worldly pursuits through attachment and aversions? These questions are very relevant to examine the endings of these tragedies. To me Shakespearean tragedy is a subtle struggle for the quest of the self, a struggle to find the answer to the question "Who am I?" Some critics quote the last statements of the protagonists (**Hamlet** Act v sc ii, **Othello** Act v sc ii, **Macbeth** Act v sc v and **King Lear** Act V sc iii) and observe that the protagonists have attained ripeness and redemption while dying, The fact is that death is not moksha or salvation but a stage in the evolution of

the soul. Moksha is to be attained in life not after death. It is to be and should be attained while a man is living. Lord Krishna says, “Before giving up this present body, if one is able to control the urges of the material senses, various ragas and dweshas, attachment and aversion, and check the storms of desire and anger, he is very close to salvation (**Gita** chap 5:23) He further sums up the symbolic features of a liberated soul and beetaragipurush:

“ Free from vanity and delusion, victorious over the evils of attachment, dwelling constantly in self or God, with desires completely eliminated, liberated from the dualities of pleasure and pain, such a highly undeluded man reaches eternal God, and attains Moksha. One who is above desires and jealousy, nadweshtinakanshati” is liberated to attain salvation in life. (**Gita**, chap 15:5)

What we find in Shakespeare’s tragedies is that till the end all tragic protagonists Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth and Lear live in a world of illusion that is Maya, caught in tangles of dualities, and in webs of passions, completely ignorant of the truth of their self. They live more in reactions and less in actions. There is sense of tit for tat in reaction. Reaction is spontaneous without any deliberation or thinking. In reaction ego dominates. There is no space or time for self evaluation. Action is a mindful response. Action without thinking is reaction. Men of reactions are self destructive and cannot attain self recognition or salvation.

Renunciation is another important stage in the process of self recognition. Swami Vivekanand writes, “Renunciation is the giving up of the world” Lord Buddha while talking of deliverance says that it is “ Which leads to the withdrawal from the principle earthly, to the destruction of all desire, to the cessation of the perishable, to joy, to knowledge, to illumination, to nirvana” Nirvana means a cessation of all causes which lead to bondage and suffering. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan writes, “ Moksha is self emancipation.”

In this brief article the attempt is to look at the endings of Shakespeare’s great tragedies under two sub heads: Hamlet and Othello under the head **Ego Consciousness and Bovarysme** and Macbeth and King Lear under the head **Contraction not Expansion :**

Ego consciousness and bovarysme:

Hamlet :

Lord Bhudha says that effacement of ego is the first step of salvation. Towards the end of the drama Hamlet while dying asks Horatio his true friend to report to the world what he has done and achieved which clearly shows that his ego-consciousness is not dying. He says:

“ Horatio, I am dead;
 Thou livest; report **me** and **my** cause aright
 To the unsatisfied. “(Act 5 sc 2 326-328)
 When Horatio himself wants to die Hamlet again says,
 “If thou didst ever hold **me** in thy heart
 Absent thee from felicity awhile,
 And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
 To tell **my story**” (Act 5 sc 2 334-37)

Harley Granville Barker finds immaturity in Hamlet at his death, “He (Hamlet) never regains a natural spiritual health, nor does he reach self understanding.” T.S. Eliot in his essay **Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca** points out that “humility is the most difficult of all virtues to achieve; nothing dies harder than the desire to think well of oneself.” Earlier in the essay he has written, “It is the attitude of self dramatization assumed by some of the Shakespeare’s heroes at moments of tragic intensity” which speaks of their continued weaknesses. Commenting on Hamlet’s last statement to Horatio as quoted above, Eliot observes that Hamlet does not attain humility or self recognition even at the point of his death. “Hamlet, who has made a pretty considerable mess of things, and occasioned the death of at least three innocent people, and two more insignificant ones, dies fairly well pleased with him self.” which means he is not free from “individualism” and “pride” and ego consciousness even while dying. The ego makes a man believe that he is right and he is the doer of actions when the fact is all actions are performed under the inspiration of Nature. Edward Dowden too agrees that Hamlet does not

attain self recognition at the end of his life rather he has attained a kind of social appreciation and not a spiritual salvation. He asks, "Does Hamlet finally attain deliverance from his disease of will? Shakespeare has left the answer to that question doubtful". Hamlet dies with his ego alive. He is not free from the sense of **I** and **My**. (see the above text)

Othello :

The last statement of Othello too speaks of his ego consciousness and self dramatization which means he dies but his self does not. He too is never free from the sense of **I** and **My**. He says:

"Soft you; a word or two:

I have done the state some service, and they know it.

No more of that. **I pray** you, in your letters,

When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,

Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,

Nor set down aught in malice: then must you speak

Of one that loved not wisely but too well;

Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought

Perplex'd in the extreme; **of one** whose hand,

Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away

Richer than all his tribe; **of one** whose subdued eyes,

Albeit unused to the melting mood,

Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees

Their medicinal gum. Set you down this;

And say besides, that in Aleppo once,

Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk

Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,

I took by the throat the circumcised dog,

And smote him, thus". (Act v sc. ii 339-357)

There is a kind of self dramatization, self justification and self praise in this last speech of Othello. T.S.Eliot writes, "I have never read a more terrible exposure of human weakness --of universal human weakness ---

than the last great speech of Othello..... What Othello seems to me to be doing in making this speech is cheering himself up. He is endeavoring to escape reality, he has ceased to think about Desdemona, and is thinking about himself.” F.R. Leavis too agrees, “Othello in his magnanimous way, is egoistic..... In short, a habit of self approving self-dramatization is an essential element in Othello’s make up, and remains so at the end.” To this critic Othello is not humble even at the end and he learns nothing from his failings, “He is ruined , but he is the same Othello in whose essential make up the tragedy lay; the tragedy does not involve the idea of the hero’s learning through suffering.” In this last speech Othello uses **four times** the letter “ I” and **four times** the pronoun “**one**” for his “I”. The sense ‘I’ does not die before his death. Othello dies narrating a puffed up story of his life’s achievements.

On the other hand Desdemona dies taking the whole blame on herself and having an attitude of humility and forgiveness which is all for Prospero. When Emilia asks dying Desdemona, “Who has done this deed?” Desdemona replies, “No body, I myself, farewell.” (Act v. sc ii 124-25) She does not blame Othello who has strangled her There is no disturbance on her face which we see on the face of dying Othello.

Contraction not Expansion :

Suffering is creative and positive and it helps a man look within and enlarge his vision. Melville says those who suffer are closer to God. But no tragic protagonist of Shakespeare seems to be closer to God even at the end of their life. No one dies with an expansion or an enlargement of his heart, having a sense of forgiveness and detachment from desires and anger. Gita says towards the end a man must realize that he is nothing but a big zero. He must attain innocence of childhood. He must complete the circle by returning to his childhood innocence at the end of life’s journey. Robert Heilman writes, “We expect the tragic protagonist to be an expanding character... and not a contracting character.” All tragic heroes of Shakespeare die in defeat and despair. They die with a grievance from life and from others. They die thinking of their unfulfilled dreams.

Macbeth

The last soliloquy of Macbeth is a specimen of the way Macbeth thinks and looks before his death. It marks his defeat and despair when he reacts after Lady Macbeth's death and finds his own death very close because the English force led by Malcolm and Macduff is coming to take revenge and reclaim the crown of Duncan grabbed by him in an act of betrayal. The soliloquy has layers of meaning and implications:

“She should have died hereafter;
 There would have been a time for such a word.
 To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
 To the last syllable of recorded time,
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
 Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
 And then is heard no more: it is a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
 Signifying nothing.” (Act V Sc V. 19-28)

Before commenting on this soliloquy, I must see what some critics have observed? Bradley observes that Macbeth speaks in despair. There is no attempt by him to look into his past actions and to repent for what he has done. The critic says, “The evil he has desperately embraced continues to madden or to wither his inmost heart. No experience in the world could bring him to glory in it or make his peace with it, or to forget what he once was.....”¹⁴

Edward Dowden too finds the ending of Macbeth without any positive realization or self recognition: “The end of Macbeth is savage, and almost brutal—a death without honour or loveliness.” If Macbeth finds that life has no significance, it is he who is to be blamed. Life is a beautiful creation of God; it is never a walking shadow. Lily B.

Campbell observes on the ending of Macbeth that Macbeth has lost all sympathy of the people around him. He has fallen in the eyes of both God and people, "Macbeth goes unwept without the comfort of friends or followers to his death." Public opinions are the opinions of God. Macbeth's mutilated head called "the usurper cursed head" is brought by Macduff. Malcolm looks at killed Macbeth as 'dead butcher' and Lady Macbeth as "fiend like queen." These observations speak of the cruel nature of dead Macbeth.

Even at the point of death Macbeth tries to generalize his feelings to escape any blame. It is his personal defeat because of his unethical desires and too much attachment with worldly things. He blames life as a walking shadow and to him a man is a poor player. It is he who has made his beautiful life ugly. There is no trace of self scanning. His statement that life is meaningless speaks of his own demonic nature. He is not free from egoism and attachment.

On knowing that Macduff is that man born not of a woman, Macbeth becomes nervous and refuses to fight with him. Here too he blames the witches when he says "and be these juggling fiends no more believed." Even at the fag end, his sense of "I" and "My" does not die. His self remains unconquered and he dies as he was in his life not as a self realized man

King Lear

There is a proverbial statement of King Bhrata Hari, a great Yogi which defines and explains the tragedy of King Lear: "Trishna na jirna vayam eva jirna." We grow old not our desires. With age desires should also decrease and grow old. While dividing his kingdom among his three daughters Lear is more demanding than giving as in commerce. Even without his kingdom he wants to live like a king. He has a feeling, "I am still the king." Even while staying at his daughter's house he keeps hundred of his attendants to look like a king. To me there is no sign of any renunciation in Lear's life. He is fully possessive. Self extinction rather than self assertion is the essence of renunciation. Lear is still far away

from attachment and aversion, raag and dwesh. He suffers from authority consciousness till the end of his life.

Carrying the dead body of Cordelia Lear cries in horror as one whose only hope and support is gone making him a straw in a storm:

“Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones:
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone forever!
I know when one is dead, and when one lives;
She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass;
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
Why then she lives.” (Act v Sc iii 231-238)

This speech is a testimony to his lost discretion and sense. He is swayed away by his emotions and betrays sentimentality and immaturity. He does not react to Cordelia's death as a ripe man.

Instead of accepting and enduring calmly Cordelia's death like a mature and detached person Lear cries and curses Cordelia's murderers as “men of stones” wishing “heaven's vault” to “crack” to eliminate all. He does not know a man can not judge a man. His last speech on Cordelia's death speaks of his immature character at his last breath:

“Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never!
Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir.
Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,
Look there, look there! He dies” (Act v sc iii 280-285)

Lear also dies in deep despair, without attaining any self expansion and without getting the answer to his own question ‘Who Am I?’ put to the Fool. He dies in illusion and ignorance. Earlier in this scene he has stated to Cordelia's dead body, “She's gone for ever! I know when one is dead, and when one lives.” It means he has knowledge of Cordelia's death. But now he does not want to believe it rather he entertains some kind of illusion when he asks to see “her lips” which seem to be alive to

him. J. Stampeer in an article "The Catharsis of King Lear" examines Bradley's comments on Lear's "ecstasy" in his last speech on Cordelia's death and writes that Lear dies in illusion. The critic says, "The tension here, and it is the underlying tension in Lear until his death, lies between an absolute knowledge that Cordelia is dead, and an absolute inability to accept it." Hence Lear gets no Nirvana which according to Lord Budhha "Is only the destruction of the fires of lust, hatred and ignorance." There is no sign of consummation of passions or extinction of false desires in the case of Lear. Till his last breath he has a continued attachment with Cordelia and aversion for Goneril and Regan.

Arthur Kirsch while commenting on Lear's last speech very significantly observes, "There is no recovery from sorrow and grief at the end of Lear, nor is there even a glimpse of the special providence that Hamlet sees in the fall of a sparrow. Lear's question over Cordelia's lifeless body, "Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life, and thou no breath at all?" (Act 5. Sc 3.282-83) is not answered in the play, certainly not by his own few succeeding words; and among those words the ones that are most unequivocal and that we most remember are: "Thou'lt come no more ,Never, never, never, never, never." (5.3.283-840.)"

. The statement "Ripeness is all" by Edgar is certainly for Lear. Lear is not spiritually free from his "I" and "Mine" Edward Dowden rightly calls Lear "grandly passive" and adds "Lear passes away from our sight, not in any mood of resignation, or faith, or illuminated peace, but in a piteous agony of yearning for that love which he had found only to lose for ever."

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A Biocentric Reading of Yang Martel's Life of Pi

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Abstract:

The concept of anthropocentrism, inspired by Judeo-Christian theology and world vision, has allowed Man to exploit nature for his own selfish advantages, eventually endangering his own existence and bringing us closer to apocalyptic prophecies. We can no longer ignore the basic truth of ecology that in the race of superiority and domination, human may himself become extinct. No lofty language about being the paragon of animals or the torchbearer of evolution can change this ecological fact that we are perhaps the frailest living being in the physical scheme of Nature. Thus, in the wake of ecological crisis, we will have to change our vision; we will have to be biocentric.

There is a need to not only create but also appreciate the already existing literature with reference to principles of ecological criticism and to what extent its resorts to hegemonic discourse and to what extent it salvages and sustains biosphere. The postmodern contemporary literature with its anti-humanism, subversion of reason and authority, its penchant for decentralisation, fragmentation and experimentation has created the right frame of mind for creating a subversive environmental literature and enjoying it. The present essay is an attempt to read Yang Martel's *Life of Pi*, a fantasy which won the Booker Prize in 2002, in the framework of the ecocritical principle, namely, Biocentrism. The novel tells the magical story of a young Indian, who finds himself shipwrecked and left at sea in a large lifeboat. It is a gripping story that explores the unique and symbiotic link between humans and the animal kingdom in addition to capturing the battle for Existence in a situation with apocalyptic overtones.

Key words: Ecocriticism, Biocentric, connectedness, coexistence, nature
Introduction

Most of the environmental studies begin with Barry Commoner's Four

Laws of Ecology mantra: "Everything is connected to everything else". In the context of abiocentric reading of a literary text applying the theory of ecocriticism, the most plausible and convincing interpretation of 'interconnectedness' has been offered by Neil Evernden. According to him it is "a very dependent kind of symbiosis, a mutualism in which the fate of two or more organisms has become so incredibly intertwined as to make them appear inseparable". (95) Indian classical literature, Kalidas's *Abhigyan Shakuntalam* offers an emotional expression of interrelatedness. This is not the projection of human feeling into nature but the true empathy of man with nature. The aesthetic experience lies in our relationship with other creatures, with the mountains and rivers and with the winds and the sky, with seasons, in a word the whole nature. If we love our environment and if we really recognise with a deep sense of humility the "reciprocal interdependence of one life process with another", we will be able to see the aesthetics of biosphere and embody it in the language, form and the content of literature which is loveable, enjoyable and readable.

The concept of anthropocentrism, inspired by Judeo-Christian theology and world vision, has allowed Man to exploit nature for his own selfish advantages, eventually endangering his own existence and bringing us closer to apocalyptic prophecies. Man can no longer ignore the basic truth of ecology that humans are not "superior to or even more interesting than, say, lichen" (Manes 22), he may himself become extinct. No lofty language about being the paragon of animals or the torchbearer of evolution can change this ecological fact that "as hominids, we dwell at the outermost fringes of ecological processes such as photosynthesis and conversion of biomass into usable nutrients" (24) Thus, in the wake of ecological crisis, we will have to change our vision; we will have to be biocentric.

Our Vedas, Upanishads and other religious and philosophical works tell us that God created universe including man from the material inside Himself, unlike the God of Christians and other Semitic religions, and "after having created it, he entered into it" ("Laitriya" Upanishad 2.6). Being the victims of the dangerous implications of climate change, Man is acutely conscious of the present state of affairs and there is a universal realisation that the entire earth should be revered for its own sake and not for the sake of the survival of man or for any other androcentric consideration as is inherent in the Western approach to ecology. Scientists, social scientists, politicians,

philosophers and many ecologically conscious groups are making serious endeavours, and they are joined by people of literature - writers, critics, theorists, admirers and lovers of beauty.

Creative writers deal in words and word is power and energy. The Bible says, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.' ("St. John" Chapter 1) Ngugi Wa Thiong'o further elaborates,

[E] very imaginative creation embodies a viewpoint, and the intellectual, as a conjurer of images wants to persuade us to view the world and our place in it in a certain way. (33)

Literature moulds human mind through words, artistry, rhetoric and through a magic of its own in a subtle but profound manner. It may be added that the word needs the flesh of biocentrism and not that of anthropocentrism. Cheryl Glotfelty in her article "Literary Critics and the Environmental Crisis" rightly emphasises:

Literature does not float above the material world in some aesthetic ether, but, rather, plays a part in an immensely complex global system in which energy, matter, and ideas interact in a perpetual dance. Put simply, literature acts on people and people act on the world. (68)

In the precolonial literatures of countries like India, China, Africa etc. high respect is accorded to nature and natural forces. The creator of the Ramayan, the great sage poet Valmiki, was so much hurt at the killing of the Kraunch (a bird) couple that poetry gushed forth spontaneously from his lips. Lord Rama, incarnation of God himself, worships the sea and requests him to grant passage for his army to Lanka.

The postmodern contemporary literature with its anti-humanism, subversion of reason and authority, its penchant for decentralisation, fragmentation and experimentation has created the right frame of mind for creating a subversive environmental literature and enjoying it. The story of Santiago, in *The Old Man and the Sea*, can also stand as a natural parable. From a humanist perspective, Santiago's superhuman efforts in *The Old Man and the Sea* can be interpreted as a struggle between man and a force which he scarcely understands, but which he knows he must continue to strive against, though knowing also that the struggle must end in his defeat. However, seen through the lens of biocentrism, the nature of man and his attitude of overpowering nature along with the attitude of

the sea forms the essence of Hemingway's celebrated novel. His so-called victory with the sea is nothing more than a humiliating defeat. Santiago and the fish are one in conflict, the conflict that noble wills must wage as their preordained task in the universe, but at times, the result of the challenge is insignificant:

You are killing me, fish, the old man thought. But you have a right to, never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who (Hemingway 71)

In *Moby Dick*, Man is the antagonist and Moby Dick, the whale, is the protagonist who is shown as a mighty force of the ocean and a part of nature. When a man, full of human pride, tries to establish his power over the ocean and tries to conquer it, the creatures of the sea make him aware that he is still an insignificant creature. The novel is a clear warning to mankind. The poignant words of Melville bring out the reality of the ocean,

That same ocean rolls now; that same ocean destroyed the wrecked ships of last year. Yea, foolish mortals, Noah's flood is not yet subsided; two-thirds of the fair world it yet covers (Melville 287)

This present essay is an attempt to read Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* in the framework of the ecocritical principle, namely, Biocentrism. It is a concept which accepts and propagates the conviction that "humans are neither better nor worse than other creatures (animals, plants, bacteria, rocks, rivers) but simply equal to everything else in the natural world" (Campbell 128). The investigation of the relationship or bond between man and animal in literary creations goes beyond the mere portrayal of physical proximity or emotional attachment of man with animals and other natural living and non-living beings. The author's imagination works like a prism through which they explore the core of human instinct and understand man-animal relationship based on basic desires, complex emotions, and spiritual inclinations. A monument to this inquiry is Yann Martel's masterpiece, *Life of Pi*, a fantasy which won the Booker Prize in 2002, tells the magical story of a young Indian, who finds himself shipwrecked and left at sea in a large lifeboat. It is a gripping story that explores the unique and symbiotic link between humans and the animal kingdom in addition to capturing the battle for Existence in a situation with apocalyptic overtones. The novel has

been successfully adapted into a powerful movie as well.

The spiritual and psychological union between man and nature, man and beast were fractured beyond repair in the process of pursuing Western concept of development. Man began to take pride on his intellectual faculties with which he sought to dominate the rest of creation for his survival and well-being. In Martel's fiction we observe a re-enactment of struggle for possession and territorial domination. The story centres around a sixteen-year-old boy named Piscine Patel (Pi for short) who lived with his parents in Pondicherry, South India. His father owned a zoo at the Pondicherry Botanical Garden and Pi, from an early age, lived in close communion with different types of exotic animals and birds, all inmates of the zoo. Pi recalls those days in these words:

To me, it was paradise on earth. I have nothing but the fondest memories of growing up in a zoo. I lived the life of a prince. What maharaja's son had such vast luxuriant grounds to play about? What palace had such a menagerie? (Martel 14)

The life of animals in captivity, according to Pi, is much more peaceful than animals in the wild. He highlights the demanding nature of ecosystem in their natural habitat:

Animals in the wild lead lives of compulsion and necessity within an unforgiving social hierarchy in an environment where the supply of fear is high and the supply of food low and where territory must constantly be defended, and parasites forever endured. (Martel 16)

He goes on to observe that,

Animals are territorial. This is the key to their minds. Only a familiar territory will allow them to fulfill the two relentless imperatives of the wild: the avoidance of enemies and the getting of food and water. A biologically sound zoo enclosure ... is just another territory. (Martel 17)

Evidently, he fails to find anything erroneous in ridding animals off their natural habitat and using them for amusement purposes, which is worse than master-slave relationship. Beginning with Pi's long speech where he explains the causes behind animals' death in a zoo, the entire narrative of first part of the novel highlights the irony of the situation,

The obituary of zoo animals that have died from being fed foreign bodies would include gorillas, bison, storks ... and most variety of deer, ruminant, and songbird. Among zookeepers, Goliath's death is famous, he was a

bull elephant seal... He died of internal bleeding after someone fed him a broken bottle (Martel 31).

No sense of guilt is even hinted at in the whole process of taming animals and forcing them to live in restraints.

However, these rigid man-made demarcations are suddenly and powerfully blurred when fate intervenes in the form of a transition, a travel to another country by ship. The Patel family planned to move to Canada in the wake of loss in business due Emergency period in India. Yann Martel efficiently depicts the dark side of human nature; exotic animals were taken on board, to be shipped to different zoos in the West to be sold at high price. The ship sank eleven days after it set sail and the only survivors were Pi, a hyena, a zebra (with a broken leg), a female orangutan and a 450-pound male Royal Bengal tiger named Richard Parker.

Territorial establishment and possession, leading to domination are inter-related factors. In the novel we find territory synonymous with power and the act of possession is to gain the status of the leader. This struggle for territory also prefigures a biological struggle for survival, the eternal battle for the survival of the fittest. In the territorial area of the lifeboat, each animal draws the boundary of its territory and aggressively guards it, but the herbivores, the zebra and the orangutan, succumb as food to the hyena and the tiger (each playing their biological roles of scavenger and predator). Very soon the hyena is also eaten up by the tiger in the presence of Pi as a helpless spectator to the scenes of carnage. With the sheer brute animal power, Richard Parker establishes an upper hand while Pi is relegated to the servile subservient position, perched on the boat's bow, terror-stricken in the proximity of an aggressive untamed beast.

In the next few days, Pi makes several plans to save himself from tiger, he considers many plans of killing Parker that would set him free from being the food of Parker. He thinks to "Push Him Off the Lifeboat", "Kill Him with the Six Morphine Syringes", "Attack Him with All Available Weaponry", "Choke Him", "Poison Him, Set Him on Fire, Electrocute Him" (158). However, by the time Pi is busy in finalising the best idea possible of getting rid of Parker, the beast makes a sound from his nostrils which was neither 'woof' nor 'meow' but 'Prusten', which is the quietest of tiger calls meant to express friendliness and harmless intentions. It is ironical that one fearful man who is continuously thinking every time to

murder the animal gets a call of friendliness. This was the moment in Pi's life which changed his notion about animal:

A part of me did not want Richard Parker to die at all, because if he died, I would be left alone with despair, a foe even more formidable than a tiger ... It's plain truth without Richard Parker, I wouldn't be alive today to tell you my story (89).

As days pass without any sign of rescue, Pi accepts the inevitability of death either out of starvation or by becoming food for the hungry tiger. Eventually the ferocity of the ill-fed tiger diminishes, and Pi begins to relax his guard slowly. The drama that unfolds has the intellectual excitement of a game of chess, each move deliberate and well-chosen. Pi knows the reason of animals' attack, even when they are not hungry,

So, you see if you fall into a lion's pit, the reason the lion will tear you to pieces is not because it's hungry ... or because it's blood-thirsty, but because you've invaded its territory... (Martel 43).

Pi further observes that unless an animal knows its hierarchical stand with you, where it stands, it would remain nervous, jumpy and extremely dangerous. Pi adopts the psychological trick of a circus trainer who flaunts superiority in order to tame ferocious animals. As the tiger has to depend on Pi's fishing for sustenance, their relationship evolves into one of nurturer and nurtured. The mental barriers of mutual fear are gradually lowered as Pi keeps offering a good portion of his catch to Richard Parker who accepts it as his due for sparing Pi's life.

Gradually, fear turns to reverence and Pi turns into a 'worshipper' as he offers fish and turtle meat as part of his ritualistic deification in his desire to please a higher being. The struggle for physical territory makes way for the deeper and more intense struggle for mental and emotional ascendancy. Once, during the journey Pi had gone temporarily blind due to a food reaction and so had Richard Parker. Emaciated in mind and body, existing on the borders of insanity, Pi appears to hear a voice speaking to him. Ultimately, with the diminished physical senses, both man and beast engage in mental interaction; they commune in a common language. Pi is sure that he is talking to Richard Parker. The purpose of the author's creative imagination is clear - it has opened up the possibility of a dialogue between two polarities - man and beast. They converse as friends, associating on common ground, in a common tongue. However, when a

third voice intrudes into their privacy, Richard Parker hastily devours the shipwrecked sailor who too is blind and hungry. The journey continues with Pi's confession of gratitude, "This was the terrible cost of Richard Parker. He gave me a life, my own but at the expense of taking one" (Martel 255). It was a human sacrifice as propitiation to a blood-thirsty god.

In the course of their continuing journey appears a carnivorous island which is a significant metaphor of the biocentric relationship that is emerging between the protagonists, man and beast. They are seen functioning as a single entity - one body, one mind and one spirit - a Narasimha, a half-man and half-beast Indian mythological figure. However, on the chance discovery of the 'carnivorous nature' of the island, which was providing nourishment to both of them, Pi decides to vacate the place taking Richard Parker with him.

In the third part of the novel 'Benito Juarez Infirmary, Tomatlan, Mexico' Pi and Parker are seen landing on the shore of Mexico after 227 days of the journey in the Pacific Ocean. However, when they arrive on the beach, Richard Parker leaves Pi and slips away into the surrounding forest without acknowledging any emotional attachment to him which extremely hurts Pi. He was disappointed that Richard Parker did not even trouble to look back at his 'life-saviour'. At the end of this togetherness, though the unimaginative bureaucratic minds could not appreciate the biocentric nature of the relationship between man and the beast, the readers do get an impressive and fantastic picture of the possibilities of asymbiotic co-existence of man and nature without any desire of domination.

The novel begins with a theistic view and ends on a pantheistic note. Pi sees himself as an element in the interconnectivity of things and the struggle for power over nature/wildlife yields to a world view that is more mature, tolerant and eco-friendly. Pi not only grew fond of Parker in course of his sailing but also of all other sea creatures. The biocentric state of being that Pi Patel reached can be effectively expressed in Aldo Leopold's words: "We are plain members and citizens of the land - not rulers of the earth" (240). Let these words echo all that has to be said and all that is yet to be said through the voice of Pi Patel, a champion of the biocentric cause and a remarkable product of a writer's own imaginative union with the cosmic voice of life.

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An Analysis of D.H. Lawrence's Novels on Sex, Love and Man-Woman Relationship (A Critical Study)

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Abstract

The study of D.H. Lawrence's novels discover his startling religion in the truth of human blood and the uninhibited role of sex leading to self-fulfilment and even deliverance. With sexual liberation in 1960's D.H. Lawrence gained high popularity as a "Prophet of Love" and "Priest of love" He became very popular and was known as a cultural figure not only a novelist because Lawrence ever advocated blood intimacy and he remarked that man is a column of blood as woman is a valley of blood. According to Lawrence, the woman was the symbol of that further life which comprised religion, love and morality. This is the strong belief of Lawrence that every human being comprises male and female in one self and love is always dual, not only for one side. The man and woman relationship is based on the polarization of the two individuals balancing each other. Love is the embodiment of positive nature and mobility. The perfect union of the two forces is the happiness of love and it is delicate and purely creative.

Keywords

Creative force, self-fulfilment, Prophet of Love, belief, religion intellect, relationship life force, spiritual-solace, Sterility Impulse, vitality

Introduction

D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930) was the most outstanding literary figure between the two world wars. Basically, he is an original novelist of the modern times and the most prolific writer of England, though he had to face many oppositions for his personal life and for writing novels on open

love, sex and man-woman relationship. He wrote many novels and short stories. He changed the dimensions of the English novel and revealed its hidden possibilities as he focused on the sterility of modern life. He seeks to persuade mass not by reasoning faculty, but by the emotional impact of his writing.

Undoubtedly, Lawrence is a great artist and creative writer but it is unfortunate that to many he still remains the author of “Lady Chatterley’s Lover¹”. As a prophet of love, he has no successors and as an artist, no imitators argued by some that Lawrence wrote his bitter attack on Galsworthy, Bennett and Wells too, because they did not fulfil the demand of the age specially of the younger generation, who were craving and starving. When he wrote “The Rainbow” in 1915, many writers his novel as obscene, because he dealt with man and women relationship in the novel. There was a conflict between man and women and this novel was taken to be immoral and was suppressed. Lawrence was shocked at this suppression. After this, Lawrence wrote “Women in Love” revealing his views on life. In it, he carried ever further his searching revelations of the complex relationships between men’s and women’s conscious and unconscious minds. The theme of the novel may be defined as “modern love experience” and problems of human life. Dr. A. S. Collins in his “English Literature of the 20th Century projected with apparently little exaggeration, the queer intensity of his relations.

