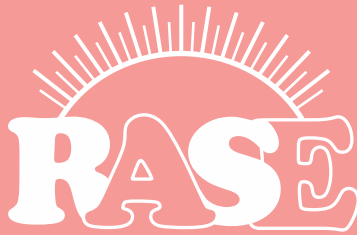


ISSN : 0975-3419

# Journal of Rajasthan Association for Studies in English

A Refereed Journal of Studies in English



VOLUME : 16  
Year : 2020

## Submission Guidelines and Subscription

The Journal of Rajasthan Association for Studies in English is an Annual Journal devoted to scholarly and authoritative opinion on broad cultural issues, focusing on the centrality of human concerns as evidenced in language, literature, art, cinema and translation. **Manuscripts are welcome.** They should conform to MLA Handbook Eighth Edition in all matters of form. The contributors are requested to provide plagiarism report along with their articles.

### Annual Subscription Rates for non-members of RASE

<b>India</b>	Individuals	₹ 200.00
	Institutions	₹ 500.00
<b>Overseas</b>	Individuals	₹ 3000.00 US \$ 50.00

Editorial Board takes no responsibility for inaccurate, misleading data, opinion and statements appeared in the articles published in this journal. It is the sole responsibility of the contributors. No part of this journal can be reproduced without the written permission of the Managing Editor who also holds the copyright (©) of the “**Journal of Rajasthan Association for Studies in English**”.

Visit our Website for further details  
and back issues of the Journal  
[www.raseindia.com](http://www.raseindia.com)

ISSN : 0975-3419

We humans have existed as a species on this planet for millions of years and have all along endeavored ceaselessly to make life better, longer, and richer. In a way, all our civilizational progress can be seen as a journey in this direction. Accumulating our experiences generation after generation, we have churned out a few ideals like justice, equality, freedom, tolerance, peaceful co-existence and so on. To materialize them, we have developed forms of government (democracy being one of them), social organization, and other paraphernalia that conduce to a life in accordance with these ideals. To be double sure, we have enshrined most of these ideals in the constitutions around the world. Yet if there arise forces that threaten to disarm humanity of these protective shields, there are always thinkers and writers whom P.B. Shelley called the “unacknowledged legislators of mankind” and saddled with the task of stirring thoughts and sentiments that can counter the anti-democratic, anti-welfarist forces by alerting the society to these dangers before they loom too large.

The anti-democratic forces rear their ugly heads every now and then. They take various guises too. So thinkers and scholars from all the disciplines of human knowledge try to investigate and conceptualize these threats from their different angles. A confluence of such minds is what makes for a conference in the present scenario.

This number of the *Journal of Rajasthan Association for Studies in English* contains research articles presented at the **XVI RASE Annual Conference** organized at Nagaur in 2019. The conference titled “Widening Canvas, Shrinking Spaces: Writer and Society Today” proved a meeting place for learned scholars from various disciplines as the subject for deliberation offered ample common ground to researchers from different fields. Some of the selected papers are being published in this number.

The papers selected are quite wide-ranging in their perspectival repertoire and reflect the opulence of academic endeavors directed towards ensuring a free space for all regardless of their political leanings. Such is the power

of dissent, the essence of democracy. Whereas Prof Sabita Tripathi in her article focusses on self-empowerment of women in terms of having free space, Dr. Dipa Chakrabarti takes up the issue of colonial legacy and nationalist desire for self-determination in North Africa. Dr. Anant Dadheech in his piece traces the presence of orientalist attitude in prevailing literary-critical discourse. Likewise, Sunita Sadh and Dr. Rekha Tiwari have pointed out how reason gets eclipsed in the very academic environs where it is expected to shine most. A related investigation is by Tripti Soni and Sucheta Jangid who have, of course in their own ways, tried to examine the role of urban space in determining the modalities of life lived by people in our post-modern world. Alerting to the dangers of over-reliance on machines Rajneesh Kumar has formulated an argument that neatly dovetails with those developed by Ankita Swetparna, Rince Raju and Nisha Paliwal in their articles. Ved Prakash Saini and Sheikh Suheel Miraj have argued for the value of committing oneself to the dreams of a better existence. Interestingly, Shashikant Acharya has turned his critical attention to the encroachment of space through bio-politics. Dr. Sumer Singh in his article investigates the literary-narrative technique of allegory as a means of unmasking the truth of political quagmire. In a similar vein, Sunil Dutt Vyas has analysed the travails that democracy itself has undergone in the post-independence era of Indian politics. Broadening the scope of discussion, Poonam Charan has explored the multicultural space and the peculiar challenges it poses to the idea of freedom and peaceful co-existence. Shankar Lal Dholi's article has lent this discussion the dimension of caste-based encroachment of free space.

So, the articles undoubtedly form a continuum of approaches towards threats to democratic space and the ways to keep them at bay. I am sure this collection will help develop a better understanding of the 'shrinking space' in the world of our 'widening canvas'.

*Guest Editor*

**Dr. Devendra Rankawat**

Department of English  
Central University of Rajasthan

## Voicing the Hidden by Assia Djebar, the Twenty- First Century Algerian Author, Historian and Novelist

---

*Dipa Chakrabarti*

The history of literature in Algeria has been shaped by centuries of intermixture of differing, and sometimes warring cultures, the indigenous Berbers, Roman invaders, Muslim Arabs and French colonists. All these have played a role in the creation and development of Algerian literature. The most famous writer to come out of Algeria, especially in Europe and the West, is the French pied noir Albert Camus, Nobel laureate and proponent of ‘absurd philosophy’ in his various essays and wildly acclaimed novels having the Algerian sun and beach as emblematic of the country itself. Since the mid-twentieth century, however a new literature emerged exploring Algeria’s struggle for independence from the French and the subsequent attempts to establish a new national identity following Algerian independence in 1962. Most prominent of the writers in this new era is Assia Djebar, the pen-name of Fatima-Zohra Imalayan. The present article wishes to examine her works, revolutionary and feminist to the core.

Djebar was educated in Algeria and then in France at the Sorbonne where she did her bachelor studies and finally did her doctoral studies at Paul Valéry University of Montpellier III. Her career as a novelist began in 1957 with the publication of her first novel, *La Soif* (*The Mischief*). It was followed by *Les Impatients* after one year (*The Impatient Ones*), which similarly dealt with young women within the colonial Algerian bourgeois milieu. The novel *Les Enfants du nouveau monde* published in 1962 (*Children of the New World*) and its sequel, *Les Alouettes naïves* in 1967 (*The Naive Larks*), chronicle of the growth of Algerian feminism and describe the contributions of Algerian women

to the war for Algerian Independence (1954–62) from France. Djébar collaborated with Walid Garn, then her husband, on the play *Rouge l'aube (Red Is the Dawn)*, published in the review *Promesses* in 1969. The collection *Poèmes pour l'Algérie heureuse (Poems for a Happy Algeria)* also appeared that year. Her 1980 novel *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement (Women of Algiers in their Apartment)* is a collection of novellas and short stories calling attention to the lingering disparities between the treatment of men and women following the decolonization of Algeria.

Djébar spent most of the war years outside Algeria, but afterward she taught history at the University of Algiers where she became head of the French Section. She also showed her huge potentials as a filmmaker. Her movie *Nouba des femmes du mont Chenoua*, the story of an Algerian woman engineer returning to Algeria after a long Western exile, was released in 1978.

Initially, alike other postcolonial Algerian writers in the post liberation times, she turned to addressing the construction of a new Algerian identity in a newly separated Algeria from France, after more than 130 years. Her 1960s novels *Les enfants du nouveau monde (Children of the New World)* and *Les Alouettes naïves (The Native Larks)* depicts the actions and experiences of women during the war. She has since emerged as an important voice in both the postcolonial and feminist movements, and her 1985 novel *L'Amour, La Fantasia (Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade)* uses a mix of fictional and revisionist history to undermine colonial and patriarchal attitudes, emphasizing the experience of women and the complexity of the relationship between a national and a personal identity.

Djébar revises traditional history in *Fantasia* using several techniques which decenters the colonizer's version of history and makes space for the participation of women in the struggle for national independence. She first presents colonial history in the form of letters, diaries and published accounts of French soldiers and officials, searching through them to find contribution of women and their participation which

eventually she recorded counteracting history's determination to erase their contribution and existence. In addition to finding moments in which the colonizers are forced to confront the problematic existence of women revolutionaries, Djebar presents the words of women freedom fighters themselves, translating them from Arabic to French.

Recording the women's stories in sections of the novel *Voices*, Djebar challenges the split between the spoken and the written, thereby underlining the limitations of traditional written history and the richness of the African oral traditions. The book is worth attention as Djebar brings together the French invasion of 1830 and the twentieth century War of Algerian Independence and alongside gives it a tone of autofiction by adding pieces of her own autobiography. Djebar thus, complicates the notion of linear history, presenting an alternative view of the interdependence of the personal and the national, the past, the present and the future.

The intellectual movements of the 20th Century, including Derridean deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, have continued the move away from the 18th and 19th century notions of the universal subject and replacing it with fractured, multiple subject positions. Feminist theorists like Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, Gayatri Spivak and others are theorizing female subjectivity in all its diversity and multiplicity in answer to the existing phallogentric constructions. In "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak summarizes her project of constructing a new model of female subjectivity, a gesture Djebar takes up in *L'Amour, la fantasia*:

"My readings are, rather, an interested and inexpert examination, by a postcolonial woman, of the fabric of repression, a constructed counter-narrative of woman's consciousness, thus woman's being, thus woman's being good, thus the good woman's desire, thus woman's desire" (Djebar *L'Amour, la fantasia* 299).

Djebar joins her own voice and life story with the stories and voices of Algerian women revolutionaries, replacing silence and the colonizer's version of history with a celebration of female experience and expression. Speaking neither for nor to her subaltern sisters, Djebar speaks with

them, emphasizing the collective nature of female expression. Djébar realizes the ways in which her own story is intimately linked to the forgotten and silenced testimonies of other women:

Can I, twenty years later, claim to revive these stifled voices? And speak for them? Shall I not at best find dried-up streams? What ghosts will be conjured up when in this absence of expressions of love (love received, 'love' imposed), I see the reflection of my own barrenness, my own aphasia (Djébar 202).

In telling their stories, Djébar and the women revolutionaries reclaim not only their individual and collective voices, but their bodies as well. Speaking the self is linked in important ways to speaking the experience of female embodiment. Sidonie Smith articulates the intersection of subjectivity and body that occurs in autobiographical projects:

When a specific woman approaches the scene of writing and the autobiographical 'I,' she not only engages the discourses of subjectivity through which the universal human subject has been culturally secured; she also engages the complexities of her cultural assignment to an absorbing embodiment. And so, the autobiographical subject carries a history of the body with her as she negotiates the autobiographical 'I,' for autobiographical practice is one of those cultural occasions when the history of the body intersects the deployment of subjectivity (22-23).

Djébar's treatment of the veil, her own escape from cloistering, and her subsequent access to academia and writing suggests that the female body is a locus of potential power, rebellion, and knowledge that threatens the status quo of male privilege:

The fourth language, for all females, young or old, cloistered or half-emancipated, remains that of the body: The body which male neighbors' and cousins' eyes require to be deaf and blind, since they cannot completely incarcerate it, the body which, in trances, dances, or vociferations, in fits of hope and despair, rebels, and unable to read or write, seeks some unknown shore as destination for its message of love (Djébar 180).



The image of the dismembered hand at the novel's conclusion suggests the connection between body and voice, subjectivity and embodied experience:

Later, I seize this living hand, hand of mutilation and of memory, and I attempt to bring it the qalam (Djebar 226).

The story of Djebar and the women freedom fighters is also the story of Algeria and the journey from colonization and subjugation to independent nation. Djebar's text refigures nationalist strategies by replacing history written by the colonizer with a history of heroic women. The re-writing of history is a common step in the project of nationalism, but most often the revised history of a colonized nation continues to be a male-centered history). By moving women from the margin to the forefront of her recreated history, Djebar documents women's historic roles as revolutionaries and makes the case that they deserve status as full citizens in the new nation they have helped to build. Danielle Marx-Scouras draws connections between Djebar's themes of subjectivity, body, voice and nationalism as they relate to Djebar's feminist political agenda:

The amputated hand symbolizes Algeria, mutilated by a history written by the hands of others (French historians, writers, artists) but, perhaps more importantly for Djebar, it also represents Algerian women amputated in their desire to write or express themselves. The dominant images of the novel – abduction and rape – sexualize the representation of Algeria, which becomes, in the final analysis, the female body. If it is on this body that the history of the French conquerors has been written, it is from this body that the decolonization of a people must be written – be they men or women (Djebar 176).

Thus, Djebar's project seeks to "resurrect so many vanished sisters" (204), to restore them to their rightful place within the new nation, to have their voices speak and be heard as full participants in the project of decolonization and nation-building. The nation that Algerian women have helped to make independent according to the author has a duty to recognize the issues and concerns of women.

## Works Cited

- Djebar, Assia. *A Sister to Scheherazade*. Translated by Dorothy S. Blair, Quartet, 1987. Originally published in French as *L'Ombre sultane*, Jean-Claude Lattes, 1987.
- . *Fantasia, an Algerian Cavalcade*. Translated by Dorothy S. Blair, Quartet, 1985. Originally published in French as *L'Amour, la fantasia*, Jean-Claude Lattes, 1985.
- . *Far from Madina*. Quartet, 1994. Originally published in French as *Loin de Medine*, Albin Michel, 1991.
- . *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*. 1979.
- . *La Soif*. Julliard, 1957.
- . *La Zerda ou les chants de l'oubli*. 1982.
- . *Les Alouettes naïves*. Julliard, 1967.
- . *Les Enfants du Nouveau Monde*. Julliard, 1962.
- . *Les Impatients*. Julliard, 1958.
- . *Poems pour l'Algerie heureuse*. S.N.E.D., 1969.
- . *Rouge l'aube*. S.N.E.D., 1969.
- . *Vaste est la prison: Roman*. Albin Michel, 1995.
- . *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*. Translated by Marjolijn de Jager, UP of Virginia, 1992. Originally published in French as *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement*, Edition des Femmes, 1980.
- Donadey, Anne. "Assia Djebar's Poetics of Subversion." *L'Esprit Creatur*, vol. 33, no. 2, Summer 1993, pp. 107-17.
- Green, Mary Jean. "Dismantling the Colonizing Text: Anne Hebert's Kamouraska and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la fantasia*." *The French Review*, vol. 66, no. 6, May 1993, pp. 959-66.
- Ghaussy, Soheila. "A Stepmother Tongue: 'Feminine Writing' in Assia Djebar's *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*." *World Literature Today*, vol. 68, no. 3, Summer 1994, pp. 457-62.
- Goodman, Joanna. "L'Ecrit et le cri: Giving Voice in Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la fantasia*." *Edebiyat*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1995, pp. 1-19.
- Marx-Scouras, Danielle. "Muffled Screams/Stifled Voices." *Yale French Studies*, vol. 82, 1993, pp. 172-82.

Mortimer, Mildred. *Assia Djébar*. Celfan Ed. Monogs, 1988.

---. "Language and Space in the Fiction of Assia Djébar and Leila Sebbar." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 19, no. 3, Fall 1988, pp. 301-11.

---. "The Evolution of Assia Djébar's Feminist Conscience." *Contemporary African Literature*, edited by Hal Wylie et al., Three Continents & African Lit. Assn., 1983.

Murdoch, H. Adlai. "Rewriting Writing: Identity, Exile and Renewal in Assia Djébar's *L'Amour, la fantasia*." *Yale French Studies*, vol. 83, 1993, pp. 71-93.

Page, Andrea. "Rape or Obscene Copulation? Ambivalence and Complicity in Djébar's *L'Amour, la fantasia*." *Women in French Studies*, vol. 2, Fall 1994, pp. 42-54.

Smith, Sidonie. *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century*. Indiana UP, 1993.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, edited by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Routledge, 1987.

Zimra, Clarisse. "Writing Women: The Novels of Assia Djébar." *Substance*, vol. 21, no. 3, 1992, pp. 68-84.

## Truth: The Writer and the State in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

---

*Rince Raju*

“What unites people? Armies? Gold? Flags?  
Stories.

There is nothing more in the world more powerful than a good  
story. Nothing can stop it , no enemy can defeat it.”

– Tyrion Lannister, (Game of Thrones, Season 8, Episode 6)

The most debated and acclaimed web series of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, adapted as Game of Thrones from an epic fantasy novel series, *A Song Of Ice And Fire*, written by George R.R Martin gains its climax twist and conclusion of the entire fight of the houses for the throne of centuries through the dialogue mentioned above. If we consider the entire plot of the series with this climax dialogue the importance of a narrative in nation building and in gaining power is revealed. This paper traces how narratives, endorsed with truths of many, simultaneously affects the state and common man. Rohinton Mistry's novel *Fine Balance* (1995) is used here as the vehicle to reveal the tenor. The novel portrays how emergency, meant for people's benefit, cut through the psycho- social fabric of the country where justice is in the hands of the rich and the struggle of the poor to construct a new life for themselves. The paper also investigates the manipulation of perception in a country like India done by political parties and the ways through which they use the pathos of masses in the post- truth world. How the beautification process initiated by the prime Minister has turned out into an absolute chaos in the unidentified city is the chief concern of the paper. The characters of Rohinton Mistry are considered as the everymen character in this paper, to mark their connection with the contemporary world of media and its effect on them. So this paper is not to criticise any government or it

measures but rather it focuses upon the way through which the government policies are manipulated and used for personal interests of rich. For this will go through the truth of the state first and then will ponder upon the truth writer wants to reveal.

### **Indira's India**

To understand the state's truth of the period of setting in the novel it's important to navigate through historical books and references. The novel deals with the state's emergency of 1975 and how it impacted the common masses. Upon the death of LalBahadurShastri Indira Gandhi became the prime minister of India by defeating her rival Morarji Desai. Due to her inexperience, the cabinet and the opposition began to call her 'goongi gudiya'. She doesn't have power and control over her ministers and her position in the party was weakened. Thus coalition and politics of defection was common in the state. Inefficiency of political and administrative system deteriorated the socio economic situation of the country and this lead to the insurrection of naxalbari. India also witnessed the emergence of a new form of industrial action called Gherao under which workers besieged factory managers in their offices for hours or even days till their demands were met. Towards the 1971 election most of the oppositional parties collated under the slogan "Indira hatao" and Indira Gandhi countered this movement by targeting upon the landless labourers, Scheduled castes and tribes, minorities, and the unemployed youth under the slogan "Garibihatao".

Mrs Gandhi's left-centre- agenda caught like a wildfire in the minds of common masses. Hence they voted for a better life offered by Indira Gandhi rather than a political change of oppositional parties. Thus congress party was rejuvenated under Indira after the 1971 general elections, which paved way for the iron lady yet to come.

To keep the promises given to the poor people of the country the central government initiated a programme of cheap food grain distribution to the economically vulnerable sections of society and a crash scheme for creating employment in rural areas. But this didn't last long, the political-military crisis that broke out in East Pakistan ruined all. The shelter

given to the refugees from Bangladesh (East Paskistan) endangered political and economic stability of Indira's government acquired so far. People's expectation were unfulfilled. Little dent was not being made in rural or urban poverty or economic inequality, nor was there any lessening of caste and class oppression in the country side.

Indira Gandhi's popularity began to decline; the marked deterioration in the economic situation was the immediate provocation for the rising discontent. At the same time the world prices for crude oil also increased, which worsened the situation by causing price rise that lead to the scarcity of essentials. Unrest broke out in Gujarat and Bihar spread all over the nation with the intervention of JP movement initiated by Jayaprakash Narayan associated with opposition party leaders. This movement demanded party less politics and advocated total revolution.

All these circumstances along with Allahabad court order forced Mrs Gandhi to proclaim a state of internal emergency under article 352 of the constitution on the morning of June 26, suspending the normal political processes, but promising to return to normalcy as soon as possible. Hundreds of the main leaders of the opposition were arrested under the maintenance of internal security Act (MISA). Public order and discipline were restored, many felt relieved that the country had been saved from disorder and chaos. There was less crime in the cities; gheraos and uncontrolled, often violent, demonstrations came to an end, there was a perceptible lessening of tension in the air. An immediate and general improvement in the administration, with government servants coming to office on time and being more considerate to the public. Quick, dramatic and well-publicized actions were taken against smugglers, hoarders, black marketers, illegal traders in foreign currency and tax evaders, with several thousand of them put behind bars under MISA.

Prices of essential goods, including foodstuffs, came down and their availability in the shops improved. Popular hopes were raised and the emergency made more palatable by the announcement on 1<sup>st</sup> July of the omnibus twenty – point programme by Mrs Gandhi, its edge being the socio economic uplift of the vast mass of the rural poor.

The programme promised to liquidate the existing debts of landless labourers, small farmers and rural artisans and extend alternative credit to them, abolished bonded labour, implement the existing agricultural land ceiling laws and distribute surplus land to the landless, provide special help to the handloom industry, bring down prices, prevent tax evasion and smuggling, increase production, streamline distribution of essential commodities, increase the limit of income tax exemption to Rs 8000 and liberalize investment procedures.

The public response to the emergency was also recorded in many historical books, as usual intelligentsia reacted to the emergency with marked hostility. Large majority of people responded it with passivity, acquiescence, acceptance or even support. There was bewilderment and as also personal fear for the unknown. It was a first time experience for the people, of an authoritarian rule.

The truth of the state will be completely unveiled on analysing the justification of Mrs. Gandhi on Emergency. She said emergency is for India's stability, security and for rescuing democracy from danger caused by JP movement. The emergency paved way for her to implement a programme of rapid economic development in the interest of the poor and underprivileged. And also she warned against the intervention and subversion from abroad with the aim of weakening and destabilising India.

Even though, towards the end of emergency period the situation was completely out of control of the prime minister. All the controlled things began to break out more powerful than before. Land lords and corrupt politicians disrupted the communication between the PM and the commoners through malfunctioning. And the freedom of press also affected negatively to PM towards the end of Emergency.

### **The Writer's Truth**

So far in this paper we traced the truth of the state through historic references and we analysed how and why emergency was declared. In the view of the state, the emergency was purely for the benefit of

the people and for security of the downtrodden. Upliftment of the down trodden and total erasure of the caste system in India was the emphasised points out of twenty by the state.

Rohinton Mistry, the Indian diasporic writer thoroughly studied the plight of the down trodden and portrays how it dismantled the life of common man in his second novel "A Fine Balance". The entire events in the novel take place in an unidentified city of India, initially in 1975 and later in 1984 during the turmoil of The Emergency. In his canvas of the novel the writer chooses four main characters, Dina Dalal, Ishvar Darji, his nephew Omprakash Darji and the young student Maneck Kohlah, from varied backgrounds of rural India to portray his version of truth about emergency. Through the life events of these characters from the rural background, where Mrs. Gandhi targeted the upliftment, Rohinton Mistry traces out the malevolence of the government and the corruption of its agents, powerful and petty alike. The psycho-social fabric of the country especially of the common masses disturbed by the political changes of the time where rich grabbed and possessed justice is well illustrated through his creation of events in the life of characters sewed with the past of the country. A composite picture of India with its passions, hopelessness, strength, fear, bewilderment and ignorance about the things happening around in course of time placed as a spectrum by setting his novel in three different backgrounds. Dina Dalal lives in the metropolis; Ishvar and Omprakash belong to the village, while Maneck is from high altitude.

Manipulation of the facts by the rich to hold the poor as poor only is well visible with the portrayal of the upper-caste character Thakur Dharamsi. For having the temerity to ask for a ballot this upper caste thug killed Narayan, Omprakash's father, and his family. These are one among those methods of the period through which the rich people overpowered the commoners from the access of their basic rights offered by the constitution.

When Indira came into action with her Twenty point Programme and her son Sanjay Gandhi with his four point programme the downtrodden



people got ignited because in both of these programmes upliftment of the backward classes and equality before law was offered. This created strength and courage in the psychic fabric of the common masses and as the reflection of this Omprakash who belonged to the lower caste chamar spit in front of the upper caste Thakur Dharamsi.

But on the other hand rich used these programmes as the way to subjugate the common mass more. The government's policy of family planning was intended for a control over the population growth which ultimately results in poverty. For this purpose government family planning centre were opened in villages. As the Centre in this unidentified city did not fill its quota, they took random people from the street and forced them into a truck that drove them to the Family Planning Centre. All three, Omprakash, Ishwar and Ashraf Chacha, are beaten into the truck and since Ashraf Chacha is so old, he is gravely injured and later dies on the street. Ishwar and Omprakash beg to escape the forced sterilization, but the vasectomy takes place. As they lie in an outside tent recovering, Thakur Dharamsi comes by and forces the doctor to give Om a castration. Due to the use of unsterilized surgical equipment used for the vasectomy Ishwar's legs become infected and must be amputated.

## **Conclusion**

Who is responsible for Om's castration? Whom you blame for Ishwar's imputed leg? What's your take on the suicide committed by ArshadChacha's daughters? Why was Manek forced to end his life? Is that government? Is that because of the emergency ? I would say a big NO! as the answer of these questions. Here the real problem is an invisible wall created between the rich and poor. No rich man wants the poor to become equal to them. It happens in every strata of the society then and now also. Even the democracy is also controlled by these type of invisible barriers indebted through generations and generations. Government is for the rich and the laws for poor. Here Dina Dalal's apartment shares the agony of commoners grinded by the rich from various dimensions, where government is just a mere victim of all.

Rohinton Mistry's characters Omprakash, Ishwar, Manek Kohlah and Dina Dilal are still grinded by the people like Thakur Dharamsi in this Twenty First century too. With the advent of the modern technology and social media Thakur Dharamsis became more powerful than before to manipulate the facts and use it for personal gain and subjugating others. After the Brexit referendum and US president election oxford dictionary in 2016 added a word called Post- Truth and they defined it as:

“relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.”

Although it's more like an old wine in a new pot, but after the coinage of the term by oxford dictionary the political culture of modern era began to be more visible and people started evaluating and stop believing the media as it is. The recent reports say that in the countries like India , Russia, and Brazil the sudden ascendancy of the post truth is through the twenty four hours news cycle, false balance in news reporting, increasing ubiquity of social media and through fake news websites.

The plight of the common people such as Omprakash and Ishwar had no change in the post truth era, rather, it worsened more. Most of the mainstream media are under control of the capitalist forces and it propagates the authoritarianism of the party in rule. Even at the time of emergency when Indira Gandhi lifted the censorship over the media, all of a sudden things turn apart. The popularity of the programmes she initiated for the upliftment of the backward people was misguided and manipulated by the rich. This favoured people like Thakur Dharamsi, and boosted them to grind the poor very easily as portrayed in the novel. If it happened in an era when access to social media was very less, imagine how it could effect in the modern era. Here lies the relevance of RohintonMistry's *A fine Balance* in the contemporary period. Each and every news that we share and read could be a tool designed by the modern Thakur Dharamsis to castrate the modern Omprakashes, who are still waiting for the equality offered by the constitution. Or it could

be a unsterilized surgical equipment to impute the modern descendants of Ishwar. Hence it is very necessary to have an extra eye, and an extra ear before you share, read, upload, anything through social media platform if you are a lover of humanity.