In this work, the conflict between the owner and the miners is depicted. There lies a theme of revolt against the machine age. Finally, Lawrence wrote “Lady Chatterley’s Lover” in 1928 which is the finest work of the author. It is an artistic revelation of the deep need of the modern men and women to face all the elements in their nature if they were not to live frustrated and incomplete lives. Lawrence’s main motive was to show and express his basic mystic view of relations between the sexes and it must be permissible to the world. Basically this novel has a frank description of sex-offensive and open use of licentious life. The physical relation of the two lovers has been clearly visualized in the novel. E. Albert has remarked in “A History of English literature” that “It is a novel in which sexual experience is handled with a wealth of detail

and uninhibited language which caused its suppression in the country. Lawrence remarked that civilization had degraded man's sexual life

D.H. Lawrence was not a social reformer but his main object was to uproot the dominance of sterile intellect over the authentic inward passion. He wanted to change the sterility of modern life. Lawrence has expressed his faith in the supremacy of physical life in his great novel "Sons and Lovers" (1913). He says "My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh as being wiser than the intellect. "What our blood feels and believes and says is always true". The entire output of Lawrence is controlled by faith in these lines. It is clear that love, sex and man woman relationship is a demand and need of life, which cannot be compelled to stop or to break. It is a natural and emotional feeling of mankind. In his famous novel "Lady Chatterly's Lover" he has written-"I want men and women to be able to think sex fully, completely honestly and clearly" Moody Lovett, in the History of English Literature⁸ has observed - "no other contemporary novelist was Lawrence's equal in communicating an extraordinarily vivid sense of living things and beings." Lawrence wrote "The White Peacock" in 1911 and caught public attention on a conflict between man and woman relationship. In "Sons and Lovers" he presented love and hatred with naked intensity. It has a similarity to Samuel Butler's "The Way of All Flesh"¹⁰ He got high popularity by this novel based on love and sex relations of the hero with two girls but his mother never liked this.

Aim of the Study

This study attempts to highlight the views of D.H. Lawrence in general because he was against the imposition of any rational pattern upon emotional inspiration, as he says that "The touch stone is emotion and not reason". He was the only novelist who wanted to be free from the bonds of conventional myth. He believed that a novelist should be truthful and sincere to his passionate and emotional reactions which are the root of all thoughts. Some critics think that Lawrence is only a writer of obscene books and a painter of pornographic materials. But this is not true. Lawrence is a novelist who always pleads for a healthy relation of man and woman. As he says "We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes is always true." (Lawrence's Letter page 96.)

As far as the introspection and views of Lawrence about sex, love and man-woman relationship is concerned, it is a fact that people, readers, intellectuals, the literary men of his time praised him for this presentation as open and true feelings of mankind, which a man needs fairly. This relation occupies an important place in his novels and he comprehensively deals with its biological, psychological and metaphysical aspects. In the novels like *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, *Sons and Lovers* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* he deals with conflict and soul-storms of sex. His idea on sex is so free, frank and straightforward. This is the reason why his two novels were banned in England. *The Rainbow* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* treated sex with honesty and frankness without concealing any aspect. The novelist shows how a man can realize richer and fuller life by abandoning intellect and adopting his instinct as a guiding force.

On the plain surface we find that the lovers love each other but they don't know why. They are simply "Two Life Forces" and they want vital fulfilment in life. This is the reason, Lawrence achieved a high place as a novelist and is unsurpassable in the English novel. He even tried to see Sexual Liberation in 1960 in England so that age and society would never deviate from the real mission and vision of life.

Conclusion

In this way, we find that Lawrence was a great force in modern novel. On this, Moody Lovett remarked – "Lawrence's artistry is profoundly romantic. Huxley described Lawrence as "fountaion of vitality and his works as Living water from such a fountain".because his faith is in physical and emotional feeling of life with sex.He wanted to give full liberty of man-woman relations for fair sex in which love between two lovers grow without any obstacles. He opened the eyes to those who were orthodox,traditional and highly conventional people of England.

Lawrence had, indeed the innocent eye, the deep attachment to the earth, which is his great strength as a writer. Truly speaking. Lawrence is the leader of the revolt against reason and intellect as he believes that the flesh is wiser than the intellect". So he seeks to sublimate the sexual act. As a novelist, Lawrence is a romantic writer and was highly influenced with romantic poets like Wordsworth Coleridge Byron, Shelley and Keats So he

was a lover of nature. His approach to natural objects, to the animals and to human beings is primitive, and biological. So his heroes and heroines seek fulfilment through love and sex experiences and mother hood. The relationship of the sexes must be a reconciliation of opposites and not dominance of one by other. For this Baker rightly defended Lawrence's approach.

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Alienation and Identity Crisis in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Novels

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Abstract

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's works have been translated in eighteen languages and two of her novels have been made into films. Her novels are full of acute observations about women, their surroundings and their plight in various situations. Chitra's world is full of themes of women's issues, immigration, history, myth and the joys and challenges of living in a multicultural world, explored in her innovative style with a child-like curiosity. She adopts a woman-centric approach to establish her vision in the context of cultural displacement, loss of personal relationships and the haunting images of her motherland. All that she writes about has a striking resonance with our day-to-day world, which make her remarkably relevant. She has also founded an organization named "Maitri", which helps women in South Asia in areas of domestic violence particularly.

Introduction :

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's works have been translated in eighteen languages and two of her novels have been made into films. Chitra's world is full of themes of women's issues, immigration, history, myth and the joys and challenges of living in a multicultural world, explored in her innovative style with a child-like curiosity. She adopts a woman-centric approach to establish her vision in the context of cultural displacement, loss of personal relationships and the haunting images of her motherland. All that she writes about has a striking resonance with our day-to-day world, which make her remarkably relevant.

Discussion :

Postcolonial Literature deals with identity crisis and it is also a major concern with Indian English Fiction. When man loses his home for some reason, he loses the comfortable zone of his family's love and care, resulting in the loss of the sense of belongingness causing a sense of insecurity, an identity crisis, a total alienation as such. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel "Queen of Dreams" has this as its central theme. Her writings are partially autobiographical and based on Indian immigrants known to her. She portrays the United States as a land of opportunity as also a land, possessing a dynamic and culturally rich society.

Her books are set both in India and America, "featuring Indian-born women, torn between the Old and New World values. She gives a laser-like insight and skilled use of story, plot, and lyrical description to give readers a microscopic look at her characters and their respective worlds, which are filled with fear, hope and discovery. Her women are caught between two worlds, the Indian and the American. "Arranged Marriage", her collection of short stories was published in 1995. According to Divakaruni, her women characters are "both liberated and trapped by cultural changes' and struggle to carve out an identity of their own."² This book has the merit of being awarded the PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Prize for Fiction, the Bay Area Book Reviewers' Award for Fiction and an American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation and is unique in dealing with issues which are extremely current and relevant, for example, abortion, inter-racial relationships, economic disparity, divorce and racism.

Another of her stories "Doors" is about the dilemma of a young woman, Preeti, who has started falling in love with "the Western concept of privacy". Suddenly, her husband's cousin wants to live with them and she exhibits her new-found decisiveness in revolting against it, which of course is not in conformity with the traditional concept of an Indian wife. In yet another wonderful story, "Clothes", Divakaruni writes about Sumita, whose husband dies and she is faced with the dilemma of staying back in America or going back to stay with her in-laws in India. She calls the widows, who live with their in-laws in India, as "doves with cut-off

wings”. Divakaruni states that her novels spring from her imagination, fired by the experience of others (Mehta). Thus, she deals with several off-beat issues in a very natural and practical manner.

According to Divakaruni, “Women in particular respond to my work because I’m writing about them, women in love, in difficulties, women in relationships. I want people to relate to my characters, to feel their joy and pain, because it will be harder to (be) prejudiced when they meet them in real life.”

In “The Mistress of Spices”, Tilo (a character) provides spices to people, but not just for cooking. She assures them that they will help overcome feelings of homesickness and alienation of the Indian immigrants. Thus, she evokes their magical powers to help her customers. In the course of time, she herself falls in love with a non-Indian and is forced to think what she should do. Either she must serve the people she has been associated with or cut herself off from them to pursue her own happiness. This novel has also been made into a memorable film.

Later, she wrote a novel “Sister of My Heart” which is about the lives of two women. One of them comes to California while the other one stays behind in India. “The Vine of Desire” continues the story about two friends. Another collection of stories “The Unknown Errors of Our Lives” is about “family, culture and the seduction of memory”

Divakaruni’s sixth novel “Queen of Dreams” is a marvellous tale of self-discovery, heightened with mystery, supernatural and suspense elements, also exploring the vital connections between the conscious and the subconscious. Rakhi, a young artist and a divorcee, living in Berkeley, California, trying to find her existence in a world is torn by violence, horror and terror. One can glimpse the ancient India as well as contemporary America, simultaneously projected through Mrs. Gupta, Rakhi’s mother, who had migrated to America with her husband and daughter. She remains quite unaffected by her migration and retains much of her Indianness tenaciously sticking to her known practices and culture. She creates her own memorable identity, which revolves around her dream-world and which none can invade, not even her husband or

daughter. Rakhi pines for her mother's attention and is not very much attached to her father in her childhood, though later when he reads her mother's journals and helps her to realize the interpretations, they are united as father and daughter.

Conclusion ;

The basic problems of diasporic writings are feelings of dislocation without roots. They feel sick and homeless and this involves pain, alienation, identity crisis – a total disconnect with the culture where they exist. The women feel powerless at times but then, situations embolden them to climb out of the crisis. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni brings out all these problems very well in all her work. Blending the boundaries of prose and poetry, Divakaruni adds lyricism to the prose, which results in wonderful depictions of the situations handled by her.

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Modern Women of African Society in Aidoo's Novels

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The aim of this paper is to explore the representations of "the New unman" in selected works by Ama Ata Aidoo. namely: Changes (1992). "Our Sister Killjoy" (1977). Ama Ata Aidoo addresses the conditions and needs of continental African women (African women who reside on the African continent) and points out key issues relating to discrimination and exclusion on the basis of sex and gender objectification, structural and economic inequality, power and oppression and gender roles and stereotypes. It is finally noted Objectification, that Aidoo does not agree with the view that the success of a woman should be Gender Roles gauged by her ability to get married and have children as emphasised by African tradition. To her, the success of women does not lie in their ability to reproduce but rather in becoming productive in other aspects that benefit humanity and promote the independence and progress of a nation. Aidoo clearly implies that for any nation to develop effectively the role of a woman must not be ignored. A woman has to join hands with man in order to see a better nation, it should however be noted that the position of a woman in the contemporary world is still a hustle since it is proven through all the new women characters that it is hard for women to live as single or divorced without stigma from the society.

Keywords : *Discrimination Stereotypes. Independence. Gender, Objectification. Gender Roles.*

Introduction:

Ama Ata Aidoo is a Ghanaian Author. Poetess. Playwright and Academic Professor. She was the Minister of Education under the JERKY RAWLINGS Administration. In 2000 she established the MABBASAM FOUNDATION to promote and support the work of African Women

Writers in Accra, Ghana. Aidoo was born on 23 March 1942 in Salt pond, Ghana. Aidoo attended "Wesley Girls High School". She enrolled at the University of Ghana, Legon, she obtained the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English and also wrote her first play, "The Dilemma of Ghost" in 1964. The play was published by Longman, the following years, making Aidoo the first published African woman dramatist. She worked in the United States, where she held a fellowship in Creative Writing at Stanford University, California. She also served as a research fellow at the Institute of African studies, University of Ghana. She is currently a Visiting Professor in the African Studies Department of Brown University. She obtained a 'Fulbright Scholarship, Award' in 1988 and Mbari Press Short Story Prize. Aidoo is the Patron of the Etisalat Prize for literature, created in 2013 as a platform for African writers of debut books of fiction.

Her novel "Changes- A Love Story" won the 1992 "Commonwealth Writers Prize" for best book in Africa. She is also an accomplished poetess. Her collection of poetry "Someone Talking to Sometime" won the "Nelson Mandela Prize" for poetry in 1997. Her novel "Our Sister Killjoy" (1977) remains one of her most popular works. Her plays "Anowa" and "Dilemma of a Ghost" mainly portray stereotypical women's roles in modern age. Her collection of short stories "No Sweetness Here" (1995) and "The Girl Who Can" mainly talk about Women Empowerment and Child Education. In her poetry collection, "An Angry Letter in January and other poems, she portrays women as a powerful weapon.

Main Thrust:

Ama Ata Aidoo has made significant efforts towards helping other women in her society to rise in power by supporting the expression of their voices through writing, changes in the roles of women over the years. This change has come about as a result of women's quest to assert themselves through education and contribute towards freeing their families from cultural and societal dogmas in which women were treated to subjugation and marginalisation. A remarkable observation was the intentionality of ascribing to female characters more respectable roles in novels by various writers as the years went by. A conclusion drawn from the study was that education is still a major weapon for enhancing assertiveness in women, but it is not the ultimate.

Average African woman experiences one form of subjugation as the 'Other' in the predominantly male societies they live. Some are not allowed to express their opinions others are refused education, some are beaten and as has become a recent feature in most newspapers in Ghana: some women are gruesomely murdered by their spouses for no tangible reason. Aidoo, by her works, clearly spells out the plight of the African woman, bringing to the fore, her daily struggles in a society which is more sympathetic to males than females and hopes that the trend would change. By their vivid portrayal of the problems women face in their daily lives, they are able to make readers better appreciate the negative side of being a woman in most African societies. Through the various female characters, they portray that though the fight for equality in a male-dominated world is not an easy one, still it is worth the try. Her "Changes- A Love Story" and "Our Sister Killjoy" portrays four educated career oriented women: Esi, Fussa, Sissie, Opokuya. They all are fighting for education, liberty of marriage and against Marital Rape. For women to be able to break free from suppression and oppression there is a need for them to be educated. Education is the only means by which the oppression and fight for or insist on their right and ensure they are as their male counterparts. African governments need to ensure the abolition of all cultural practices which downgrade the female while ensuring equal rights for both men and women at the workplace encouraging women participation in government.

In *Changes*, Aidoo does not pretend to represent all West African women, nor even all working women in Accra. Her main characters are clearly middle class. She introduces us to three different characters within that stratum: the secular, divorced, professional; the wife, 'mother-nurse' midwife, also secular; and the contemporary Muslim, veiled, running a successful business, and extremely bitter about polygamy. The three women are equally important for Aidoo's discussion of the various aspects of women's lives.

Opokuya cannot really comprehend a woman who complains of a husband being "too loving." Yet she also realises that she has long envied Esi's "freedom of movement," her independence. A nurturing, maternal type, Opokuya struggles to successfully combine her duties as a wife and a mother of four with her job as a nurse and midwife, a double shift that

finds her still weary in the morning and breathless at the end of the day. Yet Opokuya in no way typifies the traditional submissive wife. Tired of depending on her husband's goodwill for rides, for example, she proposes to buy Esi's old car. thus asserting her physical and financial independence from Kubi, as well as her desire for greater freedom of movement.

"Changes-a Love story" tells the story of Esi, a self-empowered, strong-willed statistician with a Master's degree, employed in a lucrative job at the Department of Urban Statistics. She is unhappily married to her husband. Oko, with whom she has a young daughter. Esi and Oko often dispute over their assumed gender roles within the relationship, such as Esi's refusal to cook for the family or bear any more children. During one argument, Oko rapes his wife in an angry fit. The assault leaves Esi devastated and isolated from friends and family, as marital rape does not occur, the patriarchal culture does not recognise the act as violent but rather as a husband's right. After divorcing Oko. Esi enters a polygamous marriage with a charismatic travel agent. Ali. Ali's first wife. Fusena accepts Esi as second wife but reveals her jealousy when she learns that Esi holds a university degree and a career.

The main female character, Esi Sckyi, is a strong and independent woman. She has a job and genuinely enjoys her career as a government statistician. In addition to having a job that pays more than her husband's. Esi's job comes with the home in which she lives with her husband and daughter. Esi's strong will and independent nature are unusual, given the traditional role that women were generally expected to play in the family. Esi comes to represent the emergence of a new feminine identity-one that can compete equally with men in terms of financial and personal security.

In *"Our Sister Killjoy"*, Aidoo is concerned mostly with the estrangement of the African-educated class. Sissy, the main character, is offered a grant to receive European education. Her journey into the west chronicles different aspects of her resistance to the overriding ideological hostilities that bring down Africa and African people. The novel is divided into four parts. "Into a Bad Dream" relates Sissy's travel experience to Germany. She is secure in her racial background, and only progressively over the itineraries of her 'westbound mobility' does she become conscious

of her colour complexion. In "The Plums". Sissic discovers Marija. a new German friend. Marija is entangled in boredom and immediately gets attracted to a black student. In the course of their friendship, Sissic finds out about Marya's perverted behaviours, rejects her lesbianism and leaves her in frustration and total disillusionment.

In "Our Sister Killjoy", Sissic is the new woman because she ascribes to the belief that women must be liberated from traditional as well as colonial prejudices. She too is well educated and refuses to be compromised by cure-centrism. She dispels the tendency of mimicking the whites in order to get favours and does not find it necessary to stay abroad. She strongly believes that she can liberate herself and Africa as well while at home. She I not like Marija who thinks that her contribution to her country is to be a good wife and later on be a good mother. She takes motherhood as an obligatory female responsibility and therefore carries her son Adolf everywhere she goes but feels guilty for leaving him alone at home and for desiring to be alone.

CONCLUSION

To sum it up, the new woman as portrayed in the selected work is more at peace because she has her freedom and independence. She does not accept to be defined by the patriarchal society. She does not accept to be defined by the patriarchal society. The new woman is at peace and more relaxed than the old Woman because she is economically independent and not a slave to anything hence leading to self-confidence and self-realisation. The new woman can afford to balance all roles as an independent working woman and mother and still be a submissive wife who runs her home than being put in the kitchen.

In general, women are playing different- different roles in different countries and when it comes to say about Africa, the role of women is completely different from ancient to modern age. In traditional African society women could be involved in rituals, and festivals but not in the major characters and other sectors, the history of African women in denounced under such circumstances of differences in power relations, system of belief as well as customs and tradition which strictly differentiate women of different races and classes.

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Negotiating the Existential Crisis in Post Apartheid South Africa : A Study of John Maxwell Coetzee's *Disgrace*

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Abstract

John Maxwell Coetzee grew up during the apartheid years and witnessed the ugliest chapter of 20th C human history. Coetzee often attempts to articulate his difficult position as a White, writing about Apartheid in South Africa. J.M. Coetzee is a very different writer as he has refrained from taking an overt political stand on Apartheid. He focused on South Africa's complicated relationship between Whites and Blacks and the horrific practices that took place under Apartheid where ordinary men and women in a racially divided country were transformed by the White government's policies. They suffer, but they carry on stoically despite their harrowing ordeals. Coetzee is interested in the suffering of the individual in relation to the society of which he is a member.

Key Words

Apartheid, existential crisis, realities, dynamics of power, oppression

Introduction

Recipient of two Booker awards and the coveted Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003, John Maxwell Coetzee has established himself as a strong postmodernist voice in fiction. John Banville in his article "Endgame" states:

"J.M. Coetzee is a very different writer, even though his novels are set in the same moral landscape that Gordimer inhabits in her fiction. Coetzee has been careful to hold himself aloof from direct engagement with the issues of his time and specifically with the politics of his country. His aloofness

is not that of the aesthete perched in his ivory tower. Like any serious artist, he is conscious that it is precisely by virtue of its timelessness that art contributes to its time and times to come". (New York Review, 23)

Coetzee has refrained from taking an overt political stand and yet has always been acutely aware of his responsibility as a writer while outlining the human story. The Svenska Akademien, while announcing the Nobel Prize, stated :

"The Swedish Academy in Stockholm honours the writer because he [Coetzee] is a scrupulous doubter, ruthless in his criticism of the cruel rationalism and cosmetic morality of western civilization." (Press Release, 2 nd October 2003)

Coetzee delved into the complex issues of identity crisis and alienation experienced during and after Apartheid. The long drawn legacy of systemic suppression, oppression, exploitation and subsequent challenges of reconciliation and integration constitute the oeuvre of Coetzee as an artist. He attempts to articulate his difficult position as a White writing about Apartheid in South Africa. He must inevitably share the burden and the guilt of such a heinous political practice there by admitting to his own culpability, not only as an individual but as a member of the ruling elite. Living under an oppressive dictatorship, he had direct knowledge of how it felt to be a writer in that environment. The apartheid system in South Africa was a sore point for Coetzee, as it was for many of his colleagues. It was widely agreed that an accurate depiction of South African apartheid was needed. While other writers dealt directly with South Africa's terrible condition, Coetzee was unique in his approach to the subject. Apartheid formed the backdrop for all of Coetzee's writings, but he wasn't just interested in exposing the regime's belittlement and dehumanisation of people in order to give readers a true picture of the period. As opposed to reporting the socio-political and historical facts of apartheid, Coetzee focused on the gruesome impact of apartheid on the individual human psyche. He focused on South Africa's complicated relationship between whites, blacks and the horrific crimes that took place under Apartheid. It is because of this that his works provide a compelling account of what ordinary people went through under the despotic government. The

protagonists of Coetzee's works are extraordinarily sensitive human beings. Ordinary men and women in a racially divided country have been transformed by the White government's policies. They suffer, but they carry on stoically despite their harrowing ordeals. Coetzee is interested in the suffering of the individual in relation to the society of which he is a member. What is foregrounded, what stands out in the sharp relief against the indeterminate setting, are the [existential] realities of ... pleasure and pain, power and victimisation, that is the 'reality' of human experience (Head, 2).

Body

One of the most volatile and controversial works of Coetzee **Disgrace** was published in 1999. The novel was a reaction to the current state of affairs in South Africa. It depicts the turbulent socio-political affairs of post-Apartheid South Africa. In *Disgrace*, Coetzee illustrates the social and psychic toxicity that he must have felt at any point. (Atwell, 291). Coetzee's writing, is firmly rooted in South African realities, in its history, in political complexities and ironies, in the failure of human sympathy that is the consequence of colonialism and apartheid... *Disgrace*...is a reflection on post-apartheid South Africa and the choices open to whites. (Gurnah, 13)

The story revolves around the life of David Lurie, a university professor who is frustrated with the low status of humanities. In his opinion, as a professor of English language and literature, the Romantic era and its associated arts and literature have no place in African culture. He ends up having an affair with one of his students, who then comes out and accuses him of sexual harassment. An enquiry committee is constituted and he is found guilty. He refuses to apologise, and he is dismissed from the university. On the way back, he stops to visit his daughter, Lucy, in the Eastern Cape. Lucy is gangraped by Petrus and a group of black men. She gets pregnant but refuses to abort the child. Much to Lurie's surprise she marries Petrus, and gives him her farm in exchange for her protection. Lurie at the end is shown taking care of animals that are nearing the end of their lives. *Disgrace* is a post-apartheid novel that portrays a South Africa that is no better off than it was under apartheid. The end of apartheid,

according to Coetzee, has simply resulted in the positions being reversed. The whites who are harassed and victimised by the black appear to be paying the price for their crimes against the blacks.

Disgrace remains Coetzee's most thought provoking and controversial novel. Published five years after apartheid, the novel depicts the phase of transition in South Africa. Disgrace unfolds the dynamics of power, where change in power equations vitiated social and personal relationships. It presents a bleak and unpromising picture of South Africa wherein the whites try to hold on to their identity while the blacks seem keen to settle the scores of the past. Lurie comes across as a character that refuses to accept the new reality of South Africa. Reluctant to adjust according to the new power structure, Lurie clings to his inflated sense of racial superiority.

Disgrace presents a narrative where the protagonist has a fair chance to rediscover his sense of identity by breaking away from the colonizing oppressor's identity. David grapples with the task of re-positioning himself and re-discovering his identity in the context of a post-colonial society. The narrative in Disgrace is located in a defined time space, that is, the first decade post the period of apartheid. This was a time in history when the formerly exploited and oppressed had started to reassert their rights in the society. David Lurie, a college lecturer at the Cape Town University, lacks any sort of direct involvement in the process of colonization and the horrors it perpetuated. Nonetheless, his identity is not separated from the hegemonic group because of his affiliation with the group and the privileges that he continues to enjoy in the society because of this affiliation.

The complexity of the characters and events in the novel is revealed by the narrative voice. Though presented in third person, the proximity between David and the narrator almost gives a feeling of it being told in the first person. Lurie comes across as self-centred and without any empathy. This is established right at the outset during Lurie's weekly visit to a prostitute Soraya. She asks him, 'Have you missed me?' David replies, 'I miss you all the time. (Coetzee, 1) However, there is no mention of such feelings on Lurie's part in the novel. It is not difficult for the reader

to note Lurie's mechanical response to Soraya's cordial question. This is followed by lovemaking and David participates in the act like a customer. His sex with Soraya is intense but without any emotion. He calls it the "copulation of snakes: lengthy, absorbed, but rather abstract, rather dry, even at its hottest." (3) Commenting on David Lurie's temperament, the narrator feels that "his temperament is not going to change; he is too old for that. His temperament is a fixed set." (2). This defines, two of Lurie's basic problems his longing for being desired (which is manifested through sexual encounters) and rigidity - which is replaced by humility, humiliation and pity towards the end.

Lurie's relationship with Soraya also highlights the former's alienation. Though he likes the submissiveness of Soraya (power of a white male over a black female) as a customer, there is room for affection and longing for being desired. He wants to take Soraya out of the hotel and spend time with her. He tries to peek into her personal life, which she disapproves. Lurie still tries to know more about her and takes the help of a detective agency to find out more about her life. He manages to get her number and calls her up which ends up in a threat from Soraya not to harass her any further. At this moment "a shadow of envy passes over him for the husband he has never seen." (10)

Soraya is not the only woman with whom David sleeps, his longing for love takes the form of unrepressed libido, which also serves as an act of exercising power. Lurie, "had affairs with the wives of colleagues; he picked up tourists in bars. ...he slept with whores." (7). When Soraya tries to detach herself from Lurie, he visits a prostitute younger than Soraya only to return unsatisfied. For Lurie, affection (though not reciprocal) as well as dominance is important. For this reason, Lurie's sexual adventure with Dawn also fails to provide any mental comfort or peace.

The socio-political milieu of South Africa intensifies the mental agony of Lurie, who was trying to adjust to the challenges of life, age and sex. Lurie was a professor of Romantic Literature but was forced to teach linguistics and communications. He had published three collections of essays, including one on Wordsworth, but all three books flopped. He was hopeful of composing an opera titled, 'Byron in Italy' focusing on the theme of love.

Lurie is a Prufrock-like character; proud, insecure and disillusioned with the society around him, filled with longing for love and conscious about how the world looked at him. Just like Prufrock, at the end of the novel, he found his position to be insignificant, disgusting and pitiable like a dog. Lurie was also conscious of his aging, which further intensified the feeling of being unwanted and powerless. He wished to withdraw from his promiscuous life and after Soraya became inaccessible; he even considered castration. He describes it as, “not the most graceful of solutions, but then again, aging is not a graceful business.”(9)

His affair with one of his students, Melaine is also complex. He has sex with Melanie on several occasions, and the narrator reports of her passivity during the acts. Lurie tries to introspect; “A child! He thinks: No more than a child! What am I doing?”(20).However, his sexual desires get the better of him each time. One day, Lurie makes love to Melaine (who has been trying to avoid him) at her flat, despite the latter’s unwillingness. Coetzee, in the novel remarks:

“Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she had decided to go slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck.”(21)

Lurie’s character could be understood in the context of Byron’s portrayal of Lucifer in the poem ‘Lara’ that he teaches. Just like Lucifer, Lurie behaves in a manner befitting of a monster- he doesn’t act on principles but on impulse...”(33). The relationship between Lurie and Melanie gradually breaks off and takes an ugly turn when Melanie complains to the authorities and accuses David of sexual harassment. He is summoned to a committee which wants a compromise so that Lurie’s job can be saved. However, Lurie is too proud to apologise or repent. He experiences a sense of alienation that he is unable to express. Despite his strong academic credentials, his alienation from work becomes apparent when he does not defend the charges levelled against him. He accepts his fate in silence. Being twice divorced is further testimony of his alienation from his partners and his familial life. Alienated from work, he turns to his daughter, Lucy, for emotional support. As he relocates to his daughter’s farm, he strives towards reflecting on his sense of identity.

In David's quest of re-discovering his identity, Lucy's character has a strong and permanent impact on him. It is Lucy, who ultimately helps David in altering his identity and realizing the significance of reconciliation. She is beyond being just any other woman in his life. The journey to Lucy's farm is in a way a first step in the journey of re-discovering his sense of self. He accepts Lucy's suggestion to help Petrus and Bev Shaw. However, he still refuses to shed off his pride and rigidity. He expects to be paid for the help and refuses to bring about any change within himself. He says:

"I'll do it. But only as long as I do not have to become a better person. I am not prepared to be reformed. I want to go on being myself."(70)

Lurie, finds communication with the outer world more and more problematic and turns to the dogs at Bev's clinic to counter his alienation. Coetzee paints Lucy as a strong character, one who easily works for the rehabilitation of the victims of colonial horrors. When she is attacked and gang raped by three black men. Lucy makes a bold decision to move on with her life. David, on the other hand, is portrayed by Coetzee as a contrasting character. Beyond their usual generational gap, they both seem to represent different worlds. While David is representative of the old, the apartheid society of South Africa and everything it signifies, Lucy is representative of a newer order, a post- apartheid South African society. He is unable to make sense of her efforts at reconciliation and is unwilling to move on with their lives after the attack on her. In fact, the attack on Lucy in a way further erodes his sense of identity. It pierces his identity and shatters it to pieces. After it,

"He feels his interest in the world draining from him drop by drop. It may take weeks, it may take months before he is bled dry, but he is bleeding. When that is finished, he will be like a fly-casing in a spider web, brittle to the touch, lighter than rice-chaff, ready to float away."(107)

In fact, "he has begun to float to his end."(107). The loss of blood, drop by drop, is symbolic here. The blood here symbolizes the problems that he has to confront in society, everyday. Bleeding dry would eventually signify an end to the problems of his life. The symbol of blood draining

away is an evidence of his sense of alienation from his own body. The rape is “Lucy’s secret” but it is “his disgrace”(109). He is stuck on finding the truth of the attack on Lucy. He says that, “he is losing himself day by day”(121). Every time when he nudges his daughter to give him the details of the attack, the image of bloodletting returns to him.

“Again the feeling washes over him: listlessness, indifference, but also weightlessness, as if he has been eaten away from inside and only the eroded shell of his heart remains”(156)

David is shown to lack the strong sense of self and identity that Lucy portrays. David also attempts to re-discover his identity and leave a mark of his legacy through the writing of an opera on Lord Byron. However, his attempt becomes futile as his work has little meaning and value in the context of the post apartheid South African society. On the contrary, his work seems to portray his colonial hangover and his inability to sever his ties with the hegemonic group. It is ironic that David fails to recognize that it is his daughter Lucy, her efforts towards reconciliation and her unborn child which are his true legacy and in the light of which he could re-discover his identity in a rapidly transforming society. David also attempts to overcome his sense of aloofness by engaging himself in the treatment of animals. His alienation from society is strong enough to push him to seek for wholeness through his work in an animal clinic. It is David’s association with the treatment of dogs that teaches him the true meaning and significance of love. As he learns how to let go of these dogs after their treatment, he learns the art of letting go. He begins to sever his ties from his hegemonic affiliations the moment he permits his daughter to let go of her trauma (which is symbolic to the hegemonic link and identity) so as to start afresh. Now he sees her as:

“solid in her existence, more solid than he has ever been. With luck she will last a long time, long beyond him. When he is dead she will, with luck, still be here doing her ordinary tasks among the flowerbeds. And from within her will have issued another existence that with luck will be just as solid, just as long-lasting. So it will go on, a line of existences in which his share, his gift, will grow inexorably less and less, till it may as well be forgotten.”(217)

His act of letting go is symbolic to letting go of his supposed power over the 'Others'. David's character is significant because he begins to understand the significance of reconciliation. He understands that in the absence of true reconciliation both the erstwhile colonizers and the colonized would struggle with a sense of acute identity crisis.

The narrative of *Disgrace* establishes David's strong sense of alienation throughout. The trajectory of his life and its unceremonious decline are what affect his sense of aloofness and causes his identity crisis. From being a charmer, who once attracted women around him easily, as he ages, he loses his charm and his passion. Even prior to his affair with his student, Melanie, and the charges of sexual misconduct on him and his subsequent resignation from the university, David was found wondering if castration was a means that would enable him to focus on "the proper business of the old: preparing to die." (9) The fact that he thinks about castration and death are indicative of his sense of alienation from his own body and society, respectively. Castration here is symbolic of David's emotional trauma and crisis of bodily identity. This emotional trauma in turn derives from his aloofness. This sense of alienation is so deep seated that even though the affair with his student and their sexual encounters satisfied him physically, he was still harbouring a state of "dejection" and "dullness," so much that "he sits slumped at the wheel unable to move." (25), In fact, the affair with Melanie does not in any way contribute to David's journey of re-discovering the self. She just seems to be a replacement for the prostitute Soraya. It only pushes David towards the familiar company of his daughter which ultimately enables him to alter his identity. Lucy clearly symbolizes a new existence, according to David, one in which whites and blacks are living in the same areas, working together successfully, and progressing towards reconciliation, and David sees himself outside of this new history. He sees his daughter as separate from himself, more a product of her time than a product of him. He is left wondering that :

"he and her mother, city folks, intellectuals, should have produced this throwback, this sturdy young settler. But perhaps it was not they who produced her: perhaps history had the larger share" (61)

Outwardly, David does not intend to adopt Lucy's perspective. He

is not open to the idea of change. In fact, while referring to his affair in the university and the consequences that followed, he says that he “would prefer simply to be put against a wall and shot”(66) than to undergo an imposed alteration of character. Even in the context of his work in the animal clinic, he goes on to say that, he is closed for any change. This is particularly indicative of a general characteristic of his character, his apathy towards change. This is also symbolic of his deep-rooted fear that if he gives up on his identity of self (primary identity), he would then have to alter his identity and shape it as per the requirements of a new social order. In other words, he fears the identity crisis that he would eventually face in an altered society. Living in a post- apartheid society would eventually require David to look at the erstwhile colonized as equals. He would hence lose his identity of being a superior human. It is this loss that he is scared of and hence the apathy towards change. It is this attitude of his that Lucy wants to change. She tells him that he, “shouldn’t be so unbending.....It isn’t heroic to be unbending.”(66). After the attack and gang rape of Lucy, David’s unyielding nature brings to him a deep sense of guilt. This becomes apparent through his vision of Lucy asking him to save her. Later, he “watches over his little girl, guarding her from harm, warding off the bad spirits.”(104) Here David is still identifying himself with his hegemonic role play. He wants to protect her for a reason other than the fact that it is his role as a father. David does not want his little girl to change before his eyes because, ultimately, “she becomes his second salvation, the bride of his youth reborn.”(86) This is his desire for Lucy, not necessarily that she will be a carbon copy of himself, but will carry forward his ideas so they do not die. If she does not heal and return to her former self, she cannot carry on his history. Ultimately he is powerless in trying to heal her because Lucy is not a child anymore. Lucy takes control over her own life and fate. It is these ideas that the narrative weaves together to ultimately explore the process through which David re- discovers his sense of self and overcomes his alienation. Soon after the attack, Lucy says to him, “you tell what happened to you, I will tell what happened to me.”(99) Through her insistence, she continues to usurp control from David, but she also continues her representation of the post-colonial world because she understands that, as a victim, she should tell her own story. Lucy’s statement is symbolic. The perpetrators of

colonization cannot accurately tell the truth nor even see it as the victims see it, and Lucy understands this. David does not; he wants the whole story told, not because it will help Lucy to heal, but because he wants retribution for the attack.

The truth, it seems, is important only when it is he who is trying to discover it; that way he can be in control of the truth. Not only does he think that telling the truth will begin to solve his and Lucy's problems, but David thinks that if the rape is kept a secret, it will be a triumph for the violators. As a member of the power group, he struggles with the idea of his side losing control and the other side winning, but by refusing to listen to Lucy's wish to tell her own story, David is not able to create a new identity for himself. By refusing to accept change, David keeps himself anchored in the past. But is it possible to hold on to an old identity in a changing society? The image of the self is derived based on the image of the other. When the image of the other is transforming, can one hold on to the image of the self, easily? The struggle that ensues is an identity crisis.

Ultimately David realizes that his colonial hegemony and notion would wither away as he and his generation dies and it is Lucy's idea of reconciliation that will withstand the test of time. David has not successfully brought an end to his identity crisis and sense of alienation nor has he been able to whole heartedly accept reconciliation, but he has definitely made progress in his journey.

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Mahashweta Devi's Draupadi : An Unsung Heroine

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Abstract

Mahashweta Devi's 'Draupadi' is an extremely disturbing short story about an ordinary woman who embodied extraordinary courage, perseverance and great presence of mind in the face of adversities. It is the uncommon tale of a common woman. Hailing from the downtrodden lower middle class of society, Draupadi's life was of immense trials and tribulations. Along with her husband Dulna Majhi, Draupadi was always on the run for the greater part of her life. Together with a group of like-minded people Draupadi rebelled against the affluent and powerful men of society who had been persecuting a certain section of society down the ages. Deep down Draupadi knew that she was fighting a losing battle yet she kept up her relentless struggle even enduring the worst form of indignities that can befall a woman alone.

Key Words : Dopdi Mejhen, Operation Bakuli, Senanayak, custodians, ululated, unarmed target, triumphant

The very name, Draupadi, immediately flashes the courageous woman from the Mahabharata, who protested against the tyranny of a male-dominated society. This epic character earned awe and respect from all succeeding generations because she had dared to question the sham and hypocrisy of a society-the august gathering of a royal court that had stood mute spectators to her humiliations, to put it mildly. This story need not be retold as it is etched in everyone's mind. Mahashweta Devi's Draupadi though cast in a different mould, apparently is no less courageous and an equal contender for admiration as she fought against an oppressive social and political system.

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Mary Wollstonecraft had voiced that women "should strive to become companions rather than mere wives to their husbands." (Wollstonecraft 85).

Mahashweta Devi's eponymous heroine, Draupadi or Dropdi as she was called epitomized these words of Wollstonecraft. She not only espoused the cause of justice but stood by her husband as a loyal companion, fighting for the same ideals in the toughest of times – "Dear, this is the best! We won't get family and children this way. But who knows? Landowners, moneylenders and policemen might one day be wiped out!" (Devi and Spivak 399). These extremely poignant words are uttered by Dulna Majhi to his wife Dopdi Mejhien alias Draupadi. This husband-wife duo had plunged into the deep knowing that they would probably never reach the other side of the shore and bask in the sunshine of a classless society. The purpose of this paper is to focus on the travails of a woman who had consciously stepped out of the threshold of domesticity, not in the pursuit of an individual identity but for a greater cause, that is, to fight against injustice and social tyranny.

Set against the Naxalite Movement of the early 70s, Mahashweta Devi's Dopdi and Dulna may well be fictional characters but they definitely represent hundreds of men and women who, driven by poverty and inhumane behaviour of the upper classes of society had revolted against the prosperous and the ruling class. Dopdi and Dulna were the unfortunate survivors of Operation Bakuli. The word 'unfortunate' is deliberately used to denote their endless troubles in the wake of their escape. A drought-ridden land, a caste-ridden society where untouchability was not a crime and of course, gnawing poverty led to the armed protest and the consequent murder of Surja Sahu. Despite the outbreak of drought, Surja Sahu refused to give water to the "untouchables" though he had "two tube wells and three wells within the compound of his two houses" (398). When Mahasweta Devi was honoured with the Magsaysay award, she had said:

My India still lives behind a curtain of darkness, curtain that separates the main stream society from the poor and the deprived. But then why my India alone? As the century comes to an end, it is important that we all make an attempt to tear the darkness, see the reality that lies beyond and see our own true faces in the process.' (Tiwari)

In the dead of night, Surja's house was surrounded by the rebels and

when the latter appeared with a gun, he was tied with a strong rope, beaten and finally killed. It was not only Surja's adherence to caste but also his stubborn refusal to give water to the people of the lower caste that had incensed Dulana and Dopdi. They had their personal grudges against him. Dulna's cause of resentment dates back to four generations. To quote his own words – "My great grandfather took a bit of paddy from him and I still give him free labour to repay that debt" (Devi and Spivak 398).

This is just one instance revealing the exploitation of the landless. Dopdi had her own reasons for hating Surja Sahu. Though not a victim of racial discrimination, the term 'double marginalization' is not really inappropriate in her case. The fact that she was a woman and belonged to the downtrodden class of society made her sexually vulnerable. The landlord certainly eyed her as an object for physical gratification. Dopdi said – "His mother watered when he looked at me. I'll pull out his eyes" (398). Dopdi definitely was an undaunted woman.

When the news of Surja Sahu's murder reached the government, immediate action was taken. The rebels despite being called out by name individually refused to surrender. The entire village was fenced off and gun shots were randomly fired. Dopdi and Dulna lay still on the ground pretending to be lifeless and the police mistaking them to be dead left the corpses to be counted the next day. It was under the cover of darkness that Dopdi and her husband stole out and ever since they were always on the run with the shadow of death looming large. Unable to return home after this incident they disguised themselves as Upi Mejhen and Matang Majhi and worked in various farms while at the same time served as informers to the rebels in the Jharkhandi belt – a fictitious hideout of the outlaws. In rare moments, the couple would often break into an impromptu song and dance prompting the officers to put in all efforts to decipher the meaning of the words of the song:

Hende rambra keche keche
Pundi rambora keche keche. (398)

The informant, Dukhiram Gharari spied a young Santhal trying to drink a draught of water lying flat on his stomach. He immediately

informed the soldiers and the young man was shot dead. Dopdi thus lost her husband to police firing. The writer nonchalantly says that “no one came to claim Dulna’s corpse” (398). The sub-text of this apparent apathy is that all were fighting for a common cause which transcended personal emotional bonds. For Dopdi too the objective was far greater than her personal loss. Contrary to the stereotypical image of the woman as a creature of sentiment prone to emotions, Dopdi or Draupadi proved herself as a strong woman who acted rationally as per the need of the hour. Though she loved her husband “more than her blood” (398), her love was not confined within the periphery of a marital relationship. After Dulna’s death, she began to work with greater zeal and commitment. While she vowed not to betray her comrades under any circumstances, her own life as a fugitive grew even tougher. She gathered relevant information sitting unassumingly in the bus stand, smoking a bidi and keeping track of the vehicles that passed by.

Life was an untold struggle for Dopdi. As there was a reward of two hundred rupees on her, she had to take every step with care and caution. Unable to get even two square meals a day, she was constantly on the move. When Mushai Tudu’s wife cooked her some rice, Dopdi would tie it in her waist cloth after it had cooled. Not having the luxury of a comb, she killed lice from her hair as she walked. Dopdi wished she had some kerosene oil to get rid of the lice but on second thoughts, this would invite police attention when she went to wash her hair with baking soda (and not soap) in the stream. The police would then trail the scent of kerosene. All this just goes to show the kind of life Dopdi led in her attempt to complete the unfinished task of her husband. There was no certainty about the goal which now seemed a distant dream. She became physically fatigued and mentally depressed. When suggested by Mushai Tudu’s wife that she could run away, her tired reply was – “No, tell me, how many times can I run away? What will they do if they catch me? They will counter me. Let them” (397).

The note of desperation was unmistakable. With a promise not to betray anyone, Dopdi continued to walk and was on the move when she was arrested.

When Dopdi Mejhen realized that all hope was lost and the person stalking her was aided by Surja Sahu's brother Ratni Sahu as well as Shomai and Budhna, she served her fellow comrades for the last time. She 'ululated' with the greatest strength she could muster as a warning signal that she had been apprehended so the others should change their hideout.

Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* had written that sexual oppression is one of the fundamental features of a male-dominated society. Dopdi Mejhen was arrested at 6.53 p.m. and taken to the police camp. After the initial interrogation, which took an hour, the chief officer, Senanayak departed with the sinister command – “make her do the needful.” (401) What followed was a night of brutal, inexplicable torture disgracing humanity as a whole. Bound and gagged, Dopdi was gang raped throughout the night. The Indian penal code declares rape as a punishable offence.

However, if the perpetrators are the very custodians of law as in the case of Draupadi alias Dopdi Mejhen then no light is visible at the end of any tunnel. Mahashweta Devi makes use of a repulsive metaphor of the puking moon to denote this heinous act – “The moon vomits a bit of light and goes to sleep” (402). This implies that no one came to this woman's rescue. She passed out more than once.

Daybreak put an end to this brutal torture of the dark night. Dopdi now emerged as a wounded animal ready to lash back at her perpetrators. Along with a mangled body, she now carried a scarred psyche as well. The radio simply declared “Draupadi Mejhen apprehended” (401) obviously concealing the aftermath of her arrest. Early in the morning before she was taken to the tent of the Burrah Sahib alias Senanayak, in a great show of compassion, she was offered a piece of cloth to clothe her body and given water to drink. It is now that she vented her suppressed embittered fury.

Tearing the piece of cloth with her teeth she flung the water on the ground. This was her way of protesting against the hypocritical behaviour of society. Expecting to see a submissive Draupadi, the men were taken aback at her defence. She stood before Senanayak completely naked and broke into hysterical laughter – “The object of your search, Dopdi

Mejhen. You asked them to make me up. Don't you want to see how they made me" (403).

Senanayak was nonplussed. He could not meet the gaze of this indomitable woman nor reply to her uncomfortable questions. Dopdi yelled out – “What's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?” (403).

This outburst points towards the reality of the situation where, the very people who had violated a woman's body pretended to make her respectable again, which was not possible. Her woman's body had already been defiled and her sanctity could not be restored as judged by social standards. If Dopdi was robbed of her honour, she stripped the men present there of their manhood – “There isn't a man here that I should be ashamed. I will not let you put my cloth on me. What more can you do?” (403).

It is true that she had already faced the worst and she had become utterly fearless, ready to face death. The situational irony here was that while Dopdi lost her dread and apprehension, Senanayak became “terribly afraid” of this “unarmed target” (403).

The ending of the story inadvertently brings before the mind the scene of the Mahabharata when the queen of the Pandavas, Draupadi was lost in a game of dice. As she was dragged by the hair to the court of the Kauravas, she plaintively wailed to safeguard her honour. She presented a stark contrast to Mahashweta Devi's Dopdi, who was defiance personified. Unlike Draupadi, who pleaded helplessly before all the spectators present including her five husbands, Dopdi boldly faced her tortures without uttering a cry for mercy or help. Finally when mortal help failed, Draupadi prayed earnestly to Lord Krishna who came to her rescue and prevented her from being disrobed. But in the case of Dopdi Mejhen there was no divine intervention. She neither called for help and nor did help come to her miraculously. Both the epical Draupadi and the tribal Dopdi were victimized by the patriarchal society. While one awakened compassion, the other reverence and awe for the latter fought a lone battle. Though DopdiMejhen was overpowered and had to submit to male atrocities, she was triumphant in her defeat.

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Modernist Trends in the Writings of Ernest Hemingway

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Abstract

Ernest Hemingway came onto the American literary scene when the world was witnessing the challenges of the ravages of wars and vast changes in human societies on account of the wars. Hemingway in his writings has captured the ethos and the mood of a changed world while emphasising on the universal and the permanent in human life and nature. He developed a writing style in response to the new experiences of Man and he has left an indelible imprint on the way American Prose is written. This paper attempts to study the features of modernism that are found in his writings.

Key words

Modernism, realism, materialism, symbolism

Introduction

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) belongs to one of the most crucial periods of American history. The period intervening the World Wars is regarded by historians as the traumatic 'coming of age' of the United States of America. It was a period of post war disillusionment when civilization was left in shambles. The war had shocked and permanently changed Americans who had lost their innocence forever. In the West, youths were disillusioned by the war and they held the older generation responsible. There was a breakdown of traditional values brought about by intellectual currents like Freudian psychology which fostered a 'godless' world view. Americans who lived abroad were affected by these views and they brought them back with them to the United States where these ideas took root and influenced writers and artists.

Body

Modernism, which emerged in Europe and the United States in the early years of the twentieth century, expressed itself in art as a break from the past as also from the Western civilization's classical tradition. Modernism in literature imbibed the changes in modern life. Thus, the writings of Gertrude Stein were characterised by an abstract, experimental prose poetry whose simple vocabulary recalled the bright primary colours of modern art. In modernist novel, vision and viewpoint became essential aspects. It was no longer enough to write straightforward third-person narrative. 'The way the story was told became as important as the story itself' (Van Spankeren 62). Fiction writers like Henry James, William Faulkner and others experimented with the fictional points of view.

Although there was experimentation in prose with viewpoint and form in the inter-war period in the United States, nevertheless, what characterized prose writing was realism. In fact, as compared to their European counterparts, the Americans wrote more realistically. In the 1920s and 1930s, a dominant theme in prose fiction was the importance of facing reality. Fitzgerald repeatedly wrote and depicted 'the tragedy awaiting those who live in flimsy dreams' (69) and thus captured the glittering but desperate life of the 1920s. Faulkner's tales are of universal interest as his novels are set in the southern states of America and deal with southern tradition.

Ernest Hemingway was perhaps the most popular American novelist of the century. Like Fitzgerald, Hemingway became the voice of his generation, but with a difference. Unlike Fitzgerald, Hemingway did not portray the fatal glamour of life but wrote instead about the grimmer and harsher aspects of life such as war, death, and the 'lost generation'. His sympathies were fundamentally humanistic and apolitical and in that sense, universal.

Hemingway's first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, is arguably the finest that he wrote. The novel thematically deals with the damage done to Hemingway's generation by the institutionalised violence of World War I. A natural corollary to this is the theme of sickness. The sickness is both physical and moral as is represented through the lives of the characters in the novel. It is represented in the loss of faith in traditional values, especially

religious values. The novel presents characters that are spiritually barren. Their spiritual sterility is indicated by their physical sickness. The central character Jake Barnes is impotent owing to a war wound. However, Jake is shown to be religious and is perhaps the most moral among the other characters in the novel. Brett, the leading female character in the story, can be seen as a self-destructive woman. She is addicted to alcohol and her nymphomania, her constant fits of despair and her obsession with bathing are all symptomatic of a person who is engaged in a consistent pattern of self-abuse.

The novel takes up another theme – that of materialism replacing religion or religious faith. This idea is captured in the novel's first epigraph, which is a quote from Gertrude Stein: 'You are all a lost generation'. The term suggests that the generation that came of age during World War I had lost its way. So many people had literally been lost during the bloody battles of the war. Many from Hemingway's generation felt betrayed, 'lured into a bloody and pointless war by the sentimental nationalism of a callous older generation' (Tyler 54) who were concerned only with outdated ideals and profit than with the lives of the younger generation. The Lost Generation's primary response to the war was a profound disillusionment and loss of faith in the values of the older generation, which had inevitably led to the war's devastation. The novel articulates very precisely this disillusionment and sense of betrayal.

The Sun Also Rises creates a picture of a waste land. It is the picture of the modern age laid waste by the destruction of human values and loss of spiritualism. The emotional waste land is discernible in the lives of the expatriates. Living far away from home, they remain cut-off from their families. They indulge in aimless wanderings and have no meaningful employments; are addicted to strong liquors, are sexually promiscuous, and there are no strong ties or bonds of relationships between themselves or with others. There is a perpetual sense of total purposelessness that defines their lives.

The sense of waste is nowhere better illustrated than in *The Sun Also Rises*, but it is brought out equally in two other novels of Hemingway that deal explicitly with war. *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* both deal with the destruction, physical as well as moral, of war. *A*

Farewell to Arms presents the love story of Fredric Henry and Catherine Barkley against the backdrop of the First World War. The War forms an ironical contrast to the love of Fredric and Catherine. Hemingway is strong in his denunciation of war; war in general is seen as a negation of life, permanence and stability. *A Farewell to Arms* is heavy with the weariness of war. It is an outcome of a close perusal of death. The grim realities of war reflect even more, the general defeat of hope. Fredric Henry ponders:

If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry. (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 222)

It is an eloquent expression of a kind of spiritual death.

For Whom the Bell Tolls likewise is a study of war, a story based on the Spanish Civil War. Like *A Farewell to Arms* the story discloses the struggles, brutality and barbarity of human beings pitted against one another in an unusual situation of war. Hemingway has used all his knowledge and experience gained during his stay in Spain to express the tumultuous situation and the character of the Spaniards with meticulous precision. The story of the Spanish War is not so much a social analysis as a criticism of moral qualities. The central character, Robert Jordan has been entrusted with a mission to blow up a bridge. Jordan, fighting on the Republican side, teams up with a band of guerrillas in the high mountains to defeat the fascist forces. Fascism here represents the negation of human freedom. This novel, too, like *A Farewell to Arms* is a study in doom, and murder and killing are played throughout the length of the novel.

Like other modernist writers, Hemingway feels strongly about essential human virtues. The story of Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* brings out one of the themes of the novel – the value of sacrificing oneself for others. It is a theme that Hemingway links to Christ himself. There are several allusions to Christianity in the novel. The sacrifice of Jordan in particular is strongly reminiscent of Christ's sacrifice for all mankind. Robert Jordan very ungrudgingly gives up his own life for the

sake of the partisans. He has come to regard the partisans as his own people. He reflects on the war and is satisfied that the war gave him an opportunity to do something that he completely believed in and felt a sense of brotherhood with others. This spells out the most important theme of the novel – the feeling of community and the importance of community. It is this which strongly influenced readers and made it meaningful. When he lies waiting to meet his fate, Robert Jordan reflects: “Each one does what he can. You can do nothing for yourself but perhaps you can do something for another” (Hemingway *For Whom the Bell Tolls* 485).

In consonance with modernist writers and their concerns, Hemingway had deep compassion and a large-hearted sympathy for people shouldering tremendous burden or for the luckless. He frequently delineates simple, dignified people who carry their burden of life without complaint in the face of unending hardships. Clearly Hemingway has respect for men who earn their living by toiling hard with their bodies and this is merged with his sense of tragic stoicism. The most typical of all such characters Hemingway has created is the character of Santiago, the old man in *The Old Man and the Sea*. The old man in the story is a luckless old fisherman who has not been able to catch a single fish for eighty-four days. He is poor, his only companion is a boy named Manolin, and on account of his inability to catch fish, he is ostracized by the fishing community. But Hemingway has cut him out to be the epitome of virtues that make up a true human being. He becomes the voice of Hemingway who declares the moral greatness of man, that: “man is not made for defeat,... A man can be destroyed but not defeated” (Hemingway *The Old Man and the Sea* 80).

The old man epitomizes the triumph of the human spirit in the face of life’s most besetting problems and challenges. The novel is thus an affirmation of life and the human spirit which seem to be defeated and destroyed by the harsh realities of life.

The clearest and the best manifestation of the modernist trait in Hemingway’s writing is his style. Hemingway’s writing style has been greatly admired. He left behind him, a trail of followers who aspired to his style. Philip Young rates him as the greatest prose stylist next to Thoreau in American literature, and at least, “the writer of the cleanest, freshest,

subtlest, most brilliant and most moving prose of our time” (Rao 79). Hemingway’s style has also been seen as an expression of the age itself.

Hemingway began his writing career with journalism and as a reporter he learned the skill of his trade there. The guidance of the *Kansas City Star* style guide became the basis of his writing style, chiefly: to use short sentences, short first paragraphs, to use vigorous English, and to be positive, not negative. Thus evolved the trademark ‘Hemingway style’ of writing which is characteristically described as a bald style, which is a plain style, devoid of all excesses; a style which is concise and which involves the use of precise words. An early influence on him was the writer Gertrude Stein who had developed a style analogous to modern art. Her style was characterized by the use of simple, concrete words. It was a kind of experimental prose poetry. It reflected a trend that was current in the post World War II period when the idea of form was the equivalent of content, that is, subject and technique both were inseparable. The minimalist style that Hemingway developed received further impetus by his contact with the poet Ezra Pound.

There are two sides to Hemingway’s style – one that is evocative, lyrical and tender; the other that is hard and depictive, and masculine. Prior to taking up fiction writing, Hemingway had begun as a writer of poetry. The poetic strain in him is undeniable and is to be found in all his writings. He had a love for the natural surroundings and it is often in such nature descriptions that the poetic strain is most clearly manifest. The more masculine prose of depiction that rings so clear, precise and bald is perhaps best seen in the passages describing the start of the Spanish revolution when the guerillas were most active against the fascists.

The simple prose style of Hemingway bears affinity with the English prose of the Authorised Version of the Bible. Hemingway shows a predilection for concrete words shorn of all qualifiers, intensifiers, and figures of speech as this passage illustrates:

He started to climb again and at the top he fell and lay for sometime with the mast across his shoulder. He tried to get up. But it was too difficult and he sat there with the mast on his shoulder and looked at the road. (Hemingway *The Old Man and the Sea* 94)

With great simplicity and effortless ease, emotion is injected through a bare picture describing the action with the aid of active verbs ‘started’, ‘fell’, ‘tried’, ‘sat’. ‘looked’. The compound and complex sentences are each joined by ‘and’. This technique is a favourite with Hemingway. It makes his prose fast-paced and the images pass before the eye like vignettes of the action described.

Hemingway shows a predilection for repetition. As a stylistic device, Hemingway had used it to his great advantage. In using repetitions he has imitated the incantatory effect which has been used so profusely in chiefly the Old Testament of the Bible. Its use transforms the language into a sort of verbal ritual, in harmony with the ritualized action where the emphasis is on form:

He looked down into the water and watched the lines that went straight down into the dark waters. He kept them straighter than anyone did, so that at each level in the darkness of the stream there would be a bait waiting exactly where he wished it to be for any fish that swam there. Others let them drift with the current and sometimes they were at sixty fathoms when the fishermen thought they were at a hundred. (21-22)

Hemingway’s writing depicts the iceberg theory – that is, only one-eighth of the iceberg is visible. In order to explain how the principle of the iceberg functions in his writing, Hemingway explains how he eliminated everything unnecessary to convey the experience to the reader in *The Old Man and the Sea* which otherwise could have made the story run to a thousand pages. Applying this principle to his writing, it implies a style and a literary technique of suggestiveness. The technique that Hemingway thus makes use of in his writing is of implied expressions rather than explicit statement or “a subtle hinting at something by creating an impression through suppression” (Rao 59). When this is carried further it leads to symbolism which leads one to meanings beyond the merely literal and meanings that are not transparent. A symbol is thus only suggestive of meanings and omits several things. Symbolic writing is thus thought-provoking and calls for active reader participation.

Hemingway was always credited as being a naturalistic or realistic writer since he believed in the principle of truthful depiction. However,

his writings have been recognised to contain meanings beyond what meets the eye and any number of symbolic meanings have been read into them. Hemingway makes use of symbolism in his writings in a controlled way. He is conscious of the weight of symbols in connoting meanings that are more than those intended at first. Hemingway as a writer employing symbolist techniques is adept at handling narrative devices with great felicity. The hallmark of Hemingway's style was the use of symbolism, and of this, the most dominant kind of symbols used was the use of religious symbolism. His fiction is religious in theme and the symbols are even Christological.

The titles of Hemingway's novels are greatly suggestive. *The Sun Also Rises* carries an epigraph from the Book of Ecclesiastes of the Old Testament of the Bible. *A Farewell to Arms* centres on the gospel of love taught by the preacher, while the title *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is taken from John Donne's devotion, "No Man is an Island".

The titles in Hemingway's novels serve another purpose as well – as objective as well as dramatic correlatives. The titles of his fictions and some names are ironic or have symbolic significance. As a conscious and meticulous artist, Hemingway chose names for his characters with special intent and these names thus acquire great import. Jake Barnes of *The Sun Also Rises* is impotent owing to a war wound and he is thus Jacob (Israel) rendered barren, and represents the wasteland of a past generation. The character of Pilar in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is the Blessed Virgin of Pilar, the Mother Figure for the Christ-Surrogates, Maria and Robert Jordan, and the guerillas in the same novel. Jordan in the Bible is the river where Jesus was baptized. Likewise, Robert Jordan is the link between the guerillas and the outside world. Also, Robert Jordan forms a link between Jacob and Santiago. Manolin, simply 'the boy' in *The Old Man and the Sea*, and who is also the alter ego of Santiago is Manolo or Manuel Garcia, the undefeated bullfighter in the story "Undefeated", who is reincarnated as Santiago, the undefeated fisherman – a lesser Saint James.