### **Works Cited**

- Chandra, Bibin, et al. *India Since Independence*. Penguin Books, 2008.
- Dinklage, Peter, performer. *Game of Thrones*. HBO, 25 October 2019, 7.30 p.m., [www.hbo.com/game-of-thrones](http://www.hbo.com/game-of-thrones).
- Mambrol, Nasrullah. Post- Truth. *Literariness.org*, 28 August 2019, 3.00 p.m., [www.literariness.org/2018/10/12/post-truth](http://www.literariness.org/2018/10/12/post-truth).
- Mistry, Rohinton. *A Fine Balance*. McClelland and Stewart, 1995.

## Traces of Foucault's Biopolitics in Sindiwe Magona's 'Mother to Mother'

---

*Shashi Kant Acharya*

Biopolitics has become one of the most used terms by the academicians in various conferences centred on cultural and political studies. The term 'Biopolitics' is defined as an organisational power which controls the human lives and changes them not into bodies but species. The term Biopolitics was coined by Rudolf Kjellen who also coined the term geopolitics. He used this term while studying "the civil war between different social groups" from biological perspective so he gave it a name Biopolitics, but today and especially from a poststructuralist point of view, this term is related to Michel Foucault who used this putative term for the social and political power over life. In Foucault's works this term denotes the domination of the government over the human life through Biopower. In his book 'Security, Territory Population' Foucault explains Biopower as a different set of mechanisms through which biological identity of the human beings becomes the subject of political strategy. He takes us back to eighteenth century where modern western societies started considering humans as species. Foucault defines Biopower in his book of lectures, 'Society Must Be Defended' as "a new technology of power... [that] exists at a different scale, and has a different bearing area and makes use of very different instruments(Foucault 242).

According to Foucault, bio-power came into existence only in the eighteenth century and to understand bio-power one needs to see what used to be the scene before eighteenth century. There we can say that there were three stages of evolution of power. There used to be sovereign power which had different power over its subjects. Sovereign power had power to kill and this was its power over life of its subjects. Power

over life meant power over death; it was the power of the sword. Subject is alive because of the sovereign. Power of the sovereign over life can only be exercised when it kills its subject. The right to take life and let live was replaced by the right to let live and let die. The power did not transform completely but it did have an evolution. What was the reason for this evolution? If one observes the historical evolution of European countries, one finds enlightenment as one of the biggest ideas that changed everything in eighteenth century. The power was shifted from sovereign to bourgeois class. The kind of punishment which used to be given by the sovereign to its undisciplined subjects also changed. Surveillance, record keeping book and vigilance were introduced and the subject became the property of the state. Subjects started being disciplined because they knew they were being under surveillance. But this also changed in the latter half of the eighteenth century; the demographers were introduced into the scene. Now the state started to control the birth rate, mortality rate and longevity. Human race was changed into human species. All the humans started coming into the charts prepared by the demographers of the different country. Population was controlled through different charts.

Sindiwe Magona, a black writer from South Africa has written about Apartheid and Post-apartheid in her novels like *Mother to Mother* and *Beauty's Gift*. She addresses the problems and issues of her time in her novels. *Mother To Mother* was published in 1998. This novel is centred on an incident where a Fulbright Scholar Amy Behl, a white girl was murdered in the area which was for black people. The novel is written in epistolary style in which the mother of the murderer writes to mother of the victim about being sorry for the incident and more importantly for telling the reasons which led her son to commit such heinous crime. The mother of the murderer recounts the past that changed the person her child was. South Africa saw Apartheid regime for the first time in 1948 when Nationalist Party came into rule. The literal meaning of Apartheid is to separate. Apartheid government to benefit the white minority separated the whole population into four races, Afrikaner, Bantu, Coloured, and Indian. This classification was done to develop each race

according to its need. The demonic idea behind this classification was to exercise surveillance over the different races so that the seed of self and the other could be planted in the consciousness of the white race. *Mother to Mother* is a novel of memory and remembrance of the past. It talks about the lives of black people during the time of Apartheid. Apartheid was an engineered socio-political and cultural structure by which Nationalist Party ruled the country till 1994. This structure had a similarity to Jeremy Bentham's idea of Panopticon which he introduced in 1791 but the idea of panopticon was later used by Michel Foucault in his work, 'Discipline and Punishment'. The idea of panopticon was to exercise surveillance over the subjects, observe the subjects and control the subjects. Foucault had this idea that the power and knowledge go hand in hand by observing its subjects. When a certain group of people control the knowledge and power of a country, oppression seems to be inevitable. White minority was getting all the benefits which were given to them by the Apartheid regime. The first law which was implemented by the Nationalist government was the Group Areas Act in which white population was placed at the centre of the cities and black and other population was given the land which was not fertile and which was at the margin of the cities. This geographical segregation of different races was done for the two reasons, first because the government wanted to give benefit to white minority and the second was to have surveillance over the black community. This law thwarted the familial ties and sense of community in the black population. In *Mother to Mother*, Mandisa, Mxolisi's mother recounts such past, they were happily living in the area of Blouville but in the name of enlightenment and separate development:

Guguletu would have you think it is a housing development, civilized, better- because of being made of concrete, complete with glass windows. But we lived in Blouville because we wanted to live there (Magona 33).

Apartheid government in the name of enlightenment and development gave black population different land and concrete houses but did not care about the familial relationships which got broken because of this

act. Foucault in his different works talks about how power operates in different social and institutional bodies. Power doesn't let the subjects be aware about its presence. White government in South Africa did not let black people live in the city; city was reserved for the whites. Black people were given houses outside the city area. The area which was provided to black population was not a place where black could live freely, they were under surveillance of the police of the state, *the police are no security to us in Gugulet (Magona 84)*. The police and other officials were posted at Guguletu area just to put black people and their actions under surveillance so that the white minority rule remains unthreatened.

Places often define the people who live there. Black population which was moved from one place to another in the name of enlightenment lost the sense of belongingness and sense of citizenship in their own country. The identity of the black people changed as they changed their place. The whole idea of surveillance becomes a reality when we see how black population was monitored and was oppressed by the white minority in Apartheid time of South Africa. The people lose their identities.

We could never go back to who we were before they had come. We could never go to that time or place. Nothing would ever be the same for us. We have been hurtled headlong into the eye of the raging storm (Magona 87).

The whole idea of enlightenment for the black people was a hoax. It was brought just to segregate the different races. It was not for the development of the black race but to subjugate them geographically, politically and culturally. For the Afrikaner government it was a project of development but for the Africans it was a plan to snatch their homes from them. The whole idea of this segregated development was nothing but a forced removal of black people from their homes to the place which could never be their home. The sense of belonging was snatched away from Africans.

Apartheid was a new form of oppression through laws and system which differentiates on the basis of race. Biopolitics is a control not

only on the individual but a whole population. South African Government through surveillance and state police made black community weak. Geographical segregation played a very important role in segregating people on the basis of race. Biopolitics is a political tool through which different governments control its population through surveillance, statistics and segregation in the name of development.

### **Works Cited**

- Esposito, Roberto. *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*. Minnesota P, 2008.
- Foucault, Michel. *Security, Territory, Population*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Foucault, Michel. *Society Must Be Defended*. Picador, 2003.
- Magona, Sindiwe. *Mother to Mother*. Beacon P, 1998.



## Philip Larkin's Poetry: Consolation in The Diminution of Power and Positivity

---

*Ved Prakash Saini*

During and after World Wars in the twentieth century, there was an aura of chaos in the life and literature of England. Although a victorious nation England was convalescing the damages done by the enemy nations. Such serious hours required a typical type of literature which could soothe the aching feelings of general masses. Austerity and seriousness seemed to be the remedy for the war wounds. Romanticism and illusive literature was entirely irrelevant and inappropriate to the need of the hour. The modernistic trends were at decrease and a type of Englishness was inevitable to heal the wounds unseen. The whole nation seemed to lose his power, vigour and positivity. Philip Larkin with his movement approach produced the works which gave comfort, solace to cure the diminution of power and positivity. Here is his poetry to deal with the theme. As Larkin's major poetry touches his autobiographical elements, so a little write-up of his biography is an exigency to meet the requirement of this paper.

Philip Larkin, a novelist, poet and jazz critic, was born to Sydney Larkin and Eva on August 9, 1922 in Coventry Warwickshire (now in West Midlands), England. Although Larkin was brought up under loving eyes, yet he speaks of his childhood in the disparaging terms. He described his childhood as a 'forgotten boredom'. Larkin did his schooling in King Henry VIII Grammar School in Coventry and graduated in 1943 from Oxford University. After having completed the schooling and college education, he did a job of a librarian at many libraries till at last he came as a librarian at the University of Hull where he remained till his death in 1985. Larkin was only fifteen when he first used his pen. He wrote both poetry and prose but the novel-writing brought him into the limelight.

His first novel *Jill* was published in 1946 and the next was *A Girl in Winter* in 1947. Larkin attempted for the third novel but abandoned because of the reason unknown. Then he changed the mode of his writing from novel to poetry rejecting all lures of novel-writing and successively but haltingly published four major volumes. The first entitled *The North Ship* appeared in 1945, which contained only a few poems of much worth. Larkin won wide acclaim for his poetic gift with the publication of his three volumes of poems, namely *The Less Deceived* published in 1955, *The Whitsun Weddings* in 1964 and *High Windows* in 1974. Two prose works to Larkin's credit are *All What Jazz* (1970), a collection of his jazz reviews, and *Required Writing* (1983), a collection of miscellaneous prose and critical pieces. Besides these he edited, with Bonami Dobree and Louis MacNeice, *New Poems 1958: A Pen Anthology* (1958), and was an independent editor of the *Oxford Book of English Verse* (1973) and of *Poetry Supplement* (1774).

Larkin was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for poetry in 1965, and he received honorary doctorates from seven Universities including Oxford Univ. On the death of the poet laureate, John Betjeman, Larkin was offered but refused the poet laureateship because of his shyness and in the fear of losing privacy. The honour, then, went to Kinsley Amis, one of his closest friends. In 2003 Larkin was chosen as 'the nation's best loved poet' in a survey by the Poetry Books Society and in 2008 the *Times* named Larkin as 'the greatest post-war writer'.

His personal habits, his relation with women and termination of love affair prove him to be an unsociable or isolated man. He certainly had weaknesses for women. Pornographic pictures gave him pleasure and he was addicted to it. He fell in love with many women but their love did not come to fulfilment with any of them. He even rejected the woman with whom he was engaged. He became very intimate with two other women, Maeve Brennan and Monica Jones, and he wanted to choose one of them to be his wife. However, he was not a marrying kind of man, and in the end married neither of them. He regarded women as stupid being and marriage a revolting institution. He was obsessed with death. He did not believe in God but valued rituals. To him, marriage

means loss of one's freedom. He loved animals. He loved his work and was dedicated to it. He was generous to those in distress. He was compassionate and humane. He was a man of retiring habits showing little taste to things. He avoided publicity. He did not like holidays because holidays, to him, seem a wholly feminine conception, based on an impotent dislike of everyday life. His habit and mode of living was totally like an old man for whom nothing tastes. The acceptance of Philip Larkin has been beautifully described about the plainness of life. The poet himself accepts that his youth, manhood and old age created no waves except some of weak flow of water in zigzagging way. Larkin's end of life was of many ups and downs from the health and physical point of view. In the year 1984 he became seriously ill, perhaps cancer, and breathed his last on the 2nd December 1985.

The present paper is concerned with the analysis of some poems by Larkin which justify the theme. Here are some poems to deal with for this scrounging of facts point of view.

The poem "The Whitsun Weddings" presents Larkin's dismissive attitude in the very beginning but soon (the poem) becomes contemplative. When the train leaves from the station of Hull, it is three quarters empty. Larkin captures many fleeting glimpses of the scenery on the way, though none of it is very interesting and much of it is squalid and polluted and thus repelling. Only in third stanza Larkin notices the wedding parties at each railway station; and even then he observes them with a dismissive attitude of a confirmed bachelor and an alienated outsider. Larkin himself for a long time wavered between two women, namely Monica and Maeve but married neither of them and his indecision about marriage continued to be an outstanding fact of his life. An ironical, detailed description of the various sights runs up through next stanzas. Subsequently an affirmative note enters the poem and in the concluding stanza the poem becomes vivacious and philosophical. We have the image of 'an arrow-shower somewhere becoming rain.' The sense of isolation that remained dominant throughout the poem is certainly diminished to a great extent in the conclusion. That a man should not be able to experience any curiosity about the people he sees or any interest

in what they are doing is although a sense of alienation from society at large, yet this philosophical proposition fills the poem with a positive affirmative note and is a consolation and solace to an unmarried bachelor and a detached lover. Generally a sight of pleasure is envious to those who do not possess the thing in question, but Larkin does not repent at all for the absence of those dear to sight entities. This positivism of Larkin's runs in the poem "Church Going" which displays the picture of a church and reflection of Larkin's attitude toward church in his time and its likely future in the speaker's opinion. On a surface level, this poem satirizes church going tradition, but on a deeper level, Larkin refers to the collapse of a church (going of church itself from its use), as people's religious faith also was a victim of collapse. As churches were no longer able to attract all people towards religion, it indicates the decline of church at that time. Also, all of Larkin's suspicions, fears, and frustrations are discovered in a single visit to an empty church. Each line of the poem expands the tension in the speaker's response to the building. In the first two stanzas the poet describes the physical conditions of the abandoned rural church. These stanzas suggest indecision and uncertainty in every line. Larkin being the agnostic by nature performs the worshipping rituals like taking off cycle-clips, running hands around the vessel containing holy water, perusing verses, signing the visitor's book, donating an Irish six pence in the church not by faith but only to please him mockingly in unwilling respect. His reluctant respect is seen in the line: 'Reflect the place was not stopping for/Yet stop I did.

In the consecutive stanzas Larkin expresses his concern over the prospect sad fate of the deserted countryside church:

When churches fall completely out of use  
 What we shall turn them into?  
 Shall we avoid them as unlucky places? (loc.cit.)

And then the poet advances to present the residual use of the churches after the loss of belief among the general masses: Or after dark some dubious women come/To make their children touch a particular stone.

As the poem falls in the category of descriptive-reflective poem so in the concluding stanza it becomes meditative in the form of optimism. B. G. Tandon in his critical discussion on Larkin suggests that Larkin analytically projects positivity and consolation to the believer in the church and in God with his meditation. In the meditating stanzas Larkin suggests two reflections. The first question is: What will happen to the churches when belief in them is gone and only superstition clings? The three possible answers are (1) They will be kept on show like museums for keeping historical records (2) they will be avoided as unlucky places; and (3) they will be haunted by superstitious people, especially ladies. The second question is: what will happen to those when even superstition goes? again the alternative answers are:(1) they will be frequented by the researches on antiquity;(2) they will become the haunts of the ritualists; and (3) they will be visited by agnostics of the type the poet is. The second reflection is embodied in the question , what is the value of church ? The two answers provided are: (1) it regulates three basic stages of life( birth, marriage and death) by its rituals; and (2) it makes us think of death by drawing our attention to the dead that lie buried in its yard and thereby makes us wiser, for the thought of death produces wisdom.

In the poem, “High Windows” the speaker compares the new generation and their liberty of having sex to his old time when he was a young man who was prohibited and unable to have the same freedom. His frank voice seems embarrassing when he describes how the youths today have got rid of sexual taboos, a deeper layer of the poem suggests the philosophy of old age and the recognition of human limits. This does not mean asceticism in Larkin; he simply saw that erotic love was dominated by a civilization strange to us. The indirect question of the poem is that if neither getting rid of religion nor sexual liberation brings freedom, what can we hope for?

Rather than words comes the thought of high windows:

The sun-comprehending glass,  
And beyond it, the deep blue air, that shows  
Nothing, and is nowhere, and is endless. (CP 129)

The speaker feels desperate as he contemplates his own aging. In “High Windows” he contrives to escape from his sordid envy of the young since the young are envied in their false ‘paradise’ of plentiful sex. The major part of the poem seems to present a type of loss of the timely bodily satisfaction felt by Larkin but the conclusion of the poem leaves a great message to the new generation blind to social ethos regarding sex. The positive message of the poem could be that in the sex without cultural or moral regulation no pleasure is expected. Thus this poem is an instructing moral ethos not only for individuals but for the entire world at large. Larkin energize his reader in the poem “Going” by sketching the arrival of deaths through various images. Although it is considered and understood Larkin’s poem of death, it prepares one to face death through the description of the bitter experiences while dying. The distant prospect of death does not resemble with its close approach. Hence Larkin seems to take death as inevitable truth of life and thus fills the old and the dying ones with a sense of certainty. This certainty lessens the severe effects of death. Unlike many sages Larkin is bringing comfort through his horrible discomfoting. Larkin’s hidden message or implicit meaning to the whole mankind is that if the miserable condition while dying is unavoidable and even the state of unconsciousness is certain then why this crying and weeping is for in this worldly life. Here Larkin’s unrelenting pessimism proves to be an optimistic poem.

The poem “Wedding Wind” presents the dual nature of Larkin. His dualism for and against a debatable point is explicitly conveyed in the poems “Wedding Wind” and “Dockery and Son” respectively. Larkin handles the dichotomy of ideas about marriage in equal balance. In poem “Wedding Wind” Larkin, in the words of the protagonist, a newly married Victorian girl, assuredly asserts the joy of marriage as unbearable and unending in spite of minor obstacles and hindrances. This poem is in anticipation an assurance of unending joy of marriage to those who wish to marry or also to those who are fearful of the prospect bitter and painful experience of married life. Married life is an activation of sleepy life of bachelorhood and its delights and joys cannot even be destroyed by death.

The poem "Dockery and Son" also becomes a staunch support to those who wish to remain unmarried or could not get married due to some unavoidable circumstances. According to Larkin nothing attractive and special is there in one's marriage and begetting a son. Majority of people get married and beget a son, still there have some ever biting problems for which no cure is suggested. Everybody needs a woman to satisfy his sexual urge; and, after the sexual urge has been satisfied, a man feels the need to perpetuate himself through his offspring and therefore wants children. But, in "Dockery and Son" Larkin dismisses such an altitude as a result, not of any real or natural or irrepressible urge, but of custom and habit. Thus in his view, marriage and children are not essential at all. Speaking negatively of the marriage the poet calls it a revolting institution. Larkin did not experience his own married life but he speaks in depreciatory terms about the married life of his parents. He said 'The only married state I intimately know (i.e. that of my parents) is bloody hell.' When read between the lines, this poem projects a real happy view.

The poem "Toads" indirectly denotes the poet's aversion to work. Hence Larkin compares work as toads that bind one to do it. Larkin first describes and suggests many ways to earn the living by the power of mind and by eloquence to the people who are invalids and have developed weakness because of their handicapped body. Hence Larkin's poem is a comfort to those handicapped one. In the poem 'Toads' the poet builds a bridge between the over burden of work and dodging from it and goes on clarifying by putting that when a worker feels stressed, irritated and under pressure and makes up his mind to leave job then an inner urge of moral sense as inner toad binds him to strict to it anyhow. He goes on to say that both the appeals for working or for dodging work go on strife. In the long run compulsion of works conquers because to live under the burden of this toad is essential for security of life as well as for moral compulsion. Larkin here longs for rest but accepts labour. Unlike a sage conference Larkin does not go to 'work is worship'.

"At Grass" builds a bridge that connects laudable past to the idle present. The perception of fame, power and popularity and then the obscurity of

all those merits repeatedly remind one of the games of gaining and losing. Larkin balances this thought and accepts it as the game of chance and fate. In 'At Grass' Larkin projects the life of power, fame and feats turning into a life of anonymity. The retired race horses here are the symbols of diminution of power, fame and popularity. These race horses that once have been cynosure of all the spectators have slept into oblivion and gallop only for joy and not for race. The victorious and legendary race horses have now become anonymous to all. Although this poem is explained in different perspectives, yet the loss of something vital is common to all explanations. Larkin seems here to purport the theory of loss with the pace of time and fate. Larkin prefers anonymity rather than fame. Larkin always gloated over deprivation for loss, as he once said 'Deprivation is for me what daffodils were for Wordsworth.' "At Grass" finds consolation in the diminution of power and positively embraces anonymity rather than fame.

The poem "Deception" keeps its root in an advertisement and expresses two deceptions. One is of the raped girl and the other of the rapist. In first stanza, Larkin sympathises the wronged girl and the rapist in the second one. The rapist drugged and raped the girl of sixteen from the slum. The girl remained full of agony and suffering after the incident. After recovering from unconsciousness, she did not remain the part of the world she was living in. Her mind persisted to be a repository of wounding thoughts. The memory of all these scenes and sounds prohibited the wounds to heal and drives shame beyond hiding. Here the question arises what caused the rapist to do this hideous act? Larkin holds the dire sexual desire of the rapist accountable for the cruel, contemptible and shameful act. The critics are of different opinion. Feminists claim power, violence and money-power to be the cause. The rapist did the act under inciting natural urge which could not be controlled by reasons. But what fault lies on the girl's part to be seduced in this cruel way? Larkin leaves a debatable question for all of us even today why should the girl be left shying and escaping like a criminal without her fault? His sympathy for the rapist in first stanza again puts interrogation why the rapist be held responsible when his sexual biological



natural desire was beyond control? Again Larkin's dual personality is confronting with us in the consolation and sympathy of both the wronged girl less and the rapist more in degree. We should draw a vital and cardinal conclusion from Larkin's poem that the innocent be treated as innocent and not as a criminal so that he/she may live vivacious and honourable life.

"If, My Darling" is against a good moral and didactic advice for the lover who was cheated by virtue of the lover's or the beloved's external and showy love. Larkin, exposing the illusion of love, conveys a message that love should be judged by lover's inside and not by his or her outside. Thus the poem aims at showing the gap between and the journey from illusion and reality.

In the poem "Afternoon" the general understanding of the critic and general reader is that Larkin has portrayed the gloomy picture of the lives of the wives. Yet the truth behind this is that Larkin seems to show the pleasure of the wives in disguise of their odds and ends work. These wives although remain entangled in household chores the whole day; they are indirectly enjoying the presence of their family, i.e. husband, children and luxuries and recreation.

## **Conclusion**

'Power and positivity is life and averse of it is death' runs through Larkin's poetry surreptitiously. Power is sought and liked by all and the decline or loss of it brings restlessness and dissatisfaction. In the state of such helplessness, man becomes frustrated and sometimes he is even unhinged. Natural decline of vigour is not influenced and governed by anybody. Larkin's message is that man should accept and digest the truth of loss wholeheartedly without whining or complaining of or about it. The remedy of the diminution of power and positivity is handled and advised wisely well in the poetry of Philip Larkin. Some loss is felt as remorse or other is subject to chance and fate. Although Larkin's general outlook upon life was very gloomy and bleak and his poetry is deeply dyed by his pessimistic outlook, his poetry is optimistic and consoling to those in distress. Larkin is optimistic in disguise of pessimism. Larkin

seeks to make his readers fearless and brave but in this process he first terrifies him and then brings the reader out of the terror. The best of Larkin's poetry travels from fear to fearlessness. Larkin's select body of verse through realistic and matter-of-fact attitude attempts to soothe the aching feelings of loss of power and positivity which once has been a centre of fame and popularity. Naturally a person, cynosure of all at a certain point of time, does not hastily accept the radical alteration. But Larkin's poetry through stark and naked realism succeeds in making them accept those natural and unavoidable changes and thus consoles those who are in despair, helplessness and remorse. The poet presents the kind of poetry from which even people who distrust poetry can take comfort and delight, for the poet produced the most technically brilliant, resonantly beautiful, profoundly disturbing yet appealing and approachable body of verse. Larkin's poetry suggests endless hopes of the human being. When an interviewer said that his preferred style was failure, he replied, 'A good poem about failure is success.'

### Works Cited

- Chatterjee, Sisir Kumar. *Philip Larkin: Poetry That Builds Bridges*. Atlantic Publication, 2018.
- Larkin, Philip. *High Windows*. Faber and Faber, 1974.
- . *The Less Deceived*. Faber and Faber, 2011.
- . *The Whitsun Weddings*. Faber and Faber, 1971.
- Lerner, Laurence. *Philip Larkin*. 2nd ed., Atlantic Publication, 2005.
- Sarker, Sunil Kumar. *A Companion to Philip Larkin*. Vol. 1, Atlantic Publication, 2009.
- Tandon, B.G. *Philip Larkin: A Critical Discussion of Selected Poems*. Spectrum Books, 2006.
- Thwaite, Anthony, ed. *Philip Larkin: Collected Poems*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004.

## Self-Empowerment of Queen of Belavadi

---

*Sabita Tripathy*

Basavaraj Naikar's *The Rebellious Rani of Balavadi and Other Stories* presents to its readers innumerable facets of South Indian social life in its multidimensional nature. It is amusing to go through the stories. The first story in the book "The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi" proves opposite to popular belief that women are weak in their physical and mental power. It is the heroic story of a woman-warrior who forced the great warrior Chhtrapati Shivaji through the sheer power of her valour and courage to bend down before her and accept defeat.

The story begins with an account of the birth of Mallika and her brother Sadasiva Nayaka to King Madhulinga Nayaka and his consort queen Viramma by the grace of Lord Kartika. For a long time the royal couple remained issueless. On the advice of a sage, the King and the Queen sincerely worshipped Lord Kartika and they were subsequently blessed with a son and a daughter. When Mallika and her brother attained the age to receive teaching, ten famous *Sastris* were engaged to teach them various subjects at a *pathasala*. Their native genius helped the princely brother and sister to master over many subjects. They learnt sword-fighting, the handling of other weapons and excelled other students. Mallika's grit and determination helped her to earn the fame of becoming a heroic girl in her kingdom.

A wandering saint honoured by the King of Swadi, predicted that Mallika would have to pass through a dangerous period of encountering ferocious tigers during her sixteenth year. King Madhulinga Nayak was dismayed at the ominous prediction of the saint which was noticed by his daughter, Mallika. After knowing the cause of her father's mental agony, to ward off the evil incident in future, she suggested her father to give her in marriage to a prince who should have killed the maximum number of

tigers in his life. As per her sane suggestion, a *swayamvara* was organised by the king in which princes of various countries participated with gallant records of hunting tiger to claim the hand of the beautiful and brave Mallika. At the scheduled time of the *swayamvara* the eager princes displayed, on an elevated platform, their prized victims' heads and skin. The clerks of Madhulinga's court verified the veracity of the princes' claim and came to a conclusion that the Prince of Iswaprabhu of Belavadi has killed to his credit the maximum number of tigers in comparison to his age. Accordingly Princess Mallika and Prince Isaprabhu were tied with a nuptial knot by exchanging garlands in the presence of other competitors and courtiers. The guests present on the spot offered them valuable gifts. Soon after the ceremony, the King and the Queen sent the bride and the bridegroom with much pomp and ceremony to Belavadi offering the newly married couple lavish gifts.

With the passage of time, King Isaprabhu and Queen Mallika proved themselves admirable administrators in Belavadi. Once they visited Mahabaleswar to have *darsan* of the deity and went near a lake without their bodyguards to enjoy the beauty of nature. They had eaten their lunch; naturally Iswaprabhu fell asleep. Mallika rapt in her enjoyment of the landscape was suddenly taken aback by a tiger springing at her. Unlike any other woman she did not disturb her husband's sound sleep and mustered courage to brave the critical situation single-handedly. Before the tiger could pierce its claws at her soft body, she raised her sword and smote the tiger on its head with full force. The thrust of the sword was so fatal that the head of the wild animal split and streams of blood gushed forth in a jet. The second tiger was about to leap at her horse, the queen darted her lance forcefully at the leaping tiger. The tiger fell on the ground. She struck the tiger repeatedly till it fell dead. King Isaprabhu awoken by the noise around him became nonplussed at the pitiful sight of the bleeding tigers.

The Sardars and other followers of the King gathered at the bloody spot; highly praised the Queen's prowess and humbly suggested King Isaprabhu to invite Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj to honour her. The king

agreed to celebrate the occasion by ensuring his men the presence of Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

The invincible army of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaja camped at Yadavada fell short of provision. A detachment of the Maharaja's army began to loot the houses and shops of the nearby villages. The soldiers of a troop for not getting the proper amount of milk forcibly brought the cows of Belavadi into their camp sight. The news reached Isapurabhu who held discussion with his courtiers and military officers and came to a conclusion to encounter the army of Shivaji to assuage the wrong done to his countrymen. All the courtiers and officers approved of the King's decision to rescue the cows. But Rani Mallika had another way to deal with the problem. She advised her husband not to have a direct confrontation with the army of Shivaji. She placed a proposal to the king: "Sarkar, instead of yourself, I shall go there with the women soldiers of Belavadi and regain the cows." (Naikar 26). The courtiers of the King silently stood wondering at the extraordinary courage of the queen. To encounter the army of Shivaji was not an easy task on the part of a woman warrior however brave she might be.

With the tacit consent of the King, Rani Mallika made military preparations to oppose the army of Chhatrapati. She hung the sheath and a sword by her left side and held a shield in her left hand. She took a round around the camp of the soldiers who had held their cows. Then she gave a signal to attack. The soldiers of Shivaji were taken aback at the sight of a female troop attacking them. They were not even properly dressed. Rani Mallika and her soldiers hacked, mangled many Maratha soldiers. Within a couple of hours more than a half of the Maratha soldiers lost their lives in the battle field and the rest began to flee. Under the leadership of the Queen, the female soldiers of Belavadi could rescue their cows from the soldiers of Shivaji. Raja Isapurabhu hailed the Queen, in a jubilant voice, he exclaimed:

Bravo, my dear Rani. I am really proud of you. You have disproved the traditional notion that woman is weak and helpless. You have indeed become a Goddess Chandi in your military achievement. (Naikar 28)

The courtiers and citizens of Belavadi wondered at the Queen's prowess, praised her highly and became proud of her. This heroic image of the Queen can be compared to the strength, patriotism, courage and determination of Queen of Jhansi who overcame her personal loss of her husband and fought heroically in the battlefield killing her enemy in large number.

When Chhatrapati Shivaji was resting in his camp, a messenger narrated to him how his soldiers have been defeated and humiliated by the Queen of Belavadi. He was a ruler who believed in the administration of justice on his subjects without any bias; praising the bravery of the Queen, he condemned the audacity of his own soldiers:

I must admire the heroism of the wonderful lady. But why did our foolish soldiers kidnap their cows? Who permitted them to indulge in this immoral act? These fools are rewarded properly for their foolishness. (Naikar 29)

At the same time Chhatrapati Shivaji was shocked at the defeat of his soldiers at the hands of a Queen of a small kingdom. He considered that the incident has become a black spot on his immaculate image. He ordered his Commander-in-chief to proceed to Belavadi and defeat the kingdom in the shortest period possible. In the meanwhile Raja Isaprabhu received intelligence report that the big army of Chhatrapati has camped a couple of miles away to attack Belavadi. Raja Isaprabhu sent urgent messages to the neighbouring countries appealing them to provide him military succour to fight against the invincible invading army of Chhatrapati.

The soldiers of Shivaji besieged the fort of Belavadi and tried their best to break through the impregnable walls of the fortress but the walls were built with black granite boulders. The seizure of the fort continued for twenty-six days. There was acute shortage of food in the fort. Isaprabhu consulted his wife Mallika about the further course of action of his army. She was already familiar with such political emergencies in her father's kingdom. She advised her husband not to worry about the critical situation even if it is a question of the survival of the country's

honour. She asked her husband to open the main gate of the fort and directly encounter the formidable army of Chhatrapati Shivaji. There was a fierce fight between the soldiers of Belvadi and Chhatrapati Shivaji's troop. As the fatal war was gathering speed, a Maratha soldier sneaked behind Raja Isaprabhu and mortally struck him. The Raja sagged down from his horseback.

Rani Mallika received the news of the death of her husband with a broken heart; for a few seconds she became confused and sat silently. Instead of wailing over the death news, she boosted up her strength and encouraged her soldiers with inspiring words: "My dear brothers, the kingdom does not belong to Raja Isaprabhu alone. It belongs to all of us. Nobody can take it away from us. Let us fight as long as we are alive. Come on, let's rush ahead." (Naikar, 33). Temporarily, the queen forgot the sorrow of her husband's death; she gave priority to her country's honour over her personal loss. The call of duty towards her country got prominence in her mind and jumped on a horseback studded with weapons. She cheered her soldiers with hortatory slogans, "Hara, Hrara, Mahadeva." Her soldiers became doubly enthused. Sufficient provision of food items and ammunition came from Sigehalli and Huli and her army grew in strength. Unable to face the advancing army of Belavadi, the soldiers of Chhatrapati Shivaji made a temporary retreat. A similar image of a belligerent woman invading the enemy troop is presented by Sri Aurobindo in a long narrative poem, "Ilium". Penthesilea in a fierce way kills her enemy soldiers mercilessly. "Ilium" deals with a Homeric theme which is built around Achilles and Penthesilea, the Amazonian Queen. Through her overriding strength, determination, great courage, patriotic spirit and tempestuous action she is portrayed as defending her country's freedom like a flaming goddess of strength. Talthybius presents her spreading panic among the enemy rank and file:

A woman had come to aid you  
Regal and insolent, fair as the morning and fell as the northwind,  
Freed from the distaff who grasps at the sword and spurns at  
subjection  
Breaking the rule of the gods. She is turbulent, swift in the battle.

Clanging her voice of the swan as a summons to death and disaster...

She is the panic and mellay,

War is her paean, the chariots thunder of Penthesilea.

Doom was her coming... to the men of the West and their legions.

(Sri Aurobindo 404)

Astonished Europe reels from the shock of Penthesilea's warrior spirit. Later on we will find that such a shock is given to the army of Chhatrapati by Queen of Belavadi.

Meanwhile, the sage, Sri Siddhavira Yogiraj thought of some plan to help Queen Mallika. He sent Santayya in the guise of a *sanyasi* to the camp of Shivaji. Santayya got audience and advised Chhatrapati Shivaji to seek the blessings of Goddess Jagadamba before invading the army of Queen Mallika. Chhatrapati Shivaji was himself a staunch devotee of Goddess Jagadamba. Santayya rushed to Belavadi and narrated everything to the Queen. He also conveyed the message of Sri Siddhavira Yogiraj to bring a platoon of two hundred cavalry and her son Nagabhusana to Siddhasamudra before midnight. Rani Mallika distributed ample gifts of gold and silver to her female soldiers to honour them. Accompanied by her cavalry, the Rani dressed fully with military armour, followed a secret path in the growing darkness of night. Sri Siddhavira Yogiraj felt happy to receive the Rani and her female soldiers. He asked the Rani and her soldiers to take supper and take rest. He worshipped the Goddess in the temple in the night. Early in the morning, the Rani sought the blessings of the *sanyasi*. Sri Siddhavira Yogiraj assured her victory but forbade her to injure Shivaji as the latter was a devotee of Goddess Jagadamba. Chhatrapati Shivaji visited the shrine of Jagadamba accompanied by eight body guards only. While returning from the shrine, his group was unexpectedly attacked by a big female army. The horses of the Maratha soldiers whinnied helplessly and run helter-skelter. Chhatrapati felt helpless. Rani Mallika rushed at him with a raised sword ready to strike him. He presumed the warrior woman to be Goddess Jagadamba who is angry with him for some reason. He dismounted from his horse and came near the Rani with folded palms. He requested



her to forgive him for his sin. Chhatrapati thought it a folly to fight with her. He bent down and touched the feet of Mallika and politely implored her to forgive his mistakes and ignorance:

Dear Mother, it is true that I had ordered my sardar to capture your lord and bring him to me. But the wicked sardar killed him. For this disobedience, I had that sardar's eyes extracted. After the battle is over, I shall leave him nearby fort Munavalli. You may punish him as you like. Really speaking I am not guilty of anything. You look like Goddess Jagadamba herself to me. Your candid words sound like those of my own mother Jijabayi and touch me deeply. ... I have been struggling only to destroy the Musalmans. But here I made a mistake. You may sever my head for this sin, if you like. (Naikar 43-4)

Chhatrapati Shivaji's pleading words touched Rani's heart. She agreed to stop fighting with certain conditions to which the great Maratha King gave his assent. She then came to H. H. Siddhavira Yogiraja and reported everything. Rani and her soldiers left Siddhasamudra for Belavadi. Sri Siddhavira Yogiraj met Shivaji and explained to him how Rani Mallika was dissuaded from pursuing war against Shivaji Maharaj who was a great champion of Hinduism. Both of them agreed that Rani Mallika was a brave and spirited woman. Shivaji Maharaja apologised before Yogiraj for the sin of attacking a Hindu queen. He promised to the saint that he would send a palanquin *surmjam* to bring the Rani to honour her.

As Shivaji's instructions the Rani came near the camp of Shivaji. As soon as she alighted from the palanquin, Chhatrapati Shivaji requested her to seat on the throne and bowed down to her by kneeling on his right knee. This humble gesture he might not have shown to any other ruler in his life. With folded palms he exclaimed:

O dear Mother, it is not possible to see a heroic soldier like you even among men-soldiers let alone among female-soldiers. I had a mother called Jijabayi. But from today onwards, you have become my mother. You have saved not my own life, but of many of my

soldiers. Kindly forgive us all. Mother, kindly bless us so that we may succeed in our future ventures elsewhere.(Naikar 48)

Now the sensitive heart of Rani Mallika came to the fore, she became grief-stricken recollecting her association with her late husband and wept piteously. Chhatrapati Shivaji could not bear the sight of the weeping queen and requested her to behead him for the death of her husband. For short a time, anger surged her body, Rani Mallika told Shivaji that his son was instrumental in the death of her husband. So she cursed Shivaji's son to die in a similar way in the battle-field like her husband. After the death of Shivaji, his son Sambhaji occupied the throne. He nurtured a secret desire to marry the widow, Mallika as she was very beautiful. Sambhaji's secret carnal desire was conveyed to Rani Mallika by Rani Toyabji. The latter alerted Rani Mallika to guard her life and take precaution. Before he could materialise his carnal desire with Mallika, Sambhaji fought with the army of Aurangzeb. The Rani's curse given to Shivaji bore fruit, Sambhaji died fighting against the army of Aurangzeb. After his death, Rani Toyabji invited Rani Mallika and heaped honour on her profusely. She constructed many memorial stones on the borders of her kingdom. Rani Mallika returned to her kingdom and lived peacefully after leading a life of trouble and turmoil with a great warrior King of India. But she never lost her self-confidence, so God helped her to execute her plans. One may deem it a great honour to Rani Mallika that Chhatrapati Shivaji knelt down before her and praised her valour. Naikar's heroic account enriches the self empowerment of a woman whose name will be fondly recorded in the Indian history.

### **Works Cited**

Naikar, Basavraj. *The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi and Other Stories*. CVG Books, n.y.

Sri Aurobindo, *The Complete Poetical Works*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972.

## Writer and Society: An Analysis of Vijaydan Detha's "Cannibal"

---

*Balveer*

"Stories create opportunities for readers to consider values that guide human action in in both the imaginary context of the story and the real context of their lives" (Estes 507)

The relationship of literature and society has been considered variously. Both represent each other but in different ways. Literature is a means which makes our life that we live by. It reflects socio-politico-cultural set-up of a society and disseminates its value system. On the other hand, society supplies essential components to literature for constructing different meanings and interpretations. A writer chooses different characters from various backgrounds to convey his view-points. And, these characters, with conventional understanding and approach, express values, ethics, morals and standards of the time. Chaucer's characters of *The Canterbury Tales* convey the value system of the contemporary society. The knight stands for modesty and virtues, the Miller for greed and low moral, the Clerk for discipline and logical arguments, and the Pardoner represents moral corruption and low standards. So is the case with Shakespeare's characters or with the characters created by any other writer. The characters of Vijaydan Detha also represent the values, standards and principles of his times. Through different characters and particular references, he brings forth the social dimensions of the society and presents the value system in a realistic way.

Detha's fictional world not only portrays the oral traditions of storytelling but also depicts the contemporary degraded society involved in crime, sin, vice and other unethical practices. His characters portray different aspects of society where modern man is bewildered by materialistic gains and temporary pleasures. His fictional world narrates the truth

and emotions of human life but in a very striking way, and, contains ‘shocking exposure of power’ (Gupta). Thus, he, by reflecting harsh realities and ill-practices, guides the beguiled society to the right path.

The story “Cannibal” is an epitome of degraded value system of the present-day society. It presents the inherent human nature and demonic practices of a priest. Priest is, generally, considered to be God’s man for his knowledge and understanding of different facets of life. But, in this story, the priest crosses all the limits of cruelty and turns into a cannibal. The story unravels the contemporary value system to such an extent that even a Goddess fears human beings. The priest in the story is born with some unusual qualities as he seems to be cross between a *dhatura* cactus (thorn apple) and a crow. Unlike other priests, he worships the Goddess of the temple only to get in return, and, that too, material gains. His devilish looks express his mental deprivation.

This Brahmin wasted plenty of sandalwood paste anointing himself. He chanted his mala. Offered puja to the goddess. Partook of bhang. And, ganja. His eyes glowed red as cinders, day and night. Thick lips. Yellowed teeth. Beard down to his belly, hair mated and twisted in jata as tangled as a weaver bird’s nest. Towering height. Stumpy neck. Body covered in fur like a bear. (Detha 11)

Since his worship to the goddess does not bring him the desired fruits, his offerings to the Goddess go smaller and smaller. His faith in God weakens day by day as daily offerings made to the goddess are only means of his living. Religion, as depicted in the story, has turn out to be mere hypocrisy and duplicity. The priest represents a class of people who worship for noting but to fulfill their unquenchable desires. The value of true religion is being replaced by material gains, as the priest evidently proves with his motives. And, his anger (of not receiving in return) is so deep that wife-beating has become his routine practice. Religion brings self-control, willpower and determination in life but this poor Brahmin is rather engrossed in other worldly ways. The priests, generally, stand for community welfare, and, perform religious practices for something good to take place. But, this, bear-like man blames the

goddess for his poverty and desperate plight. His inherent crow-like nature shows how he values religion when he speaks to his wife:

This goddess of ours is a cheap whore. What khak faith is anyone going to have in her when her own priest is this poor? Doing all this puja-paath has made me useless. I 'm good for nothing else now. Makes me so mad I've got a mind to go over to the temple and send her and myself up in flames. I'll wait a few days and then you just watch, I'm really going to teach her a lesson. (Detha 12)

Now, the goddess is also in a trouble as how can she trust such a vicious human being. Who knows how much can he stoop to fulfil his desires? "There is no relying on these selfish humans! You never know how and when their needs and motives would shift." (Detha 14) The wife is really concerned about the prevailing problem. One wrong move can change the whole scenario adversely. But, the adamant husband does not even think of paying attention to her sensible advices. The story also mocks the husband-wife relationship of the modern society. She has wifely devotion, dedication and care for her husband, but, in return, she gets nothing, but, a good thrashing and that too on a regular basis. On one fine evening, when the Brahmin performs the rites, the goddess appears from her idol. On her asking what he aspires for, the priest wishes to have all her gold jewelry. The priest could have asked for anything as the goddess herself was in front of him in a human form. But, he goes only for what tempts him the most. The goddess too, wants to teach him a lesson.

Detha uses the goddess as a source of divine force to guide people whenever they take wrong turns. In Detha's fictional writings, there are such references where Gods and human beings have dialogue on such occasions. These godly characters aim to reform social structure and strengthen value system. The goddess grants him a boon which is no less than a curse to the poor Brahmin. She says: "From now on, anything you ask for you shall get. But whatever you ask for others will get too, and twice as much..." (Detha 17) The boon granted to him is for the community welfare also. To the Goddess, everyone is equal and

there are no distinctions for her. Detha, through the boon practice, negates the hierarchal set up and treats everyone equally. His wife is really pleased to know the news as others can also be benefitted with the boon. But, the Brahmin has become mad and the blessings turn into a catastrophe in his life. The couple expresses some wishes and all are fulfilled soon. First, they ask for necessary grocery items like flour, cereals, sweets etc. But, their ambitions grow day by day. No sooner, their mud hut gets transformed into a palace of gold. And, so does their old age in youth. They have enough to live their life peacefully yet they pine for more and more. How strange a human being is! The priest climbs to the palace and what he sees is not tolerable to him. “As if countless suns has climbed over the horizon. Flames of jealousy started raging in his heart.” (Detha 24) He can suffer all miseries and pain of universe but cannot see others enjoy because of his boon. The turmoil going on his mind reveals his cannibal-like qualities. The sense of collective consciousness and community welfare have been replaced by anger, frustration and jealousy. Detha shows how value system has collapsed completely in modern times. The writer expresses the priest’s mental suffering:

The flames in his heart rose so high and fierce they would have scorched the sun. The beasts in him that were his nature- the jackal, crow, tiger and snake- ran amok. He stared running around in circles barking like a rabid dog. “May one of my eyes go blind! May one of my eardrums tear! May a bottomless well be dug in front of my palace! (Detha 24)

He is deeply engrossed in torturing others, and, meanwhile, his own wife falls into the well. And, he, like a demon, proudly sees people tumbling into the well. One by one everyone walks to death’s lap. The end of the story conveys how a man in demon-form celebrate massacre of his own villagers including his wife:

Now he was the sole proprietor of all these golden palaces. There was no one left to dispute his claim. Each night he slept in a different palace. There was no one left to receive twice as much as him. So

what if the goddess had given him a boon? He had enough brain in his head to know how to use the boon. And so the goddess's boon had at last been vanquished. He jumped in glee, threw his arms up in the air and admired all his golden palaces with his good eye. Too bad there was no one to witness his supreme joy. (Detha 25)

The tale puts forth the value system to the forefront which has slackened at the present due to ill-deeds of human beings- the supreme beings on earth. Whatever good Gods do to human beings, they use it according to their demonic desires. At last, the priest succeeds to trickster the goddess but on an inhumane price. He is but a lonely being to cherish the boon. The story "How Much Land does a Man Need?" also narrates the similar story where Pahom, the protagonist dies tragically in his quest to gain more and more land.

Thus, Vijaydan Detha, in capacity of a social reformer depicts a modern man completely immersed in inhumanly practices. He gains what he aspires for but the costs he pays off, is unreplenishable. He wins but loses everything in course of his achievement.

## Works Cited

- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. Oxford UP, 2011.
- Detha, Vijaydan. "Cannibal." *Choubali and Other Stories*, Vol. 2, translated by Christi A. Merrill, Katha Press, 2010, pp. 11-25.
- Estes, Thomas H., and Dorothy Vasquez-Levy. "Literature as a Source of Information and Values." *Phi Delta Kappan*, vol. 82, no.7, Mar. 2001, pp. 507-12.
- Gupta, Sourabh. "A Great Rajasthani Writer Who Missed the Nobel, Forever." *India Today*, 17 Nov. 2017, [www.indiatoday.in/india/north/story/vijaydan-detha-is-gone-and-here-is-what-made-the-writer-very-very-special-217726-2013-11-17](http://www.indiatoday.in/india/north/story/vijaydan-detha-is-gone-and-here-is-what-made-the-writer-very-very-special-217726-2013-11-17).
- Harris, Wilson. *Tradition, the Writer and Society: Critical Essays*. New Beacons, 1967.
- Merrill, Christi .A. *Riddles of Belonging: India in Translation and Other Tales of Possession*. Fordham UP, 2009.
- Tolstoy, Leo. "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" *Communication Skills*, edited by Bhargava, Neelkanth Publisher, 2018, pp. 163-84.

## Territorial Unrest in Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill*

*Aslam Mohammed and Naresh Patel*

“The land belongs to us. It is the soul of our ancestors. Where would we be, what would we do, without this land?”

*(The Black Hill 70)*

Literature is the reflection of life in all its varied forms and shapes. It has been the most powerful and effective medium of representation of human life since ages. It has a dual role as it is both a model of progress and a medium of protest. The literature of the Northeast marks the negotiation of the margins with the center thereby redefining and reconstructing the notions of identity, nationality, homeland, insiders and outsiders. The writing of the region is fresh, different, and reflects the incredible diversity of land. The new literary genre of the region has given voice and identity to the margins by depicting the contemporary ethnic and social conflicts encountered by the people in their day-to-day life.

The term Northeast of India as a geographical location consists of eight states- Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura. The Northeast region of India makes the boundaries to the neighboring countries like China, Bangladesh, Thailand and Burma. Many tribes and ethnic communities live in the eight states of Northeast India. The region has geographical, national, political, ethical, social, cultural and ecological issues. The region has undergone historical and political trauma of untold suffering and marginalization.

The Northeast Indian writers are creating a place for themselves by powerfully portraying a realistic historical background and socio-political and cultural life at the margins through their narratives. The troubled political climate, the beautiful landscape and the confluence of various



ethnic issues have given rise to a body of writing that compels us to ponder over the notion of unity in diversity.

“The writers from the region have to meet the double challenge of truth and liberty, of identity and unity, of cultural loss and recovery, of ethnic specificity and aesthetic universality” (K. Satchidanandan qtd. in Dutta).

The present paper attempts to explore the Sahitya Akademi Award winning novel *‘The Black Hill’* by Mamang Dai and the issues related to territorial unrest in the region of Arunachal Pradesh. Dai has written extensively about the varied socio-cultural and political facets of her own ethnic society and the ongoing external and internal territorial turmoil. The constant struggle between the natives of the land and the power that tries to control it for the resources within has always been a part of history.

It is since independence that the region has been witnessing all forms of violence, atrocity, social-political and regional unrest. Mamang Dai has highlighted some contemporary issues related to the region through her writings and go much beyond terror and suffering. Her creative endeavor is brilliantly depicted in the unique style of storytelling. Dai shares her reason for writing the story. “There are many lost stories in the world and versions that were misplaced yesterday or a thousand years ago” (ix).

*‘The Black Hill’* is a work of fiction that deals with the recorded historical events, depicting the picture of the pre-independent scenario of the tribes of Northeast India. Their first encounter with the foreigners or the White people and their fierce resistance against them to protect their territories highlight the struggles they have undergone.

Set in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the events in the novel take place in the Northeast region that spreads from Assam to Arunachal Pradesh. The East India Company is seeking to make inroads into the region and the local people particularly the Abor and Mishmee tribes fear its coming and are doing all they can to keep it out of their territories. “The British may conquer the world but they will never take our land” (25). The

author renders the Tribes' attempts to stop the British entry into their territories right from the beginning of the novel. Both the Adis and the Mishmi tribes suspected the British as they are invading lands to exploit the natural resources and forcibly bringing the tribal villages under their control. The land for the tribal people is not only a part of their physical existence but it also deeply connects to their cultural heritage, existence, identity and their spiritual being. They resolve to go to any extent to preserve their land from strangers as well as neighbours. The Tribes' urge to protect their territory of the land; river or the forest results in intertribal feuds making them even more closed units avoiding strangers. They say "Trust your instincts. It is the way to survive" (238). They cling to the borderlines and culture because only those things give them the sense of belonging on the earth.

In the novel *The Black Hill* symbolizes the border in itself, bordering many communities and nations. The novel centers on the Mishmee hill that is in between Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh. Many tribal and local communities of Tibet and India, religious propagandists and by passers claim freehold authority over the hill and have drawn borders on their own. Their 'Homelands' are imaginary and never a whole as Rushdie puts it, "We are not gods but wounded creatures cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions" (Rushdie 12).

The story takes us back in time to Arunachal Pradesh of 1840s and 1850s. It is the story of Gimur, a girl from the Abor tribe who falls in love with a Mishmee chief Kajinsha (a man from another tribe). The elopement and love story is set against a growing turbulence in the region. The Migluns (British) are eyed and followed with suspicion as they try and make inroads into new territory, old orders are challenged, dismantled, arranged and relations are tensed and strained between the regions, many districts and ancient tribes.

Moreover along with the inter tribe unrest and superstitious xenophobia within the native dwellers, it also brought missionaries. One of them was father Nicolas Michel Krick, a priest who wanted to carry his mission to Tibet. The turbulent love story unfolds against countryside in

turmoil, as new forces are introduced in the region, challenging the old setup establishing any peace amidst distinct local tribes. The most obvious sign that things are changing is of course '*the White man*'. As many tribes come to term with the changing realities of their time, the love of Gimur, (a carefree and bold girl) and Kajinsha (a brave young man) flowers and they elope from Mebo to the Mishmee hills near Tibetan border for a start of their new life. In a landscape that can be both evil and serene, the fates of these three characters are intricately weaved through the narrative.

On one hand the feisty girl Gimur who goes against her tribe and breaks all taboos to marry the love of her life and on the other hand is Kajinsha who wishes to unite all the tribes against the 'Migluns' in order to protect their land and their ways. The writer establishes the ethnic identities of Gimur and Kajinsha as the children of the soil. The depiction of Kajinsha's connection with the land presents his native knowledge. "The land was there for him to explore at will. The trees were a swathe of green that revealed its secrets to this man who knew their hidden paths and frozen routes over the mountains that kept the tribes apart (35). However, Kajinsha gradually realizes the futility of his mission and finds it impossible to bring together rival tribes but still determined to do whatever it takes to keep the White men out of their land. As Kajinsha's father mentions, "The others may be eating their salt but we will never allow them to come here" (8).

Father Nicolas is another determined soul who wants to spread the light of his lord in the mystic land of Tibet. But before getting there, he confronts the difficult terrains and hostile tribal of the mountains. "Beyond the Assam plain was terra incognita and anyone who went into those wild hills did do at their own risk. It was the land of 'Savage mountaineers' " (42). But Father Nicolas never lost his hope and faith in God and tried every possible way to get there, and the way ultimately led him to Kajinsha's territory. In spite of his fear and annoyance for the British, Kajinsha promised to help the priest. Though the tribes knew that the priest is harmless, they developed a sense of strangeness. The fear that their hidden land filled with myth, custom, rich history and

culture would be explored and every bit of their lives would be exploited. “Land meant survival- a territory to call your own, to grow your food in, and thus survive. . . It is also identity passed down by generation . . . If a man owns land, he owns rest” (112). But with the changing times Kajinsha’s perspective and aim too changed. He felt that for land one must need to put at stake to save the land. “We read the land. The land is our book” (140-141). Hence the territory becomes the root of suspicion not only towards the outsiders but also amidst natives of the region.

As promised Kajinsha takes the priest to Tibet but despite of all the support the tribal decide to send him back. Again Kajinsha is assigned the task of his safe return. But unfortunately the priest is shot dead by a tribe’s man and the blame is put on Kajinsha. Betrayed by his own tribe, the innocent soul eventually meets a death penalty. Gimur returns to the land with a sense of loss, loneliness and lovelessness for she has no hold over the land. The conflict between tribes flamed and turned out so deadly that it ultimately burned down the life and love of Kajinsha and Gimur. For the tribal their land is everything, and in between all the hatred for Migluns, the tribal community also crushed each other. The presence of Miglun deeply impacted the native minds, and provoked by their own ideas of invasion, cunningness, greed, exploitation and hatred towards those who wanted to embrace change that would bring a better life, they destroyed each other.