The names of these central characters discussed above also conform to a pattern – from Jacob (Jake) in *The Sun Also Rises* to Santiago (St. James) in *The Old Man and the Sea*, through Fredric Henry in *A Farewell to Arms* and Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Rain is a dominant symbol in *A Farewell to Arms* and stands for the symbol of baptism.

Fredric Henry walking through rain is symbolically baptised and this is heightened by his plunge in the Tagliamento, and his final walk back in the rain to the hotel at the end of the novel leads to the Jordan in the next novel. Robert Jordan's name suggests the river where Jesus was baptised and stands prominently between Jake and Santiago like the baptising river that separates Israel (Jacob) and the apostle James (Rao 66).

Other forms of symbolism can also be discerned in his novels. A prominent symbol employed in the novels *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is the "Mountain versus Plain" symbol. These stand for the opposing concepts of Home and Not-Home. While the concept of Home is associated with the mountains, with dry, cold weather, with peace, love, dignity, health, happiness and the good life, and the consciousness of God; the concept of Not-Home is symbolically represented through low-lying plains, by rain and fog, obscenity, indignity, diseases, war and death, and irreligion.

In *A Farewell to Arms* the sense of 'home' and being 'at home' is strongly evoked through the description of the mountain retreat where Fredric Henry and Catherine take refuge after their escape across the border into Switzerland. Through the entire length of the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, the mountains are seen as sustaining life and health. A sense of great calm and repose prevails in the idyllic descriptions of the mountain retreat.

These symbols of "Mountain versus Plain" which stand for their specific denotations are used very much in conjunction with the theme of the novels and are carefully and yet indistinguishably interwoven into the writer's narrative style.

Alongside, symbolism, Hemingway has dexterously combined myth, romance and ritual. Gertrude Stein, whom Hemingway acknowledged as his mentor, once remarked about Hemingway that "he looks like a modern and smells of the museums" (Rao 66). It only illustrates too well that Hemingway's works contain traces and echoes of legend, mythology and classical literature.

Hemingway was in close touch with writers like Ezra Pound, James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Edward Fitzgerald and T.S. Eliot who were

experimenting with new forms of writing. Two writers particularly, Joyce and Eliot, kindled new interest in readers in the early part of the century, with the sense of involvement with myth and romance. They also roused Hemingway's interest in myth and legend as potential sources for allusive writing. Besides, as a child, Hemingway had lived close to the Ojibway Indians and it was virtually impossible for him to be untouched by the influence of romance, myth and ritual. America has its own tradition of myth and romance, and Hemingway was an heir to that tradition.

Hemingway has used symbols as objectives correlatives very much in the way Eliot has used them but Hemingway is more rigidly a symbolist. Often his symbols are difficult to detect and even understand as they are carefully subordinated to the surface story, namely, the truthful depiction of happenings and the emotions they engender.

Conclusion

Hemingway as a writer evolved in various ways and under various influences. It would be difficult to attribute any single source or influence as being instrumental in shaping him as a writer. The clarity, brevity and concreteness of his style militated against philosophical discourse. Hemingway, 'the writer and the man,' has endured and will continue to fascinate and interest students of literature in times to come.

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Contemporariness of Status of Women in Tagore's Works

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Abstract In contemporary times :

Indian women have reached space or delved deep into DNA. But the journey was not so easy for them the colonial period. The social reformers and creative writers of colonial period showed the way to fight against the patriarchal hegemony, which resulted in today's dazzling achievements. Rabindranath Tagore was one of the pioneers in the field of presenting women's rights. His works present women's identity as an individual. This research article shows how Rabindranath introduced New Women in his different writings. His women characters such as Anandmoyee, Rashmoni, Charulata, Mrinalini, Kalyani, Sohini etc. bring before our eyes different facets of women-as a mother, as a wife, as a beloved, as a protester against patriarchal hegemony etc. In this article, a comparative study with other Indian writers has also been made to make the concept of women emancipation as the burning need in the third decade of 21st century. Post-corona era also needs the intensive reading of the works of Tagore for the empowerment of women in the days to come.

Key Words: New women, women empowerment, patriarchy, individuality, injustice, inequality.

Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was a "Myriad-minded man" (Dutta and Robinson 1). He wrote extensively in various creative genres, e.g., poetry, drama, fiction and non-fictional prose; composed numerous songs, painted pictures, thought about rural reconstruction, environment and nature, took an interest in science; and established a University in West

Bengal. Critics have written so much and so many aspects of Rabindranath that it is hard to discover an area to write on. And yet not much has been written on his thoughts on women, although he wrote extensively about them. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore on the women's status, at the present stage of history, civilization is almost exclusively masculine, a civilization of power, in which woman has been thrust aside in the shade. Therefore, it has lost its balance and it is moving by hopping from war to war. Its primary forces are the forces of destruction, and its ceremonials are carried through by an appalling number of human sacrifices. This one-sided civilization is crashing along a series of its one-sidedness, and at last the time has arrived when woman must step in and impart her life rhythm to this reckless movement of power. And further he emphasizes on woman's qualities. Woman is endowed with the superior qualities of chastity, modesty, devotion and power of self-sacrifice in a greater measure than man is. It is the superior quality in nature which turns its monster forces into perfect creations of beauty taming the wild elements into the delicacy of tenderness fit for the service of life. This superior quality has given woman that large and deep placidity which is so necessary for the healing and nourishing and storing of life. It is in the depth of passiveness in woman's nature that the potentiality of life is stored. Perhaps his perception about woman found its full force in depiction of women in some of his short stories and novels.

Discussion

Rabindranath Tagore was never comfortable with strident assertions of women's rights, and he was not kind of those who were known as feminists (Tagore *Chittipatra*). He showed a remarkable understanding of woman's psyche, perceived the injustice of an unequal social structure, and advocated for greater freedom and decision-making power for women in the family and the larger society. In addition to his remarkable stories about young girls (of which *The Postmaster* is a masterpiece), Tagore's short stories can be seen as representing three facets of women's lives:

- i) the romance between men and women,
- ii) social oppression of women (brilliantly portrayed in stories like *Haimanti*) and

- iii) the birth of the 'New woman' that is, a woman who challenges convention and seeks to make decisions about her own life.

In Rabindranath's early thinking, women had two principal roles—mother and lover. The loving nature of mother has been portrayed in many of his stories; Anandmoyee in *Gora*, Jatin's aunt in *Shesher Ratri* (The Last Night) and Rasmoni in *Rasmonir Chhele* (Rasmoni's Son) are a few examples. We can also see romantic love between man and woman is the basis of his stories such as *Dalia* and *Joy Parajoy* (Victory and Defeat).

However women's role as lovers has received privacy in his poems. In *Sonar Tori* and *Chitra*, romanticism dominates and the beautiful woman finds her ultimate expression in the poem *Urvashi*

For ages you have been the world's lover,
Oh you, Urvashi of unparalleled beauty

(“Urvashi” *Rabindranath Rachnabali*, Voll : 511)

Even though his visionary perceptions have been reflected in many of his poetical writings, such as *Chaitali*, *Naivedya*, *Palataka*, *Khey* and *Gitanjali* (for which he got the Nobel Prize) but the visionary in him has found its fullest expressions in his prose literature. His short stories from *Galpaguchha*, such as *Shasti* (Punishment), *Streer Patre* (A Wife's Letter), *Aparachita* (The Unfamiliar Woman), *Badnam* (Ill Repute) and *Nastoneer* (The Broken Home), *Samapti* (The Conclusion), *Khata* (Exercise Book), and *Laboratory* as well as in the powerful poems such as *Sabala* (The Strong Woman, in *Mahua* 1929) and *Mukti* (Freedom in *Palatika*, 1918). *Charulata* in *Nashtoneer* had built her own world. She was intensely in love with her husband's cousin Amal and finally took the decision not to go away with her husband but live alone in the empty house. Her decision required both courage and intelligence to assess the situation. In *Streer Patra*, Mrinal left her husband and his family to protest against the injustice they had committed against another woman. Having left home, facing the unfamiliar world, she discovered herself and her potential. In *Aparichita*, Kalyani protested against racial humiliation and decided to decline offers of marriage. In this way Rabindranath gave women both the space and the individuality to express their considered views on love,

patriarchal control over women, relationships between men and women within and without marriage and decision making power. And finally in *Laboratory*, Sohini has no inhibition in admitting her infidelity. Sohini had earlier disclosed her infidelity to Manmatha Chaudhury in private:

I feel ashamed to confess that I had been wanton. The very thought that I have been close to a number of men still ruffles me.... Our temptations lie hidden under our flesh and bones, but flares up at the slightest provocation. It does not inhibit me to tell the truth that veryearly in my life I went to the bad. We women are not the chaste allour life pretentions are constantly killing us. Even women like Draupadi and Kunti have to behave like Sita and Savitri. Let me tellyou I had no clear perceptions between what was right and what waswrong. I had no teacher to guide me. So I plunged into evil ways as Ihave been able to come out of it. Yes, my body has been tainted, but not my mind

(*Rabindra Rachnavali*. Vol. 7: 986-87)

It is certainly a bold statement not only about her, but about womankind in general. Sohini's character is unique in Rabindranath's writings as well as in the contemporary literature. Through Sohini's character Rabindranath has shown a "New Woman." Born in 1861 into an illustrious family, Rabindranath grew up in the heart of Calcutta (Kolkata). He came of age at a time when the currents of three movements had reached the shores of India:

- i. **The Religious** : Rammohan Roy had founded the Brahma Samaj (1828), which had a profound impact on a section of 'bhadrolok' community, including Tagore's family.
- ii. **The Literary** : "A Literary Revolution " had been pioneered especially in Bengal, by the charismatic writer Bankimchandra.
- iii. **The Political** : A nationalist movement had started to give voice" to Indian People's discontent against colonial rule.

Rabindranath's mind and sensibilities were shaped by these influences. Rabindranath lived for eighty eventful years in colonial Bengal and his views about women changed over time, whatever changes took place in India did reflect in his writings. It was Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay

(1838-94) who had introduced the concept of romantic love into Bengali Literature. It was Rabindranath who took the romantic tradition to great heights. Although Rabindranath dominated the literary field in Bengal, other major writers, such as Sharatchandra Chattopadhyay (1876 - 1938) and Kazi Nazrul Islam (1898 - 1976) also appeared during this time. In the mid 1920's there emerged a powerful group of younger writers who considered themselves as modernists criticized Tagore for the absence of realism in his writings. For example in Binodini of *Chokher Bali* and the nude Urvashi as well as in his short story *Laboratory* we find women as seductress and physically awakened. Since the late nineteenth century women had begun to write and publish the majority among them advocated traditionally prescribed values for women. A more rebellious note emerged with the advent of the freedom movement not just the educated elements, but women from all sections jumped into the fray of the independence movement. The effect of this change was felt in the domestic arena. Women for the first time saw themselves reflected through a public mirror.

They started to question the inequality that existed between men and women. Liberal men also raised their voices on discrimination between men and women. Kazi Nazrul Islam proclaimed:

Ising the song of equality
In my eyes there is no difference
Between men and women

(Nazul Rachnabali *Nari* Vol:I:241)

In the context of his novel *Ghare Baire* (The Home and the World), he commented; "The period during which a writer is born gets reflected through his writings may be, for a purpose The writer's period plays a role, deliberately or otherwise, in a writer's mind". This proved to be true because in 20th century (Post Independence) may be it was the influence of Rabindranath's writings especially the issues, like widowhood, women suffering in rural areas from poverty resulting in prostitution, eastern and western culture, wave of emancipation of women in the 19th century Bengal, which still reflects in many Indian writers, such as R. K. Narayan's *The Guide*. He has also shown a dancer with individualistic traits. It is

to her art as a dancer that she is dedicated and throughout the novel she makes everything subservient to that.

Neither marriage nor love counts, not even money or fame. In her dedication to art there is an undercurrent of sincerity. She leaves her husband and comes to Raju who she thinks will guide her to be a dancer, but when she finds him using her only for money she feels unhappy, she leaves everything behind to follow her quest for dancing thus finding her true identity.

In Raja Rao's novel *Serpent and the Rope*, there is the issue of cultural dualism. The novelist is obviously in favour of India, of Hinduism, but he does not degenerate the heritage of another. In a sense, the implication of the novel is that one has to be true to one's culture to find one's true self. Nayantara Sehgal vindicates the duality of awareness mostly through men-women relationship. Her women characters, by and large are hurt individuals seeking fulfillment even outside marriage. In *A Time to be Happy*, Meera and Rashmi, the mother and the daughter swing to tradition change on to native and alien culture. Anita Desai shows her tangible concern with the multicultural situation only in her novel, *Bye Bye Blackbird*.

Even in Kamala Markandaya's novels like *Nectar in a Sieve* is a work in tradition of tragedies exploring the riddle of human existence through human suffering, finally leaving the readers with a deepened awareness of human life. Rukmini for all her sufferings draws Nectar in a Sieve. Her next novel *A Silence of Desire* enacts the dilemma of the transitory phase of the nation, the polemic of tradition and modernity, faith and scepticism. Sarojini's typical devotion to Indian tradition can be seen through the faith symbolized by Swami Ji. *A Handful of Rice* a work depicting the general exodus of the poor people to the town, comes up as a novel on the existential dilemma of the modern India who cannot shed his ethical heritage.

Conclusion.

Thus, we can say, even in today's era there are still several writers (who maybe inspired or influenced by Rabindranath Tagore) can be seen exploring women's identity in their writings touching upon the similar issues. Although today's women are definitely in a better position enjoying

their dignity and individuality, still we cannot deny the fact that there are yet many who are struggling for their identity. The women of today have come along way through the growing awareness which Rabindranath Tagore had already discovered during the last period of his life.

A woman's identity is no longer limited to the role of the mother or a wife; we have arrived at a stage when women are demanding their right as human beings. They want to be counted unreservedly in their identity as individuals.

(Rabindra Rachnabali Vol:13: 28).

He could see that a new age was replacing the existing one:

I can feel that a new age has dawned in the world....Women are coming forward to build the new civilization. The Purdah over their faces has vanished, and along with it has gone the Purdah that kept their mind away from exposure to the outer world.

(Rabindra Rachnabali Vol:13 : 38)

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Not a Feminist, But... : Kancha Ilaiah's *Untouchable God*

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Abstract

Untouchable God depicts the socio-political flux in the years immediately preceding and following independence. Interwoven in its narrative which deals with resistance against the British, religious conversion and preservation of the 'verna' system as the core of 'Aryavarta', is the unchanging perception of the woman as inferior, secondary and as a utility. The nameless women in the kitchen of Ved Shastri, Sita Mahalaxmi, the dalit sex slave, Saraswati, who seeks education and converts to Islam to marry a youth of her choice only to be hounded and doomed and Mala Srivastava who has to barter her freedom to choose a husband, in order to complete her Ph. D., all these instances expose the inequalities of a typically patriarchal society. Although this microcosmic world of fiction created by Kancha Ilaiah revolves around stories of discrimination against the dalit and the myth of Brahminical superiority, but embedded in the larger narrative are female constructs as the ultimate subaltern. In fact, the issue of subaltern women in the colonial and nationalist context is compounded further by the problem of class polarization in Indian society. When India was colonized by the British, the position of women was at its lowest owing to many evil social practices such as 'purdah', child marriage, exclusion from education, 'sati' and banishment of widows, among others. It suited the colonialists, whose mission was to 'civilize' the natives, to condemn India's religion, culture and customs for what they perceived as its lack of concern for women and humanitarianism. (Sangari and Suresh 1989)

During the struggle for freedom from colonial rule a remarkable development was observed. For the first time women came out in large numbers to participate in the life of the nation. However, the fact remains that gender justice is as elusive today as it was in colonial India because the patriarchal framework of the society was not relinquished post- independence. Through KanchaIlaiah's novel this article seeks to explore the condition of women in the years immediately before and after India attained political freedom and also whether some vestiges of those situations still exist in modern India.

Keywords: gender, inequality, discrimination, exclusion, coercion, stereotyping, patriarchy, Independence, reform, participation, egalitarian, elusive.

India is a land of preserves. What happened two thousand or two hundred years ago, could well happen even today. Although we see free and equal participation of women in all spheres of national activity from the village fields to Panchayats, from boardrooms to the Central Government and many ambitious young women who are unafraid of experimenting, capable of accommodating and responsible for herself. Having found the golden mean between independence and society, is the picture really so rosy?

Violence against women is a sordid everyday reality. It knows no age and holds no relationship as sacrosanct. An unquestioned patriarchal prerogative that objectifies the female and views her as inferior; as the other, is what Mala Srivastav, the research scholar in *Untouchable God* speaks of when she says: "They (men) count their wealth in women's bodies.... Women have been an item of exchange for centuries. Even in socially sanctioned marriages, the girl is practically sold to the other family, except that the girl's side pays the boy's side to take her. Her wishes and needs are not considered." (Ilaiah 240-241)

The cultural devaluation of women is a complex issue. Ownership of property in patriarchal hands, hypergamous marriage practices and the system of dowry have rendered the girl child unwanted and dispensable.

New medical technology and changing family norms only added to it. The female became soft target for foeticide, infanticide, neglect and violence, both domestic and societal. Infact, the practice (prevalent also in Jharkhand) of ‘dayan- bisahi’, or declaring a woman an evil spirit/ one with an evil eye, exists largely to usurp property and land. The system of ‘wife- selling’ in Rajasthan that has social sanction under the label of ‘nata’ reminds us of the practice of ‘sambandham’. As explained in Kancha Ilaiah’s novel, in Kerala, only the eldest son in any Namboodri family could marry a brahmin woman to produce an heir. The other male siblings were not permitted to marry but could establish a relationship, a ‘sambandham’, with some Nair woman. Their “divine desires” (25) satiated, they left the children to the Nair dynasties. This was called matriarchal Nairism. (*Towards Equality*, 1975)

Banerjee Babu, the bhadralok, “was immensely gratified at his lack of daughters, though he suspected his wife did not share his feelings”. (105) He had four sons. The desire for sons only (reflecting a typical social mindset) is shared by most men in the novel, including Srinivasan, who has been bankrupted in marrying off his ugly, squint- eyed, fourteen- years old daughter. He expresses his anguish through a series of passionate articles in his newspaper against the evils of dowry system, but at the same time, lauding the ancient Telegu (now discontinued) system of paying a bride price for the privilege of getting married, a custom which we also find mentioned in *Kayar* (1978), a novel published in English in 1998, written by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai. Krishnamurthy, Srinivasan’s friend, reacts violently: “How can a man, with all his manliness alive in kin, pay bride- price for a woman? He invests his blood in a womb to procreate sons... The result is an unending series of payments by men to women: a societal blackmail.” (141) The usurious view of relationships is one of the reasons responsible for the objectification and social devaluation of women.

In the novel the character Namboodri not only reduces his widowed sister- in- law to the status of non- entity, he also takes the fullest possible advantage of his socially accepted right to coerce a dalit woman.

Paradoxically, while the touch of a shudra was considered polluting, having sexual relations with a shudra woman is his divine right. Sita Mahalakshmi, his sex slave, suffers unspeakable torture which she bears in silence because this horrendous practice had both religious and social sanction, and the Nair men actually looked upon it as a “great spiritual blessing of a Brahmin’s lust that had been bestowed on his family.” (27) The children born of this unholy alliance would not have any claim to their father’s name or caste.

In modern India, in Rajasthan, women are forced into multiple marriages approved by their families, even husbands, for the ‘bride-price’ they get from the groom. This unique system is prevalent in areas mostly inhabited by the backward classes, scheduled castes and tribes. It was evolved to allow a woman to marry another man in case her marriage breaks down. That sounds very reformist, does it not? Except that in most cases, it is the husbands who break the marriage and pass on their wives to others for a handsome sum. This cynical and emotionally wrenching merry-go-round of relationships is called ‘nata’. The offsprings of such alliances are rootless, suffering from an identity crisis. It is destroying the social fabric of rural Rajasthan in post-independent India. (Choudhary 92)

Nambodri’s opinion that “No chaste wife ought to be alive after the death of her husband” (25) is reflective of the mindset that glorified sati because it is socially and economically convenient to get the widow out of the way. Although sati and its glorification are prohibited under law, the Roop Kunwar case in recent history and the social glorification of the act through building of shrines and annual processions of the Rani Sati Mandir continues, because women are brought up on fables of sacrifice and purity.

Ved Shastri, in Ilaiah’s tongue-in-cheek satire, considers women to be despicable creatures. He wants a pure “alternative arrangement for producing children” (16) such as “men mating with men”. His laughable argument is that since men have breasts, they also have wombs. Women’s wombs in his opinion “are poison cells” (16). The myth of male supremacy

and the notion that women are somehow impure because they menstruate is widely prevalent and still actively practiced in modern India, debarring them from certain religious places. The legal battle has been won but not the battle for social acceptance. That women are a financial liability is a deeply felt male prejudice and can be seen in jokes targeted at women. In the novel it is expressed by the character Krishnamurthy who resents the fact that “the man must pay all his life for the upkeep of this creature who is less useful than a cow...” (141) The author’s ironical gaze follows each of the six Brahminical caricatures and their misogynist world—Ved Shastri of Tamil Nadu, Bannerjee Babu of West Bengal, D. C. Tilak of Maharashtra, Krishnamurthy of Karnataka, Namboodri of Kerala and Appa Rao of Andhra Pradesh, presenting a pan Indian picture of society.

There are, however, a few characters who care for the rights of their women. Srinivasa, who seeks shelter in Krishnamurthy’s ashram for his widowed daughter, Lila, is disillusioned by the treatment meted out to her: “But this is no place for women and the low born...” (164) he says and helps her to escape from the ashram with Gurram, the lowborn, wandering poet, so that she can make her own way in the world and be “free”. Then there is Gurram, who insists on asking Lila if she herself wanted to come with him. He admonishes Srinivasa: “You have no right to decide for her.” (164). Balram, a fruit vendor and his wife, Sakku Bai, dream of educating their daughter, Saraswati. She is denied education by the priest on account of her low caste but is gladly tutored by a muslim woman, Jahanara Bee. Later they readily give their consent to her desire to marry a muslim boy, Hussain. She and Hussain marry with the blessings of both their families but this happy story ends in tragedy. Hussain is murdered by religious zealots and banners carrying warnings against conversion and education of girls or shudras are put up as communal violence flares up.

Ilaiah’s comment in the opening paragraph of his debut novel: “Men were men whatever caste they were born in” (1) exposes how far he has travelled from his earlier polemical, non-fiction, *Why I am not a Hindu*, in which he has shown dalit society as being exemplary, egalitarian and non-oppressive. In *Untouchable God* Ilaiah has portrayed women as the

ultimate subaltern. Embedded in this story of caste supremacy is the saga of women whose condition is likened to that of Dalits regardless of which caste they belong to. It exposes an unchanging perception of women as inferior, secondary and a utility. The novel's sharp critique of patriarchy, whether dalit or upper caste, is its redeeming feature. The contempt for and oppression of women who are routinely exploited for their labour and treated as chattel is remarkably interwoven in the complex matrix of caste, religion, gender, class and even race.

In the final chapter of the novel, the author brings out an outsider's perspective through Isaiah, a black American sociologist, haunted by his own history of racism and inequality, who journeys to the land of Gandhi who had inspired Martin Luther King, Jr., looking for answers. He encounters the shocking realities of a deeply striated society in the land of Gandhi. While reading *the Rig Veda* he finds no mention at all of "the untouchables and women" (212) "Maybe they were an afterthought" he thinks to himself. He remembers that in the book of Genesis too God created the female only after the male and that too as a companion to him. He later finds that in India the Christian priests are as dogmatic and chauvinistic as their brahmin counterparts. Isaiah meets Mala Shrivastav in Banaras, who is doing her Ph. D. research on the widows of Banares. When Isaiah expresses his shock at seeing widows barely ten years of age, she remarks that "unfortunately, inspite of the law, people still marry off their girls very young, sometimes to much older men" (233) This is not as archaic as it seems. Last year (2016) too there were reports in the newspapers about school girls in Jharkhand seeking the government's intervention in averting their marriage and making their parents understand the importance of completing their education. In the novel as well, the character of Mala, who is a breath of fresh air, a confident, courageous young woman, has had to barter her freedom to choose her own life partner in order to be allowed to complete her Ph. D. Isaiah is saddened that Mala's findings, insights and solutions—her "Ph. D., would be wasted" (242) "buried under the weight of domesticity, until many years later perhaps a more fortunate daughter would clean out an old trunk and find the dusty thesis wrapped in old memories" (243)

Mala's statistics, gathered by her in the course of her research, speak for themselves: "In all the sanctuaries the women suffer from 40 percent more mental illnesses than the average population, 70 percent more anaemia, 50 percent of them are dangerously underweight. I'm still gathering statistics on their average lifespan." (242) No doubt women in India, for the greater part, have come a long way in their quest for equality and emancipation. It is an evolutionary process. Nonetheless they still have to fight almost daily with stereotypical patriarchal constructs of how to behave, what to wear, where to go, where not to go, how long to stay out of the house and what is good or not good for them. Equal pay for equal work is still a dream in some areas. (*Women in India*, 1985)

Stereotyping begins in the kitchen, change will also have to begin there. In the novel "Men were men whatever caste they were born in; they tilled the land and fed the cattle but they would never cook, or weed crops. This division between the labour of men and women was so deep that it was almost a thing of nature; it was so old that no one could have said whether it was made by Gods or humans." (1) "Only an exceptional man like Paraiyah did both male and female tasks" (2) Paraiyah is exceptional because he is a keenly observant, sensitive, thinking individual. He is a dalit but he questions why he should be "a piece of walking pollution, never to be clean." (7). He wonders with unusual perception about the pain of the cut crops, the love among the ants, birds and animals and wonders whether the God that created the likes of him is different from the God who created the upper castes—an 'Untouchable God'. For all this he pays with his life.

That very night there is a meeting of chosen brahmins in Ved Shastri's house to plot the murder of Paraiyah. For them it is a minor incident as these men would not stop at anything to protect their privileged status in society. What engages our attention, however, is the condition of the women of the house who are cooking thirty- three different dishes in the kitchen. They are shivering because they have to do the cooking in wet clothes as it is said to please the Gods. The sharp reaction of a young woman in the group who hates the wetness and the endless chores in the

kitchen, dishing up food they will never have the opportunity to taste and in whose opinion even “Shudra women, Chandala women are better off” (12), is immediately quelled by the reprimand from an old woman: “Don’t talk like that. You’ll become a widow if you talk about tasting the food before a man has even smelt it.” (12) Women who reinforce patriarchal stereotypes have also, to a great extent, ensured that women ever remain subordinate and secondary. Kancha Ilaiah’s ironical gaze and sharp critique of the hypocrisy in the caste ridden society which he condemns, speaks especially of women who are the ultimate subaltern across all castes and class. In the microcosmic world of fiction created by Kancha Ilaiah, the larger narrative of indictment of the treatment meted out to Dalits, is embedded an unapologetic feminist perspective.

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Many Million Black Voices--Protest in Richard Wright's Novels

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Abstract

In America there has been a tradition of angst in black protest literature. In fact, the seeds were sown in America soon after the settlement of Africans on American soil. When the Africans arrived in America, they were evidently very much different from the rest of the Americans, not only in the very purpose of their arrival but also in their physical appearance as well as in their cultural background. While the Europeans had come to the New World to seek their fortune, the Africans had been brought there to serve them. They faced discrimination from the very beginning. Richard Wright was one of those writers who showed their reaction to the racial prejudices. The subterranean world created by Wright is symbolic of Negro Marginality. His short stories and novels unmistakably bring out the element of protest and give assent to the allegation that Wright is more propagandist than artist. His creative vision propelled him to voice his concern for suffering humanity Richard N. Wright's novels give a glimpse of the predicament faced by a Black Man living in a world of affluent whites in the country of their birth. It is the intelligently aware negro writers like Richard Wright who try to project the suppressed urge for acceptance and recognition among their citizens. Wright has an exceptional flair for presenting characters that become the mouthpiece of the protest building within them

Keywords

Negro, discrimination, prejudice, recognition, subjugation, protest

Introduction

A critical study of the fiction of Richard Wright brings sharply into focus the fact that he had made an attempt to interpret the effect that social surroundings had on his protagonists. The portrayal of life and the problems of living as felt, perceived, observed and understood by him can be seen in the entire body of his works, which represent Wright's quest for the identity of a black man in an America dominated by white population. Among all the works of Richard Wright runs a unifying thread that connects them thematically. One can clearly discern the pattern of fear, frustration rage and angst that govern the characters and actions of his protagonists. In dealing with *Negro Problems*, Wright obliterates the fine line between what it is to live in abject poverty, and what it is to live as a negro in America. In all his works runs the very strong thread of Protest. In almost all his works Wright takes a stand.

The post-Civil War household word among Negroes--- "He's an Uncle Tom!", which denoted reluctant toleration for the cringing type who knew his place before white folk, has been supplanted by a new word from another generation, which says— "Uncle Tom is Dead".

Wright's collection of five long short stories *Uncle Tom's Children* is prefaced with these startling words. And these are the emotions that dominate his works. The grinning, servile "nigger" of yesteryear is not seen in his novels. Instead, the rebellious, sullen, obstinate and uncooperative Negro dominates and fills the pages with his contempt for not only White folk, but also for those among his brethren who are terrified of the repercussions of any rebellious behavior.

America during Wright's time was full of written and unwritten laws dealing with black - white behavior. A Negro could be lynched if a white woman made advances towards him; if he was found loitering in an all-white neighborhood; or if he had not responded to a white American the way he "should have". The "should have" varied from people to people. I quote Wright himself:

There were many times when I had to exercise a great deal of ingenuity to keep out of trouble. It is a Southern custom that all men must take off their hats when they enter an elevator. And especially did this apply to

us blacks with rigid force. One day I stepped into an elevator with my arms full of packages. I was forced to ride with my hat on. Two White men stared at me coldly. Then one of them very kindly lifted my hat and placed it upon my armful of packages. Now the most accepted response for a Negro to make under such circumstances is to look at the white man out of the corner of his eye and grin. To have said, "Thank you" would have made the white man think that you thought you were receiving from him a personal service. For such an act I have seen Negroes take a blow in the mouth. Finding the first alternative distasteful, and the second dangerous, I hit upon a course of action, which fell safely between these two poles. I immediately --- no sooner than my hat was lifted---pretended that my packages were about to spill, and appeared deeply distressed about keeping them in my arms. In this fashion I evaded having to acknowledge his service, and in spite of adverse circumstances, salvaged a slender shred of personal pride. How do Negroes feel about the way they have to live? How do they discuss it when alone among themselves? I think this question can be answered in a single sentence. A friend of mine who ran an elevator service once told me: "Lawd, man! Ef it wuzn'tfer them polices 'n' them ol' lynch-mobs, there wouldn't be nothing but uproar down here!"