The mountainous territory has been portrayed as the major strength of the tribal people as well as the root cause of their inter-tribal rivalries and violence. It is only their survival instinct that motivates them to preserve their boundaries from strangers and other tribal groups. A kind of border instinct seeded in every man living at the border.

However Dai, through the narrative is not focusing on the betrayal and disputes but on the resulting loss, destruction and territorial unrest. The novel attempts to explore beyond terror and turmoil. Kajinsha is the symbol of unity who sacrificed his soul to bring a new consciousness among the tribes. “Deep in his heart he had always wanted peace. Like his father he too had dreams” (285). It is termed as “*Borderland*

*Consciousness*" (Gloria Anzaldua 77) a kind of collective consciousness where shared beliefs, and boundaries can protect their borders as well as relationships. The tragedy would have been averted had there been trust, understanding and honesty among the different community and class. Kajinsha says "I believe in life. There may be a chief God, yes, but it is better to be friends with all gods... we have a life and our lives are also ruled by gods" (139).

Mamang Dai used story telling as a new style to develop this new consciousness. *The Black Hill* brings forth the meaning of love, between a man and a woman, a priest's divine love, a community's love for land, territory and for the identity drawn from its ownership. In thick jungles and rocky terrains, these different loves intertwine through events first and finally and most beautifully in essence too.

"What I believe that after everything is laid to rest. All that matters is love; and that memory gives life and life never ends"(x). She narrates a historic tale of love and freedom and the story of the black hills erased by the fires of history. In the Prologue Dai says that the story begins with "a man whose shoulders touched the sky"(ix). And ends with a story that is never ending and as it can be told in many ways.

By reflecting upon the trauma of untold suffering of the marginalized people the narrator honestly intends to show the cracks through which such strong winds of change found home . . . "This is not to be mistaken simply as blind nostalgia for a way of life long lost . . ." (Zama i) but must be received as voices within our own society longing to be heard, and yearning for peace and harmony.

## Works Cited

- Anzaldua, Gloria. *Borderlands the New Mestiza = La Frontera*. Aunt Lute, 2012.
- Chowdhury, Dr. Payel Dutta. "The Personal and the Political: The North-East Indian Scenario in Mitra Phukhan's "The Collector's Wife." *Research Scholar*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2016, pp. 349-52.
- Dai, Mamang. "An Interview with Mamang Dai." Interview by Babli Mallick, *Academia*, 2016.

- . *Arunachal Pradesh: The Hidden Land*. Penguin, 2009.
- . *The Black Hill*. Aleph Book, 2014.
- Diyum, Banu, and Pratisha Kumari Sakia. "The Images of Inter-Tribe Unrest and Symbolism of Border Consciousness in the Writings of Mamang Dai: With Special Reference to The Black Hill." *Universal Review Journal*, vol. 7, no. 12, 2018, pp. 1195-99.
- Goyal, Anuradha. "The Black Hill by Mamang Dai – Book Review." *ANU Reviews*, 10 March 2015, [www.anureviews.com/the-black-hill-mamang-dai](http://www.anureviews.com/the-black-hill-mamang-dai). Accessed 10 Jan. 2020.
- Rexlin, T., and R. Mercy Latha. "Mamang Dai's The Black Hill: A Story from Border Perpetuating Borderland Consciousness." *International Journal of Recent Research Aspects*, 2018, pp. 600-3.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-91*. Vintage Books, 2014.
- Thorat, Pravin. "Frontier, Foreigner and Faith: Mamang Dai's The Black Hill as a Lost Piece of North-Eastern Tribal History." *Langlit*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2017, pp. 413-19, [www.academia.edu/28683107/An\\_interview\\_with\\_Mamang\\_Dai.docx](http://www.academia.edu/28683107/An_interview_with_Mamang_Dai.docx). Accessed 15 Dec. 2019.
- Zama, Margaret Ch, editor. *Emerging Literatures from Northeast India: The Dynamics of Culture, Society and Identity*. Sage Publications, 2013.

## Cultural Aspects in the Elegiac Poetry of the Dholi Folk Literature

---

*Shankar Lal Dholi*

Indian civilization is one of the oldest civilizations of the world. Vedas are known as the oldest books which are known as a creation of the Almighty. In Hindu religion Varna system subdivided into caste system and it has age old history. The historical, cultural and sociological aspects of ruling class are well defined and written by the historian, genealogist and writers. But the marginalized communities like tribes, nomads, subaltern etc. are not given adequate place in Indian history. Whenever we go through any historical or any other book or any census which describes the cultural or sociological traditions of our country, we come to know only about the description of rulers or upper castes. The description of tribal and subaltern communities, their clans, history, culture, social structure, way of living etc. are generally not found. Many times even the names of these communities also don't have a place in Indian narratives. It is termed as palace paradigm. Following remarks of Michel Foucault: "In our culture (and doubtless in many others), discourse was not originally a product, a thing, a kind of goods. It was essentially an act – an act placed in the bipolar field of the sacred and the profane, the licit and illicit, the religious and the blasphemous. Historically, it was a gesture fraught with risks before becoming goods caught up in the circuit of ownership." (Dana 75)

Indian oral traditions are age old and are practised in many communities and castes till today. With cultural social and economic evolution and effects of globalization most of the communities have moved to the way of modernization and have lost their traditions. Many marginalized and backward communities who came latter to the mainstream of development still carry their traditions and culture. Some of them are

losing their traits in the present. The culture and traditions of these marginalized communities have never been brought in the fore. The development of new theories like post modernism, auto ethnography etc. insist on the studies of the culture of such communities'. These new theories and methods have brought their oracy and traditions in the fore.

Dholi caste of Rajasthan also has its long history. The dholi caste has a rich oral tradition. This community is mainly a community of singers. The Dholis assume themselves as 5th son of Brahma while some others call themselves son of Narad. Many of Dholis explain that they are Gandharvas who sang and danced at Indra's palace. Some of them represent themselves as genealogists or bards. To prove their higher status of origin they show their pothis of their Yajman castes and recite their folk poetry. The main occupation of dholis is to sing or recite poetry on various occasions of their yajman castes. They are good at composing folk poetry as well as folk songs. To praise or entertain their yajman, the dholis recite various poems or sing different songs according to the need of social or cultural programs. They perform different songs and poems on different occasions which are part of their oral tradition and folk literature.

The Dholis have a rich folk literature. It covers various social, cultural and historical narratives of the *Yajmans*. The Dholi Folk literature carries the traditions, customs and ways of life of the people who are not bearer of it. They perform oral poetry and songs not only in the programs of their *Yajmans* but even when they gather at any house or place with other member of their community. They recite or sing these poems or songs in presence of other members of their community. The oral folk literature is the part of their culture and life as well as it is the source of their livelihood. It is the tradition of Dholi caste that they train their children in singing since their childhood. The performance of Dholi children gives an immense satisfaction to their parents.

Elegiac poetry is an important part of the Dholi Folk Literature. The Dholi folklorists compose Elegiac poetry on the death of their Yajman. The Elegiac poetry of the Dholi Folk Literature describes cultural, social,



economic and emotional aspects of Yajman families. The Elegiac poems performed by the Dholis are part of the programs held in the Yajman family after the death of any family member. These elegiac poems depict deeds of the dead, mourning of his family members on death, expenditure on feast, reaction of community members and rivals after the organization of such a grand feast (mrityubhoj mean ceremonial feast after death), deeds and ceremonies by ancestors and the role of present ceremony in raising their social status. The paper describes the cultural aspects of the Yajmans described through the Elegiac poetry of the Dholi Oral Tradition of Rajasthan. Deep Punia observes – “Rural communities integrate messages of values in their folksongs for transmission from one generation to the next and instead of preaching these as such folksongs are used as vehicles. Therefore, the most cherished and followed social values of any rural community can be understood by analysing its folksongs. In other words, folksongs depict social values and thereby explain the dynamics of their life. In the course of time, these folksongs are modified to imbibe and reflect the changing values of society and its cultural heritage. However, cultural change is relatively much slower and folksongs generally depict more of the traditional values of the community. In this way, folksongs are a medium for social values and both are integrated even in the changing contexts” (Sharma 125).

The elegiac poetry expresses the cultural aspect of yajaman yajamn caste. The people who reward Dholi for their performances are known as ‘Yajamans’. The allocation of ‘Yajamans’ is transferred from generation to generation. To express the different aspects of yajman community expressed through Elegiac poetry of Dholi oral tradition, I have inculcated an Elegiac poem which was collected by me from a folk poet Mr. Laxman Lal Dholi. He belongs to the Dhangarbhath caste of Dholi community.

## TITLE

'ASYO DRIGPAL MOHDAD GOD DEVA'	'SUCH WAS DEVA-PROTECTOR OF THIS PALACE'
SAMAT CHOTINSE MAHASUD	IN THE YEAR OF THIRTY FOUR
BARAS NE BUDHWAR	ON THE DAY 12 <sup>TH</sup> (
MELYO SANDESO MADRVA	GOD SENT THE MESSAGE
PATEL DEVO G DEVDWAR	TO CALL MR.DEVA
PALANG GADRA PATEL RE	HE HAS GOOD BED AND QUIT
MAHA SU GAJEWAN MAN	HE HAS MATERIAL SANCTITY
HATHA U KRO NI HEDRA DADRWA	PLZ DO THE CHARITY BY HANDS
AAGE DEVA JI RA JATAN	IT WILL BE COUNTED FOR HIM IN THE HEAVEN.
GEET	METER
DESH RA BANNA HAI	THE REPUTED OF COUNTY
RAJ HI RANNA HAI	SMART AND HANDSOME
JAG MAI JANNI HAI	FAMOUS AMONG ALL
MAT JASI.	SUCH WAS MR DEVA.
THAN CHPPAANNI YE	THE LETTERS WERE PRINTED
PRTHI PUNJANNIYE	WHOLE OF THE EARTH WAS WORSHIPPED
ELLVA RANNA YE MAT ASSI.	THE GODDESS ELWA IS A POWERFUL DEITY.
BNNE CHATRAKOT CHAMANDA	THE GODDESS CHAMUNDA AND HER TEMPLE
PUNJVE PNDA	WERE WORSHIPPED BY THE PRIEST DEVA
THRPE JHNDA	HE ENHANCED THE POPULARITY OF THE TEMPLE
GOK THAVA.	EVERY ONE CAME TO KNOW ABOUT THE PLACE.
AAVO SAMTA.SATHI	OH BROTHERS PLEASE COME
PRGGNNA PATI	HE WAS LIKE A RULER OF AREA
DESH RA HATHI	HE WAS MOST POWERFUL OF OUR REGION
GOD DEVA	MR. DEVA
ASYO DRIGPAL MOHDAD GOD DEVA .	SUCH WAS MR. DEVA , THE OWNER OF THE PLACE.
JASRAJ TO JAYA	JASRAJ BORN DEVA
GUNNIYA GAYA	THE POET PRAISED HIM
PAN VADAYA	THE CHARITY IS ALSO DONE
HUD POLLA .	AT THE PLACE OF DEVA.
DHAN SAT MAN SE DHAYA	SEVEN MAN(1 MAN -24 KG) GRAINS WERE COOKED
RAMRIJAYA	THE GOD RAM WAS WORSHIPPED
SUM SIJAYA	THE FOOD WAS COOKED IN ABUNDANCE
KHUB POLA.	AT THE PLACE

AAVO SAMTASATHI	OH BROTHERS PLEASE COME
PRGGNNA PATI	HE WAS LIKE A RULER OF AREA
DESH RA HATHI	HE WAS MOST POWERFUL OF OUR REGION
GOD DEVA	MR. DEVA
ASYO DRIGPAL MOHDAD GOD DEV .	SUCH WAS MR. DEVA , THE OWNER OF THE PLACE.
VRDESH VAKHANU	I VARDESH PRAISES
JAS HI JANNU	I KNOW THE PRAISINGS
ANNI THKANNE	AT THIS PLACE
JET AAVA	ALWAYS WINNING TAKES PLACE
KAR VRDESH RODE JI	VARDESH AND RODE MADE
JUG HI BNKA	THE WORLD TO KNOW
SAMNTA SANKA	BY THEY INVITED THE LORDS.
KAR SAVA .	
AAVO SAMTASATHI	OH BROTHERS PLEASE COME
PRGGNNA PATI	HE WAS LIKE A RULER OF AREA
DESH RA HATHI	HE WAS MOST POWERFUL OF OUR REGION
GOD DEVA	HE WAS MOST POWERFUL OF OUR REGION
ASYO DRIGPAL MOHDAD GOD DEVA.	'SUCH WAS MR. DEVA, THE OWNER OF THE PLACE'.
SAJIYO FAGAN DHAN	WITH THE FAGUN GRAINS(WHEAT)
HI SOMANN	OF HUNDRED MANS (2400 KGS
BAVAN HI JITAN	ALL THE 52 CLANS WERE SERVED
KAN BNKA	BY THE BRAVE AND STRONG KANA
PAN KAN JIVA PITA VNSH GHOD DEVA	PAN, KAN, JIVA AND CLAN OF FATHER
KIDO MALAM KRIYAVAR	ORGANIZED A BIG MRITYUBHOJ FEAST
NAND MEGHA.	NAND AND MEGHA WERE ALSO TOOK PART.
AAVO SAMTASATHI	OH BROTHERS PLEASE COME
PRGGNNA PATI	HE WAS LIKE A RULER OF AREA
DESH RA HATHI	HE WAS MOST POWERFUL OF OUR REGION
GOD DEVA	HE WAS MOST POWERFUL OF OUR REGION
ASYO DRIGPAL MOHDAD GOD DEVA.	SUCH WAS MR. DEVA ,THE OWNER OF THE PLACE.

The elegiac poetry of Dholi literature expresses various aspects of culture of Yajaman community. Culture is a wide term. Raymond Williams says that culture includes “1- A general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development. 2- A particular way of life, of either people, a

period or a group 3- The works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity.” (1976,80) Clyde Kluckhohn’s *Mirror of Man*, Geertz lists the following potential meanings of culture: (Geertz, Clifford. *Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture*. 1973. pp. 3-30).

1. The total way of life of a people.
2. The social legacy the individual acquires from his group.
3. A way of thinking, feeling, and believing an abstraction from behaviour a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave.
4. A storehouse of pooled learning a set of standardized orientations to recurrent problems.
5. Learned behaviour.
6. A mechanism for the normative regulation of behaviour.
7. A set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and other men
8. A precipitate of history.
9. A behavioural map, sieve, or matrix.

(*The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. Geertz. pp. 21) or the “Easter Island-is-a-testing-case natural experiment model.” (Martha Schoolman, *Abolitionist Places*, Routledge Publications. pp. 128)

The elegiac poem ‘*ASYO DRIGPAL MOHDAD GOD DEVA*’ explains various aspects of the cultural traditions followed by the family of the dead deva and his community. It says that on the 12 th day a grand feast was organized by the family of deva and all his kith and kin were present there. The folk poet mentions the name of his relatives, and expression of the community members on this grand feast *mrityubhoj*. The expenditure, quantity of grain, life and deeds of the dead Deva. The poem tells that all the 52 clans of the society were present in the *mrityubhoj*. The organization of such grand feast has brought a great respect to his family among the community.

The study of elegiac poetry of *Dholi* folk literature explains the many unsolved questions of different communities. These poems have different aspects of these communities like structure of the community, cultural tradition, the deity of the community, role of *mrityubhoj* or such feast in creating debt ridden communities, role of money lenders (sahukar) in organization and encouragement of such feasts. The elegiac *dholi* folk poetry proves that communities which are known as primitive also have their own literature which is based on their culture and life. The elegiac poetry of *dholi* literature is an important part of *Dholi Folk Literature*.

### **Works Cited**

- Ahmed, Kasim Ali. *Folklore of Assam*. EBH Publishers, 2012.
- Auge, Marc. *A Sense for the Other: The Timeliness and Relevance of Anthropology*. Stanford UP, 1998.
- Bauman, Richard. *Story, Performance and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative*. Cambridge UP, 1986.
- Bhagwat, Durga. *The Riddle in Indian Life, Lore and Literature*. Popular Prakashan, 1965.
- Bodley, John H. *Cultural Anthropology: Tribes, States, and the Global System*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *On Symbolic Power*. Harvard UP, 1991.
- Clifford, James. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*. Harvard UP, 1986.
- Crooke, William. *The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India*. Munshiram Manoharlal, 1978.
- Das, Veena and Deborah Poole. *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*. Oxford UP, 2004.
- Devy, G.N. *A Nomad Called Thief-Reflections on Adivasi Silence*. Orient Longman, 2006.
- Devy, G.N. *Painted Words: An Anthology of Tribal Literature*. Penguin Books India, 2003.
- Dube, S.C. *India Village*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961.
- Dundes, Alan. *Essays in Folklorists*. Ved Prakash Vatuk Folklore Institute, 1978.

- Dundes , Alan. *The Study of Folklore*. Englewood Cliffs, 1965.
- Enthoven, R.E., Banjari. *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay*. New York, 1920.
- Foley, John Miles. *The Theory of Oral, History and Methodology*. Indiana UP, 1988.
- Foucault, M. *Nietzsche, Genealogy History. Language, Counter Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Cornell UP. 1977.
- Geertz, Clifford. *Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight*. In *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. Basic books, 2000.
- Gopal Rao Naik, S. *Banjara Charitra*. Gandhiji Sugali Sevak Sangham, 1990.
- Goswami, P. *Essays on the Folklore and Culture of North-Eastern India*. Spectrum Publications, 1983.
- Grierson, George Abraham. *Linguistic Survey of India*. Low Price Publications, 1994.
- Griffin, Gabriel. *The Uses of Discourse Analysis in the Study of Gender and Migration*. U of York, 2007.
- Haimendorf Christopher Von Furer. *Tribes of India: The Struggle for Survival*. Oxford UP, 1982.
- Kroeber, A.L. and Clyde Kluckhohn. *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. Vintage Books, 1995.
- Mann, Rann Singh. *Culture and Integration of Indian Tribes*. M. D. Publications, 1993.
- Mukharji, Ram Satya. *Indian Folklore*. Sanyal, 1904.
- Pasayat, Chitrasen. *Oral Tradition Society and History*. Mohit Publication, 2008.
- Mahanand, Anand. *Lo(k)cal Knowledge, Perception on Dalit, Tribal and Folk Literature*. Authors P, 2013.
- Mann, R.S., and Vijoy S. sahay. *Nature-Man-Spirit Complex in Tribal India*. Concept, 1982.
- Misra, Kamal Kant. *Tribal Elites and Social Transformation*. Inter-India, 1994.
- Mukherjee, M. *The Perishable Empire: Essays on Indian Writing in English*. Oxford UP, 2000.
- Naik, Cheeniya B. *Banjara Charitra: Sanskriti-Pragati*. Sri Hathiram Bawaji Publications, 1998.

- Naik, Dhanasingh B. *The Art and Literature of Banjara-Lambanis*. Abhinav Publications, 2000.
- Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. Routledge, 2004.
- Patel, M.L. *Development Dualism of Primitive Tribes: Constraints, Restraints, and Fallacies*. M.D.Publications, 1994.
- Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale*. U of Texas P, 1968.
- Radhakrishna, Meena. *Dishonoured by History-Criminal Tribes and British Colonial Policy*. Orient Blackswan, 2001.
- Raglan, Fitz Roy Richard Somerset. *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama*. Dover Publications, 2016.
- Raheja, Gloria. *Songs, Stories, Lives: Gendered Dialogues and Cultural Critique*. Kali for Women, 2003.
- Rajaram, J. *Banjara Moukhika Kathalu*. AP Government Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Institute, 2009.
- Raza, Moonis, and Aijazuddin Ahmad. *An Atlas of Tribal India: With Computed Tables of District-Level Data and Its Geographical Interpretation*. Concept, 1989.
- Rich, Paul B. *Race and Empire in British Politics*. Cambridge UP, 1990.
- Richard, B. *Story, Performance and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative*. Cambridge UP, 1986.
- Ricks, Christopher. *Oxford Book of English Poetry*. Culture Industry, 1999.
- Rose, G. *Visual Methodologies*. Rawat Publications, 2005.
- Roy, Burnam. *Tribes in Perspective*. Motilal Publications, 1994.
- Sarma Aravinda. *Women in Indian Religions*. Oxford UP, 2002.
- Sharma, Jatin. *Values in Karbi Folk Literature: An Evaluation*. 2016.
- Sims, Martha C. and Martine Stephens. *Living Folklore: An Introduction to the Study of People and their Traditions*. Utah State UP, 2005.
- Singer, Wendy. *Creating Histories: Oral Narratives and the Politics of History-Making*. Oxford UP, 1997.
- Singh, Amarkant. *Modernization of Indian Tradition*. ABD Publishers, 2019.
- Singh, Amar Kumar and C. Rajyalakshmi. *Status of Tribal Women in India*. Social Change, 1993.

- Singh, K.S. *Reflections on the Current Debate Concerning the Indigenous Peoples*. Social Change, 1993.
- Skinner, Quentin. *Visions of Politics*. Cambridge UP, 2002.
- Steedman, C. *Archival Methods*. Rawat Publications, 2005.
- Tylor, E.B. *The Origin of Cultures*. Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1958.
- Vishwanathan, G. *Masks of Conquest*. Oxford UP, 1998.
- Wasamba, Peter. *Contemporary Oral Literature Field Work: A Researcher's Guide*. U of Nairobi P, 2015.
- Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Oxford UP, 2015.



## Allegory as a Strategy of Communication: A Study of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*

---

*Sumer Singh*

### Introduction

George Orwell, a pen name for Eric Arthur Blair, was a British novelist, essayist and critic. He was born in India in the twentieth century (1903-1950), and grew up in a war and military atmosphere. His experience of the Indian Imperial Police from 1922 to 1927 changed his character into a rebel in terms of literature and politics. In 1936, Orwell already knew where he stood when he said that, "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism, as I understand it. It seems to me nonsense, in a period like our own, to think....every one writes of them in one guise or another." (Orwell 1946)

George Orwell's famous novel *Animal Farm* (1945) is a satirical allegory based on the events of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the early years of the Soviet Union. Orwell used allegory as a tool to expose the evils of Russian Revolution; and thereby to warn people and raise awareness to the danger of communism, or Russian political system. It is a cautionary tale about the dangers of consolidating political power in a communist state and a warning against authoritarian regimes and dictators. Actually the novel *Animal Farm* allegorically represents the events that transpired before, during, and after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, when Joseph Stalin usurped power and oppressed the entire Soviet Union. The quote "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it" by George Santayana is well exemplified in the allegory *Animal Farm*. George Orwell tries to show the identical fact using allegory that Napoleon forgot about all the mistakes that dictator

farmer Jones made and he committed them himself. The crux of *Animal Farm* is that power corrupts, but absolute power corrupts absolutely. The present paper aims at how Gorge Orwell critiqued Russian communism through the use of allegory as a technique of communication.

*Animal Farm* is one of the most well-known and appreciated allegorical novels in literature. One of the basic functions of allegory is to make literary document both convincing and relevant. *Animal Farm* is an allegory in which animals are personified to represent the struggles and conflicts of the Russian Revolution. The Russian Revolution and the allegory *Animal Farm* are very identical because of the events that took place e.g. the overthrowing of the government, and the consequences they led to, both of the leaders and their weaknesses, and the poor characteristics and skills shared between Squealer and Lenin. Similarly, Napoleon usurps power in the novella shortly after the Battle of the Cowshed and develops into a tyrannical ruler, who oppresses his subjects by forcing them to work long hours while continually reducing their food rations. Orwell wants to communicate a warning message to the readers that if we allow the shrewd and selfish politicians to consolidate power, then they gradually and subsequently take away civil rights and liberties. He also warns the readers about the various methods of manipulation and propaganda used by authoritarian regimes to oppress and control the populace. Squealer acts as Napoleon's mouthpiece and cleverly manipulates the animals using various rhetorical devices and propaganda strategies to deceive the animals into believing and supporting Napoleon's selfish, oppressive political agenda. Ironically, what Orwell wrote for the Soviet Union holds true today for USA and India as well.

### **Orwell's Purpose of Writing *Animal Farm***

George Orwell's purpose for writing *Animal Farm* according to Woodcock (1996) was to (a) reveal how Russia was preventing and distorting truth and (b) decry England's refusal to acknowledge the inherent flaws of communism. Explaining his personal involvement in

the Spanish Civil war, George Orwell stated that the civil war had broken out in 1936, right around the time he got married. Desiring to help the Spanish government, he joined the battle, resulting in a shot to the throat by Fascist sniper. After seeing people shot and imprisoned, he and his wife escaped Spain alive but having learnt an important lesson that totalitarian regimes can overpower and control the voice and opinion of the people, even in democratic countries. He stated that every major piece he wrote after that experience had the purpose of fighting totalitarianism and supporting democracy. In the preface to the Ukrainian edition of *Animal Farm* Orwell stated that his purpose for the writing the novel was to provide an allegory for the Russian Revolution. (Orwell 2002)

### **Allegory as a Strategy of Communication**

Allegory is one of the oldest literary forms, with writers long relying on allegory's ability to convey a moral or political message efficiently and discreetly. Allegory, as others in this volume have explored, is derived from 'allós' and 'agoreucin', signifying "other speaking." other than what is said, or, what is not said. Because of the interest in "otherness" in the cultural, social and philosophical contexts of many Western academic disciplines, much of the recent discussion and development of allegory has been toward issues of difference and absence. Allegory fascinates those writers, who want to explore the complexities and difficulties of speaking about the not-said, or more interesting, the not-yet-said. Allegory has come to be perceived as a rhetorical stance, one that in literature includes the writer, the words and the reader into a reading event called "text" or textuality. It is not a thing but an event that happens. Any one piece of writing may be an allegory if the reading constitutes it as such, while at another time it may be read more generically as utopian or satirical or even realist. *Animal Farm* is an allegorical story about communism, the political ideology that promotes the eradication of class and the equality of all people. Old Major symbolizes the fathers of communism, Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, while the hypocritical ruling class of pigs represents the Soviet

Government in the wake of the Russian Revolution. George Orwell likely chose to use an allegorical story to attack totalitarianism (rather than attacking it directly or explicitly) because it was such a sensitive political subject at the time that he wrote the book (1944-45).

On a superficial level, *Animal Farm* is a story about talking farm animals who dream of a better life. However, *Animal Farm*—which Orwell called “a fairy story”—has a secondary and more symbolic meaning. The story is both a political and a moral allegory that draws inspiration from real historical events, namely the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent era of Stalinism. The animals in the story are anthropomorphic, meaning that they exhibit human characteristics, such as the ability to talk and think like a person. Several of the animals represent real historical figures associated with the Russian Revolution: The philosophical Old Major represents both Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, two men who presented the theory of communism as the means by which the economically oppressed working classes would eventually rise up to create an egalitarian society. Most of the animals on the farm are analogous to the poor, uneducated Russian peasant class, whose interests the leaders of the Russian Revolution claimed to represent. The animals are presented as illustrative of the utopian dream of socialism pitted against the vices of capitalism represented by the humans in the story. Neither political ideology is presented in a favorable light, but whereas the evils of capitalism are taken for granted, it is the futility of the socialist ideal on which the work primarily focuses. Yet the means by which it levels this criticism at Communism—that is, in terms of a relatively simple and two-dimensional beast fable—does little to illuminate either the virtues or the vices of that complex ideology.