Body

It is this "uproar" that fills Wright's novels. Right from the very beginning, with the publication of *Uncle Tom's Children*, he had written of the chasm between the blacks and the whites, and the cruelty and humiliation faced by black Americans. But the publication of the book showed him that he had "written a book even banker's daughters could read and weep over and feel good about." He swore to himself that if he ever wrote a book again, no one would weep over it; that it would be "so hard and deep they would have to face it without the consolation of tears."

It was this that made him fill the pages of his work with protagonists who were symbols of protest. Bigger Thomas in *Native Son*, Cross Damon in *The Outsider*, Jake Jackson in *Lawd Today*, and Fishbelly Tucker in *Long Dream* are Wright protesting in different milieu, in different circumstances.

Richard Wright's outlook is essentially existential. Despite this, the element of protest is unmistakable, as it will be evident from any analysis of his short stories and novels. It will be obvious that in spite of many common elements his fictional works share with the works of other creative writers, Richard Wright has something new to give. Though he has based his works on the American sociological situations, his short stories and novels are definitely not the works in the field of sociology but works of art. It is to this aspect of Wright's fictional design that attention has been focused in the dissertation to counter the allegation that Wright is more a propagandist than a creative artist.

The word "Negro," the term by which the black folk in America are usually designated, is not really a name at all, nor a description, 'but a psychological island whose objective form is the most unanimous fiat in all American history:' a fiat buttressed by popular and national tradition, and written down in many state and city statutes; a fiat which artificially and arbitrarily defines, regulates and limits in scope of meaning the vital contours of their lives, and the lives of their children.

This island is anchored in the feelings of millions of people, and in the conduct of the white folk that surround them, that they have no claim to pursue happiness, their progress towards civilization constitutes an insult, behavior must be kept firmly within an orbit branded as inferior, and that manliness on their part warrants instant reprisal. Three hundred years are a long time for millions of blacks to be held in such subjection, and this slavery numbed their personalities. But as these blacks toiled, millions of poor free whites against whom their slave labour was pitted, were rendered indigent and helpless. The slave grown cotton concentrated the power of the Old South in the hands of few Lords of the Land, and the poor whites decreased in number as the blacks increased. To protect their power, the Lords neutralized the strengths of the blacks and the restlessness of the whites by dividing and ruling them.

The beginning of the eighteenth century marked the rise of a fully developed antislavery sentiment in the North. In the wake of the French

Revolution came the rallying call for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, to the expressed conviction that all men were equal in the eyes of God. But “when thick black lips first stammered the first hesitant assertions of manhood,” the Lords of the Land were furious, and whips, knives and guns were used to set the order right as they saw fit. But in the latter part of the eighteenth century, their conduct underwent a sea change. To evade the prevailing Christian injunction that all baptized men are free, and to check the growing record of revolt, they culled from the Bible a thousand quotable verses admonishing their slaves to be true to their masters. What followed can be quoted from Wright himself: “(Feeling that) they had squared conscience with practice, they extended Christian salvation to us without granting the boon of freedom. This dual attitude compounded of a love of gold and God, was the beginning of America’s paternalistic attitude toward her black maid, her black industrial worker, her black stevedore, her black dancer, her black waiter, her black sharecropper; it was a code of casual cruelty, of brutal kindness, of genial despotism, a code which has survived, grown, spread, and congealed into a national tradition that dominates, in small or large measure, all black and white relations throughout the nation until this day”

In general, there were three classes of men above the blacks: the Lords of the Land – the operators of the plantations; the Bosses of the Buildings – the owners of industry; and the vast number of poor white workers - their immediate competitors in the daily struggle for bread. The Lords of the land held sway over the plantations and over the blacks; the bosses of the buildings lent money and issued orders to the Lords. The Bosses fed upon the Lords, and the Lords fed upon the 5,000,000 landless poor whites and the blacks.

When the Emancipation proclamation was signed, suddenly there were some 4,000,000 black folk free but stranded and bewildered upon the land they had tilled under compulsion for two and a half centuries. Personalities blighted by years of servitude, but eager to hold husbands, wives and children together in family units, some black folk went back to

those same Lords of the Land “and begged for advice and for work. And so began a new kind of bondage-sharecropping.”⁴ Some others did not do that. Eager to taste their new found freedom, restless and incessantly mobile, thousands tramped from place to place for the sheer sake of moving. In 1890, many white people predicted they would perish in a competitive world, but in spite of this, they left the land and wandered from New Orleans to Natchez, Memphis, and Birmingham—in short, wherever their feet led them. They labored in the sawmills, turpentine camps, road jobs, they abandoned the plantations where they had been born and went north and south.

The women fared easier in the early days of freedom. Their authority was supreme in most of the families inasmuch many had worked in the “Big Houses” of the Lords of the Land and had learned manners, had learned to cook, sew and nurse. So, because of their enforced intimacy with the Lords, many of the women, after they were too old to work, were allowed to remain in the slave cabins to tend generations of black children. They enjoyed a status denied to many men, being called “Mammy”; and through the years they became new symbols of motherhood, reigning as arbiters in domestic affairs.

New types of behavior and new patterns of psychological reaction emerged from the steady impact of the plantation system. When a white man asked even an innocent question, some unconscious part would listen closely, not only to the obvious question, but also to the intonations of voice that indicated what kind of answer he wanted. Automatically, a black would determine whether an affirmative or negative reply was expected, and they would answer, not in terms of objective truth, but in terms of what the white man wished to hear. If a white man stopped a black on a southern road and asked; “Say, there, boy! It’s one o’clock, isn’t it?” the black would answer; “Yessuh.” If the white man asked: Say, it’s not one o’clock, is it, boy?” the black would answer, “Nawsuh”

Any form of protest earned them the name “bad niggers”. The Lords of the Land still preached the doctrine of “White Supremacy”. The poor white trash were easily whipped up into hysteria who seized the guilty

black and dragged him, naked and bleeding, through the dusty streets. This token-death was made known throughout the quarters where black folk lived. The body would be swung by ropes from trees, and shot at the mutilated. The law was White. They could not protest, they could not vote, there were no black policemen, black justices of the peace, black judges, black jailers, black juries, black mayors... the Ku Klux Klan was the obvious and the subtle factor, keeping those who would want to protest from asking too many questions.

Conclusion

When the protest began it was with a murmur. The first poems, the pioneer novella or short stories, the first speeches collected and printed—they form the bedrock of what came to be protest literature. "...negro life identified with the countless black millions who made up the bulk of the slave population during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, those teeming black millions who endured the physical and spiritual ravages of serfdom, those legions of nameless blacks who felt the shock and hope of sudden emancipation, those terrified black folk who withstood the brutal wrath of the Ku Klux Klan, and who fled the cotton and tobacco plantations to seek refuge in northern and southern cities coincident with the decline of the cotton culture of the Old South" is not only the subject of Wright's photo essay, *One Million Black Voices*, but the raw materials of the protest literature that had preceded Wright a hundred years before. In fact, Black Americans have resorted to protest since their (forced) arrival in America. Beginning with their singing in the cotton fields, oral tradition of stories, and later poems, short stories and black literature, the horrifying picture of their constant brutalization and at first a subservient and quiet but later a raging protest can be clearly perceived.

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Of Rebels and Revolutionaries: The Quest Motif in Indian Women's Writing in English

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Abstract

There has been a paradigmatic shift, the shift of focus from the male consciousness to the female consciousness in women's writing in English in Indian Fiction in the Post-Independence era. Writing as such, has been a liberating experience and adventure for women writers in India which, in turn, has become a tool for emancipating themselves and also the female protagonists they have created. Being courageous themselves, these women writers have created some rebellious women protagonists who represent the idea of the New Woman.

These female protagonists seem to resurrect themselves from the ashes of myths and patriarchal hegemony. It is in this delineation of the women characters that there emerges the New Woman who has covered a long and tedious journey before she could transform her persona, to have a new identity for herself.

This article attempts to study the quest motif of this New Woman who aims at decolonizing the bodies of women from the occupation of patriarchal society. In the phallogocentric society like ours, women have been kept in the periphery. This New Woman, representing all rebellious Indian women writers, intends to reverse the gaze. This article takes up some of the zealous women protagonists and discusses how they exhibit their angst and rebellious spirit. We can witness the birth, growth and the maturity of this New Woman right from the novels of 1960s, who once was subjugated, is now ready to liberate herself from the clutches of orthodoxy. The most important characteristic she possesses is the courage to revolt against the male dominated society.

Mythological and cultural idealization has suppressed women leaving no choice but to be complicit in their servitude. Myth is the cornerstone on which the Indian family and society is built. But what we see is that the women characters in these novels have ample signs of going in the opposite direction. The elements of revolt and feminine defiance call the critical attention of the readers of the Indian writing in English. The New Woman in these novels is a Promethean rebel and a symbol of the quest motif. She is aiming at a Gynocentric narration of her past experience and even of her future.

Key Words : Phallogentrism, Mythology, Paradigm shift, Women Protagonists, The New Woman, Revolt, Gynocentrism

Post – Independent literary India witnessed a quest for a new direction and the novel as a genre provided an opportunity to a host of Indian women novelists, for whom it became a tool for liberating the idealized image of women from someone as chaste, docile and submissive to someone who comes across as an individual with her own desires. For women writers, it was an opportunity to etch some strong willed and revolutionary women protagonists who are born to rebel against the androcentric Indian society.

This article attempts to study some of the women protagonists in Indian writing in English in the post-Independence era who seem to resurrect themselves from the ashes of traditional myths and patriarchal hegemony. The New Woman covered a long and tedious journey before she could transform her persona. Of men and marriages, she was now least concerned; jobs, opportunities, money and even lovers were some of the things she was interested in.

What Yosano Akiko had said a long ago about women, seems to be coming of age.

The day for moving mountains is coming
 You don't think so?
 It is coming: for a while the mountain sleeps,
 But in other times
 Mountains all moved in fire. If you do not believe that
 Oh man, this at least believe:
 All sleeping women

Will awake now and move. (Akiko)

Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air. (Plath)

What Sylvia Plath proposes is apocalyptic, but it lends credence to the genuine angst experienced by women over centuries of subjugation by men. Consuming men seems to be the only way of liberating women. Anita Desai echoes a similar sentiment when she writes “Amla, always go in the opposite direction.” (Desai *Voices in the City* 159)

Women writers were quick to articulate their concerns through their works and they gradually came to occupy their rightful space in Indian Fiction Writing in English. Being courageous themselves, they created some rebellious women protagonists who represent the idea of the new and strong woman. Women’s writing in India aimed at decolonizing the bodies of women from the occupation of a patriarchal society.

Right from the novels of 1960s we can discern the birth, growth and maturing of this New Woman. She, who once was subjugated, was now ready to liberate herself from the clutches of orthodoxy and patriarchy. She aspired to reshape the contorted social construction of woman and womanhood. Jacques Derrida claimed that society has always been phallogocentric, the ideology that the phallus, or male sexual organ, is the central element in the organization of the social world. In a phallogocentric society like ours, women have been kept at the periphery. The new woman intends to reverse the gaze. Shobha De asserts that women in her books are definitely not doormats. They are not willing to be kicked around.

Writing has often been a vicarious adventure within which women throw off their fetters and achieve some degree of autonomy and self-expression. These protagonists are constantly at war with tradition and the phallogocentric domain. The most important characteristic that they possess is their courage to revolt to find their self. Alluding to Descartes’- *cogito ergo sum* – one can say, ‘They revolt that is why they

are.’ The new woman in these protagonists is a Promethean Rebel and a symbol of the quest motif.

Indian women novelists have been greatly influenced by their western counterparts like Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf, Elaine Showalter and Mary Dally. Mary Wollstonecraft advocated the rights for women. Simone de Beauvoir believed that a woman’s inferiority in society is a result not of natural differences but of differences in the upbringing of men and women. The male domination is not inherent. Elaine Showalter talked of certain issues like, “If the pen is a metaphorical penis, from what organ can females generate texts?” (Gilbert and Gubar 6-7) to which Elaine Showalter answers saying, “ Women generate texts from the brain or that the word-processor with its compactly coded microchips, its inputs and outputs, is a metaphorical womb” (Wood 332). In her 1978 book, *Gyn/Ecology*, the American Feminist Theologian Mary Dally wrote one of the most radical essentialist accounts of gender relations. Like Beauvoir, she argued that religion, law and science were all methods of patriarchal control working to define and limit women. She even said that the image of ‘God the father’ was constructed to validate the rule of the father in patriarchy.

Perhaps Rosie the protagonist in the novel *The Guide* (1958) comes across as a prototype of the New Woman. She is the daughter of a temple dancer but does not follow in her mother’s footsteps. She is depicted as an assertive woman who marries a rich man Marco to escape the stigma of her community and for the social prestige that she would enjoy which comes with her husband’s respectable position.

Rosie’s dreams of a happy married life are thwarted by Marco’s complete indifference towards Rosie and conjugal life. Marco’s utter neglect of Rosie and bitter quarrels between them rekindles her desire to become a Bharatnatyam Dancer and get a sense of purpose in life. The next step that she takes is what makes her a precursor to all the rebellious women protagonists in Indian Fiction in English. Since love and acceptance are denied to her, she decides to chart her own course. This can be taken as the beginnings of Rosie’s revolt. During their visit to Malgudi, Marco leaves Rosie who finds comfort in the company of

Raju, a tourist guide. It results in an intimacy between the two. One day Rosie confesses to Marco that she had an extra marital affair with Raju. Rosie would have put the blame on Marco had she been asked to justify it. She had the audacity to say sorry for the act, but Marco did not forgive her. She goes out of the conventional circle of marital purity in revolt, since perhaps, “It was men invented virginity, not women” (Faulkner 50). Earlier she had told Raju, “Don’t trouble me. I don’t want to come with you. Leave me alone” (Narayan 72). Both men-Marco and Raju in her life took her as a mere body.

A close reading reveals that the novel is not as much about Raju, as it is about Rosie as an emerging woman in a phallogocentric society. Raju is ‘possessed’ by Rosie. When she hears the final words of separation from Marco, “I am trying to forget even the earlier fact that I took a wife”, Rosie rationalizes, “Even Othello was kinder to Desdemona” (Narayan 152). SanthaKrishnaswami claims, “The problem is posed, the resolution is left to conjecture, [...] the seed of woman’s rebellion has been sown” (Krishnaswamy 120).

Anita Desai novels are women oriented. She is an avowedly subjective writer who portrays the picture of a new woman as a victim first, as a fighter, as a heroine and finally as a victor due to her resilient spirit.

Maya, the protagonist in *Cry The Peacock*, is married to Gautama who, being extremely involved in his profession, has hardly any time for her. *Cry, the Peacock* is as much about Maya as it is about patriarchy, male ego and male chauvinistic attitudes. Maya finds herself as a caged bird. When she finds that her emotional needs are neglected, her physical wants are unattended, she takes to solitude and silence as her weapon for revolt. When she was married, an astrologer had predicted the death of either her or her husband. She killed Gautama by pushing him off the parapet. We can interpret that the act of pushing him off the parapet, resulting in his death, is because she wants to be definitely sure whether the death prophecy was meant for her or for her husband, so that she can have a peaceful domestic life. She looked to be relieved after this incident. “No one, no one else loves me as my father does, in Gautama’s family, one did not speak of love, far less of affection.” (Desai *Cry the Peacock*

43) “I was their toy, their indulgence, not to be taken seriously.” (45)

The next woman character we take up for analysis is Nanda Kaul, the protagonist in *Fire in the Mountain* (1977). The word ‘fire’ in the title is symbolic of Nanda’s anger (burning like fire!), resentment and revenge towards her husband in particular and family in general. We are told that she has decided to go to the mountains at Carignano in Kasauli, preferring solitude; and uses detachment as a weapon against injustice done to her by her husband’s infidelity. She goes to an isolated space chosen by her as a powerful weapon to protect herself against a world where her emotions and sentiments have been abused by her husband who has been the Vice - Chancellor of the Punjab University and also a symbol of a hard-core patriarchy.

Again, Anita Desai’s novel *Voices in the City* is critiqued for the element of feminine defiance. Monisha, the protagonist, tells her sister, “Amla, always go in the opposite direction.” (Desai *Voices in the City* 160). *Voices in the City*, other than its having the nihilistic approach, can also be regarded as a significant discourse on modern Indian feminism. Anita Desai here fashions a culturally and historically specific text that partakes in creating new feminist ideology in Indian literature written in English. This work insistently questions and opposes the quintessential feminine ideal rooted in Hindu mythology. Desai documents the traditional structure of patriarchy. Her protagonist Monisha dismantles the old mythologies and iconic presentations of women as subservient, self sacrificing and chaste by her feminine defiance, and Desai by creating an oppositional female character and by adopting Kali as the reigning goddess of her novel, presents recusant images of Indian femininity.

The prototypical Indian woman she has been, both wife and mother, who formerly was also active in her empirical existence, but her roles and contribution have not been recognized, more so by her husband who has been unfaithful. Therefore, she has decided to revolt. Nanda, in the manner of a goddess, stands tall and erect, her dark sari emphasizing the austerity and sparseness of her life, in tune with the stark rocks that surround her. She almost constitutes a law unto herself, living as did Lord Shiva, the fashioner of the world, outside of linear space and time.

Resembling Shiva's consort Parvati, Nanda Kaul too embodies feminine creative energy. Let us recall, it was Parvati who provided Shiva with sakti- power. Nanda Kaul uses this power to take revenge upon others.

Shashi Deshpande is another leading and strong feminist writer. In the novel *That Long Silence* (1988), as in others, man-woman relationship becomes the focal point of exploration. The elements of revolt are clear. Her characters offer a great deal of biting and bitter experiences, come up to overcome the sense of pessimism, doom and defeatism.

The protagonist in this novel is Jaya (The one who is a victor) who fights for her identity and self. She wants to break the stereotype of house wife roles. That it is a revolt writing is justified by what the novelist herself had to say, "And I wrote *That Long Silence*, almost entirely a woman's novel, nevertheless, a book silencing of one half of humanity: A lifetime introspection went in this novel, the one closest to my personality, the thinking and ideas in this are closest to my own." (Jain 210)

In *Socialite Evenings* (1989), Shobha De has created a strong woman Karuna and describes her journey from a middle-class family girl to a self sufficient Bombay Socialite. From her early childhood she had learnt to do things which the society considered wrong and evil. Everything she does is a protest against the phallogocentric world. She, as other De's protagonists, knows the significance of power, the economic power to control men.

Her friend Anjali was threatened by Karuna's growing popularity when Karuna developed an infatuation towards a famous ad-film maker. Karuna made a short trip to New York. After coming from there, she broke off her relationship with her boyfriend, telling him, "You know space, I know my own space. I feel claustrophobic. I need to find myself" (De 55). Just like Virginia Woolf's notion of women's freedom and space, Karuna needs to create a room and space for herself. Acquiring freedom and establishing her identity was more important than just acquiring boyfriends.

Being Shobha De's woman, Karuna is more concerned about her

economic status, precious stones and bank balances than sustaining the ethics and morality related to matrimonial in phallogocentric society. She even once said that she had married a wrong person, for the wrong reason at a wrong time. “Why she married me I shall never know” (De, 65). She speaks blatantly. She knew that her body was only a commodity, “And that made me realize that I wasn’t wife material” (70). What Anjali speaks about men serves De’s purpose, “Men just feel terribly threatened by self-sufficient women” (69).

In *Jasmine*, Bharati Mukherjee presents a woman protagonist of the same name. Mukherjee fictionalizes the process of Americanization by tracing a young Indian woman’s experiences of patriarchal subjugation, trauma and later of triumph in her attempt to forge a new identity for herself. Her childhood name is Jyoty (a light to the world!). After she is married, she is known as Jasmine and from Jasmine to Jase and from Jase to Jane. Apart from facing racial discrimination in an alien land, she also faces sexual harassment, and is also raped. As a part of ‘purification’ and retaliation, she murders her rapist. Due to this retaliatory measure, Karuna has been compared to the goddess Kali. She speaks of the revenge she took upon the rapist, “I extended my tongue, and sliced it. Hot blood dropped immediately.....ribbons of bright blood rushed between his finger.....[I] began stabbing wildly through the cloth, as the human form beneath it got smaller and smaller.” (Mukherjee 106) Projected as a strong woman, Jasmine revolts against fate and conventions at every juncture. Her freedom loving spirit surfaces to the forefront throughout and she clearly emerges as a rebel, an adapter and a survivor.

A sizeable body of Indian writing in English is centered around the men-women-money-marriage motif. Manju Kapur’s *A Married Woman* (2003) is the latest and strongest protest narrative. The cultural norms and mythology, the ideals of femininity and the ‘fixed’ place of women are some factors which have not allowed women to express their suppressed feelings. Therefore, a woman is forced to accept unconsciously her status as a subordinate in the phallogocentric hegemony.

In the Indian context, a woman has lesser chances of making choices in decision making. What Astha, the protagonist, does with marriage in A

Married Woman goes a long way in demystifying marriage and dismantling the 'roles' of married women. The novelist exposes through Astha the realities, losses and traps. She has been portrayed as one who has understood the need of change.

Very much like her western counterparts, she chooses a man to marry, begets children and much against her husband and family, falls in love with a woman named Pipee. Through Astha's move, Manju Kapur intends to expose the existing tension with an intention to revolt. A man's approach to marriage in the patriarchal society is different from that of a woman's and it can be better comprehended by what Lord Byron has said about the asymmetrical nature of love of a man and of a woman that love is of man's life, a thing apart; it is woman's whole existence.

Gradually, as Astha sensed that there was no reciprocal love, she started distancing herself from the man she married. When Hemant, the husband, was not happy with their girl child Anuradha, merely for being a female child, Astha, though shocked, said, "It is not in our hand, at least not mine. It is the man's chromosome that decides the sex" (Kapur 61).

When she comes in contact with Aizaz, the founder of the Street Theatre Group, she sees possibilities of flying. She "suddenly glimpsed possibilities, suddenly her life seemed less constricted" (115). She also said tentatively, "It may not be a bad thing, if marriage is terrible, it is good to be able to leave" (168). Now she thinks of her name- Faith. Faith in herself. "It was all she had" (299).

She travels a weird track, making her journey a unique one, since it takes a life time to possess a place of one's own. She refuses to be the object of desire. She goes in the opposite direction.

Mythological and cultural idealization has kept women subordinated, in which women have no alternative but to be complicit in their servitude. Conventional roles have the Indian women bound hand and foot, and to rebel against it, it would mean that a woman is questioning the myth, at tacking the culture, and that cannot be permitted. Myth is the cornerstone on which the Indian family and society is built. But what we see is that

the women characters in these novels have ample signs of going in the opposite direction. The elements of revolt and feminine defiance call the critical attention of the readers of Indian writing in English. Again, that there are many female writers in Indian Fiction in English, in the post-independence era, is a justification that there exists some real and critical problems that need to be resolved not only in fiction but also in reality. Therefore, these women writers have created some life- like women protagonists who dare to go in the opposite direction. These unforgettable characters have one common objective- to dismantle the mythological and idealized image of women, and to create a New Woman, the one who is a rebel and revolutionary. This New Woman is aiming at Gynocentric narration of her past and even of her future.

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Colonialism and Christianity: A Postcolonial Reading of Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill*

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Abstract

The paper analyses Colonization and Missionary Zeal and the relationship between the two concepts treated by Mamang Dai in the novel *Black hill* from a post-colonial perspective. It also analyses how the noble purpose of missionaries about enlightening the savage hill tribes and Tibetans of Sommeu brought unintentional violence the territories. Mamang Dai *The Black Hill* is concerned with the themes of colonization of Northeast India and unstoppable Missionary Zeal. The novel depicts British colonization of Assam and their repeated attempts to conquer hill territories, confronting hill tribes who were always hostile to strangers. Father Nicholas Krick, a French priest is an exemplary figure that represents Missionary Zeal. His determination to reach Tibet to build a Church to spread Christianity shows his commitment to Mission and duty assigned by Paris Foreign Mission and the "White Man's Burden". The attempt to befriend unfriendly and hostile hill tribes of Northeast India by spreading Christianity is one of the soft methods of colonization. The vehement resistance by the hill tribes and the severe punitive expeditions of the British also showed that colonization of Northeast India was not an easy task for the British. The violent resistance and warfare of the tribes against the British also showed tribal integrity, rootedness, and importance of land in their lives.

Keywords:

British colonization, conflicts, missionary zeal, proselytization

Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill* depicts colonization of Northeast India and unstoppable Missionary Zeal. The novel depicts emergence of British as an authority in the region and the use of historical records and documents makes it a historical novel which is mixed with her imagination and of the tribes. Based on historical documents, Dai traces the process of colonization of the region since 1826. The characterization of Father Nicholas Krick is based on colonial records and the author's interviews with senior tribal citizens. She has also taken liberty to add her imagination and creation of other characters with her gripping narrative skills. The novel primarily concerns itself with two major aspects - colonization and missionary zeal. Dai depicts the conflicts between British and hill tribes in the process of former's attempt to colonize the regions and latter's attempt to resist. The vehement resistance and bravery of hill tribes compelled the British to think on another method of colonization. Perhaps, the British authority in Assam aided the journey of Father Nicholas Krick through the tribal territory to know tribal ideology and impose European or British ideology. Father Nicholas Krick wished to explain how superior their God was and what the tribes worshipped was primitive nonsense. He tried to befriend the hill tribes by showing that white people were not their enemy. When their attempt was a total failure which ended with their death, the British authority in Assam took the full responsibility to punish the hill tribes by raiding and killing.

Father Nicholas Krick, a French priest is an exemplary figure representing Missionary Zeal. His determination to reach Tibet to build a Church to spread Christianity shows his commitment and also the commitment of Paris Foreign Mission to spread holy gospel to the unexplored regions of the globe. It also symbolizes "White Man's Burden" to enlighten the savages. The simple people of tribal territories and that of Sommeu did not have inimical feeling towards French priests but they heard about the colonization of Assam and they rightly felt that "once the priests come, the British, with their guns and their garrisons will follow". Dai has also narrated how systematic and determined the missionaries were in spreading Christianity around the globe. They targeted the unexplored regions of the globe and also the regions where there was already established religion. In 1658 the Society of Foreign Missions of

Paris had been founded with the appointment of the first Vicar Apostolic to Asia, followed by the setting up of a seminary in Paris which sought to convert non-believers and impart training and preparation for missionary work in Asia and countries around the Indian Ocean (Dai 13). In October 1848 at the age of twenty-nine, Nicholas Krick arrived at the Missions Etrangères de Paris, Rue du Bac, Paris to start his journey for Mission Tibet and complete the formalities of a candidate.

It was an age of Christian martyrs, and Tibet remained an unexplored area of the globe that "lured explorers, merchants and priests as if it was preordained that men would leave everything and fall to a spell blowing like a fierce wind from a distant world that called with such insistence that they could not do more than submit, set sail, struggle to find a route through the glittering pinnacles of ice into the secret heart of that world, or perish in the attempt" (Dai 14). Father Nicholas Krick was one of them who volunteered himself in the service of God whose commitment made him oblivious of others' religion and tradition. Father Krick had extraordinary commitment and could "not rest until he felt every prayer and sermon was imbued with the original, passionate conviction of his vocation in the service of God". He was seeking an experience of the passionate union with the divine that would come only through the path of love and service. And for that he decided to leave the comforts of life by dedicating himself to the service of God. Before he started his journey his every hour of prayer was a preparation for voyage, a tidying up of things, a constant farewell to the grounds, tender flowers and green grass of his home, a strengthening resolve to travel out in the name of God- to live another life "over there" (Dai 15). He regarded his suffering and shame as an assignment of God for certain purposes, "The time we are given is not in our hands. It belongs to God. The words we did not say, the things we could not do...Even the suffering and same we live through have their purpose. Not my will, oh Lord, but thine..." (Dai 247). His mission was Tibet and he knew that God would open the way. On arriving in Guwahati he looked at the hills surrounding the town like an amphitheatre, and he wanted to break out and follow the river into those mountains that would lead to Tibet. His mission was to spread the message of Jesus Christ and to convert the Tibetans into Christianity.

But the irony of the situation was that people of Sommeu had their own established religion and they did not like any strangers in their land. The French priest could not convert a single Tibetan soul but tried his best by befriending and explaining them. Father Krick's first journey was troublesome, received with hostility and threats but he did not give up his second attempt which ended with his death.

Colonisation and Missionary activities often tend to go together. In the nineteenth century Britain had risen as the dominant power and the British East India Company with its merchants, soldiers and naval fleet was playing a pivotal role in restoring Christian communities in China and other eastern lands. Manchu was defeated by the British in the First Opium War and the Nanjing Treaty of 1842 ended the isolation of China with the separation of Hong Kong Island that paved the way for the opening of the Chinese market to western nations. The treaty of Whampoa in 1844 granted commercial privileges to France with access to certain ports and free travel and missions in China. France also secured an edict of tolerance from the Chinese emperor that would permit Christian missionaries back into China (Dai 14). Father Krick's journey to Tibet was also aided by British colonialists in India. When the Directors of the Society of Foreign Mission of Paris found difficult to enter the Southern Tibet through China, they decided to send Father Krick through India, because "India was ruled by the British and there was greater opportunity here if not to find a route into Tibet, than to discuss the matter with Thomas Oliffe, coadjutor of the Vicar Apostolic of Bengal" (Dai 38). Even Thomas Oliffe, coadjutor of the Vicar Apostolic of Bengal offered Assam province to Society of Foreign Mission of Paris to include in their mission in Lassa. When they reached Assam, they got friendly and warm reception of British authority.