By presenting his message indirectly through the medium of a fable, Orwell is able to give his ideas a broader and more universal application. Though the story of the animals on Manor Farm parallels real events in twentieth-century Russia, Orwell’s political critique extends far beyond that particular country. Written near the end of World War II, *Animal Farm* is intended to be a critique of the totalitarian regimes that Orwell saw coming to power all over the world—in Germany, Italy, and Spain,

as well as in Russia. By making the main characters of the story nonhuman, Orwell creates a necessary distance that serves to highlight the absurdity and hypocrisy of the Russian Revolution or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the USSR).

*Animal Farm* is most famous in the West as a stinging critique of the history and rhetoric of the Russian Revolution. Retelling the story of the emergence and development of Soviet communism in the form of an animal fable, *Animal Farm* allegorizes the rise to power of the dictator Joseph Stalin. In the novella, the overthrow of the human oppressor Mr. Jones by a democratic coalition of animals quickly gives way to the consolidation of power among the pigs. Much like the Soviet intelligentsia, the pigs establish themselves as the ruling class in the new society. The struggle for preeminence between Leon Trotsky and Stalin emerges in the rivalry between the pigs Snowball and Napoleon. In both the historical and fictional cases, the idealistic but politically less powerful figure (Trotsky and Snowball) is expelled from the revolutionary state by the malicious and violent usurper of power (Stalin and Napoleon). The purges and show trials with which Stalin eliminated his enemies and solidified his political base find expression in *Animal Farm* as the false confessions and executions of animals whom Napoleon distrusts following the collapse of the windmill. Stalin's tyrannical rule and eventual abandonment of the founding principles of the Russian Revolution are represented by the pigs' turn to violent government and the adoption of human traits and behaviors, the trappings of their original oppressors.

*Animal Farm* perhaps works best not as a specific allegory of the Russian Revolution but rather as a fable about the basic nature of human beings, both in isolation and in groups, which militates against any utopian ideal. What Orwell has seized upon is precisely those qualities of animals that humans share which make such an ideal impossible—qualities such as sloth, stupidity, fear, and greed. The central irony of the fable is that although the animals initially rebel against the humans because of behavior which humans usually call “bestly,” the animals themselves, as the work progresses, become more and more like humans—that is, more and more base and beastly.

What is most demoniacally human about the pigs is their use of language not only to manipulate the immediate behavior of the animals through propaganda, emotive language, and meaningless doubletalk but also to manipulate history, and thus challenge the nature of actuality itself. This manipulation, however, is only one primary means of the pigs' control; another, equally important, is the threat of brute force as manifested by Napoleon's pack of vicious trained dogs. In the final image of the allegory, the realization is that humans prove to be no better than animals, and animals prove to be no better than humans. The great ideal of the windmill, itself a Quixotic gesture of idealism, cannot be achieved because the animals, like humans, are basically limited by their own natures, and because nature itself is blindly indifferent to the aspirations of man. Orwell's own pessimistic view in the work seems to be echoed by the cynical donkey, Benjamin: "Things never had been, nor ever could be much better or worse—hunger, hardship, and disappointment being . . . the unalterable law of life." (87) The law of man is the law of the jungle after all; the truth of "power corrupts" is the same as the truth of "the fittest shall survive."

### **Critical Analysis**

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* acclaimed as a prominent and powerful allegory about Soviet Communism. In Orwell's *Animal Farm* the story opens on a farm run by the farmer Mr. Jones. One night an older pig (pigs are the wisest of the animals) tells the group about a dream he had about a utopia run by animals and centered upon equality. However, Old Major dies soon after he speaks about his dream and his vision is never realized in his lifetime. After his death, all the animals rejoice at the prospect of Old Major's dream and eventually drive Mr. Jones from the Farm. Led by pigs such as Napoleon, Snowball, and Squealer, the animals form a government based on equality and form the principles in the Seven Commandments of Animal Farm. As time goes on, Napoleon grows more and more power hungry and eventually drives out Snowball from the farm. With the help of Squealer, Napoleon is able to convince the rest of the farm of Snowball's "evil" nature and maintain rigorous

work hours for the rest of the animals. In the end, Napoleon and the rest of the pigs begin walking on two feet like the humans they once loathed. In the final scene play cards with the humans they once fought so valiantly against.

The true cleverness of the novel comes from the correlation with true historical events in Russia. In the late 1910s, Russia overthrew the final Tsar Nicholas II and became a communist nation. The revolution was led by Vladimir Lenin who truly believed in the original principles of Karl Marx communism. Soon after the revolution concluded however, Lenin died and Joseph Stalin and Trotsky fought for political control over the nation. Stalin's brutal and ruthless principles eventually resulted in becoming the leader of the Soviet Union. Stalin betrayed communist doctrine ruled with an iron fist. Stalin's totalitarian rule continued for decades as he drove millions of his own people to starvation because of the outrageous work requirements and low rations. After researching the historical background of the Soviet communism, the allegory of *Animal Farm* becomes much clearer. *Animal Farm* is known for its incredibly clever allegory of the Russian Revolution. *Animal Farm* ultimately explains the true dystopian nature of the nation.

The first symbolic character is Old Major as Karl Marx. Old Major is described by Orwell (...so highly regarded on the farm that everyone was quite ready to lose an hour's sleep in order to hear what he had to say"(01). His principles were noble, his character was strong, and he was respected by all of the animals on the farm. Old Major had the benefit of not placing these policies into existence however. While his dream is grand and perfect, it's a highly romanticized ideal. Creating equality is a difficult task since the animals cannot contribute to the farm equally. Even with difficult problems inevitably arising, life for the animals is at first happy, largely because of another pig named Snowball. Snowball is representative of the Russian politician Leon Trotsky. Like Trotsky, Snowball tried to stay true to the original views of the philosophy of his predecessor. Snowball is described by Orwell as "...vivacious pig...quicker in speech and more inventive" (9). He is the leader of the revolution and creates a moral and pleasant society, despite the pigs

taking more than their share of their food. However, Trotsky's rival, Joseph Stalin was eventually able to retain control of the Soviet Union, and is represented by Napoleon. Napoleon according to Orwell is "a large, rather fierce-looking Berkshire boar". He is a far more rugged and ruthless pig who eventually takes complete control over the farm. The allegorical point of view allows for the novel to be a reflection of an entire culture rather than a single individual. The perspective is from third person subjective. From this point of view the trials and struggles are seen in the horses, donkeys and, goats.

The pig's deceit is shown in a manner emphasizing the slow accumulation of power before turning on the original Seven Commandments all together. The pigs also constantly utilize fear to gain legitimacy from the rest of the animals. By allowing fear to influence their lives, the common animals gave up their equality to ensure their safety, instead of having faith in themselves. By keeping too much faith in the pigs to keep them safe, the pigs ultimately abuse this power for their benefit. Much like McCarthyism swept the nation during the 1950s, a deep fear of Mr Jones or Snowball returning kept the animals obliging to the will of the pigs. However when the responsibility of reporting the news becomes an opportunity for propaganda, the pigs quickly take advantage. In this regard the major theme could be considered the importance of empowerment and freedom of expression. Even Boxer who is rather gullible begins to deny facts spouted by Squealer. If some of the animals were confident rather than panic-stricken, the pigs would have to be more dignified in their principles. Instead the culture declines into starvation and misery while the pigs show no consideration for anyone else.

The overall value of the story of *Animal Farm* is rested upon strength of the allegory. The story on its own is a strong representation of the easy corruption of power. Without knowledge of Joseph Stalin, and Leon Trotsky, the cautionary tale remains powerful and effective. The struggle between Snowball and Napoleon is a legitimate dispute and can be applied to politics outside of Soviet Russia. While the story on its



own is far more bizarre and abstract, it still captures the theme of the power corrupting a strong ethical society. The allegory allows the reader to truly grasp the perspective of the Russian people during this time as their society deteriorates.

### **Critical Overview**

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., and Adam de Hegedus were among the first critics to attach more significance to the novel beyond that of a political satire. Schlesinger wrote in the *New York Times Book Review* that Orwell's ability to make the reader empathize with the plight of the animals "would compel the attention of persons who never heard of the Russian Revolution." In *Commonweal*, De Hegedus stated: "[The novel] has implications—and they are many—which are older and more universal than the past and present of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." He, like many critics have since, pointed out the similarity between conclusions drawn from Orwell's text and the famous aphorism of British historian Lord Acton who wrote, "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely."

*Animal Farm* is in fact one of the most studied and most readily misinterpreted novels of the twentieth century. And, given our distance from the events which it allegorizes and from the ideas it counterposes, it has only become easier to misinterpret since the fall of the Berlin Wall. The pigs have at last been vanquished, and Mr. Jones has returned to the farm, as we knew he would all along. In order to read *Animal Farm* as the allegory which Orwell's contemporaries understood it to be, one must first have an outline of the key players. Old Major, the prize boar, who first passes on his ideas about animal oppression by the humans, and then declares the future Rebellion of the animals to overthrow man and find freedom. Old Major says that all animals are equal and urges them to join together to rebel. Old Major dies shortly thereafter, but the farm animals develop his ideas into the philosophy of Animalism, and they defeat the abusive farmer in an uprising, renaming the farm "Animal Farm." What follows is a long story of political turmoil

among the animals, with the pigs rising to power and becoming oppressive rulers themselves, amending Old Major's revolutionary statement ("All animals are equal") to a nonsensical one that justifies their dominance ("All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others").

## Conclusion

Since *Animal Farm* is an allegory based on the problems resulting from Russian Revolution, and its subsequent oppressive communist state, one of the messages of the novel is about how power can often lead to corruption and oppression. Even when a revolution is done with the best intentions, all directed toward the greater social good, it can devolve into a government which is just as bad (or worse) than the oppressive regime which it replaced. Other messages or lessons of the novel include the means by which a government rules and/or oppresses its people (or animals in this allegory). When the revolution begins, it is to establish the law of the land that all animals are equal. However, over time the pigs (leaders) clearly put themselves in a higher position (under Napoleon) and this reestablishes a hierarchy (which was what the revolution was supposed to have eliminated). This hierarchy divides the animals; thus, they are no longer all equal.

The novel also shows the ways a group/government can manipulate and brainwash its citizens through the use of propaganda. Napoleon and Squealer constantly change the seven commandments in order to suit their increasing power. By the end of the novel, the commandments read less like a document stating the equality and happiness of all animals, and it reads more like the establishment of the privileges of pigs over all animals. Napoleon and Squealer not only change the commandments (usually acting as if they had never been changed); they also change history to suit their narrative. Snowball had been the hero of the Battle of the Cowshed, but in order to praise Napoleon and criticize Snowball, Squealer gradually changes the story, eventually making Napoleon the hero of the battle.

On a symbolic level, Orwell's allegorical novel *Animal Farm* reflects the events of the Russian Revolution in which Bolshevik and liberal

revolutionaries overthrew the Russian Czar. Two of the pigs in the novel symbolize the historical figures Leon Trotsky and Joseph Stalin, and nearly every literary element in story symbolizes the rise of communism and its consequences in Russia and the Soviet Union. Thus, allegory as a strategy of communication may be linguistic, generic, discursive or semiotic, or semantic and rooted in recognized ideological codes for society, culture, politics, economics, religion and such like. The allegorical stance uses structures, strategies, techniques, that are more or less appropriate to instigating awareness of otherness, flexible interpretation, and contradiction, within particular reading environments. If the reading is situated within such an environment, allegory happens.

## **Works Cited**

- “Novel Guide.” *Novel Analysis: Animal Farm, Characterization*. 2010.
- Orwell, George. *As I Please*. The Collected Essays, Journals and Letters, 1943-45, [www.orwellfoundation.com](http://www.orwellfoundation.com).
- . *Essays*. Edited by J.Cary, Random House, 2002.
- . *The Animal Farm*. Penguin Books India, 2011.
- . “Why I Write”, 1946.
- Pearce, Robert. “Orwell, Tolstoy, and ‘Animal Farm’.” *The Review of English Studies*, 1998.
- Storgaard, Claus. *Opinion Essays: George Orwell, Socialist, Anarchist or What...?* 2004.
- Woodcock, G. *The Crystal Spirit*. Little, Brown and Company, 1966, [Commonwealthmagazine.org](http://Commonwealthmagazine.org).

## Indian Campus Novels as Critiques of the Follies and Foibles of the Educational Academies

---

*Sunita Sadh*

The shelves of book-stores in present days are stacked with novels speaking volumes of challenges and enthusiasm of student life in some university or college. Campus fiction has gained popularity as readers, especially youth, show great interest in reading about the academy or educational institution. In the era of globalization, knowledge-based economy rules the world; thus education, especially the higher education, has gained immense prominence. Academics dominate the most traditional occupations— from agriculture to sports, from languages and social sciences to medical sciences, etc. Campuses are places of intense study and emotions get ignited when the issues of the day become debating points on campuses. The heat of revolution is felt in the furnace of ideas generated on campuses. Whether it is the struggle of a country to change its government to democratic ways or the production of a creative work, the modern world owes much to the inmates of the campus.

“Campus novel” originated as a literary genre in the US and the UK in the fifties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Novels like *Pnin* (1955) by Vladimir Nabokov, *Lucky Jim* (1954) by Kingsley Amis, *Eating People is Wrong* (1959) and *The History Man* (1975) by Malcolm Bradbury, had the characteristic features of campus novels. *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth Century Literature in English* (1996) explains Campus Fiction as a genre of novels, usually comic or satirical, which have a university setting and academics as principal characters. Siegfried Mews in his article “The Professor’s novel: David Lodge’s *Small World*” (1989) quotes Kramer’s definition of campus novel which say that this

literary genre “incorporates an institution of higher learning as crucial part of its total setting and . . . includes among its principal characters, graduates or under graduate students, faculty members, administrators, and/or other academic personnel” (714).

All the campus novels, thus, have a university or some other place of educational academy as its setting or background. The principal characters belong to the academia. The plot consists of incidents in the enclosed world of the campus. Most of the novels present different aspects of life in either a comical way or in satiric tone. The authors break the traditional idealistic notions of teachers and educators and try to portray the hard and harsh reality of education system and institutes. They present the insider’s real experiences and the follies and foibles of the academic life. Through satirical and ironical portraits, they try to pinpoint that there is little hope for education which has become more business than sacred place of knowledge and that materialistic desires and ambitious approach for power and authority have engulfed the minds of the faculty and administrators. *Campus* (2002) by Prof. K. L. Kamal, the former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Rajasthan, is a novel that presents the malfunctioning of the Universities in the present times. The work reports the challenging life of a determined Vice-Chancellor who wishes to see his university as one of the best National Universities by promoting higher education and research. Prof. Kamal presents non-cooperation of some members of staff, strikes, burning of his effigies, pressure from a corrupted governing body, and favoritism as the major themes.

Most of the campus novelists do not believe in presenting an ideal or inaccurate, falsified image of teachers and students who are at the campus to serve the cause of education. In fact, they attempt to portray the struggles the academic characters undergo when they have to choose between idealism and practicality, thus giving way to pretensions. The authors satirize the usual glorified image of academicians who are portrayed as comic, ridiculous figures who are less interested in matters related to research and subject expertise. The world of academe, with its own set of distinctive customs, seasons, rituals and foibles, is ruled

by factors that motivate human behaviour — power, ambition, rivalry, lust and anxiety, are displayed to their full extent and anatomized. Describing human beings with ordinary human weaknesses and eccentricities, against the background of preserving the high culture explains why campus novels are usually either comical or satirical. The principal characters are depicted as selfish power mongers who are driven by selfish desires, ambitions and are keen on their own self-development. Their flaws and hypocrisy are mercilessly dealt with and are put to shame when the masks of intellectuality that they wear, are torn off. Elaine Showalter, a well-known critic of Campus Fiction sees the University as a place of cloistered intrigue. Some novels expose how academicians occupy unambiguous hierarchies in the University set up and are deeply involved in various mechanisms of power politics.

David Lodge is one of the most popular contemporary writers of this genre in Britain.

He is best known for his alert and funny “campus novels, *Changing Places* (1975), *Small World* (1984), and *Nice Work* (1989), in which English and American academics encounter the well-observed follies of each other’s professional and cultural climates. He opines that “the high ideals of the university as an institution—the pursuit of knowledge and truth are set against the actual behavior and motivations of the people who work in them” (Edemariam 145). Lodge uses satire in order to present the university as an absolute web of pretense in which teachers are caught. *Small World* satirically portrays a different academic surrounding by depicting the International literary conferences. In a sarcastic mien Lodge has this to say about the academic world, “The whole academic world seems to be on the move. Half the passengers on transatlantic flights these days are university teachers. Their luggage is heavier than average, weighed down with books and papers – and bulkier, because their wardrobes must embrace both formal wear and leisurewear, clothes for attending lectures in, and clothes for going to the beach in, or to the Museum, or the Schloss, or the Duomo, or the Folk village. For that’s the attraction of the conference circuit: it’s a way of converting work into play, combining professionalism with tourism,

and all at someone else's expense. Write a paper and see the world!" (Lodge, *Small World* 231).

The campus novel is one of the favorite genres with the Indian novelists too. The present day writers in India are interested to write about their own experiences of student life. The Indian campus novels are successful among the alumni as well as youth. *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) by R.K. Narayan is the first Indian campus novel which gives a glimpse of a student, his preparations for his examination and his love life and the obstacles he faces at a youthful stage of his life forms the plot of the novel. Prema Nandakumar, Nayantara Sahgal, Rita Joshi, Ranga Rao, Chetan Bhagat, Srividhya Natarajan, Gita Hariharan, Kaveri Nambeesan are popular names of this genre.

Prema Nanda Kumar's *Atom and the Serpent* (1982) with the subtitle *A Novel of Campus Life in India Today* presents an Indian university wherein most of the professors are aiming at their own research projects, foreign trips and promotions rather than the welfare of the students. The novel centers on the faculty of an Indian university. In a satirical manner, Nandakumar lampoons what transpires amidst the faculty. *Atom and the Serpent* revolves around the happenings that Dr. Kamalapati Vatsa, an atomic scientist at a reputed institute in Mumbai, observes when he is invited to give a lecture at a local university on "The Biological Effects of Atomic Research". To his horror, he witnesses non-academic activities like demonstrations, gheraos, power politics, corruption, and back biting which take place in the university. Prof Adhyaksha, the vice chancellor tries to keep things under control but fails in his mission as Sheela Rani, and her brother Kshema Rao, the Union president, help to create chaos in the university in order to get her promoted. The VC wants to keep the reins of power to himself and he encourages the rival team against Kshema Rao, led by Karmachari Sangh in order to retain his position. Vatsa compares him with Chanakya, a historical figure who is wise and shrewd. Sheela Rani in spite of being in a decent field tries to manipulate everyone in the university. Neither does she teach nor is she involved in any research; but she does specialize in gossiping and linking people at the university. Through the character of Sheela

Rani, Prema Nanda Kumar exposes the non-academic elements that come to play wherein she is supposed to get promotion on the merit of her academic performance.

Ranga Rao's *The Drunk Tantra* is a campus novel that satirizes the involvement of politics and politicians in the affairs of the university. It shows the interest of the members of the institution in promotions not on the basis of merit but on contacts. The novel tells the story of Hari Kishan, a university lecturer, who despite his inefficient teaching practices succeeds in reaching the top position of College Principal and later also tries for the post of Vice-Chancellor.

Mainak Dhar's *The Funda of Mix-ology: What Bartending Teaches That IIM Doesn't* is a story of a young man, an IIM passed out alumnus who has a high paying and high stress job, immersing him completely in work. After a few years he ponders over his mad pursuit of academic excellence at IIM and realizes that his higher education did nothing to make him compete with the rat race of his job and the drudgery that characterized his routine work life.

Chetan Bhagat is one of the bestseller campus novel writers in present day Indian English literature. His campus collection consists *Five Point Someone—What not to do at IIT* (2004), *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*, *Half-Girlfriend*. *Five Point Someone* is a grand campus novel set in the IIT Delhi campus and tells the tale of three friends—Hari, Ryan and Alok—who try hard to cope with the heavy workload and with heavy competition. Despite being intelligent, they are screwed up by the grading system of the IIT. Ragging, grade system, malpractice, study pressures and academic stress, student-teacher relations, friendship, tough but thrilling hostel life and careerism are the key issues of student life in this novel at length.

Dean Koontz in *Brother Odd* (2009) says, “Most universities are no longer temples of knowledge, but of power, and true moderns worship there” (7). *Five Point Someone* explicitly presents how the entire modern education in India symbolizes a power magnet, whether one is in a professional or non-professional course. The novel shows how grades



play the most powerful role in students' lives and how the faculty are the kingmakers who delineate their power in all possible ways by keeping the students under their direct control.

The power game begins from the first day of the college life. In the first lecture itself, students are briefed on the course outline and grading pattern. The professor advises them not to miss classes, to complete assignments on time and asks them to be prepared for surprise quizzes. They are threatened with the consequences of bad grades. He says, "If you get bad grades, and I assure you- you get no job, no school and no future. If you do well, the world is your oyster. So don't slip. Not even once or there will be no oyster, just slush" (Bhagat 11).

The pressure to perform at the IIT is so acute that it demoralizes the students to a great extent. At first, they had to compete against lakhs of students all over India to get enrolled in the IITs. After joining a professional course, they have to follow the tedious working system of the course. They have to attend lectures, tutorials and labs from eight to five, the next few hours are to be spent reading in the library, and working on reports and assignments in the hostel rooms, apart from studying for surprise quizzes and semester exams. The narrator expresses the horror of their situation,

"Working away like moronic drones until midnight. Manpro yesterday, Aptech day before, Quanto today... it never ends" (Bhagat 14).

This statement highlights the work pressure faced by all students. The whole course is nothing but mindlessly competing and drudgery for four years. It is a power game where the professors judge the students by their capacity to learn the entire course by rote. A GPA (Grade Point average) is stamped on every student and becomes his identification code. The opportunities and even power granted to the students are in direct proportion to his GPA – another example of power game.

The news of a surprise quiz travels through the campus like wildfire making the students work till four in the morning. Students worry about relative grading system. If they don't study and others do, then the GPA would be dramatically slashed down. Mugging is the key mantra to get

the IIT tag. Ryan, who is different from others, feels, “Continuous mugging, testing and assignments is what a student does at IIT” (Bhagat 25). There is no creativity or invention on the campus. The IIT has produced many CEOs and entrepreneurs but not great engineers or true scientists. It only trains engineers to work for multinational companies as mindless cogs. The examination system is too hectic with heaps of coursework that remain impossible to complete.

Chetan shows how much master- slave syndrome is common in any educational institution. Facing the viva-voce is one of the hazards of student life. The game of superiority played by the teachers is very complex. Hari, the hero is asked questions and the professors look him in the eye, his body gets frozen, sweat covers his face and he loses his sense of voice. Though he knows the subject well, he keeps mum due to the pressure which builds within him. He does not answer even a single viva till the last semester of his course. Prof Gayal, with the feeling of superiority which is common amongst the faculty says, “The standard of this institution is going down day by day. What are, a commerce student?” (Bhagat 56). In local IIT parlance, a commerce student is the one who is sub- standard- one who would not fit into IIT, which is considered a temple of science.

In another instance, Prof Vohra in the design class, teaches how to execute a basic screw-type design. Ryan draws a modified screw jack which was superior to the basic kind. Prof Vohra proceeds to ask Ryan whether it is an electrical engineering class or a design class before asking Ryan to leave the class. The professor could not tolerate someone deviating from the path he had set. Creativity is completely disrespected and nullified. Power is abused in the hands of the professor.

Another example of how the faculty is a victim of prejudices, is the way they play with the grades of a student. A student who belongs to the lower rung of the academic circle is first labelled and then battered by the negative perception. When Ryan gives some ideas on how one could design a suspension bridge, Prof Bhatia is excited about the project and asks him to submit a scale drawing. He holds out the promise of a

special internship project for Ryan. But when Prof Bhatia comes to know about Ryan's GPA, he calls Ryan and tells him to forget about the drawing and the internship. Prejudice about students is one way of showing the autocratic attitude of the faculty. Rather than viewing it as an opportunity for genuine mentoring and inspiring a student to build his potential, the Prof wants a mere yes man with a high GPA. Bhagat pinpoints very realistic and painful experiences of students at such higher but hypocritical educational institutes. Many students could connect their adverse experiences with the principal characters of the novel, and perhaps that is the reason why Bhagat is a bestseller writer.

It is true that power corrupts and it attracts those who like to dominate. *No Onion nor Garlic* by Srividhya Natarajan shows how power mongers in an academic surrounding misuse their power. She brings out the repercussions of caste system in an academic milieu. Caste politics at one of the south Indian universities is interestingly figured in Natarajan's novel. Prof. Ram, the central figure of the novel tries to establish a statue of goddess of education, and also wants to appoint his son as an Assistant Professor in the department of English avoiding the most eligible Dalit candidate. The low caste students and teachers are portrayed as powerless at the hands of the high caste professors. The novel lists the misdeeds of such mischievous egoistic professors who leave no coin unturned to get their motives served, like organizing processions in the name of caste in university with students, delaying the submission of research scholar's thesis for selfish reasons, mediocrity in conducting a conference with all his relatives and caste people, trying to have their papers and books published, exhibiting excessive hatred towards the low caste people.

Indian English campus fiction portrays the inside of the educational academy and the real insiders' experiences, exposing those aspects of such academies that remain hidden from the eyes of the commoners who hold great faith in these temples of education. These campus novels point out the follies and foibles of the academicians, whether they are faculty members, students or administrative staff. The authors show the universities as the most unintellectual places where the academicians

fail to give due importance to research and teaching. In fact, the necessity of participating in seminars and conferences and the importance given to maximum amount of publication prompts them to get indulged in unethical means. The novels are also critiques of the university administration— misuse of power, corruption, inefficient Vice-Chancellors, unqualified teaching faculties vulnerable system of education, politics, and unjust administration. Campus fiction shows that power oscillates between merit and mediocrity. Most campus fiction is grappling with the perceived loss of value and sense of inadequacy to rise to the challenges that are prevalent in society. Society looks to education for a solution to combat its ills; and when education reflects only this confusion without a solution sight, the educational institutes and teachers come in the line of fire. Thus, campus fiction is only symptomatic of the disease engulfing society; and not the disease itself as is often interpreted.

### Works Cited

- Bhagat, Chetan. *Five Point Someone -What not to do at IIT!* Rupa, 2004.
- Edemarian, Aida. "Who's Afraid of the Campus Novel?" *The Guardian*, 2004, n.page. Accessed 10 May 2006.
- Koontz, Dean. *Brother Odd*. Harper Collins, 2009.
- Lyons, John O. *The College Novel in America*. Southern Illinois UP, 1962.
- Mews, Siegfried. "The Professor's Novel: David Lodge's *Small World*." *MLN*, vol. 104, no. 3, 1989, pp. 713-26.
- Nandakumar, Prema. *Atom and the Serpent: A Novel of Campus Life in India*. Affiliated East West, 1982.
- Natarajan, Srividhya. *No Onion nor Garlic*. Penguin Books India, 2006.
- Rao, Ranga. *The Drunk Tantra*. Penguin, 1994.
- Showalter, Elaine. "Campus Follies." *The Guardian*, 2005, n.page. Accessed 10 May 2006.

## Cinema of Resistance V/s Cinema of Consistence Impact on Story

---

*Bhavani Singh*

Cinematography, the art of motion-picture photography, Film or movie a series of still images that create the illusion of still image that creates a moving illusion is what we call cinema. When we talk about motion pictures what come to our mind is the beautiful background color full films and attractive dialogues but if we move from motion picture to mirror picture of real-life incidents then Documentary films are the one that play its part. Documentary films are intended to show reality, which primarily was used for instruction, education or maintaining human records. The documentary is usually called actuality films and is usually in one-minute length but over the times has evolved with a longer duration of time to include education and fiction and even observation. In this paper we will be looking at how both being in same genre speaking same thing in different style affect our understanding of theme, story. In fact our perception on the entire movie or video is changing.

A narrative film or a fictional film is a film that tells a fictional or fictionalized story, event or narrative. In this style of the film, believable narratives and characters help convince the audience that the unfolding fiction is real. Fictional film stated very early in the form of drama and street play, it was although a part of informative visual art during ancient time and people got both entertainment and education by watching fictional play. Best Example is during Elizabethan Age Drama were more often showing moral values and how it affects the people of the higher status. In India, we have stories of Ramayana which portrays the story of the victory of good over ego with so many subplots and divisions inside them. Fictional films first to came in the world, but what is here interesting to note is that fictional films too used some elements

of documentary films like real characters. Many plays of William Shakespeare are based on real characters like Hamlet we have king Duncan story then Henry V, Richard III, Henry IV, Julia Caesar, King Lear.

The term documentary was not coined before 1926. Many of the first films, such as made by Auguste and Louis Lumiere were only minute or less in length due to technical limitations. A documentary film is a non-fictional motion picture intended to document reality, primarily for Instruction and education. The first film that was short name '*Nanook of the North*' depicts the life of Artic. The documentary is useful for Education to make the people feel real pain or happiness going through the theme or rather through the main storyline. The documentary which depicts the scene of freedom struggle, the assignation and the dominance of how the British tried to suppress Indians and how they manipulated with people's feeling, incident of Jalian wala Bagh, they all are portrayed with as much reality as possible.

In this research paper we will make a comparison of a song by Coldplay- Hymn for the weekend a song by popular British rock band and we'll compare it with the other documentary films which represent freedom fighters and freedom struggle.

### **Fictional Film/Song - Coldplay Hymn for the weekend**

Coldplay is a British rock band formed in London in 1996. The four members which include Lead vocalist/Pianist Chris Martin, lead guitarist Jonny Buckland, bassist Guy Berryman, and drummer Will Champion- were at University College London and came together from 1996 to 1998. The Song by Coldplay "Hymn for the Weekend" is dedicated to Indian Audience and it is the song shot in Indian Locality. The song begins with the Introduction of a traditional black and yellow taxi and a poster which has 'Rani' written on it, typically representing about how modern British were slowly entering into India with their Machinery Where Rani is just an ideal but not a reality someone who just watches but does nothing depicting her helplessness. In the next scene, we see a temple background with the saffron color flag, one thing to note here is

the song entirely portrays India where only one religion exists *i.e.* Hinduism. So was the case when the British invaded India as India was known for Hinduism or rather this could also be looked at as how British used one religion (Hinduism) as a weapon to invade the most powerful country both in cultural root and economic sector. In the next scene, we look at Chris (Hero) walking through the street and kids with color on their face and hand, which could be seen as how they manipulated and are manipulating our younger generation. In the next scene, we see a woman wearing a heavy dress and a crown representing how ancient queens used to be in India and the scene completely shows us how British Invaded India. We see a public band where there is a use of Gendha flower typically used by Hindu people for their God and Goddesses now are used for the speakers and western instruments and all Indian kids are dancing in western form. The application of the scene is so beautifully portrayed that we don't find anything wrong because we see our face colored and we dancing to the tone of westerners in western hip-hop style whereas westerners show their rules as superior by garlanding it with 'Gendha flower'. The application of the theory of Orientalism and Post-colonialism is visible in this scene. In the next scene, we see the representation of women in India, a theatre where all men are seated and a women with heavy jewelry and traditional Indian dress stands in front of them. The representation of women done here is quite fascinating we can also note that the song represents how India was when British came and how slowly they unloaded their burden of civilizing the uncivilized which was then called as "*The White man's Burden*" by Rudyard Kipling in his poem with this title only:

Take up the White Man's burden"  
 Take up the White Man's burden –  
 Send forth the best ye breed–  
 Go send your sons to exile  
 To serve your captives' need  
 To wait in heavy harness  
 On fluttered folk and wild–

Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half devil and half child

These are the starting lines of the poem.

Immediately after this, we find an old woman walking helplessly in front of a TV screen representation of young and old age. In the last scene which purely shows how slowly the tradition slowly deviated from our group of Kathakali dancers with their colour from face fading out slowly showing us the fading out of our culture. Each scene in the song slowly and is depicting the rise of British Empire in India what's also interesting to note is that we find so many other interesting scene supporting the theme of orientalism or rather colonialism like a scene of doll play and magic box and few saints with their long shawl showing us deep routes of Hindu culture and more importantly we see many kids in the song showing us how we slowly are controlling young minds as well by turning them towards our culture. All these events represent a fluid narrative technique, how the story is molded beautifully and told in scattered manner can have different impression on the minds of some people who think that colonialism ruined them. The entire song is just in length of four to five minutes, which is both fascinating in terms of its colonialism technique and fluid in narration.

### **Documentary Film - Viceroy House (Gurinder Chadha 2017) The Mangarh Massacre**

If we look through the mirror here we see that such documentaries try to show the uncensored pictures, events and suffering of people. They rather are sharp edges of Sword which are strung straight inside people's heart and mind which creates an image of high patriotic feeling inside people's mind. The essence however here is to educate the people which is done well by the documentary. Documentaries are never time-bound. They could be short, as well a long, their narration is usually objective and they focus on facts and education representing real characters and their real state of mind. The documentaries are more closely examined with short viewpoints clear with what has to be shown



they are also closely associated with the theory of “Traditional Criticism” as it too represents events that are closely associated with people’s life or leader’s life analyzing their mind through their background. Though both fiction and documentary represent the same situation and event their narrative style which is fluid for fiction and objective for documentary, both have their effect in the minds of the audience. What is more interesting to note is that the very different way of characterizing the scene can make a huge impact and difference in people’s minds closely associated with the linguistic approach where the tone, style, situation all play an integral part in representing meaning for a word. Fiction and documentary are both two different tracks traveling at the same speed but to a different world of the same destination just like Charlie Chaplin and Adolf Hitler were from same period but different in how they are remembered today. Even if we look at documentaries during world war II of Nazi camp they portray cruel Nazi party which killed Jews brutally in a concentration camp while Charle Chaplin represented so many cruel events of world war II in his movie with the more sarcastic and comical tone which creates a different effect in the minds of people.

### **Works Cited**

- “Coldplay – Hymn for the Weekend.” *Youtube*, Documentary Films Features, [topdocumentaryfilms.com/category/history/](http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/category/history/). Accessed 1 October 2019.
- “History of Documentary Films.” *Wikipedia*, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Documentary\\_film](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Documentary_film). Accessed 28 September 2019.
- Kalorth, Nithin. *Documentary/ Experimental Films*, Academia. [www.academia.edu/32699255/DOCUMENTARY\\_EXPERIMENTAL\\_FILMS](http://www.academia.edu/32699255/DOCUMENTARY_EXPERIMENTAL_FILMS). Accessed 28 October 2019.
- Kipling, Rudyard. *History Matters*. [historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5478/](http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5478/). Accessed 29 October 2019.
- Pezarkar, Leora. “The Mangarh Massacre.” *Live History India*, [www.livehistoryindia.com/snapshot-histories/2017/08/07/the-mangarh-massacre](http://www.livehistoryindia.com/snapshot-histories/2017/08/07/the-mangarh-massacre). Accessed 29 October 2019.

## Allegory of Geeta of Democracy in *The Great Indian Novel*

---

*Sunil Dutt Vyas*

*The Great Indian Novel*, published in 1989, is a political satire that interprets the Mahabharata as India's modern history from the freedom movement to the Emergency and its aftermath. The book combines the past history and myth to the present Indian politics during and after the freedom movement. It is a combination of past and present, prose and verse, politics and philosophy producing a hard hitting satire. This interpretation of reality through myth and history has veiled caricatures of well-known characters and situations from the epic and politics. However, Tharoor's avowed aim in this novel is to affirm Indian cultural identity by highlighting its pluralism and openness.

In *Transmission of the Mahabharata Tradition*, C.R.Deshpande, as quoted by Shashi Tharoor, indicates the influence of the Mahabharata on Indian society in these words, "In India a philosophical or even political controversy can hardly be found that has no reference to the thought of the Mahabharata." Tharoor, inspired by this perennial source of delight and inspiration, creates a mythic parallel in the contemporary Indian history, in his *The Great Indian Novel*, making use of mythology and history allegorically for a better understanding of democracy in the prevailing social and political conditions.

In a historical and political allegory, the characters, actions and setting make a sense on the primary level, communicating at the same time, a correlated signification to historical personages and events. The novel is a satirical recast of the Mahabharata in the contemporary political action and persons, and some key episodes from the epic are used allegorically to project certain important political events of post-independence India. Miller says that an allegory can be used to convey

to the reader a vivid sense of the enigma of time. It is a sign to sign relation as opposed to the sign to thing relation of symbol. It is the spreading out along a temporal axis, in a narrative of the disjunctions that are expressed punctually, in an instant, by irony (Miller 44). The second half of the novel deals with the politics of independent India and its leaders showing the early seeding of corruption into the Indian polity and the shifting focus of politics from the nationalism to individualism.

Draupadi Mokraasi is Indian democracy, married to the five Pandavas – judiciary, army, media and beaurocracy Civil and Foreign. The marriage of Draupadi and Arjun is given a modern meaning by presenting it as a union of democracy and voice of the people whose medium is the press. The modern Arjun, a journalist is a representative of the powers and weaknesses of the Indian press “with his paradoxical mixture of attributes, as the spirit of Indian people, to which he so ably gave voice as a journalist” (Tharoor 320). At the critical time in politics the major imperfection of the press, its indecisiveness is revealed when ignoring the despotic politics in the country, Arjun is said to devote himself to Subhadra and non-political freelance journalism with ‘great competence but no greater consequence.’(Tharoor 362)

Lord Krishna is presented as Dwarakaveetile Krishnankutty Parthasarathi Menon, a local M.L.A. of the Kaurava Party and secretary for a remote taluka Gokarnam in Kerala. His identity is not clear as his character is the merger of personalities and concepts – political, mythical, practical, ideal, individual and universal. Perhaps he represents the omnipresent omnipotent Spirit of We the People of India.

Krishna’s words are pieces of advice about the basic principle of democracy – parliamentary democracy can only work if those who run it are constantly responsive to the needs of the people, and if the parliamentarians are qualified to legislate. Tharoor’s novel is a comic, ironic allegory mixing myth and history. The paper shows how *The Path to Salvation*, the eighteenth book in the novel, is the allegory of the journey of democratic India and how the institutional flaws hinder, in modern Indian politics, the attainment of the ideal heights of democratic society indicated by *Gangaji i.e. Gandhiji*.

The state of emergency is equated to the molestation of Draupadi. Some important episodes from the epic are shifted into a dream world to accommodate them with the chronological frame of the historical narrative as the disrobing of D.Mokraasi during the Emergency. However, for the Emergency, Tharoor writes that she was empowered “to prohibit, proscribe, profane, prolate, prosecute or prostitute all the freedoms the national movement had fought to attain during all those years” (Tharoor 357).

The eighteenth book opens with declaration of general election after the Siege Rule i.e. Emergency – “At the peak of her regime of repression, with the press tamed...the workers terrified and the poor terrorized...Priya Duryodhani surprised the world...by suspending the siege and calling free general election” (Tharoor 389). The incident is equated to an effort “to make Draupadi a new sari” when people of India get a chance to vote for democracy against dictatorship – “Indeed, some even said, between dharma and adharma” (Tharoor 389,391). Thus the Emergency is termed as the Siege to give it a colour of war and Election is termed as the Kurukshetra. But the fact that Army, Bureaucracy and Diplomacy do not take part in it, Tharoor prefers not to call it the exact Kurukshetra. So V.V. says, “you must understand one thing. This election is not Kurukshetra”( Tharoor 391). Describing the election V.V. says, “The struggle between dharma and adharma is a struggle our nation, and each of us in it, engages in on every single day of our existence. That struggle, that battle, took place before this election; it will continue after it” (Tharoor 391).

Krishna’s advice to Arjun to perform his duty renouncing the reward of his work can be re-worked as a sermon to every voter:

Accept good and evil alike;  
 Acknowledge the real need to strike;  
 Give up all attachment,  
 Flow like rain through a catchment,  
 And join the election campaign.  
 It’s a question of your self-respect

And Draupadi's, which you're sworn to protect...  
Who acts for the Spirit, not for personal gain;  
Who untouched by attachment, or any other factor;  
Acts for the nation in this election campaign (Tharoor 396-397).

Krishna's words are in conformity with what V.V. advises about the basic principle of democracy that parliamentary democracy can only work if those who run it are constantly responsive to the needs of the people, and if the parliamentarians are qualified to legislate. The resplendent, infinite, primeval and supreme Universal Form (*Virat Swaroop*) of Lord Krishna becomes Bharat Mata with all physical and metaphysical aspects:

So Arjun, stop doubting; rise and serve India.  
Serve me, the embodiment of the Spirit of nation.  
I am the hills and the mountains, Himalaya- Vindhya;  
I am the worship, the sacrifice, the ritual oblation;...  
I am the beginning and the end,  
The aim and the goal;  
The origin, the part, the whole, ...  
I am nation, country, mother, eye, Seeing and All-Seeing  
(Tharoor 397-398).

The opening of the metrical discourse represents the indifference of people towards the participatory politics and their unwillingness to exercise the suffrage – to avoid action through pity. People are unable to understand whether it is to oppose certain person or a group or an ideology. Every opposition party is referred as an enemy; the campaign has turned into a real battle field full of anger and abuse. Even the media is also perplexed and acts in sentiments. It is the time, more than ever, that media should fulfil its duty rightfully without fear and favour – “Dutiful action, without care of reward; Is the first step you can take toward Eternal bliss”. The press is to become the voice of people but not to echo the pampering populism. It is not to reflect the light of masses but rather to be the guiding light for them, as Krishna warns – “As for whether Priya is adored by the masses; Don't worry- too often,

the masses are asses". Like the typical Geeta of the Mahabharat, it ends with an Arjun resolved to act, signifying the awakening of the press to promote people's call for democratic space. Having reminded of the true Spirit, it shakes off the irresolution and asserts, "That's all over now! I'm ready to act" (Tharoor 398).

The Path to Salvation is the allegory of the journey of democratic India and Tharoor has showed the institutional flaws which hinder the attainment of the ideal heights indicated by Gangaji. As, when Draupadi collapses on the ground, the voice from the mountain top also says, "Democracy always falters first,...She can only be sustained by the strength of her husbands. Their weakness is her fatal flaw. She cannot endure to the mountain-top" (Tharoor 414). It has the assured declaration of Lord Krishna echoing the words of the spirit of our Constitution for the survival of democracy. The allegory shows Tharoor's sacred faith in democracy and elections. Even if the election is used as another game of dice played with ballot paper or efforts are made to strip off the institutions of our heritage, he gives a message loud and clear that however hard one may try, one will never succeed in stripping Draupadi Mokrasī completely. And thus we assure ourselves that in our country, she will always have enough to maintain her self-respect (Tharoor 382).

### Works Cited

- Abrams, M.H. and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Handbook of Literary Terms*. Cengage Learning India, 2011.
- Ghosh, Tapan K. *Shashi Tharoor's The Great Indian Novel: A Critical Study*. Asia Book Club, 2008
- Miller, J. Hills. "Time in Narratives." *Of Narratives, Narrators*, edited by Rajul Bhargav and Shubhshree, Rawat Publications, 2004.
- Tharoor, Shashi. *The Great Indian Novel*. Penguin Books, 1989.

## Shrinking World of Vulnerability: Narrative Techniques in *The Blue Bedspread* and *If You Are Afraid of Heights*

---

*Mandeep Singh*

Raj Kamal Jha was born in 1966 at Bhagalpur in Bihar and he was brought up and initially educated in Calcutta and received his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur where he was the editor of his college magazine, *Alankar* ("Raj Kamal Jha", *Wikipedia*). He received his master's degree in print journalism from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. He was also "a visiting professor in the University of California, Berkeley" ("Raj Kamal Jha", *The Indian Express*). At present he is the chief editor of *The Indian Express*. Besides his mainstream profession of journalism, Jha is an internationally celebrated fiction writer. Beginning with his critically acclaimed debut novel, *The Blue Bedspread* (1999), he has penned *If You Are Afraid of Heights* (2003), *Fireproof* (2006), *She Will Build Him a City* (2015) and very recently *The City and the Sea* (2019). As it is clear from the chronology of publication of his novels, Jha is among those Indian English fiction writers who started their writing careers in the closing decades of the twentieth century. His generation in particular, published their first novels in the ninety nineties. Novelists of his generation like Arundhati Roy, Aravind Adiga, Amitava Kumar, and Chetan Bhagat among others capture the panorama of the "New Urban Realism" prevalent in both metropolitan and small towns of India (A. Singh 1). Among the major issues of this new sub-genre of realism are globalization, soaring corruption in public offices and Indian politics, rising consumerism, class and caste conflicts, aspiration of educated Indian youth, problems of Indian society like casteism, patriarchy, communalism and rising religious and political

fundamentalism and the virtual as well as real life manifestation of repressed sexuality and sexual violence. It is against this background that Jha's novels can be read as he writes from a subaltern perspective and about many of these subaltern issues. Child sexual abuse, rapes, domestic violence, Dalit issues, the impact of globalization on subaltern classes like daily wage labourers, the real life conditions of the lower middle class strata of Indian society and the rich-poor divide. He writes about the exploitation of the subaltern individuals and their resulting suppression and silence in both domestic and social spheres. However, this paper exclusively and concisely focuses on the narrative techniques used in Jha's first two novels – though the discussion is made in reference to the thematic concerns of both novels. The scope of this paper is limited as I have chosen only a few of the narrative techniques for critical study in it.

*The Blue Bedspread* is primarily a novel about domestic violence, incest, child sexual abuse and the silence of the narrator who experienced all this. This novel comprises interlinked stories in which the unnamed narrator recounts the unusual events of his life to a one-day old baby girl whom he has brought home from a hospital. Being a maternal uncle of the baby he is obliged to take care of the baby for a day until she is adopted by a childless couple the next morning as her mother, the narrator's sister has died in childbirth. All the stories of the novel are in fact being written by the narrator for the baby so that she may read them when she grows up and may come to know her actual identity. These stories are about the narrator, his father, mother and sister, sister's husband, and his mother, who also happen to be nameless as they are all given generic names – Father, Mother, Sister, Brother, Husband, and Mother-in-law. It is Mother and Sister who become the victims of domestic violence at the hands of their alcoholic husbands and mother possibly dies as a result of domestic violence. Both Brother and Sister also have to face the trauma and “claustrophobia” (Rastogi 116) of physical violence and possible sexual assault committed on them by Father. The domestic atmosphere of the house depicted in the novel is bleak – marred by domestic violence and alcoholism in which the situation



of the motherless children entrapped in incest is like love among the ruins where the only source of joy and solace for them is the forbidden night game that they play on the blue bedspread. It is not just an act of sex that the growing children experience with each other but the physical articulation of their sense of holding and caressing each other in the face of trauma and fear which they use as “defence mechanism” (Mangal 504) for as the narrator says it were those “moments that were key to” their “survival” (*Blue* 63). Sister experiences more or less the same kind of domestic atmosphere after marriage – alcoholic and violent father figure is replaced by alcoholic and violent husband whom she leaves in order to return to her brother. Sister and brother meet for one day after which several months later brother – the narrator, receives the call from the hospital informing him about the death of his sister during childbirth and asking him of discharging her dead body and the baby from the hospital. The narrator in the end of the novel confesses that “I...am...the...father...of...my...sister’s...child” (226-7).

*The Blue Bedspread* as a novel is made of interlinked stories in which the narrative emanates in fragmented form mainly through the narrative technique of analepsis (flashback). It is the narrator who goes into his past in order to reveal his traumatic familial relations. Stories have been put in different sections which have been given generic familial titles; ‘Father’, ‘Mother’, ‘Sister’, ‘Visitors’, and ‘Brother’. The narrator can be recognized as ‘Brother’ in the novel whose stream of consciousness is the basis for all stories. The form of the novel is postmodernist metafiction in which there are instances galore of narrative devices like self-reflexivity and fragmentation. Right from the beginning the narrator drives the novelistic discourse in self-reflexive manner which exposes the fictionality of the stories that he narrates or which at least makes the reader realize that the narrator is a writer of the stories of the novel within the novel. The novel has been written using the device of frame story in which there is one main/ frame story comprising a fictional discourse between the narrator and his one-day old niece along with marginal characters like the Superintendent of Police who informs the narrator about the death of his sister in childbirth and the hospital staff.

The narrator brings the baby home and begins writing stories for her to read about her family background and identity when she grows up. The narrator spends the whole night taking care of the baby and writing stories for her. From the narrative point of view these stories occur within the frame story. Now the question arises who the narratee of these stories is? Technically, it is narrator's niece as the stories are directly addressed to her. Almost all stories are fragmented in the sense of discontinuous narrative – that they are not concluded by their literal ends but they emerge and re-emerge and find their progression and conclusion in other stories. Moreover, there are some stories which are not completed at all, that they remain enigmatic – for instance the mystery of the English teacher's daughter's death in the story, "The Highwayman." (207). Then, there are stories which have alternative ending as in the story, "The Murder Mystery" (132). Jha also uses the narrative device of unreliability in narration which is manifested in the sense that certain narrative chunks baffle narrative comprehension. Silence in the form of subtext can be one reason towards this narrative unclearness. For example, the reason behind Father's and Husband's domestic violence is only seemingly obvious. Certain other hints regarding the fidelity of narrator's mother and his sister blur the issue of domestic violence. Nevertheless, the violence inflicted by narrator's father at his children and wife and also the violence inflicted by his brother-in-law at his sister is not justifiable.

*If You Are Afraid of Heights* stands more in the category of the novels what Amardeep Singh in his article writes about, that is globalization, rising consumerism and the new urban realism. The main narrative of this novel is woven into three loosely but integrally interlinked narratives divided into three sections and each is preceded by a prologue. The three sections of this novel are, 'of heights', 'you are afraid' and 'if' which is the opposite of the title of the novel. But it stands for a logic as the first part actually should be read at last and the third part at first in order to understand the main narrative of the novel – which otherwise remains a mysterious puzzle for the reader. In part one Rima and Amir, two strangers, meet and fall in love with each other. Part one narrates

their romantic but fragile companionship which is broken and rather diffused like an airy dream by the end of the first section of the novel. Part two narrates the story of a minor girl raped and gagged to death. It also narrates the story of Mala who arrives in the town to investigate the case and Mala and Alam's chance meeting. Mala with the help of Alam is able to understand her own child sexual abuse committed by her father while recreating in her hypothesis the incident of the rape of the girl child. It is interesting to note that the names of the principal characters in both parts are each other's mirror images: AMIR – RIMA and MALA – ALAM. It is no coincidence that the names are mirror images of each other as it is part of the narrative strategy of the novelist for it is these mirror images of names which are the key to unravel the narrative. Rima is Amir's imagination and Alam is Mala's imagination. Both Amir and Mala imagine what they lack in their life – Amir's loneliness and alienation creates the image of Rima as Alam's image is created by Mala's desire for becoming a newspaper reporter. Both of them pick up these characters from an English primer. It brings to one's mind the concept of "cancelled character." The term 'cancelled character' was coined by Brian McHale by which he meant "a literary character" who "is exposed as textual function and no longer seen as 'integral creature' possessed of self-identity" (Hawthorn, *Glossary* 34). According to McHale, Tyrone Slothrop from Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) is an example of 'cancelled character' who "beginning as at best a marginal self [...] literally becomes *literal* – a congeries of *letters* (author's emphases) mere words" (qtd. in Hawthorn 34). A character named, Klamm in Kafka's *The Castle* (1926) is also an example of this narrative technique (34).

For the depiction of three main stories and various other narrative fragments within the stories in *If*, Jha has employed various narrative techniques like magic realism, cinematic representation, anthropomorphism, surrealism, stream of consciousness and fantasy. Fantasy, in fact is at the core of the narrative design of this novel as various stories in the novel grow out of the fantasies of the principal characters of the novel. Magic realism is also an indispensable narrative

technique in the novel by which the narrative design of fantasy in the novel is manifested. Magic realism as a theoretical term refers to “a style of modern fiction in which the recognizably realistic mingles with the unexpected and the inexplicable, and in which elements of dream, fairy story, or mythology combine with the everyday, often in a mosaic or kaleidoscopic pattern of refraction and recurrence” (“Magic realism”). While as a narrative style and technique, magic realism is often used in discussions of “Latin American” (“Magic realism”) fiction writers like Gabriel García Márquez, Isabel Allende, and Alejo Carpentier, and European authors such as Günter Grass, Milan Kundera, Italo Calvino, and Angela Carter, it has also become a popular narrative form among Indian fiction writers in English. Postmodernist Indian writers in English have adopted this narrative form particularly being influenced from and also borrowing it from Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981). Magic realism is not simply a blend of the fantastical or magical and the realistic. In fact, “it should not be confused with the fantastic [...] or fantasy fiction” as going “beyond the limit of realism” is not at all the “purpose” behind the employment of this narrative form. In sharp contrast, it is a “distinctive political purpose” (Buchanan 303-4) which has more to do with this term’s use in fiction rather than a mere device of creating a fantasy play in the novelistic discourse. In *If You Are Afraid of Heights*, Jha makes use of magical realism by inserting the image of a miniature-sized man riding on a crow who circles over the entire city watching and observing the activities of the city dwellers. The mixture of the magical with the real can be observed in the fact that this fantastic trope has been inserted in an otherwise realistic narrative in which Jha registers the bleak realities of the twenty-first century postcolonial India – the new urban realism as discussed above in the introductory part of this paper. Apart from a flight of fantasy of the main characters of this novel, *If* is a social document of the twenty-first century urban India in which Jha closely captures the life conditions of the lower middle class and the poor sections of Indian society and the social condition of these strata have been pitied against that of the urban elite and it is the unusually tiny man sitting on the crow’s back

who becomes a witness of such events as he himself says: “Since morning, I have flown in circles across the sky and over the city, throughout the day, the afternoon and the evening, watching...” (*If* 2).