The arrival of British colonialists and missionaries brought conflicts between British and traditional system of administrations and also conflicts over resources. The British began extending protection to the Saniwals and Beheas, the gold washers and fishermen, who came up from the plains for profit. The Abor did not like this occupation of British on their resources and mounted a raid on a British garrison and kidnapped three Saniwals. It was in retaliation that the British had burned the offending

village and demanded the return of Saniwals". In 1839, a group of Khamti rebels of the Suddya Khawa Gohain, aided by the Singpho and Mishmee tribes, attacked the British stockade (Dai 22), but the rebels were crushed with 'divide and rule' policy of the British. Before the arrival of British the tribes had intermittent warfare among themselves but the British arrival brought large scale violence and destruction.

The arrival of missionaries also brought confrontations between two systems of Beliefs- Christian and Indigenous. Marpa's exchange with Kajinsha shows his belief in their own religion in particular and the beliefs of the people of Sommeu in general, "These are the texts that are thousands of years old, written and passed down from generation to generation but it will not interest you because you do not know what religion is, what a script is. It is what makes us strong and invincible. It is what keeps us safe from strangers" (Dai 229).

Krick's mission to build a church in Tibet was met with mixed responses. The common people needed treatment of unknown diseases and the authority did not want any strangers in their territory. Krick and his fellow priest Bourry tried to befriend the tribes with "Medicine and music" (Dai 231). Renou wrote from Szechwan that "knowledge of medicine and vaccines would endear the missionaries to the indigenous population. This would pave the way for the spread of the holy gospel" (Dai 39). It is the missionary zeal and the commitment of Father Krick to that mission brought disturbance in the territories of hill tribes. In the punitive expedition as a revenge for the killing of two French priests many of Kajinsha's "relatives and sons" were killed in open combat, his people dispersed and Kajinsha was taken to Debrooghur jail (Dai 265) and was executed. Immediately on his return from Mebo, Eden and his troops of twenty Assam Light Infantry and forty Khamti volunteers and porters had marched from Suddya across the patch of dense forests towards the hills (Dai 264). The presence of French priests also dwindled the relationship between Tibet and Mishmee and Abor territories. The authority of Sommeu held Kajinsha responsible for showing the French priest the way to Tibet.

Kajinsha did not expect Father Krick's second arrival in Sommeu.

He believed in peace and love. He found Krick's God and his mission Tibet responsible for his death. Kajinsha had concern for the safety and security of his territory. He did not like any strangers in his territory but out of the humanitarian feeling he showed the way to Tibet. He always tried to help the priests in their return to Assam, but their second arrival angered him. Now look what has happened, just because of your stupid God and your Tibet! Tibet! Now you are dead! Where is your God now? He had his own belief system who believed in the existence of gods in the stream, trees, rocks and caves. While judging Father Krick's notion of his own God Kajinsha showed rational thought, "What does it matter what a man believes, if it is the same or different from your beliefs, as long as he has a life that he knows and loves?" For him, it is the life that matters, and when someone has zeal of living, the safety of life becomes utmost important.

Everyone of hill tribes became suspicious about the arrival of white-skinned strangers in their territory, "What was it they wanted, so far away from home? What hungers drove them?" (Dai 21). The news of colonization of Assam and the power of British made them concerned about the security of their territories. But they also had humanitarian feeling, and perhaps it was the soft feeling of tribes that the British wanted to use for colonial purpose. The mistake of showing the priests the way to Tibet created confusion between Sommeu authority and hill tribes that brought destruction in the hill territories and tragic death of Kajinsha. It can be concluded that missionary zeal and colonization and their moral and physical support to each other is the cause of tragedy in the novel.

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Blend of Naturalism and Expressionism In Arthur Miller's "Death of A Salesman"

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Abstract :

Naturalism and expressionism are the two important characteristic features of modern American drama and Arthur Miller, one of the most important playwrights of modern American drama, reflects the note of naturalism and expressionism in almost all his plays specially in his masterpiece "Death of a Salesman". In his Introduction to the 'COLLECTED PLAYS', Miller hints at his involvement with the three stylistic modes prevalent in modern drama: the realistic, the expressionistic, and the rhetorical. "I have stood squarely in conventional Naturalism" he declares acknowledging Ibsen's impact on himself. And his most important play "Death of a Salesman" is one of the greatest American plays. Its popularity in America is explained by the fact that its theme is related closely to the social realities of life in that country. It is also essentially a modernistic play and it makes a powerful impression upon the reader because of its naturalism and pathos. The aim of the paper is to throw light on how these two features naturalism and expressionism are blended in Miller's "Death of a Salesman".

Keywords :

Naturalism, Expressionism, Salesman, Disjointed, Con-currency, Skeletal Setting, Retrospective etc.

Introduction: -

Arthur Miller is an American playwright who came to the scene after the Second world war. Born in 1915 in a Jewish Middle-Class family, Miller was educated at the University of Michigan where he distinguished himself in Journalism and playwrighting. At present, he ranks with Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams as one of three foremost playwrights of America. He is popular playwright because he has the touch of common

speech mingled with democratic idealism, poetic expression and an ancient people's capacity for understanding the anguish of the soul. Miller's first Broadway play "The man who had All the Luck" (1944) ran for only one week; but his next "All My Sons" (1947) was very successful, winning the New York Critic's Circle Award. "Death of a Salesman" (1949) established him as a major dramatist, and this and "The Crucible" (1953) are now the acknowledged classics of the modern theatre. "Death of a Salesman" presents a realistic evaluation of American Values. Its Naturalism is fairly obvious, and reflects the influence of Ibsen, the great realist reformer on Miller. Other realists may satisfy themselves by just observing and depicting the reality, but Miller goes beyond that. If there is an evil, he hits at it with a reformer's zeal. "Death of a salesman" is an expressionist reconstruction of naturalist substance, and the result is no hybrid but a powerful particular form. The continuity from social expressionism remains clear. The play is a tragedy in which past and present are mingled in expressionistic scenes involving a middle-aged travelling Salesman who, after an unsuccessful attempt to start out on still another selling trip, has Just returned home.

Main Thrust :

Naturalism is a deepening or radicalization of literary realism, with which it is sometimes confused, and is a reaction against romanticism, which dominated the literary scene since the 18th century. Naturalism rejects imaginative idealization in favour of a close observation of outward appearances. As such Naturalism in its broad sense has comprised many artistic currents in different civilizations. Expressionism refers to art in which the image of reality is distorted in order to make it expressive of the artist's inner feelings or ideas. Thus, while Naturalism is all about representing things in a realistic way and often focuses on everyday life, expressionism expresses people's inner world, focussing on emotions rather than external realities. As was mentioned before, while Miller uses realistic characters in exploring the theme of the American Dream, the plot and style of the play more closely exemplify the playwright's use of expressionism. These two aspects are linked together in Miller's "Death of a Salesman".

"Death of a Salesman" is regarded by some as the best American play

stance "A Streetcar Named Desire" • America can boast of Arthur Miller and Tennessee William as a part of its contribution to the theatre. "Death of a Salesman" exhibits all the most characteristics of Miller's playwriting in their plainest and most emphatic form. The realistic technique demands that an appearance of real-life situations is presented on the stage. The audience, as it were, is looking into a room, the fourth wall of which has been removed to enable them to watch what is going on. Action, according to this technique, is to be based on chronological time, dialogue should appear to be such that it could be heard in any comparable situation; and a Naturalism of strict logic should move events to a climax in the final act. Miller, in writing "Death of a Salesman", derived part of technique from his study of the plays of Henrik Ibsen, a Norwegian dramatist. Miller believed that 'the hero was a person who acted as a moment when others would remain silent or retire'. Drama, according to Miller, illustrates a process of behaviour in which the hero at a crucial moment acts when those around him, if in a comparable situation, would not act.

In his introduction to one of his expressionist plays, the dramatist August Strindberg wrote that he had tried to imitate the disjointed but apparently logical form of a dream. "Anything may happen, everything is possible and probable. Time and space do not exist, on an insignificant ground-work of reality, imagination spins and weaves new patterns: a mixture of memories, experiences, fancies, absurdities, and improvisations." Thus, time and space are dissolved and logical process is abandoned, as in a dream, so that imaginations may more freely dramatize the complexities and contradictions of Willy Loman's consciousness. Miller wanted to unveil the inside of Willy's head, to project Willy's inner reality. This aim obviously derives from expressionist drama.

But in this play 'Death of a Salesman', as Miller tried to find ways of showing the process of Willy's mind, a strange thing happened. But in writing this play, as Miller tried to find ways of showing the process the Willy's mind, a strange thing happened. The two European traditions & naturalism and expressionism merged. The firm reality of Ibsen's method remained, but this was blended with the dream-sequences of past life existing in the present. These dream-sequences were a derivation from expressionist drama. The stage- setting expresses Willy's divided consciousness. Time

and space may exist for the surrounding apartment houses and their inmates, but may be dissolved within the reality of the Loman home: Reality dissolves for Willy at certain points in the play, and the dream-like remembrances of the past give further 'expressionist' dramatization to his divided consciousness. Miller sees Willy as living, "at that terrible moment when the voice of the past is no longer distant but quite as loud as the voice of the present". The dream-sequences generally regarded as flack backs, have been explained by Miller not as flashbacks but as "a mobile concurrency of past and present" intended to show that in his desperation to justify his life, Willy Loman has destroyed the boundaries between now and then.

Conclusion :

Thus, we see that the play "Death of a Salesman" is concerned with the blending of two literary theories Viz. Naturalism and Expressionism. Miller blends these techniques to convey the tragedy of Willy Loman all the more poignantly. It brings out effectively Willy's loss of grip on reality, his living in the past and building castles in the air which have little relevance to the hard of the present. "Death of a Salesman", with its skeletal setting, non-realistic lighting, musical locomotive, and free movement in time and space suggests expressionism, but it may be pointed out that these elements involve no distortion of reality. Actually, Miller goes a step beyond Ibsen in the use of delayed exposition, or retrospective action. The dramatic devices line lighting, used by Miller in this play are part of the expressionist technique.

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Singing the Body Precarious: A Reading of Violence and Vulnerability in Tishani Doshi's *Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods*

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Abstract

The title of this paper is framed by two different borrowings. While its syntax constitutes a visible debt to the title of Walt Whitman's well-known poem 'I Sing the Body Electric' contained in his 1855 volume *Leaves of Grass*, its semantic use of the word 'precarious' is significantly derived from the title of Judith Butler's 2004 book *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. Contextualizing the poetic oeuvre of Tishani Doshi within this framework of the glorious celebration of the human body on the one hand and the recognition, on the other, of its essential fragility, precarity and vulnerability in a world inevitably, not to say indelibly, marked by violence, shall assume the subject of this paper. Confining its focus to Doshi's third poetic collection *Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods* (2017), this paper shall attempt to draw attention to the thematic motif of violence and bodily vulnerability that, in consonance with Doshi's lush and majestically sweeping command over idiom, etches in these poems a memorable poetics of love and loss.

Keywords: *body, precarious, violence, vulnerability, love, loss*

When so much can be vanished
so silently into the dark teeth of sleep,
tell me, wouldn't you fear for your life?

What it is. What it might become.

(Tishani Doshi, 'Fear Management', 15)

To engage with the muse of poet-dancer-columnist-novelist Tishani Doshi

is to open oneself to fully embrace the unthought-of propensities of the free verse form. It is to be prepared to be awed by the vital agility of language, its urgent epistemological explorations, and its lush reaching out to signification. Reading Doshi's poetry involves a willingness to surrender oneself to the unimagined onslaught of everyday emotions, to be assaulted unexpectedly by the unforgiving commonplace, and to be exposed to the unsettling vision of relentless erosion of self and the world that each lived existential moment implicitly invites us to participate in. To read Doshi is to be brought closer to oneself and to the corporeal reality of our vulnerability as humans, and in their realistic, uncompromising evocation of love and loss, each of her poems becomes both glorious ode and graceful elegy to the wondrous humdrumness of our being in the world. In Doshi's poetry more than anywhere else, there is an acute consciousness of the quiet but unceasing march of biological time, a poignant watermarking of the gradual ushering of our biological clocks towards temporal disintegration, and a mature philosophical acceptance of the inevitability of death towards which the ship of each life is afloat. As Sumana Roy writes in her review of the volume, "... Doshi's poems live on this awareness—that to be alive is to allow oneself to be dismembered, our bodies, our relationships, the things we own, our memories." (*Livemint*)

To write poetry is, as Doshi states in her interview with Saima Afreen, an attempt to "arrive at some kind of truth". "People," she states, "don't know that they need poetry, but they do. Poetry has that power to change something. I believe in it. Poetry offers optimism in the middle of war, negativity. It transforms." (The New Indian Express) In her interview with Shreya Ila Anasuya also, Doshi upholds poetry as "a quiet centre that holds something up to the light, even if it's momentary. There is something about the distillation that poetry does, which could offer us an alternative vision." (Helter Skelter) And indeed, all the forty-one poems in *Girls are Coming Out of the Woods*, through their various expressions of the ephemerality, the nebulousness and of the rich possibilities of life, affirm at their centre a sincere poetic voice that strives to be an honest interpreter of life and an empathetic and thoughtful explorer of the disparate pieces of our souls, and of our pasts, presents and futures. Her poems, says Doshi in her interview with Nair, are "about making

connection, grappling with what you receive from the outside, and this works across time – backward, forward, sideways.” (The Open Magazine) For Doshi then, poetry manifests itself as a ceaseless attempt to create meaning in a difficult, often disturbing and inscrutable world and is, as the very first piece of the volume, ‘Contract’ avers, no idle, leisurely musing, constituting rather, a serious commitment to render to the reader the undiminished and unflinching truth of experience. The poet must suffer loss acutely and at first-hand – “forgo happiness,/ stab myself repeatedly,/ and lower my head into countless ovens” (1) in order to be able to speak the truth about it, and even then, the truth must be made palatable so that the reader may live “seized with wonder”. (1) Militating against violence, indifference and apathy – both temporal and social, her poetry has, as Doshi asserts, “been working for years/ to harden itself against the axe” and in digging for truth through experience, both real and vicarious, the poet has “lost so many limbs to war, so many/eyes and hearts to romance”. (2) However, wooed with love, the poet promises to be a faithful companion, to stand by her readers through “downfall and resurrection”, like “twins, our blood/ thumping after each other/ like thunder and lightning”, hastening them forwards “towards fury, towards incandescence”. (2) For Doshi, empathy constitutes the keyword to being a poet and it is only through heightened empathy that the poet can inhabit a world in which “Flowers had names and/ purpose. Small birds/the shape of scars/ made nests in braziers/ of sky.” (‘When I Was Still a Poet, 95) An abandonment of poetry on the other hand, brings about an imaginative impoverishment of the world – “afternoons dry/ as raisin skins scrub/ by. Thieves approach./ Dogs bark. Love springs/ from dirt like carrots.” (95)

In her entire poetic oeuvre ranging over her three collections of poems, *Countries of the Body* (2006), *Everything Comes From Elsewhere* (2013) and *Girls are Coming Out of the Woods* (2017), there is a ceaseless obsession with testing, transmitting and making sense of experience through the corporeal dimensions of the body – both its entitled freedoms and its embodied limitations, in order to arrive at some viable truth that makes life worthier and more livable. The acknowledgement of the sheer physicality of our being, the consciousness of the mutability of the human body and of our particular embodied existence in the world occupies

central place in the poetics of Doshi for whom, as she states in her interview with Asmita Bakshi, most of what she sees is shaped “through the prism of being a woman, through the anatomy that is my own, through my experiences of being a woman in the world”. (India Today) For Doshi, being in all its physicality – vital, flawed and declining, must be urgently negotiated with and responded to, and one clearly discerns in her oeuvre a phenomenological belief in the body as an indispensable part of the locus of one’s perception and spatiality. Borrowing from her dance, Doshi’s poems completely inhabit the corporeality they emerge from and explore it with honesty, devotion, commitment, not to say curiosity, to find, foster and reach unmapped epistemological terrains. As has been pointed out by several of Doshi’s reviewers and as Doshi herself states in her interview with Rodrigues, her third volume has at its centre “the female body, questions about motherhood, mortality, gender violence and ageing”, (The NavhindTimes) and in this, more than Doshi’s two former volumes, it crafts an exquisite poetics of the limited and perishable human body.

Unlike in much of corporeal poetry by women, the body that makes its presence felt in Doshi’s poems is not the sexual body asserting identity, independence or desire but the commonplace human body, vulnerable in all its anatomic, pathologic and gerontologic weaknesses. Recalcitrant and self-willed, it is an unexceptional and quotidian body that remains imperviously unfaithful to our adolescent fancies of desirable shapes, that falls and crashes against floors, breaks ribs, develops crushes, falls in love, fears for its well-being, gives itself up to grief, to loss, sprouts white hair and deep wrinkles, is dependent on drugs and medication, dreads an unremarkable death and which in ultimate non-living disintegrates, decomposes and in yielding to an avalanche of minor forms of life “morphs from man to farm.” (Love in the Time of Autolysis, 32) Often ungendered in its poetic evocation, this body, however, is permeated with the distinct consciousness of female embodiment and her poems, as Doshi insists in her interview with Priyanka Shankar have much to do with “being a woman of a certain age”. (Deccan Chronicle) Karthika Nair also marvels at the centrality within the collection of the “erasure” and “decay” of the body which she finds the poet chronicling “with the attention of a clinical pathologist”, even celebrating it “with tenderness and grim humour” (The

Open Magazine) so much so that the volume appears to be a manifestation of the body's precarious finitude. For Doshi, as she tells Nair, it is being at the age of life that she finds herself in and the perspective on it that is offered to her by her home on a remote beach in a small fishing village in Tamil Nadu that shapes her vision of the precarity and vulnerability of life:

There's this romantic idea of what beach life must be, but the reality of coastal life, at least my coastal life in Tamil Nadu, is that you're brought very close to death. And the presence of decay in the most basic things, like one morning you walk down and the kitchen lights have fallen down because the wires were corroded. The hinges on the gate to the beach give up the ghost every four months. Dolphins, dogs, turtles, awash on the shore, dead. And so watching that slow decomposition makes you wonder naturally about the slow decomposition that's happening inside your own body. (*The Open Magazine*)

This slow decomposition, continuous and inevitable, finds its place in poem after poem in constant succession in *Girls are Coming Out of the Woods*. Thus, in 'Disco Biscuits', the poet, poignantly conscious of "time cracking at his knees", writes:

...because when you're young you don't know that your bones have been giving way the second you were born. So you give, and your giving's large and uncalculated. But then there's the haunting. And how it works is a kind of time warp that bitch-slaps you when you're at your innocent best... (40)

In 'Dinner Conversations', the reader is unsparingly reminded of the pathological haunting of our lives:

The years grow drowsy on antibiotics
and you'd think we'd be counting our beloveds
just to make sure they've still got teeth in their skulls. (64)

In 'The Leather of Love', the sense of loss in love and life is once again expressed through a haunting sense of physical decline and dissociation:

And when we lie in bed and talk
of the body's failings, of the petulant dead, of
disenchantment and insufficient passion,
we're chewing through fears so thick our
teeth are beginning to rust. (66)

In Doshi's oeuvre, the obsession with truth drawn from and tested by corporeal being is all too closely felt and in each of her poems in this collection, it is the subjective physical body which becomes the testing ground for desire, love, loss and even futility, its constantly-changing spatio-temporal location becoming for her the roots from which the poet's flexible identity is derived. In her interview with Anasuya, Doshi states:

I think we all carry our identities quite heavily around with us, and I feel we should break them. I read somewhere that every seven years every cell in our body is replaced, so we essentially become new human beings, and even if it's not true I like the idea of it, because while identity is important, it is also a kind of cage that fixes upon us. (*Helter Skelter*)

For Doshi who describes herself, as in her interview with Anasuya, as "this half-Welsh, half-Indian, poet-dancer who lives in a beach in Tamil Nadu and loves dogs", (*Helter Skelter*) who has always relished the position of the outsider wherever she has lived in, and would like to be looked upon, as she tells Shankar, "as though I've drifted in from elsewhere", the idea of belonging is "always in transition". (*Deccan Chronicle*) For her, therefore, the body that offers possibilities of transformation and resurrection with every passing day becomes the creative site that the artist in her inhabits and expresses from. So whether it is love, pain, longing, violence, nostalgia, philosophy or even poetry that Doshi's poems deal with, the motif of the human body consistently watermarks her poetics. In 'Summer in Madras', the poet brings out how an acute consciousness of the body can only lead to pain. In the poem, "rivers break their dams" against Mother's nerves, Father offers "pieces of his skin" to gulmohars, while Husband must stuff his ears "with desiccated mango husks" to keep at bay the "advancing armies of the past". However, while "everyone in the house is dying" in intimate summer connection with the truth of their

corporeality, it is only the Brother, “most lackadaisical of all” whose dissociation of consciousness from his body leaves him carefree - singing, as he toys with death’s umbrella, blissfully impervious to the aches of mortality. (5) In ‘How to be Happy in 101 Days’, Doshi again talks of renewing one’s essential connections with the body, her philosophy of being in the world asserting itself in the principle, ‘I feel; therefore I am’:

... Find a forest
to disappear in. Look for thirst-quenching
plants. Rub the smooth globes of their roots
in your palms before biting into their hearts.
Lean backwards and listen to the slippery
bastard of your own arrhythmic heart.
Remind yourself that you feel pain,
therefore you must be alive. (11)

It is because the body constitutes the essential medium of feeling and experiencing the world, and the mandatory material portal through which human communion with the external world is established, the physical body also establishes itself as a vital site of human vulnerability. Thus, while the body in Doshi’s poetry is forever disintegrating in tune to its own inescapable rhythms of mortality, it is equally, and more lethally and alarmingly, open to harm and destruction through everyday acts of violence in our world. “Look at the news,” states Doshi in her interview with Anasuya:

Today, it’s Gauri Lankesh. But for every second of every day there is a stifling, if not in this country, then in another. And these acts are condemned as horrific and animalistic, when in fact animals don’t do this kind of thing to each other. They kill to eat. They don’t revel in torture. So this violence is coded into the very fact of us being human, and rather than look at it as an anomaly we should be looking at it as a part of what we are. What poetry can offer in all this is a way to hold the haunting, to give the dead a voice, or at least, an echo. (Helter Skelter)

The poems that make their appearance in *Girls are Coming Out of the Woods* document violence with, as Karthika Nair puts it “unblinking

resolve”. There is the violence, in Nair’s words, of “nature against its particles, that of humans against animals, or, in a sense, the violence every living creature seems capable of.” In fact, in attempting to negotiate with the myriad forms of violence that the human physicality is subject to, the collection, as Nair states, seems to warn readers that “violence is a pre-requisite” of our workaday world. (The Open Magazine) There is in these poems, of course, the existential violence of time that Doshi contours with unparalleled grace through the emotions of loss and nostalgia. For instance, in ‘Monsoon Poem’, Doshi very poignantly brings out how, despite the typical connotation of romance and amorous desire underlying the Indian monsoon, its melancholy evokes a sharp consciousness of loss and death:

.... Notice
 how hardly anyone mentions the word
 death, even though the fridge leaks
 and the sheets have been damp for weeks.
 And in this helter-skelter multitude
 of grey-greenness, notice how even the rain
 begins to feel fatigued. (Monsoon Poem, 19)

And yet, the realist in the poet knows that with the arrival of summer and the reappearance of “the cracks in the earth”, all this melancholy and loss shall disappear and we shall once again “dream of wet”, aspire for the monsoon with the same romantic longing, forgetting how “unforgivingly” poets of the past had lied to us about the rains. (20) Expressed again with moving nostalgia and an irreparable sense of loss in ‘Ode to Patrick Swayze’, is the inordinate, self-centered, adolescent longing for love:

...what I’d wanted
 most was to be held by someone determined
 to save me, someone against whom I could press
 my unflourishing chest, who’d offer me
 not just the time of my life, but who’d tear
 out reams of his yellowing pancreas,
 and say, Here, baby, eat. (22)

However, equally insistent and unignorable in these poems is the documentation of the physical violence in our world, particularly the proliferating cases of violence against women. The titular poem of the volume in particular, was inspired by the murder of Monika Ghurde, a designer, perfumist and a very close friend of Doshi's, in her house in Goa and the rage at the incident kept being fuelled, as Doshi states, by the incessant newspaper reports of brutality and violence that kept pouring in from all corners of the country. "How do you write about violence without perpetuating it?" asks Doshi. In her opinion, "A greater violence would be a disconnect. To not feel someone else's suffering." (The Open Magazine) Within the psyche of *Girls are Coming Out of the Woods*, there lies an intimate acknowledgement of violence as the inevitable in the human condition and a large number of its poems in their unsparring exploration of violence, forcefully assert that while there is no limit to the general human capacity for violence in the world, female bodies undoubtedly remain the most vulnerable. "Learn to steer through darkness," writes Doshi in 'How to be Happy in 101 Days'. "If you're attacked, spread your legs and say, /Brother, why are you doing this to me?" (12) Again, in 'Meeting Elizabeth Bishop in Madras' one comes across the following lines:

And what can be said about darkness after all?
 About men who board buses with iron rods?
 What can be said about all the dragging and laying
 of bodies to earth? Of landfills of lacerated breasts
 and vaginal scree, of girls hanging from a mango tree? (76)

But the two poems in this collection that exclusively build themselves around violence against women are – 'Everyone Loves a Dead Girl' and the titular poem, 'Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods'. In the former piece, deadness becomes a social metaphor for the representation of all women, victimized and violated, who serve as punitive social reminders of girls who "walk down the wrong roads and fall down rabbit holes" (17) and whose examples urge the need to cling closely to one's own daughters by convincing them "how beauty is a distance they don't need to travel". (17) There is a large group of these 'dead' girls in society – unmentioned,

invisible, their victimization brazenly undocumented, “and even though they have no names and some of them/ have satin strips instead of faces, they all have stories/ which go on and on – ocean-like, glamorous, until/ it is morning and they go wherever it is dead girls go.” (16) In ‘Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods’, the poem conjures an incantative image, both haunting and promising, of girls coming out of this social ‘deadness’ into social, political and cultural visibility – undeterred by violence, undoing silence, “with panties tied around their lips,/ making such a noise” (36) to create a determined epistemological rupture by bringing to the world their suppressed tales of undoing by men:

....Girls are
 coming out of the woods, lifting
 their broken legs high, leaking secrets
 from unfastened thighs, all the lies
 whispered by strangers and swimming
 coaches, and uncles, especially uncles,
 who said spreading would be light
 and easy, who put bullets in their chests
 and fed their pretty faces to fire,
 who sucked the mud clean
 off their ribs, and decorated
 their coffins with briar. (36)

Vulnerability, in general, is an idea that Doshi closely grapples with in this volume. Understood as a state of being exposed or open to hurt, whether physical or emotional, and as an essential inability to protect oneself from harm, vulnerability can be looked upon as a marked characteristic of the human body. Theorizing this integral public dimension of our personal and subjective bodies, Judith Butler, in *Precarious Life*, writes:

The body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others, but also to touch, and to violence, and bodies put us at risk of becoming the agency and instrument of all these as well. Although we struggle for rights over our own bodies, the very bodies for which we struggle are not quite ever only our own. The body has its invariably public

dimension. Constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine. Given over from the start to the world of others, it bears their imprint, is formed within the crucible of social life; only later, and with some uncertainty, do I lay claim to my body as my own, if, in fact, I ever do. (26)

Derived from the Latin 'vulnus' meaning 'wound', vulnerability constitutes an essential recognition of our subjection to power and violence and of our inherent inability to avoid, counter or overcome it as humans. Most approaches towards vulnerability posit it as a significant basis for human solidarity and regard it as a revelation of our human interdependence in the world, for though there are no universal patterns of vulnerability and not all humans are vulnerable in the same way, their particular vulnerability being determined by subjective factors such as gender, age, class, race, geographical and social location, etc., humans universally remain vulnerable and in this they share with each other an essential sameness that cannot be disputed. Drawing attention to this essentially shared human bond of vulnerability in a world increasingly defined by violence, Butler states:

The question that preoccupies me in the light of recent global violence is, Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And, finally, What makes for a grievable life? Despite our differences in location and history, my guess is that it is possible to appeal to a "we," for all of us have some notion of what it is to have lost somebody. Loss has made a tenuous "we" of us all. And if we have lost, then it follows that we have had, that we have desired and loved, that we have struggled to find the conditions for our desire. [...] This means that each of us is constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies-as a site of desire and physical vulnerability, as a site of a publicity at once assertive and exposed. Loss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure. (Precarious Life, 21)

For both Doshi and Butler, it is the recognition of this essential vulnerability to violence that constitutes an acknowledgement of our humanity, our universal frailty and our universal propensity to loss. For Doshi, this essential vulnerability of life offers an imperative for shared empathy not just among humans but among all forms of life and even when her muse turns to the non-human world, there is the vulnerability to destruction, change or transformation by the tyranny of time. It is this undeniable openness to violence and to being hurt that makes such radically different pieces as ‘Poem for a Dead Dog’, ‘Pig-Killing in Viet Hai’, ‘Calcutta Canzone’ and the titular ‘Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods’ strike harmonious roots - epistemological, thematic and emotive - in the same collection. The leaning towards violence in a violent world is, as the poet admits, ubiquitous. No one, Doshi’s muse seems to state, is immune from it. As she puts it in ‘Poem for a Dead Dog’:

...But Life,
 Even though it’s ours, is mostly
 Small. Small the way I squash ants
 Against a wall. (80)

And yet, it is possible to desist from translating this leaning towards violence into the victimization or harm of others by trying to look for utilitarian motives of practicing it:

....Should
 you see butterflies gambol in the air,
 resist the urge to pinch their wings.
 Look for utilitarian values of violence.
 Use the knife lustily: to peel the mango’s
 jealous skin, to wean bark and cut bread
 for the unending hunger of stray dogs.
 (‘How to be Happy in 101 Days’, 11)

It is Tishani Doshi’s firm belief that the poet’s calling is to try to make the world a better place and to, despite the chaos and hopelessness, keep “singing, singing”:

...holding the throat of life,
till all the sunsets and lies are choked out,
till only the bones of truth remain. ('Find the Poets, 84)

The empathy and wisdom of the poet, she admits, will not undo violence, nor restore losses or "make the dead sing/ sweeter" ('Meeting Elizabeth Bishop in Madras', 77). However, poetry will always be needed to make the world livable for the living and it is the poet's responsibility to ensure this through her art, or as Doshi puts it in 'Meeting Elizabeth Bishop in Madras':

...living, we must rush to see the sun
the other way around, we must feast on miracles
for breakfast. And even though the million
wild ascending shadows will not be back,
Elizabeth, we must engrave the words on cages,
swim through the beast of this salty knowledge.
Our art is worth this much at least. (77)

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Women Issues In the Novels of Shashi Deshpande

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Abstract

Shashi Deshpande is one of the most accomplished contemporary Indian women writers in English. She has articulated a whole gamut of feelings, passions, hopes, aspiration fears and frustrations of modern Indian Women, torn apart by the conflicting forces of tradition and modernity. Deshpande has emerged as a great literary force. In her writings, she presents a realistic picture of the contemporary middle-class women. This research endeavour focus on women issues and a woman's perspective of the world. Special focus will be on the recent phenomenon of the educated earning wife and her adjustment or maladjustment in the family. Shashi Deshpande's writing emerges from her rootedness in middle class Indian society. The protagonists of all her novels are middle class educated women.

Keywords: Contemporary Indian Society, tradition, modernity, self, identity, Feminism.

Shashi Deshpande is one of the most accomplished contemporary Indian women writers in English. She has articulated a whole gamut of the feelings, passions, hopes, aspiration, fears and frustrations of modern Indian Women, torn apart by the conflicting forces of tradition and modernity. Deshpande has emerged as a great literary force. In her writings, she presents a realistic picture of the contemporary middle-class women. She focuses on women's issues; she has a woman's perspective on the world. According to Seema Suneel:

“The primary reason for Shashi Deshpande to write is that it allows her to create her own world, Creative writing allows her ‘a safe place’ from which she can explore a wide range of

experience, especially with regard to women's status in society. She sensitively portrays the lot of women and their mute, convoluted self-abnegation in the stories. For the courageous and sensitive treatment of large and significant themes, her works are regarded as outstanding contributions to Indian literature in English". (Suneel 36)

Shashi Deshpande deals with the middle class Indian women who represent the overwhelming majority of Indian women struggling to adjust rather than free themselves from the traditional world. However an indictment of Meena Sherwadkar is that, "writers appear not to have paid much attention to the recent phenomenon of the educated earning wife and her adjustment or maladjustment in the family." (Sherwadkar 95)

Shashi Deshpande's writing emerges from the rootedness in middle class Indian society. The protagonists of all her novels are middle class educated women. Indu (*Roots and Shadows*) is a journalist, Jaya (*That Long Silence*) is a housewife and a creative writer, Saru (*The Dark Holds No Terror*) a doctor, Urmi (*The Binding Vine*) a college teacher, Sumi (*A Matter of Time*) though educated, takes up a job only later, while Savitribai and Leela (*Small Remedies*) are a singer and a social worker respectively. Madhu, the narrator (*Small Remedies*), is also a journalist and a writer. Deshpande thus seems to believe that it is the educated and the creative woman who will liberate herself first and contribute to women's liberation both actively as well as through her exemplary behaviours.

Deshpande knows intimately the segment of Indian society about which she writes and can easily empathise with it. In *Italic* she has revealed the secret of her fictional writing:

"I realize that I write what I write because I have to, because it is within me. It's one point of view, a world from within the woman, and that I think is my contribution to Indian writing". (Society 56)

Deshpande has her own independent views on women, their position and predicament, their trials and tribulations which deserve a careful consideration and evaluation. She generally has the heroine as the narrator and employs a kind of stream of consciousness technique. Almost all her novels deal with a crisis in the heroine's life dealing with her travails and prevarications.

Deshpande has her own independent views on women, their position and predicament, their trials and tribulations which deserve a careful consideration and evaluation. She generally has the heroine as the narrator and employs a kind of stream of Consciousness technique. Almost all her novels deal with a crisis in the heroine's life dealing with her travails and privations, tensions and irritations, pains and anguishes. Unable to defy social conventions or traditional morality she finds herself enmeshed by desires and despairs, fears and hopes, loves and hates, withdrawal and alienation, suppression and oppression and marital discord and male chauvinism. Infact, Deshpande's chief thematic concern is with woman's struggle in the context of contemporary Indian society, to find her identity as wife, mother and most of all as human being. Her novels are concerned with a woman's quest for self, an exploration into the female psyche and an understanding of the mysteries of life and the protagonist's place in it. In an interesting interview, Deshpande reveals that all her characters are concerned with their 'selves and they may learn to be honest to themselves-Being true to one's self, not as being true to the sense, that nature/Culture demands of you is the wisdom that the (ha 12) Deshpande protagonist learns." (*Dhawan* 126) Her novels thus attempt a redefinition of women's culture and identity in the Indian context.

In their quest for self-realization, each protagonist breaks free from the religious and social codes that circumscribe and undermine a woman's spirit and deny her an identity of her own. These alternative narratives of women's history are transformed into narratives of resistance. Thus resistance forms a strong sub- text of her novels Malashri Lal argues in her "The Law the Threshold":

“...that Indian women writers despite their acceptance of the intellectual message of individual, gender based critique from the West wished to remain in active link with family and community concepts in India.”(Lal 201)

Shashi Deshpande's works validate Lal's opinion. Her women attempt to reassert their place in the context of the family on the basis of equality and nurture their individuality.

The novels of Shashi Deshpande depict situations arising out of conflicts in the inner configurations of the individual. These conflicts revolve round the interplay of the 'self' with others. Amid the flux the individual relentlessly struggles to attain authentic selfhood-the core of being, from where human action springs which would not only enable her to grasp reality but also endow a meaning to her existence. This struggle of the individual for a possible apprehension of self-identity forms a recurrent theme in the novels of Deshpande. Relationships traditionally define a woman's identity and her perception of the self is seen in connection with others. Community expects her to merge herself with man. This implies that she has to sacrifice her 'self' and avoid attainment of a distinct 'selfhood'. The struggle between the two selves – the real and the idealized engenders grave psycho-emotional imbalance. Deshpande's protagonists are women struggling to find their own voice and continuously aspiring to define themselves, but they “become fluid, with no shape, no form of..... (their) own”. (Roots and Shadows 45) Jaya, in *That Long Silence* undertakes a futile search for her 'self' but the real picture, the real 'you' never emerges. Looking for it is as bewildering as trying to know how you really look. Then different mirrors show you ten different faces.”(64). The experiences of Indu in *Roots and Shadows* are not different. “This is my real sorrow that I can never be complete in myself”, (121) she bewails. She thinks that she has found in Jayant, her husband, “the other part of my whole self,” but she comes to realize that “this was an illusion.” But can perfect understanding ever exist” she asks. (122)

All the protagonists of Deshpande are in search of their identity. But to evolve their own identity they must first fight against patriarchy. And so, in *that Long Silence*, Deshpande tells us how a woman attracts more suffering through her silence. In *Dark Holds, No Terrors*, we see how men become aggressive when their wives become the breadwinners and also enjoy more social prestige. In *Roots and Shadows*, Indu first berates herself through education, then exposes her family to modern values and finally decides to continue her struggle. In *The Binding Vine*, Urmi helps Mira and Shakutai to have their own voice. In *A Matter of Time*, Sumi is not reduced to a weeping child after Gopal has left her but she gradually

makes her life meaningful. In *Small Remedies* all the three women have a very high and noble aim before them and work very hard to realize it. Thus Deshpande endeavours to establish woman as an individual, who breaks loose from the traditional constraints and redefines her identity in the changed social ambience of the modern times.

Deshpande has comprehensive understanding of the grassroot reality and women's plight in India. While remaining well, within the bounds of the Indian middle – class respectability, the novelist has raised some significant questions pertaining to gender issues, and the position of women in India. The novelist is pained to notice the ways undertaken by the male members of the society to subordinate women. She specifically mentions economic deprivation and rape as the two main instruments employed to curb the spontaneous growth of a woman. We are reminded in *The Binding Vine* that “if a girl's honour is lost, what is left? The girl doesn't have to do anything wrong; people will always point a finger at her. (94) Matrimony which is often regarded in India, as the ‘summon bonum’ of a woman's life is, according to Deshpande, no longer a sacrament. It is a convenient arrangement always to the disadvantage of the woman. The role of a wife in the present times is nothing less than walking on the razor's edge. What makes matters worse for Indian women is that there are no choices before them. Like marriage, their decisions are made in the heaven of their husband's minds. The author in *Roots and Shadows* puts it:

“Millions of girls have asked this question millions of times in the this country..... What choice do I have? Surely it is this, this fact that i can choose, that differentiates me from the animals. But years of blindfolding can obscure your vision, so you no more see the choices. Years of shackling can hamper your movement so that you can no more move out of your cage of no choice.” (94)

This is a sad commentary on the incompatibility and hypocrisy of married life.

The realistic treatment of human predicament in Deshpande's fiction along with the contemporary angst in an existential manner might appear

to be depressing, but the final impression of her works is far from being gloomy or depressing. Significantly her leading women characters learn in due course how to arrive at a compromise and find a sense of balance in life. At the end of *Dark Holds No Terrors* Saru for example, goes back home with,

“.....all those selves she had rejected so resolutely at first, and so passionately embraced later. The guilty sister, the undutiful daughter, the unloving wife... all persons spiked with guilt. Yes she was all of them, she could not deny that now. She had to accept these selves to become whole again. But she was all of them; they were not all of her. She was all these and so much more.”(77)

Shashi Deshpande occupies a significant place among the contemporary women novelists who concern themselves with the problems of women and their quest for identity. Her attempt gives an honest portrayal of their suffering, disappointments and frustrations which makes her novels susceptible to treatment from the feminist angle. She however maintains that her novels are not intended to be read as feminist texts. This is evident from what she says:

“A woman who writes of woman's experiences often brings in some aspects of those experiences that have angered her, roused her strong feelings I don't see why this has to be labelled feminist fiction”. (Sree 124)

Deshpande's approach is different. She has consideration for a home of peace and love that can provide security to women. U.S. Rukhaiyar observes:

“She feels that security is also an important requirement of women. So, if a home is there in a position to provide her safety, a woman may not revolt against the home in that case. She is not for revolt for the sake of revolt but rather revolt in the sector and degree required. So she shows that there are some husbands who are good and some women who are not at all prepared even to raise their voice. (Sree 122)

According to Y.S Sunita Reddy : “She can be called a ‘feminist’ if at all only in a certain specific sense. Deshpande feels that women have a tremendous inner strength but so much of that strength is used up in merely enduring. Her idea of feminism is best summed up in her own words: “For me feminism is translating what is used up in endurance into something positive, a real strength.” (Reddy 171)

Deshpande is one with Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal in not merely describing the pathetic lifestyles of Indian women but also in trying to understand and suggest measures for amelioration. Thus in choosing a protagonist who is somewhat feeble at the beginning but emerges in the end as a stronger woman with a transformed consciousness, Deshpande follows a liberal feminist ideal where growth in consciousness is the objective. Chandra Holm interviewed Shashi Deshpande for *Indian Review of Books*. (Holm, 2000) Holm commented that her protagonists change a lot when they marry and lose part of their identity and self confidence. But all of them end up becoming complete human beings. In other words, her main characters have an incredible inner strength. At this Shashi Deshpande replied:

“Yes, I do believe that women have great strength. All humans do. Actually we have reserves we are often unaware of. But for women the situation is made more complex by the fact that they have been told they are weak they are made to believe in their weakness. And often they learn to hide their own strength, because a woman’s strength seems to weaken a man.” (59)

So Jaya (*That Long Silence*) gradually emerges as a confident individual in full control of herself and refuses to be led by others. A stereotypical housewife initially nervous and needing male help and support all the time, she understands that she also has a hand in her victimization and that she has to fight her own battle and work out her own strategy. It also shows how with this new confidence Jaya becomes emancipated without rejecting outright the cultural and social background. Indu (*Roots and Shadows*) defies the worn-out traditions, pushes aside all her fears about her imagined inadequacies and asserts herself as an individual.

The final message conveyed by the novelist is that, women must face the challenges of life boldly and resolutely. They have to establish the fact that they can be true to their convictions, irrespective of what role they play in the family, a daughter, a wife, a mother and also a career woman. Standing at the cross-roads of tradition they do seek change, but within the cultural norms, so as to enable themselves to live with dignity and self-respect. Her protagonists try to redefine human relationships. According to Dr.S.Prasanna Sree:

“Without rejecting outright the cultural and social background, they realize the need to live in the family but reject the roles prescribed to them by the society. They try to achieve self-identity and independence within the confines of marriage. Thus they manage to extricate themselves from male dominance. At the same time, they are not willing to forgo the security marriage offers them. In short Deshpande's women want the best of both the worlds”. (Sree 64)

At the core of all good literature is a moral vision. This vision has, however, to be conveyed in the right form and Shashi Deshpande has done just that. She has presented before her readers her views about what is right and acceptable and what is not in such a manner that even her critics are forced to consider her viewpoint before pronouncing judgment and that is half the battle won.

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Asserting Identity through Literature: A Study of Bama's *Karukku* and Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan*

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Abstract

The present study explores how Bama's Karukku and Omprakash Valmiki's Joothan: A Dalit's Life by protesting, questioning and challenging 'culture and conflicts' create spaces to negotiate and assert identity. For the marginalised communities like the Dalits in India, literature is a crucial means of defining and asserting identity and defying the contentions, notions, beliefs and images popularized by the dominant classes and culture. The concerns of both the writers remain the same-to claim recognition and justice and to forge identity by articulating protests from the fringes. The present paper examines how literature serves as a means of asserting identity for the Dalits.

Keywords: Dalit, Identity, Literature, Karukku, Joothan, Caste Discrimination

Introduction:

"The fundamental and core feature of India's social structure", says Badri Narayan in his book, *Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion in North India: Culture, Identity and Politics*, "is its caste system". He elaborates, "even after nearly sixty years of Indian independence, caste and the entrenched caste hierarchy, still remain the symbol and essence of Indian society, differentiating it from other societies... The dominant Brahminical cultural code accords the so-called lower castes, a highly, inferior position in society and has drained them of dignity and self-respect in every domain of their lives. The lower castes, or Dalits as they prefer to be called, have always been marginalized by the upper castes. In the recent past,

however, there is a visible upsurge in the assertion of Dalit identity, which challenges the humiliation that they have faced for centuries.”

For the marginalised communities like the Dalits in India, literature is a crucial means of defining and asserting identity and defying the contentions, notions, beliefs and images popularized by the dominant classes and culture. The present study explores how Bama's *Karukku* and OmprakashValmiki's *Joothan: A Dalit's Life*, by protesting, questioning and challenging 'culture and conflicts', create spaces to negotiate and assert identity. What are the ways and means through which systematic oppression and discrimination is practiced against the Dalits in the land of their birth? What are the strategies deployed by the writers to counter such discriminatory practices? The present study examines the above questions and explores how literature serves as a means of asserting identity for the Dalits.

Main Thrust:

In the piece entitled 'Ten Years Later' prefaced to the second edition of *Karukku*, Bama makes explicit her intention behind the writing of her masterpiece *Karukku* : *"That book was written as a means of healing my inward wound; I had no other motive."*

Karukku expounds the caste discrimination that the Dalit community experienced in India. Caste based discrimination, as Badri Narayan explains, gave rise to the evil of untouchability and made millions of people vulnerable to oppression, exploitation and suffer civic and social disabilities and injustices of various forms. Located at the fringes of the society, the untouchables in India were oppressed, exploited and treated most inhumanly by the upper caste Hindus. When Gandhi Ji assumed leadership of the Indian freedom struggle, he realized that freedom necessitated the emancipation of untouchables and eradication of Untouchability for the inclusion of this community in the social fabric of the nation. He gave them the name Harijan, literally meaning god's people, to give them a fresh identity. He insisted that public places such as temples and schools Should be opened to them and that they should be treated with dignity. However, the discriminations and atrocities committed in the name of caste continued unabated, especially in the rural areas. Bama's *Karukku*

reveals, with unflinching honesty, the pain of what it means to be a Dalit in India. The first chapter of the novel provides a physical description of her village to inform how the Parayas settlement, the Dalit community to which she belonged, was located at the outskirts of the village next to the cemetery. The text elaborates:

Just at the entrance to the village there is a small bus stand... To the left there is a small settlement of ten to twenty houses, known as Odapatti... To the right there are the Koravar who sweep streets, and then the leather working Chakkiliyar. Some distance away there are the Kusavar who make earthenware pots. Next to that comes the Palla settlement. Then, immediately adjacent to that is where we live, the Paraya settlement. To the east of the village lies the cemetery. We live just next to that.

A similar description has been provided by Mulk Raj Anand at the very outset of his masterpiece “Untouchable” which illumines the extent to which the untouchables were excluded from the mainstream culture and society and the great barrier which existed between the Dalits and the other communities of the town:

The outcastes’ colony was a group of mud walled houses that clustered together in two rows, under the shadow both of the town and the cantonment, but outside their boundaries and separate from them. There lived the scavengers, the leather workers, the washer men... and other outcastes from Hindu society.

Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* is yet another novel which depicts how the division of quarters across the village reflected the rigid class/caste hierarchy and how high caste people treated the Pariahs with contempt and disgust (given below is an extract.) An extract, given below from should be omitted from *Kanthapura* reveals how deep rooted were the distinctions of caste in the mind of the tradition-bound orthodox Brahmins who could never think of mixing with the Dalits of the village. Achakka, the old Brahmin woman narrator of *Kanthapura* tells :

Our village had a Pariah quarter too, a Potters quarter, a Weavers

quarter, and a Sudra quarter. How many huts had we there? I do not know... of course you wouldn't expect me to go to the Pariah quarter.

As Written in the early decades of the twentieth century, both *Untouchable* and *Kanthapura* describe the caste distinction that existed in pre- Independent India. But these discriminations, as discussed earlier, continued even after independence and to use Bill Ashcroft's words, "in post-colonial societies, the participants are frozen into a hierarchical relationship in which the oppressed is locked into position by the assumed moral superiority of the dominant group, a superiority which is reinforced when necessary by the use of physical force."

Bama then describes the mental indoctrination of the Dalits who had been convinced of their inferiority and submitted meekly to the politics of exclusion and oppression practiced by the dominant caste and culture. She narrates an incident when she had gone along with her grandmother to one of the upper caste houses and witnessed the humiliating behaviour of the upper caste woman towards her grandmother. The text illustrates:

After she had finished all the filthy chores, Paatti placed the vessel that she had brought with her, by the side of the drain. The Naicker lady came out with her leftovers, leaned out from distance and tipped them into Paatti's vessel, and went away. Her vessel, it seemed, must not touch Paatti's; it would be polluted... Annan told me all these things. And he added, 'Because we are born into the Parayajati, we are never given any honour or dignity or respect. We are stripped of all that.

Yet another episode of the novel is worth revisiting in this context: "... an elder of our street came along from the direction of the bazaar... carrying a small packet...by its string, without touching it. The elder went straight up to the Naicker, bowed low and extended the packet towards him, cupping the hand that held the string with his other hand."

Bama's narrative, thus, reveals how the Dalit community was condemned to a life of servitude, humiliation and deprivation. It is important to note

here that both Bama's grandmother and the elder of Bama's street are constricted by a notion of defilement which was a consequence of the caste system and caste rule is imposed upon the Dalit community and eventually led to their mental indoctrination and subordination. Needless to say, Bama's individual life story emerges as a representation of a wider experience of the community of Dalits and hence, "Karukku stands as a means of strength to the multitudes whose identities have been destroyed and denied."9

Omprakash Valmiki's autobiography *Joothan: A Dalit's Life* is yet another work which voices the injustices and oppression meted on the Dalits in the newly independent India of the 1950s. *Joothan* was originally published in Hindi in 2003 and later on it was translated into English by Arun Prabha Mukherjee. She says in her 'Foreword' to the English translation that "Joothan is one among a body of Dalit writing that is unified by an ideology, an agenda, and a literary aesthetic. It provides an apt introduction to this newly emerging school of writing, which is not just a school of writing but sees itself as part of a social movement for equality and justice."10

Both Bama and Omprakash Valmiki experienced oppression, subjugation and denigration as Dalits which they have been forced to voice through their writings. Even though vast linguistic and cultural differences do exist between these two marginalized communities, it is the experience of dispossession and discrimination, and the crippling psychological and cultural consequences of those experiences which link, in a fundamental way, these two communities. The opening lines of Valmiki's text illumine the exclusion of his community from the rest of the village:

*Our house was next to Chandrabhan Taga's cattle shed. Families of Muslim weavers lived on the other side of it. Right in front of the cattle shed was a little pond that had created a sort of partition between the Chuharas' dwellings and the village...The homes of the Chuharas were on the edges of the pond.*11

The above description makes it clear that Chuharas were segregated from the rest of the village. In fact, pushed to the margins of the society, they

were treated as outcasts. The debilitating effects of the discrimination and humiliation experienced by the Dalits become evident in the following words of Omprakash Valmiki who writes in the Preface to the Hindi edition of the book:

*Dalit life is excruciatingly painful, charred by experiences. Experiences that did not manage to find room in literary creations. We have grown up in a social order that is extremely cruel and inhuman. And compassionless toward Dalits.*¹²

The pain and anger in the author's voice become more visible as he goes on recounting atrocities and the abuses experienced by the Dalits which he calls "bitter memories" which "flash" in his "mind like lightning every now and then." He further asserts, "they have suppressed the weak and the helpless for thousands of years, just in this manner. No one will ever know how many talents their deception and treachery have wiped out."¹³

Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan*, by articulating the wrongs done to the Dalits, endeavours to give voice to a community silenced by its gross ill treatment by the upper caste people. His writing can also be viewed as an act of resistance as it foregrounds the dispossession, abuse and exclusion suffered by the Dalits. His voice, therefore, emerges as the public sound of his community.

Literature, thus, becomes a means for Omprakash Valmiki, of voicing his pain, anger and aggression at the injustices and defining and asserting his 'Dalit identity'. Arun Prabha Mukherjee says in this connection:

*By identifying themselves as Dalits, writers like Valmiki are embracing an identity that was born in the historic struggle to dismantle the caste system, which was responsible for their untouchable status, and to rebuild society on the principles of human dignity, equality, and respect.*¹⁴

Conclusion:

Both Bama's *Karukku* and Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* critique and challenge those assumptions and practices which aim at abusing, humiliating and oppressing a particular community- the Dalit community

in India, and even though the people and the places change, the modes of practicing injustices remain the same. Dalits have experienced profound inequality and injustice in their own land. Both these works, therefore, emanate from the writers' sense of indignation at the injustices and oppressions they suffer in the land of their birth. The concerns of both the writers remain the same- to claim recognition and justice and to forge identity by articulating protests from the fringes. Bama's salvation comes from her understanding that all these discriminations are only man made. The text illustrates:

But Dalits have also understood that God is not like this, has not spoken like this. They have become aware that they too were created in the likeness of God. There is a new strength within them, urging them to reclaim that likeness which has been repressed, ruined and obliterated; and to begin to live with honour and respect and love of all humankind. To my mind, that alone is true devotion.¹⁵

Whereas for Valmiki, "reading about Ambedkar's life proved to be a transformative moment"¹⁶, his text reveals: "Ambedkar's lifelong struggle shook me up. I spent many days and nights in great turmoil. The restlessness inside increased. My stonelike silence suddenly began to melt...Reading these books had awakened my consciousness. These books had given voice to my muteness."¹⁷

In *Joothan*, Valmiki emerges as a "speaking subject and recorder of the oppression and exploitation that he endured not only as an individual but as a member of a stigmatized and oppressed community."¹⁸ Both *Joothan* and *Karukku* reflect the ways in which the marginalized communities have been oppressed and abused over the ages in India and what Adam Shoemaker says regarding the Aborigines of Australia "gaining confidence" and making "political and social advances over the past twenty-five years in Australia"¹⁹ through their projects of creative writing. The same can be said of the Dalits of India who have embarked on the journey of negotiating their identities and recovering/liberating their selves from past denigration through their creative and autobiographical writings. And as the Canadian author Larissa Lai describes her empowerment through writing which

she views as "a means of communication and discussion" and a tool by which she found herself "able to assert a presence" (20), the Dalits have gained confidence and power through their writings. Bharathiraja says in this connection:

"Dalit literature is creative and intellectual literary expression which transforms the social realities into various literary genres. ...Dalit literature is primarily a social and human document which deals with the people who had been socially and economically exploited in India for hundreds of years."²¹

In conclusion, it can be said that both Bama and Valmiki question the systematic oppression of Dalits over the ages, and through their writings, they empower all those who have suffered various injustices, exploitation and victimization. Both these works are marked by the writers' resolve to assert, preserve and celebrate their Dalit identities. *Dalit endrusollada; talainimirndunillada* 22 (Say you are a Dalit; lift up your head and stand tall) says Bama in the Author's Afterword to the First Edition. Literature, for both these writers, therefore, emerges as an effective means of expressing/creating awareness and, also as a source of inspiration to those suffering multitudes whose identities have been denied and who can find, forge and assert their identities.

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John Arden : An Artist With Socio-political Plays

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Abstract

This article will aim at discussing the early plays of John Arden. Though the word ‘early’ suggests a stage in the development of an artist, it may not be practical to go in for a fixed chronological separation in this regard. Yet, however, for our understanding, it may be mentioned here that it deals with the important plays produced roughly about the year 1960. Perhaps it will not be an exaggeration to say that Arden proved himself to be an accomplished artist right from the beginning of his play- writing career. John Arden’s dramatic potentialities were not fully explored, whereas Arnold Wesker, because of his good stage popularity, received some critical attention, though not enough perhaps.

Key Words: John Arden, Socio-political Plays, John Wesker

Introduction

Because of his playhouse popularity, Arnold Wesker was thought to be a more accomplished playwright than John Arden; and in the 1960s, in his evaluation of post – 1950 drama, G.S. Fraser chose Wesker as a representative of contemporary socio-political-protest in British drama. But a decade later, in the 1970s, Fraser regretted not having chosen Arden in place of Wesker; Arden now appeared to be a highly accomplished playwright. We shall quote G.S. Fraser at some length:

In my necessarily selective treatments of the new drama in England since 1955, I now very much regret that I did not choose John Arden instead of Arnold Wesker as my representative of the movement of social revolt in drama. I had not had the opportunity, in the early 1960s, to see any of Arden’s plays acted, and I had not read him deeply or thoroughly enough to grasp his quality.

Arden is a master of language, in a way in which Osborne (except for his mastery of the language) and Wesker are not; Pinter is a master of language, too, but often of language in its flatness and treachery. Arden has deep roots in the historical past, whereas for Osborne history begins with cheap beer, free cheese and pickled onions on the pub tables in the days of good King Edward VII. It is not only, find Arden's Armstrong's *Last Good Night* one of the great historical and political plays in the English Language, comparable without absurdity in its treatment of local and central loyalties, of the treacheries and nobilities of kingcraft, with the political scenes in the two parts of Shakespeare's Henry IV. *Live Like Pigs*, again, in its grasp of the rogue tradition, its sympathy for the traditional energies of anarchy, reminds one of Burns's *The Jolly Beggars* and makes Wesker's *Roots*, say, look in comparison a squeamish and didactic tract.

We should mention an interesting and very important fact about John Arden at this point that the Irish actor, writer and political activist Margaretta D'Arcy was Arden's working collaborator in most of his plays, including influence on Arden, and later she became Arden's wife. But by this time Arden was geographically as well as culturally and politically distanced, having moved to Ireland and, almost uniquely for an English writer at that time, taken up Irish issues in his work. The role of Margaretta D'Arcy in making John Arden the dramatist is acknowledged by scholars and critics. In his illuminating study of John Arden's plays Albert Hunt makes this point explicit:

This book is about the plays of John Arden. But no study of his work would be accurate without full acknowledgement of the part played by his wife Margaretta D'Arcy. From the beginning, Margaretta D'Arcy former professional actress has contributed ideas and material and criticism and technical know how to John Arden's work. In recent years she has increasingly shared in the actual writing....Although she did not write any of plays, she worked closely with Arden during the writing and contributed many of the key ideas.

So that is the state of understanding among critics on the question of collaboration of D'Arcy with John Arden. The following plays are supposed to have been written in collaboration in every sense:

The Business of good government

The royal Pardon

Ars Longa, vita Brevis

The Hero Rise Up

The Island of the Mighty

Margaretta D'Arcy's influence on Arden's work has not been confined for offering ideas and collaborating on the writing. In fact, Margaretta has been the driving force behind the experiments in which he has been involved outside the professional theatre- particularly the Kirkbymoorside festival and, the work which led to The Ballygombeen Bequest. As he himself puts it, without her, he would have been a different, and lesser, playwright. George Wellworth puts John Arden into the category of an intellectual dramatist. Though Arden does not have the brilliance of Nigel Dennis, he will surely outlive his age.

George Wellworth says:

“Arden's strength lies in his ability to create dramatic atmosphere, to build up a believable stage world. Of all the playwrights writing in England today, with the possible exception of Pinter, Arden stands the best chance of surviving beyond the current vogue”

Today it will probably sound redundant to discuss whether Arden is a great playwright, *or not*, because he is now enjoying as are established an a brilliant playwright. How Arden became a playwright and wherein lies the essential point of his greatness, which incidentally matches with the observation of George Wellworth, may / seen in his self-explanatory account given his book of essays entitled to Present the Pretence: Essays on the Theatre and it's Public, published in 1977. Arden wrote:

The art of the theatre is exceedingly ancient, and I do not believe that the principles underlying it have been radically altered by any of the innovations in style, adjustments to stage-practice... The

actor on the stage pretends: and presents the pretence to the public. To what end, and in what manner, the social conditions of the age and the occasion will determine. Sometimes the purpose is serious, sometimes frivolous

What we notice here is that it is John Arden's considered opinion that the Drama, in its essentials, has continued to remain the same despite of the innovations in style and adjustments to stage practice. Arden further opines on how he came to be a playwright and how he chose his themes:

But to say this is to say nothing of the content of plays: What they tell and to whom. To begin with, I was never very concerned about such things. I found a story which appealed to me, for whatever reason and will relate it to the conditions of the time and the potential audience to be sought for it. Only then the idea of a story to embody the theme, and the style to narrate the story, became uppermost in her mind.