Stream of consciousness is another indispensable narrative technique used in this novel as the narrative progresses mainly through the stream of consciousness of Amir and Mala, the two principal characters of this novel. The term stream of consciousness was “coined by William James in *Principles of Psychology* (1890) to denote the flow of inner experiences” (Cuddon 866). As a narrative technique, it can be traced as far back as in Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1760-67) and then finding roots in the nineteenth century European fiction writers like Dostoevsky, Schnitzler and in proper sense of the term in Édouard Dujardin, the French novelist (1866), whose *Les Lauriers sont coupés* (1888), is said to be a model behind James Joyce’s employment of this technique in his fiction (“Stream of consciousness”). In the twentieth century English novel, this narrative mode was “pioneered” and honed by much celebrated writers like Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf (Baldick 318). Stream of consciousness is “that technique which seeks to depict the multitudinous thoughts and feelings which pass through the mind” (Cuddon 866). Besides fantasy as a narrative mode, stream of consciousness is central to the narrative structure of the novel in the sense that it is through the “thoughts, memories expectations, feelings, and random associations” (Abrams and Harpham 379) that the whole narrative of the novel is constructed. Without taking into account the flight of free thoughts and mental preoccupations of Amir and Mala, it is impossible to imagine the development of the stories and stories within stories of this novel. Stream of consciousness usually takes place “when the character is alone and allowing thought to succeed thought without external prompting” (Hawthorn, *Studying* 243) and it is the state of being “alone” and also *lonely* (my emphasis) in the lives of Amir and Mala that drives their stream of consciousness into a phantasmagoria. A long extended piece of stream of consciousness is seen in which Mala is reminded of a rainy day when she was six years old. Memories of her childhood come floating in her thoughts which

give a hint to the reader that she was also a victim of child abuse and it was probably her father who used to sexually abuse her. In this way, the technique of stream of consciousness draws a parallel between two girl children – one whose rape and murder case Mala has come to investigate and another, Mala herself as a child. Likewise, Amir after the accident is often lost in his thoughts, memories and sense impressions while staying as a patient at Paradise Park at Rima's residence. He also keeps thinking about his dream about a girl child and a woman, her mother, and tries hard at deciphering the meaning of the dream as well as his own perceptions and sense impressions that he encounters. The little girl in Amir's dream is the girl raped and murdered whose case Mala investigates and the woman is that girl's mother whom Mala meets during her investigation. Mala in the end of the novel is revealed to be a housewife dreaming about investigating the rape and murder case of the girl as a crime reporter. It is in this way that the stream of consciousness of the main characters of this novel helps join the three fragmented stories of the novel and makes it a composite narrative.

## Conclusion

Called "the novelist of the newsroom" (qtd. in *Peoplepill*) Raj Kamal Jha presents "a writer's view of contemporary India" (Roesky) in his novels. Certainly, "the newsroom inspires the writer in him" (Soofi) as he chooses to write about the bleak issues of contemporary India, like child sexual abuse, incest, rape, mental and physical trauma faced by vulnerable individuals, plight of the downtrodden, minorities and other subaltern groups and individuals, the condition of India as a nation and the social reception and impact of globalization, rising consumerism and modernization of India. In short, he writes about the various issues pertaining to 'the new urban realism' as the major thematic concern of his fiction. *The Blue Bedspread* and *If You Are Afraid of Heights* are the narratives of vulnerable individuals whose worlds are constantly shrinking as a result of the marginalized positions they occupy in the society they live in. However, they try to articulate their plight and simultaneously overcome their subalternity in their own peculiar ways

in the fictional worlds that Jha creates for them, though the space they create in the form of their ‘defence mechanisms’ may be fragile and shrinking and as fictional as their narratives. This phenomenon can be critically comprehended through various narrative techniques that Jha has used in these two novels which has been the objective of this study and which I have attempted to demonstrate.

## Notes

Abbreviations: *Blue* = *The Blue Bedspread*, *If* = *If You Are Afraid of Heights*

## Works Cited

- Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. “Stream of Consciousness.” *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 11th ed., Cengage, 2018.
- Baldick, Chris. “Stream of Consciousness.” *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. 3rd ed., Oxford UP, 2008.
- Buchanan, Ian. “Magical Realism.” *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*, Oxford UP, 2010.
- Cuddon, J. A. “Stream of Consciousness.” *Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory*, revised by C. E. Preston, 4th ed., Penguin Books, 1999.
- Hawthorn, Jeremy. “Cancelled Character.” *A Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory*, 4th ed., Bloomsbury, 2014.
- . *Studying the Novel*. 6th ed., Bloomsbury, 2010.
- Jha, Raj Kamal. *If You Are Afraid of Heights*. First US Edition, Harcourt, 2003.
- . *The Blue Bedspread: A Novel*. Picador, 2000.
- “Magic Realism.” *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, edited by Dinah Birch, 7th ed., Oxford UP, 2009
- Mangal, S. K. *Advanced Educational Psychology*. 2nd ed., PHI Learning, 2002.
- “Raj Kamal Jha.” *Peoplepill*, peoplepill.com/people/raj-kamal-jha/news/. Accessed 25 Aug. 2020.
- “Raj Kamal Jha.” *The Indian Express*, indianexpress.com/profile/columnist/raj-kamal-jha/. Accessed 29 Aug. 2020.
- “Raj Kamal Jha.” *Wikipedia*, 4 Sep. 2019, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raj\_Kamal\_Jha. Accessed 11 Sept. 2019.

- Rastogi, Pallavi. "Raj Kamal Jha (1966–)." *South Asian Novelists in English: An A-to-Z Guide*, edited by Jaina C. Sanga, Greenwood P, 2003.
- Roesky, Lars. *A Writer's View of Contemporary India: Themes, Motifs and Narrative Techniques in the Novels of Raj Kamal Jha*. 2013. U of Graz, Diploma Thesis, unipub.uni graz.at/obvugrhs/231582. Accessed 19 August 2020.
- Singh, Amardeep. "The Indian Novel in the Twenty-First Century." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*, Feb. 2018, doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.414. [www.lehigh.edu/~amsp/The\\_Indian\\_Novel\\_in\\_the\\_21st\\_Century.pdf](http://www.lehigh.edu/~amsp/The_Indian_Novel_in_the_21st_Century.pdf).
- Soofi, Mayank Austen. "Raj Kamal Jha: 'We Journalists Are Not the Stories.'" *Mint*, 10 Jan. 2015, [www.livemint.com/Leisure/boKAWisoKEuQ3MoYujtXbM/Raj-Kamal-Jha-We-journalists-are-not-the-stories.html](http://www.livemint.com/Leisure/boKAWisoKEuQ3MoYujtXbM/Raj-Kamal-Jha-We-journalists-are-not-the-stories.html).
- "Stream of Consciousness." *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, edited by Dinah Birch, 7th ed., Oxford UP, 2009.



## The City Space of Lagos as a Reading of Contemporary Nigeria in Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference*

---

*Sucheta*

The city spaces are known for the mosaic of anarchic diversity as well as disorganized contradictions which have been a rich source of motivation for writers, photographers, painters and other practitioners of creative arts. In literature, the city space has been pursued as an aesthetic object which gives a visual effect to the narrative. Literary universe not only describes the geographical landscape with emotions but it also offers different ways to perceive the world. The textual representation of the city illustrates the socio-cultural forms in urban spaces where writer not only reflect on the transition from rural to urban space but depicts the character's experience in the peculiarities of city space.

The city of Lagos occupies a prominent place in 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigerian fiction. It negotiates the postmodern life in the city of Lagos, portraying it "as a place impossible to live and survive in" (Feldner 63). There are notable Nigerian novels such as Chris Abani's *Graceland* (2004), Sefi Atta's *Everything Good will Come* (2005) and *A Bit of Difference* (2013), Helen Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* (2002), Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* (2000) which explore the politics and poetics of urban spaces, capturing the city of Lagos, its smell, sounds, landscape to carve out the human existence in times and spaces which greatly experienced as dystopian. Among these writers, Sefi Atta documents the crippling state of socio-political and economic circumstances in metropolitan Lagos. The prevailing contemporary problems in Lagos reflect the disorganization within Nigeria as a whole because "Lagos is often used as a metonymy for Nigeria" (Feldner 64). In this view, the

article illustrates how Sefi Atta's novel *A Bit of Difference* negotiates the social, political and economic challenges and possibilities that city of Lagos entails.

Sefi Atta (1964) is one of the most insightful and engaging author and playwright from Lagos, Nigeria. She divides her time between England, USA and Nigeria which shapes her thought process as a diaspora and a Nigerian African writer. Most of her novels, short stories and plays are set in Lagos and for that, she says in an interview with Toni Kan that "I begin my novels, short stories and plays in Lagos settings before I venture to other parts of the world, and that parallels my own journey." (The Guardian, 2017). She moved to the USA but 'home' continued to be in the centre of her imagination. Atta deals with Nigerian women's world specifically along with contemporary conditions of Lagos, economy, governance, health sector, corruption and immigrants experiences of Nigerians in general. Geographical locations as cities, urban towns, play an important role in Atta's work as space and pathways to self-discovery for female characters. She portrays the darker side of Nigeria that how Nigerian society has been distorted by the negative impacts of Globalization and neo-colonialism. In this framework, the current paper examines the locale of Lagos considering the city's dysfunctional socio-cultural settings that interrupts an individual's personal development in many ways and left them to search for the meaning. It attempts to look into the postcolonial condition of Nigeria through the city space of Lagos with the colours of contemporary city life that includes both gloominess and happiness.

Sefi Atta's fiction has a peculiarity of city settings. The city space that Atta creates in her works has 'plural urban subjectivities' (Nnodim Ch. 5) to intervene the contemporary economic, socio-political, postcolonial cultural discourse that is relevant to the postcolonial city and postcolonial Nation. Atta's intense and vivacious representation of the city of Lagos proposes a reading of the city as a microcosm of Nigeria. The Novel *A Bit of Difference* is located in England and Nigeria and the narrative shuttles between both the places. The novel is a cultural thesis the way it deals with the socio-cultural formations over the time in Nigeria and

the protagonist Deola Bello, a 39 years old unmarried woman's cross-cultural experiences in London that drives her to embrace her own culture. The novel is structured into six parts; 'Reorientation', 'Actually', 'Foreign Capitals', 'Business of Humanitarianism', 'Sidestep', 'For Good' which loosely can be called episodes. The current paper primarily deals with the third section entitled, 'Foreign Capitals' where Atta gives an account of economic crisis, the terror of armed robbers, violence, corruption, ethnic riots and changing dimensions of postmodern human conditions in the city of Lagos. The title, 'Foreign Capitals' refers to the international finance assistance through charity and aids provided by developed countries to Africa which further worsens the condition due to the lack of infrastructure and unplanned execution of the programmes aiming to improve the current situation.

Atta's novels explore urban lives and identities; the (im)possibility of imagining the city and the nation in the context of ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural pluralism; contested notions of belonging and unbelonging; and the feasibility of social activism in the face of urban dystopia and oppressive postcolonial regimes. (Nnodim Ch. 5)

She implants Deola's life in city-space of Lagos to weave the themes and motifs to the narrative of contemporary Nigeria. Atta's effort to read the city throws light on Nigerian experiences through symbols, images and voices that refer the anger and disappointment about the postmodern conditions where things have so many centres but nothing is organized. Deola asks her mother on their way from the airport, "Are the street lights working now?" (72) with a surprise that shows, she is habitual of the darker sides of the Lagos. Her curious observation of Lagos after coming from London brings in the images of interest and despair both.

Deola notices the oil-stained pavements bordering the road. It is Sunday, so the road is less congested, but there are hawkers and newspaper sellers. There are also beggars, who will become peripheral once she becomes habituated. Signboards are perched

on buildings that were once residential: phenomenon clothing, FSB International Bank and Sherlaton Restaurant. (74)

An analysis of the images and voices of Lagos in the novel suggests a perspective on the subjects of armed robbery, traffic, discredited roads and corruption and poverty etc., “in Atta’s works, one reads the city in the people and the people in the city” (Oniwe Ch. 6). The images of beggars in the city portrays the hunger and poverty in city space that is considered to be a space full of abundance and opportunities, “A group of beggars are gathered outside the church gates. One sits on the ground with his atrophied legs crossed. Another holds up a fingerless hand” (154). Atta’s minute description of utter traffic and lack of space to surpass or park a car refers to the disorganization and imperative nature of people, “Jaiye’s car is parked by a street gutter and sandwiched between two cars” (154). Poverty and scarcity are very real circumstances of contemporary Nigeria because of worse economic and political policies of the state that became an unintentional force to give a rise to the violence and anarchy in the city. Toni Kan, a fellow Nigerian author says on Atta’s mastery of sketching the city that “no contemporary Nigerian writer is better than Sefi Atta at evoking the smells, sounds and the sheer madness of this sprawling cosmopolitan city of Lagos” (Oniwe Ch. 6). She uses the city of Lagos as a Canvas in the novel to paint her understanding of postcolonial Nigeria.

The traffic is worse this afternoon, especially along the route her driver takes. They pass people queuing outside the Embassy of China. Perhaps they given up on getting British and American visas, she thinks. On another street, also filled with potholes, she notices several car dealerships and it occurs to her that the terrain here actually resists the development. It is a passive-aggressive landscape. (102)

Lagos represents a combination of chaos and order, the energy of a megacity and instability that keeps an individual at the centre of a critical and intellectual ambience at the same time. Atta brings in the crippling socio-economic state of Lagos that affects its people in a way that they are driven towards the smuggling, drugs and corruption to access the

materialistic life. The disorder in the city of Lagos refers to an inner emptiness of people who are desperately seeking something to give their life a meaning. Sefi Atta's paradoxical portrayal of Lagos is plural in its' nature and draws two pictures of the city; a space that is full of obscurities yet has a smell of belonging. Atta's vibrant illustration of city life through the sensory experiences from sight, smell and sound are conveyed in the novel to give a realistic touch to the city of Lagos in the literary universe. The noise and traffic of the marketplace creates a chaotic ambience and dysfunctional conditions of the city where people are stuck in their ways to work and home, "Mummy the traffic is terrible and you can't see at night" (105). People in the city of Lagos demonstrate the larger experience of the country in terms of the varied social and political problems that torment Nigeria, "The land is too damn African, stubbornly so. People can continue to develop it if they like, but it will find ways to expose any sign of urbanization as a façade" (102). A sense of nostalgia arises when Deola experiences the familiar sights of which she used to see as a teenager in Lagos. Things are still the same which indicates a stagnant state of the city and its people. The Development and growth plans by the state seem to be a failure because of the uncertain historical circumstances that Nigeria struggled through in the form of military regimes and failure of democracy.

The city is shrinking, or perhaps it is just more crowded. It is the rainy season, which makes Deola wonder why she ever called this time of year summer. The streets are waterlogged. Some of the sights along the way are new to her, like the organized labour mass-transport vans, but most are familiar. There are yellow taxis and vans, buses with biblical messages like 'El Shaddai' and 'Weep not crusaders' lorries dripping with wet sand, unfinished buildings and broken-down cars. (72)

The urbanization and city space in contemporary times provide better opportunities for employment, economic growth and access to goods and services to poor people in developing countries. The idea of community transferred is central to the cities in the developing countries with all the hardships involved and diversities are allowed to coexist.

However, with all the merits, urbanization has brought some new challenges in terms of crime, insecurity and violence in different forms such as armed robbery, digital crimes such as data theft and internet fraud, intolerance towards the diverse ethnicities and riots as a result etc. A developing country like Nigeria which is infamous for the instability, violence and corruption, is affected by the criminal violence caused by armed robbers across the nation, especially in the cities.

Rapid population growth and urbanization in countries such as Nigeria often translated into fewer job opportunities and social services and hence slow rate of economic growth, especially when policies to enhance growth and create employment are bureaucratized or not taken seriously (Falola and Mbah 4)

Nigeria is one of the rapidly urbanizing countries where most of the cities have become centres of socio-political and economic power due to the oil boom in the 1970s but it caused a lopsided distribution of wealth in the society, “the economy took a turn and slide, slide, slippity slide they did into a recession, yet oil boomers continued to rock throughout the eighties, chanting, ‘The roof, the roof, the roof is on fire’” (86). In the novel, Sefi Atta portrays the urban crime and violence in the city of Lagos by Armed robbers which are interlinked with the socio-political and economic structure of the nation. Urban spaces usually serve as the epicentres for socio-political and economic activities which more often get affected by crime and violence in Nigeria. The Nigerian cities such as Abuja, Lagos, Nairobi and Enugu are threatened by the high rates of crime. The armed robbery and violence in Nigerian cities include “inter- and intra-communal violence, ethnic militia and vigilante violence, political and electoral violence, armed criminality and gangsterism, and arms racing” ( Hazen and Horner 52 )

In Lagos, people are afraid of death by armed robberies. Car crashes and sickness. They are terrified of bankruptcy-financial and the other kind that leads to a permanent loss of hope. They call on God so much because they don't trust that the next day will be delivered free of charge, so they want immediate remuneration, connections and companionship (187).

The terror of armed robbers in Lagos has become part of people's daily life. Their every reference to life is related to crime and violence by armed robbers. Deola's mother frequently caution her about armed robbers in the city and she gets frustrated on this, "what is this "armed robbers, armed robbers" about? They're part of our lives. You don't stop doing what you have to do because of them" (105). The fear of armed robbers among people in Nigerian urban life is so prevalent that they prefer leaving the country to escape the violence and crime, generated from corruption and armed robbers.

Nigerian society's widening inequalities in terms of economy and resources, the possession over public property by the rich, oil boom, law enforcement over the poor after the 1970s (in Military rule) are such situations which triggered the deprived people especially youth to reject the existing social structure and perpetuated the conditions of violence and crime, "where the ostentatious display of ill-gotten wealth is applauded; where criminals, men in positions of power and trust, and law enforcement agents tend to collude, and where the needs and aspirations of the majority are neglected, is likely to breed armed robbers and other property-related offenders" (Ekpenyong 21). Since armed robbery is primarily "an urban phenomenon", it affects the population at a large scale due to its' density in the cities (22). They have infused a sense of fear and insecurity in the urban population in contemporary Nigeria. The armed robbers attack police stations, banks, residential houses, courts in broad daylight(Atta 71). The tremendously active armed robbers in the city of Lagos as Sefi Atta discusses, take the socio-economic structure and official policy measures for granted which creates disorder and life threat in the state. Deola's step-brother Dots says pointing at the church, "it's only God that can save us. Actually, I take that back because things could be a lot worse. God has already saved Nigeria" (149). The incidents of armed robbery have been increasing at a high rate in Nigerian cities since the early 1970s after the end of civil war. Armed robbery in the 1970s and 80s was seen as a conscious and well-planned attack on the military regime. Robbers targeted police and government officials, proclaiming a political motive

for their acts (Merenin 278). It is noticeable that the prevalent corruption in the nation provides suitable justifications and scopes to the armed robbers to choose, condemn and judge the victims and destroy the socio-economic order. The failure of crime prevention commissions and social control depicts the prevalence, magnitude and seriousness of the crime problem in Nigeria. The contemporary “Nigeria is besieged by robbers who are better armed, organised, and committed than the police, and that life is going to be uncertain for a long time for most of the people” (267).

Sefi Atta portrays the problem of armed robbery in Nigeria by linking it with corruption and unemployment that leads youth towards criminal activities to meet their material objective in life. Nigeria’s capitalist society (after independence and oil bloom ) and the growing class struggle due to the privileged elites brought social inequalities which is a major reason of criminal activities in Nigeria, driven by need and deprivation, “the problem of crime, as well as its social and economic causes and consequences, is a continuous indictment of, and challenge to, the inequality-ridden capitalist social order in Nigeria” (Odekunle 91). Armed robbery in Nigeria is the result of an evident prominence of accumulation of wealth and material possessions by any means and the incapability of the system to provide subsistence to many. The death penalty has failed to reduce the wave of armed robbery in Nigerian cities. The criminal activities in Lagos and other cities of Nigeria take place to gain a livelihood by illicit and violent means.

In the absence of legitimate opportunities and of effective constraints, the energies of some young men and women turn to other ways of surviving. Armed robbers in Nigeria are not ‘primitive rebels’. They have no political consciousness except, maybe, the inchoate notion that their fates and fortunes ought to be better than what they are. Their proceeds from crime are not shared with the masses but consumed by themselves (Merenin 280).

Nigeria should diversify its economic system. The oil centric, mono-cultured economy for foreign exchange needs to be expanded to the



sectors like agriculture, local small industries such as sculpture and art, mining etc. so that every small unit of production can contribute in the growing economy. In this way, the equal distribution of the wealth will reach to every sect of society that gradually would strengthen the social structure and the poor. The pervasiveness of crime and corruption has become a curse for the economic system in Nigeria. The absence of growth and long term failure of economic schemes including debt mismanagement, unemployment, hunger means the limited access to food and unequal wealth distribution that leaves many people poor and hungry today on the continent. Population increases, insecurity, conflicts, terrorism, dictatorship and unreliable government policies represent the major challenge to establish an adequate social and economic structure that may assure people with a hope to provide them with the basic amenities.

Atta vividly portrays the life in Lagos as lived by the protagonist Deola. The representation of Lagos as a city of disorder and despair suggests the disorganized social and political structure. The state of roads, children beggars, armed robbery, corruption, violence and fear in the city have become the intrinsic part of Lagosian. The anarchy and disorder in the city describe a recent history of failed democracy and army coups which devastated the country for their selfish objectives of power. However, none of them could offer Nigeria good governance and leadership that resulted in a gradual deterioration of socio-cultural values, political and economic conditions which are said to be essential for the development and growth of a nation. The prevailing depiction of Lagos as a place of loss and destruction in *A Bit of Difference* suggests tyrannical and morally degenerating urban spaces which have become a threat to the socio-cultural and economic structure of the contemporary Nigerian society.

## **Works Cited**

Ekpenyong, Stephen. "Social Inequalities, Collusion, and Armed Robbery in Nigerian Cities." *The British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 29, no. 1, 1989, pp. 21–34. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/23638130](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23638130). Accessed 22 Oct. 2020.

- Falola, Toyin, and Emmanuel M.Mbah, Introduction. *Contemporary Africa: Challenges and Opportunities*, edited by Toyin Falola and Emmanuel M.Mbah, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Feldner, Maximilian. *Narrating the New African Diaspora: 21st Century Nigerian Literature in Context*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Hazen, Jennifer M., and Jonas Horner. "Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria: The Niger Delta in Perspective." *Small Arms Survey*, 2007.
- Kan, Toni, Interview. "I Want to Be a Successful Novelist and Playwright :Sefi Atta". *The Gaurdian*, 30 April 2017, [guardian.ng/art/i-want-to-be-a-successful-novelist-and-playwright-sefi-atta/](http://guardian.ng/art/i-want-to-be-a-successful-novelist-and-playwright-sefi-atta/).
- Marenin, Otwin. "The Anini Saga: Armed Robbery and the Reproduction of Ideology in Nigeria." *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1987, pp. 259–81. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/161014](http://www.jstor.org/stable/161014). Accessed 22 October 2020.
- Nnodim, Rita. "Female Alter-Native Publics, Imaginations, and Cityness in Sefi Atta's Lagos Novels." *Writing Contemporary Nigeria:How Sefi Atta Illuminates African Culture and Tradition*, edited by Walter P. Collins III, Cambria P, Kindle Edition, 2015.
- Odekunle, Femi. "Capitalist Economy and the Crime Problem in Nigeria." *Africa Development / Afrique Et Développement*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1977, pp. 79–94. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/24486523](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24486523). Accessed 22 October 2020.
- Oniwe, Bernard. "Images and Voices of Lagos in Sefi Atta's Novels." *Writing Contemporary Nigeria:How Sefi Atta Illuminates African Culture and Tradition*, edited by Walter P. Collins III, Cambria P, Kindle Edition, 2015.

## When the Machines Start Writing about Us: Artificial Intelligence and Literature

---

*Rajneesh Kumar*

In computer science, artificial intelligence (AI), sometimes called machine intelligence, is intelligence demonstrated by machines, in contrast to the natural intelligence displayed by humans. Leading AI textbooks define the field as the study of “intelligent agents”: any device that perceives its environment and takes actions that maximize its chance of successfully achieving its goals. Colloquially, the term “artificial intelligence” is often used to describe machines that mimic “cognitive” functions that humans associate with the human mind, such as “learning” and “problem solving”.

Novelists are captivated by the potential of artificial intelligence. But what happens when the machines start writing about us?

Almost every day brings a startling new advance in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), the seemingly magical general-purpose technology of our times. In 1997, the world was stunned when IBM’s Deep Blue computer beat the greatest chess player of all time, Garry Kasparov. Although impressive in its way, Deep Blue was little more than an immensely powerful rules-based calculating machine, a “\$10M alarm clock”, in Kasparov’s irritable phrase.

But more recent advances in Deep Learning techniques, combined with an explosion of data from our smartphones and computers and massive increases in computing power, have enabled machine-learning programs to perform an increasing array of tasks as well as any human: interpreting radiology scans, flying aircraft, identifying images and recognising speech.

All this buzz about AI has also sparked the imagination of some of our most inventive novelists, among them Jeanette Winterson and Ian

McEwan. Once the exclusive preserve of science fiction, thinking robots have now entered the literary mainstream. McEwan's most recent muse is none other than Demis Hassabis, the luminous founder of Google DeepMind.

This latest fascination with AI is that it reframes the eternal debate about what it means to be human, challenging our conceptions of identity, creativity and consciousness. AI is both the apotheosis of the rational scientific thought of the Enlightenment and, possibly, its damnation too. Are we approaching the day, the Israeli historian Yuval Noah Harari has asked, when computers will know us better than we know ourselves?

IJGood, the mathematician who worked alongside Alan Turing in the code-breaking team at Bletchley Park during the second world war and was a pioneer of AI, was one of the first to grasp the full significance of an "intelligence explosion".

Once ultra-intelligent machines surpassed the intellectual level of humans, he wrote, then they themselves would be able to invent even better machines, leaving us far behind. "Thus the first ultra-intelligent machine is the *last* invention that man need ever make, provided that the machine is docile enough to tell us how to keep it under control," he wrote in 1965.

**Even before the age of AI**, humans have been fascinated by artificial creations that come to life. In ancient Greek mythology, Pygmalion created Galatea, a beautiful ivory statue that was animated by Aphrodite and became his wife. In Jewish folklore, the golem was an amorphous lump of clay that was brought to life by humans.

And, perhaps most famously of all, Mary Shelley wrote a Gothic horror in 1816 about how Victor Frankenstein, a brilliant young scientist, created a hideous, out-of-control monster from body parts discarded from "the dissecting room and the slaughterhouse". It was this literary masterpiece that inspired Winterson to write her latest novel *Frankissstein*, interweaving Shelley's experiences with a love story set in Brexit-era Britain in which a young transgender doctor called Ry (wryly described as "future-early") falls for a mysterious Professor Victor Stein, who is,

naturally, an AI expert. “This story is an invention that sits inside another invention — reality itself,” Winterson writes.

In an interview with the BBC, the author described Shelley’s original tale as a message in a bottle that can only now be fully understood, 200 years after it was written. Just as the 19TH-CENTURY mathematician Ada Lovelace wrote code for a computer that had not yet been built, Shelley was anticipating a world that had not yet been created. “These women were really looking past the present, jumping forward into a future that did not yet exist,” she said.

For Winterson, who has movingly explored the nature of her own individuality and sexuality in her memoir *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*, the dawn of the AI age is something to be welcomed, even cherished.