In the lines quoted above we have tried to point out John Arden chose the content of his plays. Another important fact which should be mentioned with reference to his plays is his socio-political bias and this is central to our present study. Arden is some kind of a socially conscious playwright who fulfils some public responsibility, and as such his Vision is conditioned by political choice. Ronald Hayman may be quoted here appropriately:

John Arden is above all a public playwright. He does not write out of private obsession or personal problems. His plays are much more about relationship between groups than relationships between individuals. His characters are nearly always representatives of a group interest and they can be categorized according to their place in the community or according to the social purpose which they embody.

The social purpose embodied in the play *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* is that it preaches anti-war message to the community. In this play there are four soldiers, who take the skeleton of a dead comrade back to his hometown in order to preach an anti-war message to the community.

Though the play is set in the nineteenth-century England, the relevance of the context is not confined to that century. In the twentieth century the question of violence in society is accepted as a possible outlet of the extremists' thwarted political ambitions and dogmas. Armstrong's *Last Goodnight* tells the story of how Lindsay, a cultured poet diplomat in the service of James of Scotland, sets out to bring Johnnie Armstrong and his gang of marauding, borderland outlaws, back into the King's service. The socio-political theme of the play is, therefore, central to the activity of Lindsay. So Lindsay tries to win the favour of Armstrong by offering him a royal pardon and making him a petty overlord. But this does not work. At the end, Lindsay is compelled to betray Armstrong. He offers him a safe conduct to the King, and the King has him hanged. Violence in society and defiance of authority are fundamental socio-political themes with which John Arden grapples in the play *Armstrong's Last Goodnight*. In *Live Like Pigs*, there are gypsies, the respectable neighbours and the representatives of civil government. The play is a comment on nomadic civilization. *The Waters of Babylon* is a rich Jonsonian comedy about slum landlordism, asylum seekers, national lotteries and Tory sex scandals. *The Workhouse Donkey* is a vast Dionysiac pageant and the play is about Municipal corruption. In this play Arden himself divides his cast list up under four headings: Labour, Conservative, the Police and the Electorate.

In contrast, *The Waters of Babylon* is a deliberately artificial play. The scene is set in London, early in 1956. Beginning with a music-hall comedian type chat to the audience, it includes pantomime gags, songs, dances and verse monologues. The main political theme of a conspiracy on the life of Russian leaders Mr. Khrushchev and marshal Bulganin by a polish émigré in London, Paul, is fed by many subsidiary political themes like fascism, colour discrimination, liberty, totalitarianism, English democracy, Pacifism and so on. The social themes are highlighted by the post-war disillusionment, moral depravity of men and women, including political bigwigs, immoral way of living, earning money by swindling on the pretext of setting up Municipal Savings Bank and organising a public lottery, and sex scandals of politicians. These are frequent references to Poland, Russia, Nazi Gestapo, Austria, Khrushchev, Bulganin, which sustain the political theme of the play.

From a Socio-Political perspectives, the theme of intrigue on the life of the Russian leaders- Comrades Khrushchev and Bulganin – on their proposed visit to London, in the dominant political theme of the play. The scene of the play in London, early in 1956, the setting is Contemporary society. It is difficult to summarize the play as it is crammed with plot and invention, and a complex variety of characters. Krank is the central figure. He is a polish expatriate in London, a pimp and slum landlord in North London, and an architect, losing his job as the action unfolds. Besides these broad political and social themes, there are allied political and social themes which together contribute to the sum total of socio-political themes in the play. We may discuss some of those themes here. An oblique remark on the English politicians is made here by Krank who tells Butterthwaite:

KRANK: ... I have been informed that you are in some sort of authority upon the complications, the intrigues, the tricks, traps, and tramlines of your English bureaucracy.

Krank is unable to discover his true self amidst a world set topsy-turvy by the war. Similarly he is unable to discover others' true selves too. He, therefore, considers their actions as madness. Politically speaking, he pleads for Pacifism.

KRANK: But I don't know what you are. Or you, Henry Ginger, or all of the rest of you, with your pistols and your orations, and your bombs in my private house, And our fury, and your national pride and honour.

This is lunacy,

This was the cause, the carrying through
Of all the insensate war.

This is the rage and purposed madness of your lives,

That I, Krank, do not know. I will not know it,

Because, if I know it, from that tight day forward,

I am a man of time, place, society, and accident:

Which is what I must not be. Do you understand me?

Then we find the post - war disillusionment and meaninglessness of life

and existence expressed in a very intense manner in the following lines which present the picture of a devastated world.

Arden's next play *Live Like Pigs* (1958) the scene is a post - war Council Estate in a north country industrial town is a realistic study of how the life- style of the gipsies is incompatible with the life-style of educated people, with the resultant eviction of gipsies by the police from their caravan site and also from their new house allotted on rent by the Local Corporation under Housing Scheme. Judged this way it is a social problem play.

Commenting on the theme of the play Albert Hunt observes:

But of all Arden's plays, *Live Like Pigs* is, at first sight, the closest to a social document. Set in 'A post - war Council Estate in a north - country industrial town', it deals with an obvious social problem: What happens when you forcibly put a group of gypsies into a council house. Moreover, the more noticeable non - naturalistic devices of *The Waters of Babylon*...The play was, in fact, handled as one more example of a slice of working class life and one in which Arden had evaded the central problem of making working class speech dramatic by creating a family of lyrical romantics. *Live Like Pigs*, then, can be seen as a naturalistic social problem play tarted up with songs and over - lyrical dialogue.

It tells us the story of what happens when a family of gypsies, the Sawneys, is put into a Council house next door to a would-be respectable family, the Jacksons. The Sawneys attract much more extreme group, one of them howls in the street at night: and eventually the 'respectable' neighbours are themselves roused to violence. At the end of the play, the police have to rescue the lawless gypsies from the fury of law - abiding house holders. Politically, the play may appear to be a mockery of the welfare scheme of Housing as a part of the programme of Welfare State.

Arden's next play *Soldier*, soldier was written for television. It won the Italian prize for 1960; it is a sad little story about simple, pathetically ignorant people who are deceived. The main plot revolves round the

scuffhams, a pious, puritanical window-cleaner and his wife, whose son is in the same regiment as the soldier. Arden obviously enjoys his anarchical behavior. But this is not to suggest that Arden necessarily approves the unscrupulousness of the Soldier; but certainly he has seen him as embodying the vitality and virility which the townspeople lack. We are made to feel that it is not just the Scuffhams but the whole town that will be poorer when he is gone. While emphasizing the difference between the soldier and everyone else in the town, the play shows very little interest on Arden's part in differentiating between the other characters. Mary, the wife, emerges sharply, though mentally she appears for more alert in same incidents that in others, but the Scuffhams and the Parkers are fairly flat and uncharacterized. Parker has an important role to play, taking the Soldier along to the Scuffhams and encouraging them to give him money, but he always seems to be doing what the plot requires him to do, not what he actually would do. In someways he is a fit like the Burgee in Sergeant Musgrave's Dance, who has to help the plot along, but the Bargee's actions are motivated quite convincingly by self-interest; and his dialogue has a pungent irony in it which is quite lacking in Parker's. The best scene in the play is the find scene between the Soldier (whose name has never been given) and Mary, who has taken a firm decision to marry him. Hayman gives a fine summing up of the play like this:

This is a kind of insight that belongs very much to the ballad tradition. Arden sees all the lowest common multiples in human experience. At moments like this, the man is every soldier there has been and the girl is every Soldier's wife.

By way of rounding off our discussion here we may emphasize once again with a reasonable measure of confidence that the early plays of Arden had a strong socio-political bias which enlivened the spirit of the plays. In *The Waters of Babylon* the main political theme of a conspiracy on the life of Russian leaders, Mr. Khrushchev and Marshal Bulganin by a Polish émigré in London, Paul, is fed by many subsidiary political themes like Fascism, Colour discrimination, Liberty, Totalitarianism, English democracy, and Pacifism. The social themes are highlighted by the post-war disillusionment, moral depravity of men and women, including political bigwigs, immoral way of living, earning money by swindling on

the pretext of setting up Municipal Savings Bank, and Organizing a public lottery, and Sex scandals of politicians. *Live like Pigs* is a social problem play with political overtones. It is a realistic study of how the life-style of the gypsies is incompatible with the life-style of educated people, with the resultant eviction of gypsies from their new house allotted on rent by the local Corporation under Housing Scheme. *Soldier, Soldier* is a sad little story about simple, pathetically ignorant, people who are deceived by an Unknown Soldier's cock-and-bull story about their Soldier-son. So, we have seen that even as a socio-political dramatist John Arden is extraordinarily different; he is beyond dogmatism and beyond ideological commitment.

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A Study on Racism and Slavery in Mark Twain's *(The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn)*

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to focus on racism and slavery in Mark Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Even though Mark Twain is a comic writer who often treats his subject satirically but Huckleberry Finn also discussing slavery and racial decimation from one character to others and some palaces. Racism in contemporary world affairs is disguised, and it is what some refer to as symbolic racism, modern racism or aversive racism. But his best-known work The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a major American satire which is not vindictive, not loaded with invective, and not bitter. His targets, clearly defined, are made to look ridiculous but the irony is light and humour is strong. Thus, his most famous satirical novel vividly departs from the techniques most frequently associated with his satirical reputation.

Keywords: American satire;racism;ethnicity;slavery;realism

Introduction:

Mark Twain, also known as Samuel Langhorne Clemens, was born in the tiny crossroads of Florida, Missouri, a few miles back from the Mississippi River, on March 10, 1835. Adepot town and steamboat stop on the Mississippi River, Hannibal supplied the young Samuel Clemens with the scenery and characters that brought much of his later fiction to life. Mark Twain is a literary man of scholars, developed over a period of eight to ten years by a small - town Missouri boy who had been a typesetter and river boat pilot up to the time of the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861.

Although it was common among critics from 1920 through 1970 to more or less ignore Twain as a literary humorist, except in relation to the Southwest, humour specifically "American" humour was the envelope that carried his message. However, Race and racism are complex and disputed notions not only in the United States but everywhere in the world. We do not intend, by the present research, to place emphasis on the historical stages of racism rather than to illuminate its darker side and complexity in the American society. Racism existed throughout human history. It may be defined as the sentiment of hate of a person towards another either because of skin colour, language, customs, or the feeling of supremacy and the belief that a particular race is superior to another. Although it is illegal in the United States, racial inequality, however, remains a troubling issue in the American psyche and political landscape. Nothing prevents it from occurring because it is rooted in the make up of the human nature. Hence, Racism can occur systemically, as the result of policies, conditions and practices that affect a broad group of people. For example, research shows that systemic racism can result in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students experiencing poorer outcomes in education, or job applicants without Anglo-Saxon names finding it difficult to gain job interviews. In its most serious form, racism is demonstrated in behaviours and activities that embody race hate, vilification, abuse and violence—particularly experienced by groups who are visibly different because of their cultural or religious dress, their skin colour or their physical appearance. This disdains the old-fashioned, redneck ideology of white supremacy and black inferiority and instead espouse support for the ideals of equality in human affairs and Slavery in the United States was the legal institution of human chattel enslavement, primarily of Africans and African Americans, that existed in the United States of America in the 18th and 19th centuries. Slavery had been practiced in British America from early colonial days and was legal in all Thirteen Colonies at the time of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

But, certainly, much of his canon is cast in that tone, particularly his diatribes against missionaries and other forms of foolish activity. Ultimately, racism is a tool to gain and maintain power. It is also inextricably linked with socio-economic factors and frequently reflects

underlying inequalities in a society. Slavery was practiced throughout the American colonies in the 17th and 18th centuries and African slaves helped build the new nation into an economic power house through the production of lucrative crops such as tobacco and cotton. By the mid-19th century, America's westward expansion and the abolition movement provoked a great debate over slavery that would tear the nation apart in the bloody Civil War. Though the Union victory freed the nation's four million slaves, the legacy of slavery continued to influence American history, from the Reconstruction era to the civil rights movement that emerged a century after emancipation.

Main Thrust:

In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* Mark Twain's main targets are the institutions of slavery, Christianity, government and politics, and family life. Running through the criticism of these forces is an attack on superstitions, especially those associated with death. In dealing with slavery, Twain does not castigate slave owners; he does not sing the praises of the downtrodden Blacks. His method is simply to show us slave owners and slaves doing things, thus emphasising attitudes of white people. The scenes depict are funny and highly ironic. Invariably Jim turns out to conduct himself in ways we associate with goodness. The casual tone, a non-vitriolic point of view, and light but dominant irony provide a negative criticism of slavery. The author's point of view does not intrude. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* opens by familiarising us with the events of the novel that preceded set in the town of St. Petersburg, Missouri, which lies on the banks of the Mississippi River. At the end of *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn*, a poor boy with a drunken bum for a father and his friend Tom Sawyer, a middle-class boy with an imagination too active for his good, found a robber's stash of gold. As a result of his adventure, Huck gained quite a bit of money, which the bank held for him in trust. Huck was adopted by the Widow Douglas, a kind but stifling woman who lives with her sister, the self-righteous Miss Watson. Racism and Slavery in America, Although Twain wrote *Huckleberry Finn* two decades after the Emancipation Proclamation and the end of the Civil War, America and especially the South was still struggling with racism and the after effects of slavery. By the early 1880s, Reconstruction, the

plan to put the United States back together after the war and integrate freed slaves into society, had hit shaky ground, although it had not yet failed outright. As Twain worked on his novel, race relations, which seemed to be on a positive path in the years following the Civil War, once again became strained.

In *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain, by exposing the hypocrisy of slavery, demonstrates how racism distorts the oppressors as much as it does those who are oppressed. The result is a world of moral confusion, in which seemingly good white people such as Miss Watson and Sally Phelps express no concern about the injustice of slavery or the cruelty of separating Jim from his family.

Huck states

I felt good and all washed clean of sin for the first time I had ever felt so in my life, and I knew I could pray now. But I didn't do it straight off, but laid the paper down and set there thinking - thinking how good it was all this happened so, and how near I come to being lost and going to hell. And went on thinking. And got to think over our trip down the river, and I see Jim before me all the time: in the day and the night-time, sometimes moonlight, sometimes storms, and we a floating along, talking and singing and laughing . But somehow I couldn't seem to strike any places to harden me against him, but only the other kind. I'd see him standing my watch on top of his'n, 'stead of calling me, so I could go on sleeping; and see him how glad he was when I came back out of the fog; and when I come to him again in the swamp, up there where the feud was; and such-like times; and would always call me honey, and pet me and do everything he could think of for me, and how good he always was; and at last I struck the time I saved him by telling the men we had small-pox aboard, and he was so grateful, and said I was the best friend old Jim ever had in the world, and the ONLY one he's got now; and then I happened to look around and see that paper.

Notwithstanding, Twain has presented in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* several families and their life styles. He has drawn each from a different strategy of society and has used them in the telling of Huck's adventures to help emphasise the different values that each level of society

has. Jim's family life in the post-war South was the lowest of the lowly. A slave was not considered to be a human being with feelings and, as a non-human, was sold apart from his family. Jim did have a wife (or woman) and children. His main desire in life was to become a free man and bring his family together. His desire as to get his children and so intense that he knew he would achieve it even if he had to " get an *Abolitionist to go and steal them.*"

Huck's family life, if one can call it one, would be next on the social scale. He came from a background of what many refer to as poor white trash. The characterization of Pap Finn in the novel is a prime example of people from this walk of life. No reference is made to Huck's mother; thus we must assume she is dead. Pap was as disreputable a father as one would ever see.

He would leave Huck to fend for himself and be gone as long as a year at a time. Pap was a " drunkard, a scoundrel and the disgrace of the town". He was spoken of by the boys in the town as " a man who used to lay drunk with the hogs in the tanyard". Huck knew his father had returned to town before he saw him. He had noticed foot prints in the snow around the widow's garden fence. He recognized them as Pap's by the "cross in the left boot-heel made with big nails, to keep off the devil". This is symbolic of the superstitions held by the more ignorant, lower class people. Huck and Pap confront one another in Huck's room at the widow's. He seemed to take a strange pride in his ignorance, filthiness and poverty and wanted his son to follow in his footsteps. Pap constantly badgered Huck for money, having heard of the boy's fortune .

Conclusion:

Even Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is a major American satire which is not vindictive, not loaded with invective, and not bitter. His targets, clearly defined, are made to look ridiculous but the irony is light, and humour is strong. Especially the protagonist Finn had faced many problems in this society however how Finn has been overcome all the problems in that American society by using his perception. However, this paper has been focused on how the American society has to treat the people those who came from other countries.

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Book Review of Shakespearean Tragedy Through Bhagavad Gita by Dr. Yamuna Prasad

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Taking up this book for a review, I must admit with humility, is my proud privilege as the writer Dr Yamuna Prasad had been my teacher when I was doing my graduation in St. Columba's College, Hazaribagh and even after that I have been in his close contact always as a student So far as the book is concerned, its title **Shakespearean Tragedy Through Bhagavad-Gita** is very expressive in itself. It is a scholarly research oriented book-a literary exploration with a new approach to Shakespeare's tragedies through the yardsticks of how a man should live and what he should attain before casting off his body. Both these questions have been well articulated in **Bhagavad-Gita** and in this book, the writer has tried to find answers to these questions in Shakespeare's great tragedies. The book has been enriched with many relevant Sanskrit shlokas from **Bhagavad-Gita**.

This book is a landmark on a different level. We, the Indian teachers and our students, usually approach Shakespeare through the windows and doors opened by the English and the American critics. We are never tired of quoting them and judging Shakespeare on the basis of what they have said. We seldom try to open our own doors and take our own stand One reason as we have been dictated and conditioned that we as non English cannot understand and appreciate Shakespeare. Walter Raleigh says. "He (Shakespeare) has many disciples and admirers in foreign lands. Some of them partly understand him." Shakespeare's admirers who live in abroad who do credit to him and to themselves cannot teach his love of him to his friends at home their public image is an empty thing to those

who celebrate him more intimately (Shakespeare's England O U PVol 1)

Dr. Amlendu Bose, Ex Head of English of Calcutta University, refutes the derogatory comments of Raleigh and writes that Shakespeare has such a deep and fine understanding of human nature that people of any country can find spiritual affinity with the values seen in his characters and hence there is no bar in understanding Shakespeare. Shakespeare then can have a valid meaning for those who are not Englishmen (for instance for us who are Indians) as for those who speak his language" (Shakespeare's Appeal in Shakespeare Quarter Century Vol. 1966-67)

Father Lawler in an article **Indian Appreciation of Shakespeare** explains in detail that the Indians can understand and appreciate Shakespeare like anybody else called English or American. He writes, "Is it not a fact that the big themes in Shakespeare the struggle of honour against ambition-of duty against doubt-of deep chaste marital love against canker of suspicion do stir and grip the Indian heart, so that the Indian has to say to all the world Shakespeare does mean something to me" (Shakespeare Quarter Century Vol 1966-67} Dr Prasad's **Shakespearean Tragedy Through Bhagavad-Gita** s a testimony to justify convincingly that Shakespeare can be understood in depth and appreciated by an Indian

Excluding Introduction and Conclusion the book has four main chapters dealing with **Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth** and **King Lear**. In Introduction, taking many relevant references from Indian Scriptures, the writer explains in detail that tragedy is not an Indian concept. Lord Buddha says there is suffering but it has a cause, remove the cause and suffering is gone. Indians take tragedy as a symptom of ignorance, feebleness and lack of maturity Our **Ramayana** and **Mahabharata** which deal with so many horrible scenes and countless deaths end on a point of union between Rama and Sita and victory of justice and truth symbolized by Pandavas respectively. Kabdas's *Shakuntala* appearing to be a tragic tale ends on a note union and happiness.

Hamlet has been examined under the title **Indeterminate Intellect Negates Action. In Gita** chap. 2.41 Lord Krishna says to Arjuna, In Karma-Yoga the intellect is one determinate and concentrated where as the

intellect of the undecided is scattered in many directions and is endlessly diverse.’ This shloka sums up the character of Hamlet. Hamlet is seen caught in a dilemma and confusion like Arjuna in **Mahabharata**. One who does not have a determinate and single minded intellect and is confused, cannot attain his goal in life. Both Arjuna and Hamlet are in Vishad Yoga i. e. in moods of dejection and depressions Fortunately Arjuna found a teacher in Lord Krishna who liberated him from weaknesses and the latter became a man of action and succeeded. Hamlet who has been given a task which is beyond his capacity to understand and solve is caught more and more in emotional attachments and confusions and dies as a man of indecisions and inactions.

Othello has been examined under the title **Man is His Own Enemy** Lord Krishna says in **Gita** chap 6.5 that a man becomes what he thinks He is his own friend and his own enemy. The problem with Othello was that he did not look into his own suspicious and jealous nature which was his real enemy. It is his own nature and not Iago which is the villain of the drama. Othello knew neither himself, nor Desdemona and certainly not Iago Even his love for Desdemona was based on an illusion. He loved her because she had pity on his dangers he had passed in battles. If Hamlet was all thought and no action, Othello was all action and no thought but action without thought.

Macbeth has been examined under the title **Never Ending Attachment**. In **Gita** Lord Krishna says in chap 16 21 that anger, lust and greed are the three doors to lead one to degradation and hell. Macbeth’s too much greed for power led him to his downfall. The witches whom later on Macbeth called fiends are not villains but personifications of his repressed ambition inward temptations and attachment with crown only. He lost his reasoning power in the storms of his ambition and flood of temptations. He took the fair as foul and the foul as fair. He never looked into his actions and died blaming the witches, life and the world.

In the fourth chapter **King Lear** has been examined under the title **Man Grows old but not His Desires**. Human beings are born in ignorance, live in ignorance and die in ignorance. In chap 7:27 of **Gita** Lord Krishna says all human beings are born in delusions and are overcome by the dualities of

desire and hatred. King Lear became old but his desires remained young. He gave his kingdom to his daughters but was determined to keep the power of the crown. His too much authority-consciousness was the root cause of his problem. When the King Dasaratha was in his Vanprastha stage, he decided to give his crown to his eldest son Sri Rama and wanted to move to the forest for meditation. King Lear even after giving his kingdom to his daughters wanted to live with his daughters like a king and wished to be called a king by keeping so many attendants. He died in anger and hatred, blaming his two elder daughters and not as wise, sensible and humble old man.

In this book it has been logically and convincingly concluded on the basis of textual analysis that Shakespearean tragic heroes are so immature as characters without learning any positive lesson from life. No one lived and died as Gita says. The ego consciousness and tendency to think right of oneself remain alive in every tragic protagonist till death. All tragedies of Shakespeare end in defeat and despair, judged on the basis of Indian scriptures especially Bhagavad-Gita.

To sum up this brief review of the book **Shakespearean Tragedy Through Bhagavadgita**, it can be said that it is an excellent scholarly and fresh interpretation of Shakespeare's great tragedies especially in the light of our great scripture **Bhagavad-Gita** which teaches the art of living i.e. how to live and how to die. The book also inspires us to study foreign literature not by going on the beaten track and trodden ways set by the western critics but by exploring new possibilities from new angles and attitudes purely our own. Every student is a critic hence every one's interpretation must be his or her own.

This book has appealed so much to me especially the textual analysis of Shakespeare's great tragedies in the light of **Bhagavad-Gita** that I would like to recommend it to all those who read Shakespeare's tragedies, who teach the texts and above all who wish to understand them from Indian viewpoints.

Book Review of The Great Derangement : Climate Change and the Unthinkable by Amitav Ghosh

Dr. Samira Sinha

With cataclysmic events of weather extremes occurring across the world, symptomatic of the disastrous effects of climate change, Amitav Ghosh's return to non-fiction writing with *The Great Derangement* is a timely intervention that examines the various types of derangements of an anthropocentric world. He examines it in three parts, that is, Stories or literature, History and Politics. Published in 2016 by University of Chicago Press, the book itself is a culmination (as stated by the author himself in the acknowledgements) of a four-lecture series given as part of the Berlin Family Lectures, at the University of Chicago in the fall of 2015.

Ghosh begins by saying that future generations, in retrospect, may well consider us to be deranged for our collective imaginative failure to deal with the issues of global warming. He examines the inability of generations both past and present at all levels—literary, historical and political—in assessing and responding to the scale, violence and extreme nature of the events of climate change. Contemporary modes of thinking and imagination, asserts Ghosh, cannot find the solution necessary to tackle the issues. Serious literary efforts in fiction, for instance, has lagged behind in producing hard-hitting narratives around this problem although there is material enough and the novel, in his opinion, is the best suited genre to deal with it. He indicts history too of gross simplification, having many contradictory and counter intuitive elements. Likewise, the geo-political imperatives of power and economy reduces political efforts to tokenisms. As Amitav Ghosh writes in the book: “....the patterns of life that modernity engenders can only be practised by a small minority of the world's population.” The fatal indifference of the propounders of globalization and the individualistic and isolated approach of governments led to an unsustainable template of development that has proved disastrous for the world.

Ghosh opines that the phenomena of not regarding climate fiction as serious fiction and relegating it instead to the realm of science fiction is an imaginative and cultural failure. Among others, he discusses his own novels *The Circle of Reason* (1986) and *The Glass Palace* (2000) and the discovery of oil in a fictional place called al- Ghazira and a place in Burma, respectively. Such fortresses have historically become symbols of development that depersonalize and dehumanize, turning communities and regions into fierce competition and perhaps even war zones. Industries such as these have mushroomed around the world, tearing into the social, cultural and environmental fabric, but have had little or no impact on “our imaginative lives, in art, music, dance, or literature.” (101) Ghosh does make a few exceptions such as Abdel Rahman Munif, a Jordanian- born writer. Whose ‘Petrofiction’ came in for criticism from John Updike as being inadequate and dealing with “men in the aggregate” (106) as opposed to novels of “individual moral adventure” (105). Amitav Ghosh refers to several writers around the world in whose work the non- human and the aggregate are very much present and who are celebrated as great story tellers, for example, John Stienbeck, Adwait Mallabarman, Mahashweta Devi, Sivarama Karanth, Gopinath Mohanty and Vishwas Patil to name a few.

Throughout the book Ghosh questions consumerism, materialism, individualism, capitalism and the culture of waste that has brought the planet to the brink of destruction. The relation of humans to the environment and how culture and literature should play a better role in bringing people together on one platform in their concern for it and inspire them to act, is the main thrust of his book. He concludes with optimism and the hope that collective activism “will break through the deadlock and bring about fundamental changes.” (214) He is also hopeful that if religious groupings around the world join hands with such popular movements then it will provide the necessary momentum that is necessary to spearhead drastic reduction of harmful emissions and help humans to “rediscover their kinship with other beings.” (217)

Unbidden Musings

Dr. Samira Sinha

Morning After Rain

A halo of marigold drops
Surround the tips
Of limpid leaves
With sunshine
On it.
Profusion
Of warm
Sunny rays
Hang about the green
Like a golden haze.

How Often

To live not
Half as much
In speech as in thought;
In writing I do express
But a fraction of what
I could in unwritten lots.
Having heard not
What I wished to,
I listen for the
Echoing silence.

Sunday Morning

Viewed from my bed, the sky seems
An integrated portion of the wall,
An extension of the same solid structure.
It always thrills me thus,
To find heaven within my grasp;
A Sunday slice of the blue absolute.
I ride on it till I am lulled
Into a half sleep; the second blissful sleep—

A true gem among the pebbles.
The call to get up then
Jangles like an alarm.
Her treble voice merges with
Some distant filigreed patterns of my mind.
Injects an urgency into everything,
And the loud tick of the wall clock, its hands
Crucified at ten past nine.

I watch
The sunlight caught in a luminous bubble
On the floor, like
A drop of oil on water,
Quivering with a sense of passing time.
I am set forth from
Night's warm womb of anaesthetizing darkness,
And the protection of death- like sleep,
Emerging newborn
Into the world of light.
The morning
Both resurrection and renaissance.

On Sunday
I can bask in the light of my sensibility,
Discovering and estimating life.
I can remain an unshackled atom.
In a vast cosmos of swirling atoms,
Till Monday morning.

Unbidden Melancholy

Thus smelt the wet, cold morning;
Thus puddled the whole world was;
Now sigh wind, now weep rain,
So it was, so will remain;
No rhyme, nor reason.
Pain drops from the sky
And blots, blots, blots.



Sweet Dream

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Sleeping Sleeping
Snoring highly
Sweeping sleeping
Sensing sweet

Sensitive dream
Sensualising sleep
Made me cosy
Created a craziness

Sudden meeting
Made me beating
But not said
Even a kindly word

Sudden sighted
Shiva lord quivered
Tri- Trishul
Shivered me a time

Honoured hour
Hovered over
Heavenly Hellenic feel
Revered revelation

Snoring sleep
Sounding sweet
Praying pure line
Om Namah Shivaya

Revealed Recurred
Sweet sleep
Shifted a sight of
Shiva Shiva Shiva

Behold sweet sight
A Baby in my lap
Believed a sight
Blessing of an incarnation

Dedicated to my Grand Child

Poet and Poetry

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A poet is not one
Who collects words
Opens a dictionary, chooses phrases,
Places them in set rhyme schemes,
Takes out as ready made
To be sold in markets

A poet is one
Who knows the deep layers of life,
Who knows the creations of God,
In whose contemplation
A philosophy of life is alive;
Whose words are magnetic.

A poet is one
whose heart is an ocean;
Emotions rise up in tidal force,
Words forced to come out.
The birds sing when happy
Tears come when the heart is wet.

Poetry is not
A bucket of water from a well.
Poetry is not one
Which one writes;
Poetry is one
Which makes one write.

Catching one's hands,
Making one helpless,
Making one restless,
Tickling sometimes;
Making one smile,

Making one weep.

Poetry is one
Which is not confined;
Confined to the left and the right
Confined to pamphlet issues
Confined to social deliberations,
Confined to personal problems.

All these are quite necessary;
Necessary to give a bodily shape,
The soul is not without a body;
Poetry has both a soul and a body,

Poetry has eternal perspectives
Rich creative imagination,
Depth of an ocean,
Width of the sky,
Height of the Himalayas
Freshness of the Ganga.

Poetry is one
Which has no age
Which has no space,
Which puts on a new cloth,
Which gets a fresh meaning
In each new age.

Poetry is one
Which jerks and jolts,
Which compels to think
In each fresh reading,
Which gives peace, stability
In upheavals of life.



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