“The great thing about AI, if we ever do it, is how can you worry about gender, whether you love a man if you are a man, whether you love a woman if you are a woman, when we are about to share the planet with self-created, non-biological life forms which will not have a gender? This could change everything. I love this,” she told the BBC. But many other writers, including McEwan, have a far more ambivalent, and darker, view of the emergence of humanoid robots, the visible embodiment of AI. In his novel *Machines Like Me*, McEwan tells the story of Charlie, a happy-go-lucky drifter who buys one of the first synthetic humans.

For McEwan, the onward march of science spells the retreat of human self-regard, a “series of demotions leading to extinction”. Once, humans were at the centre of the universe with the Sun and planets “turning around us in an ageless dance of worship.” Then “heartless astronomy” reduced us to an orbiting planet around the Sun, just one among many other rocks.

Humans, though, still clung to the conceit that they remained brilliantly unique, “appointed by the creator to be lords of everything that lived”. But then soulless biology confirmed that we are little different from other creatures, “sharing common ancestry with bacteria, pansies, trout and sheep”.

**Many AI experts reading these novels** would surely say that the authors are letting their imaginations run way ahead of themselves. Machine learning programs may be becoming exceptionally good in many narrow domains, but they are still comically weak in terms of general intelligence.

Alison Gopnik, a developmental psychologist at the University of California, Berkeley and an expert in the “theory of mind”, argues that natural stupidity will continue to pose a far greater danger to humanity than AI for the foreseeable future. “There is not much basis for either the apocalyptic or the utopian vision of AIs replacing humans. Until we solve the basic paradox of learning, the best artificial intelligences will be unable to compete with the average human four-year-old,” she writes in *Possible Minds*, a collection of essays on AI by many of the world’s leading experts.

Still, machine learning is continuing to make great strides in many narrow areas, including writing. Some AI programs are already writing news reports for major US agencies. Bloomberg News says that almost one-third of its content is written with the help of robot reporters. The system it uses, known as Cyborg, can pull the essential facts out of routine statements and write basic news stories in double-quick time.

The irony is that many of these computational news reports are also read by robots linked to automated financial market trading programs. Important information is already being extracted, analysed, reported and read with almost no human intervention. We are already beginning to write ourselves out of the script.

**No matter how much we laugh at** robotic failings today, we should still marvel at how fast AI has developed over the past decade and wonder how far it may yet evolve. We flatter ourselves that electronic intelligence will always take shape in humanoid robots.

Few scientific writers have a longer perspective than Lovelock, author of *Novacene*, argues that the Earth is a single system of living organisms and inorganic surroundings, Lovelock believes it is only a matter of time

before we hand the “gift of knowing” on to new forms of intelligent beings.

At 4.5bn years of age, Earth is estimated to be halfway through its existence. At some point before our Sun burns itself out, it seems certain that electronic intelligence will supersede the human kind, he argues. If we are lucky, humans might provide entertainment for — what he calls — the cyborgs, “just as flowers and pets delight us” today.

If we are to take any consolation, he suggests, it is to come from the words of Alfred Tennyson’s poem on Ulysses, as the great warrior and explorer slipped into old age.

“Tho’ much is taken, much abides; and tho’ / We are not now that strength which in old days / Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are...”

Maybe cyborgs will still write novels for fun about humans. Or, if they see the need, they may even write books about the internal lives of machines. The only trouble is that we humans would not be able to read them, still less understand.

## Works Cited

“Artificial Intelligence in Fiction.” [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artificial\\_intelligence\\_in\\_fiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artificial_intelligence_in_fiction).

Sartre, Jean Paul. *Existentialism and Humanism*. Brooklyn, Haskell House, 1977.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. United Kingdom, London Publishing House, 1 January 1818.

Thornhill, John. “AI and Literature: The Muse in the Machine.” *Financial Times*, 9 August 2019.

## Pursuit of Ipseity

---

*Rashmi Vyas and Shashi Kala*

Pursuit of ipseity is a principal element in the postcolonial writings. The conjectural concept concerns its nature, course of formation and its existential questions. Identity construction after displacement has been discussed myriad of times and it is a societal endorsed fact that an individual's identity is rooted with his ancestral locality. The modern man's predicament due to immigration or expatriation thereby leading to existential crisis in the life is expressed through the fictional characters in various contemporary novels. The themes of rootlessness, feelings of being displaced are extensively and poignantly expressed by the post-colonial writers like Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, V.S. Naipaul, Jhumpa Lahiri, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Arundhati Roy, Meena Alexander etc. The present paper with the study of the novels of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* assays to elucidate the struggles and endeavours of the immigrants and refugees in pursuing their true self after being dislocated from their homeland and the process of assimilating themselves in the new culture. In this epoch of transnational migration, the influx of the people among the different countries, conflux of the divergent cultures, amalgamation of identities have broken the notion of fixity and narrow nationality.

The growing competition and shrinking space has augmented intercontinental and cross cultural migration. When migration takes place due to coaxing factors such as insecurity, poverty, scarcity of land, unemployment, stifling authority or environmental hazards, it is coaxing migration. When migration is due to coercive factors like availability of better job opportunities, political freedom, fertile land and environmental safety, it is coercive migration. In both the cases, the immigrants feel the psychological ordeal of displacement, distancing feeling of



rootlessness, pursuit of selfhood and query of adjustment to the host land.

The South Asian diasporic literature is an effectual credential of the cultural and diasporic experience of the immigrants who are frayed asunder in the process of realizing themselves in a hostile land and upholding the fidelity towards ethno-religious traditions of the homeland.

Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Lowland*, sketches the destiny of affable fraternal ties ripped apart by migration and vindictive political affairs. Lahiri's description of the story professes to show how the non appearance of loved ones becomes surreptitiously a fore shadow of their unforgettable presence within the subconscious mind of the characters directing their actions to their own drifting of life.

*The Lowland* twirls around a Bengali migrant family in the United States and its Indian sections provide background to the story as it ensues.

The missing of family life back at Tollygunge heightens the loneliness of Subhash, the elder brother, as the text narrates;

“For a year and a half, he had not seen his family. Not sat down with them, at the end of the day, to share a meal. In Tollygunge, his family did not have a phone line. He'd sent a telegram to let them know he'd arrived. He was learning to live without hearing their voices, to receive news of them only in writing.” (Lahiri 50)

Subhash's loneliness intensifies on India's Independence Day as he observes and compares it with his present situation as the text informs;

“The following day was August 15, Indian Independence. A holiday in the country, lights on government buildings, flag hoisting, and parades. An ordinary day here.” (Lahiri 61)

After the tragic death of his younger brother Udayan, Subhash decides to marry his widow Gauri and bring her in America to save her from the destitution of widowhood. In the due course of time his decision of marriage proved very agonizing as he felt severely lonely in his old age. Though he found his life partner in Bela's teacher he felt the woes of loneliness of old age in an alien land as the text reveals: “But he had lost

that confidence, that intrepid sense of direction. He felt only aware now that he was alone, that he was over sixty years old, and that he did not know where he stood.” (Lahiri 172)

It needs to be discerned that Subhas, Gauri, are equally dislocated in Calcutta and Tollygunge, where everybody knows of Udayan and his destiny. In America, nobody knows what happened with Mitra’s family in Calcutta which gave them a necessary space to start a new life. However, their inner commotion and secret of Bela’s parenthood haunted their lives, and they became psychologically displaced in the diasporic environment. Gauri was a woman who was not able to forget her past, and that cajoled her into a kind of aloofness and alienation not only from the present, but also from her daughter Bela. She cuts her hair according to American style, throws away her saris and attempts to lose herself in the study of philosophy. Ironically, feeling of isolation comforts her as the text depicts: “Isolation offered its own form of companionship: the reliable silence of her rooms, the steadfast tranquility of the evenings.” (Lahiri 165)

She is tattered between the two brothers. She clings to the memory of Udayan’s death and the secret that she hides.

The secret makes her incapable to correct in any place as she was a stranger in her in-laws’ home, and she is an equally stranger in Subhash’s life, though she likes the inscrutability that American academic circles offers her.

The author also dealt with the estrangement and segregation of Udayan when he got injured in the preparation of explosives. His life was always at stake; He had trouble in hearing, asked Gauri to repeat herself. There had been damage to one of his eardrums from the explosion. He complained of wooziness a high-pitched sound that would not go away. He said he could not hear the shortwave when she could hear it perfectly well. He worried that he might not be able to hear the buzzer, if it rang, or the approach of a military jeep. He complained of feeling alone even though they were together. Udayan’s death was due to his involvement in the killing of a police officer called Nirmal Dey, though Udayan was

not the one to use the knife; he was the one, among those who contrived the murder. Gauri became a part of the plan when she spied on Dey and kept a track of his daily timetable. In her canopied belief and love, she could never comprehend the consequences of her actions or interrogate Udayan for his intentions. After their arrival in America, Subhash again showed his maturity. Knowing that it would take Gauri time to accept him as a husband, Subhash endured her and gave her space and never pressurized her active participation in the relationship.

The novel reconnoitres the strain arising out of the conflict between two identities – social and cultural. Under such conditions, the immigrants who are caught between the needs and demands of the present and the nostalgia and sentiments of the past resort to either merge in the host country or reclaim the homeland through nostalgia and memories. In this sense, it can be said that a displaced individual posits himself in an in-between space engendered by an attempt to parley between the shifting realities of the present and the eternal sentiments of the past. Lois Tyson comments thus:

“Double consciousness and homeliness are the two features of postcolonial Diasporas. “Double consciousness” or unstable sense of the self is the result of forced migration colonialism frequently caused. In the Diaspora this feeling of being caught between cultures, of belonging to neither, rather than to both, of finding oneself arrested in psychological limbo that result not merely from some individual psychological order, but from the trauma of the cultural displacement within which one lives is referred to by Homi Bhabha, and others as “unhomeliness”. Being “unhomed” is not the same as being homeless. To be unhomed is to feel not at home even in yourself: your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee, so to speak.” (421)

The middle class Bengali immigrants of the novel are obsessed by their preference, loneliness and the guilt of vanished connections with family and lovers in their native country. Besides these, a captivating story about a real political revolt that took place in some parts of India in

1960s and which was termed as Naxalite movement forms the first part of *The Lowland*. The second part of the novel highlights its far-reaching effects on the one family. Lahiri spotlights the diasporic dilemma of her characters whose lives oscillates between India and the United States over the course of five decades. The story deals with the theme of extirpating and absorption venturing to set up affinity among the characters. It can be observed that the novel harbours on individuals and their pursuit of self.

**Regarding identity formation in the hybrid space, Brah argues:**

“[the] word diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation, and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience. But Diasporas are also potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings. They are congested cultural and political terrains where individual and collective memories collide, reassemble and reconfigure.”

Finally it can be asserted that the process of immigration involves cross-cultural conflicts, social clashes, fluid identities, therefore a rational and astute approach is to be maintained in relation to the tardy influence of the past homeland and the constraining influences of the present hostland to be a part of present ecumenical world.

The next novel in discussion is Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* which focuses on the diasporic theme of dislocation of refugees and a substantial pining for relocation to re identify themselves. Displacement literally means a change of address but in literature especially the non-resident Indian writers it is used to mean the change of socio-cultural position of the people and what gives poignancy to this theme is its global readership and enduring appeal.

**Leela Gandhi in her book ‘Post Colonial Theory’ says:**

“Diaspora evokes the specific traumas of human displacement—whether of the Jews or of the Africans scattered in the service of slavery and indentured-post colonialism is concerned with idea of cultural dislocations contained within this term.”

Amitav Ghosh exhibited an anthropologist's allurements for the Sunderbans, its people and the local myths and legends that sabotaged the authorized version of history and religion. The carved boundaries of modern nation state, the wind and the tides took the fishing folk to the mouth of many rivers- channels that set up a unique turbulence of fresh and salt water. *The Hungry Tide* displays the harrowing effect of partition on the starving people and how the people of the Indian subcontinent become disseminated. He depicts how political tumult makes a people refugee or immigrant, and the subsequent diasporic lives with a sense of imaginary homeland. Here Priya Roy studying fresh water Dolphins is a creature of nowhere. She is unhinged as a second generation immigrant. In fact, in *The Hungry Tide* Ghosh's topical focus is on the 'uprising' of Morichjhapi. The partition is the cause of this 'event'. The partition of the Indian subcontinent is the reason behind displacement. Consequently, the refugees shove along the border of India and Bangladesh. The refugees are socially dislocated and politically marginalized. When the refugees are sent to Dandakaranya, they feel socially, politically and culturally isolated. The twinge of rootlessness impels them to conjure their homeland. Nirmalbabu's notebook unfolds the story once Kusum told him. The story of her "exile in Bihar and how she had dreamed of returning to this place, of seeing once more these rich fields of mud, these trembling tides... [with] all the others who had come with her to Morichjhapi."

To live outside the homeland is a kind of exile which Kusum and the people Morichjhapi feel. One's formation of identity is extremely conditioned by family, culture, education, and the larger part of the society where one lives. In this novel the dissipated people have evolved an ethnic identity to cope with the crisis of identity and the pangs of rootlessness. Kanai Dutt and Piyali Roy are the two main protagonists in the novel. Kanai, a Delhi based businessman and also a translator who came to the island of Lusibari to meet his aunt Nilima. Nirmal and Nilima came to the Sunderbans when the radical ideas of Nirmal became precarious in Calcutta. The journal of Nirmal had been written a long time before in 1979. Piyali is an émigré, American cetologist, who came

to study about the Irrawaddy dolphin which lived in the rivers of the tide country. Piya requested Fokir to accompany her as a guide in the canals of the area. Kanai also went along with them. Initially when she turned up at canning and hired a dubious guide and a guard from the government functionaries, she was unaware of the corrupt attitude of public servants. .Soon she realized her mistake and hired Fokir to take her to the region of dolphins. Kanai decided to return from the trip, while Fokir and Piya went out to observe the dolphins. Fokir was alien to the English language and she had no idea of Bengali language but they strived to communicate through non-verbal language. The journal of Nirmal incorporated the information related to the village of Morichjhapi. The journal also comprised of some private information y of Nirmal's life. Morichjhapi was the place for tiger preservation project, the government considered the refugees as the illegal tenants. The story of the novel revolves around the tide country that consists of the villages such as Lusibari, Garjontola and Morichjhapi. Widowhood has been established in to their everyday lives in such a way that they shed their marital symbols every time when their men go out for fishing. Ghosh picturizes the custom of the tide country in the following excerpt.

When the men folk went fishing it was the custom for their wives to change into the garments of widowhood. They would put away their martial reds and dress in white saris; they will take off their bangles and wash the vermilion from their heads. It was as though they were trying to hold misfortune at bay by living through it over and over again.

Kusum and Moyna sharpened their tools of survival. The writer intends to suggest that if the people of both elite and famished milieus are united, then there will be thriving future for the world's poor. The relationship between Piya and Fokir denotes such unification

The cultural difference between Piya and Fokir is narrated through the tiger killing incident in the novel. When a tiger enters the village the villagers want to kill it for their own sustenance. These people have been tormented immensely due to the tigers, while the government authorities have imposed the restrains over the tiger-killing and started

the conservation of these animals. While Piya who is an outsider and thinks Fokir may oppose the tiger killing but she finds that Fokir himself is involved in the act of killing the tiger. This incident reveals that she has misunderstood the Fokir. Piya begins to believe that Fokir is a kind of man who is associated with nature and its habitat.

Towards the end of the novel when Piya and Fokir are trapped by the cyclone, it is the intense despondency and struggle for survival that brings them closer. Piya begins with a misconception of the people and environment around her and precedes to represents a movement towards parity between the privileged and subaltern culture. Ghosh intends to suggest if the world is to see the positive change through social anthropology, there is the need to promote such cross culture relations and philanthropism.

## Conclusion

Identity of an individual is dynamic which alters with certain specific associations and social establishments. The process of globalization has not only unsettled people and cultures but has created new identities and affiliations in terms of both conflicts and collaborations. Due to transnational flows and assorted globalizing phenomena, the migrants, the refugees are striving for a distinct identity. They are integral to their host as well as homeland. They are rooted in their home culture but ready to assimilate and thrive in the auctourant settlement.

## Works Cited

- Kundu, Tanmoy, "Amitav Ghosh: A Study in Displacement." *New Man International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*.
- Lahiri, Jhumpa. "The Lowland." Random House India, 2013.
- Nair, Chitra Thirvikraman. "Politics of in-between Spaces: Diasporic Travails in Jhumpa Lahiri's Fiction." *Asiatic*, vol. 9, no. 1, June, 2015.
- Rajammal, Dr. P. Pandia, and Mr. S. Thalopathy. "Hybridity In Jhumpa Lahiri's The Lowland." *Universal Review*, vol. 7, no. 12, December 2018.
- Ramya, H., and Dr. Shibila. "Jhumpa Lahiri's the Lowland: A Thematic Analysis." *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, vol. 3,

no. 5, Sept.–Oct. 2018, [dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijels.3.5.4](https://doi.org/10.22161/ijels.3.5.4).

Renukadevi, R., and Dr. G. Sathurappasamy. “Immigrant Experience in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Lowland*.” *International Journal of Research*, vol. 4, no. 1, January 2017, [edupediapublications.org/journals](http://edupediapublications.org/journals).

Tyson, Lois. “Critical Theory Today: A User Freindly Guide.” 2nd ed., Routledge, 2006.

Vanitha, A. “The Theme of Dislocation in Amitav Ghosh’s *the Glass Palace* and *the Hungry Tide*.” *Pune Research Times, An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2.



## *The Alchemist: An Allegorical Evidence of Pursuing a Dream*

---

*Sheikh Suheel Meraj*

Allegory taken from Greek word *allegoria* means - “speaking otherwise”. It narrates a set of circumstances using characters and actions to signify or represent a deeper or veiled meaning. Therefore, it is a story understood at two levels and sometimes three or four. It is so, because the reader can understand only through an interpretive process. Here, author has used the narrative of prose to depict the personal legend of a boy who chose to seek his dream rather to yield. Who so ever believe in dreams also knows how to interpret them. Life is interesting when one has a dream, as dreams are the languages in which the universe speaks, because all are created by the same hand.

“All things are one the old man had said.”(23)

Everything under the sun has been written by one hand only. It is the hand that evokes love, creates twin soul for every person in the world. Without such love, one’s dreams would have no meaning.

Here we have a sustained allegory of ideas, the central device is the personification of abstract entities such as virtue, state of mind, mode of life and type of character. As a matter of fact, sustained allegory; is a favorite form of middle ages. It produces masterpieces, especially in the verse-narrative mode of Dream Vision.

Santiago an Andalusian shepherd boy from a Spanish province dreams of travelling to the world in search of treasure as desirable as any ever found. His parents wanted him to become a priest, but he decides to become a traveler, so his father gives him three ancient Spanish gold coins and blessing. The boy had already seen many castles and met many women. He also owns a jacket, a book that he could exchange

for another and a flock of sheep. The boy knew everything about each member of his flock: he knew which ones were lame, which one is to give birth, and which were laziest. In addition to this he knew how to shear them, slaughter them. To become a shepherd, he first meets a Gypsy, who has travelled, but they had no flocks of sheep. And people consider them as tricking masters. It is also said that they have a pact with devil and they kidnap children, taking them away to their mysterious camps and make them their slaves. Gypsy suggests him to go out for a treasure in the far-off place in desert to become rich. They ask for one-tenth from the treasure as a share in exchange for interpreting the dream he had. But she does not know how to turn dreams into reality. After that boy meets a King of Salem Melchizedek as his name (old man). whose wise ideas and the two stones, black which signifies yes *Urim* and white which signifies No *Thummim* are enough to help him to heed omens. The Old man impresses Santiago by commenting on the book he was reading. He also ask share of sheep in exchange to tell him how to find the hidden treasure, because everything in life has its price. He also said about the Gypsies; as these are experts at getting people to do anything they can dream.

After wards, he sells his sheep, with whom he had spent two years, leading them through the countryside in search of food and water. They were so used to him that they know his schedule. He embarks through the exotic markets of North Africa, where he is robbed and left completely alone. Through the Egyptian desert where, he has a fateful encounter first with Crystal merchant for whom he worked and let him (merchant) to become a rich. The crystal merchant also realized the arrival of boy as a good omen by which he found more money pouring in his drawer. He does not regret hiring the boy. So, the boy was also paid more money than he deserved. Here, he found resemblance with the merchant regarding the dream of becoming rich and then going to Mecca, which he hasn't yet, because he could not leave someone in charge of the shop. But the only thought of Mecca is keeping him alive. Hassan the merchant is afraid that if his dream is realized, he will have no reason to go on living. He is afraid, so he prefers only to dream, but not to take

any action. If he would, then he has to change his way of life. He does not know how to deal with change as he is used to that who he is.

Santiago meets an Englishman on a bench at warehouse who is in search of an alchemist. As he had already spent much of his fortune from his father seeking Philosopher's stone, he had spent enormous amount of time at great libraries of the world, had purchased all the rarest and important volumes on alchemy. English man is well read in major religions and speaks Esperanto as well. He has learned all this because Alchemist will put him to test before he could become one.

Finally, he met with an Alchemist during his stay in desert near Oasis, whose idea he found similar to that of an old man's. They both (Alchemist and Santiago) speak of soul of the world to which we are all connected to. While travelling they also hear the rumors of coming tribal war, among the tribal and the aboriginals. They face numerous obstacles. But they overcame. Lastly, boy arrive at the Al-fayoum Oasis; the home of Titular Alchemist. He also became a counselor during the journey on desert. Because he was able to bought omens from desert. During the travel they both are taken as prisoners by a warring tribe as well. The coincidence is that the alchemist also found his perfect disciple, and the chief, because that disciple has understood the glory of God.

“Listen to your heart, wherever your heart is, that is where you'll find your treasure.”(111)

If you know your heart well, because you will know its dreams and wishes, then you will know how to deal with them. It knows all things, because it came from soul of the world, and it will one day return there. Where your treasure is, there also will be your heart,” the alchemist said. The boy and his heart have become friends, it is neither capable to betray one another. The boy understood his heart, when he wandered far from his dream his heart presses him and sounds the alarm. The boy swore that, every time he heard the alarm, he would heed its message. It gives him strength, because the days of silence in the desert are wearisome. Heart also stimulates what are his strongest qualities and reminds him of his giving up sheep during the time he spent working at

crystal shop. He recognizes to live in moment. We are living right now to achieve goal, because all men always live their lives based on future. If we pay attention to the present, we can improve upon it. What comes later would also be better. He lived every one of his days intensely since he had left home . If he will die tomorrow, he would have seen more than any other shepherd and would also be proud of that. We only fail to achieve our dreams, because we have the fear of failure. We all need to be aware of our personal calling. We lose control of what is happening to us, and our lives become controlled by fate. That is world's greatest lie. Because everything happens with us, and even people can turn themselves into wind, if the wind helps. Because people are capable at any time in their lives, of doing what they dream of. They also can learn early in their lives, what is their reason of being.

“Learns to recognize omens, follow them,”(139) the old king had said. These are the signs which we should pay heed to, rather ignoring. The omen, he had sought to find with sheep, books, crystals and in the silence of desert. Only those who can see such signs of life are able to find treasure. All the things are collaborating in his success. Firstly, he is supposed to become a priest first however, he decides to be a shepherd, so he can move to pursue his dream. He tells himself that fear of suffering is worse than suffering itself. And that no heart has ever suffered when it goes in search of its dreams, because every second of the search is a second encounter with God and eternity. As he mused about the journey, then realized that he had to choose between thinking of himself as a poor victim and adventurer in quest of his treasure. He has discovered things along the way that he never would have seen. Whenever we do something that fills us with enthusiasm, as we are following our inner heart. Because the secret of life is to fall seven times and to get up at eighth time.

He embarks his journey for the treasure hidden thousands of miles away at the base of Egyptian pyramids during his journey. Firstly, he is robbed and subjected to test of his persistence and courage. He is left completely down even though he stakes everything and is unable to speak a single word in Arabic. He never thought about what he has left

behind, rather he looked forward. So, he could not be hasty, nor impatient. If he pushed forward impulsively, he would fail to see the signs and omens left by God along the path. He overcome all his obstacles to achieve his personal legend. He chose to seek like an adventurer, else he is not living. He remembers the words of wise man, the necessity of following our heart. It is language of enthusiasm, of things accomplished with love and purpose, as part of a search for something believed in and desired. It is almost as if he had been here and left his mark, he thought. And yet, none of these people have ever met the old King. On the other hand, he said that he always appeared to help those who are trying to realize their destiny, like crystal merchant whom he assisted along the journey. Everything on earth is being continuously transformed, because the earth is alive...and it has a soul. We are part of that soul, whether mineral, vegetable, or animal-even just a simple thought. That is the principle that governs all things, As in Alchemy, it is called the soul of the world. When we want something with all our heart, which is when we are closest to the soul of the world. It is always a positive force. So, we rarely recognize that it is working for us. But in the crystal shop he probably realized that even the glasses were collaborating in his success. It is only those who are persistent and willing to do things deeply, can achieve their aim.

“When a person really desires something, all the universe conspires to help that person to realize his dream.” said the alchemist. (109-110)

Echoing the words of the old king, the boy understood. He also knows that there is a mysterious chain that links one thing to another, the same chain that caused his recurring dream, that has let him first sell his sheep and bought him to city near Africa to find a king also to be robbed in order to meet a crystal merchant and then subsequently his destiny. He also had to give one-tenth of his flock to the old man. The sheep, the merchant's daughter and the fields of Andalusia were only steps along the way to his destiny. The difference between crystal merchant and Santiago is that, he wants to change and deal with it to realize his destiny.

“And, when you want something, the entire universe conspires in helping in help you to achieve it.” (21)

He has clear goals to accomplish, because it is what he wants to do. It's the thought of treasure which keeps him going, the language of enthusiasm and purpose. The words luck and coincidence by which universal language is written also plays an important role while achieving his goal. It is the courage as a quality most essential to understand language of the world.

There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve is the fear of failure. As all people have dreams, they never try to fill they tell, talk and plan about them, but when obstacles get in their way, they let their dreams go. They are also afraid to pursue their most important dreams, because they feel that they do not deserve them or that they will be unable to achieve them. Therefore, it becomes impossible for them to realize their destiny.

“When you really want something, the universe always conspires in your favor.” (152)

Ultimately, he joins the caravan along an Englishman to Egypt, who tells him secrets of Alchemist. Their caravan meets with one another. One always had something that the other needed- as if everything is indeed written by one hand. He found his ideas like the old man (Melchizeds). He uses the support of his father, gypsy and then of old man to build his confidence. They both speak of soul to which we all are connected to. At last, he arrives Al-fayoum Oasis-house of titular Alchemist, where he meets a girl Fatima with whom he immediately fell in love. As he had been told by his parents really know a person before becoming committed. He had loved her before he even knew she existed. He knew that his love for her would enable him to discover every treasure in the world. He realized it by remembering that one day in Tarifa the levanter had bought to him the perfume of that woman. Sometimes he is reminding himself that he had been a shepherd, and that he could be a shepherd again. Fatima is more important than the treasure. She also knows that men have to go away in order to return. And she already

has her treasure: it is you. Now she expects that the boy will find what he is looking for. During trip he meets an alchemist, who motivates and persuades the boy to move on to look for your treasure and goal. The boy shares story of past events like, old king, omens and about his treasure as well. So now, He fears nothing, because it is those omens that brought you to me, as alchemist refers. And I am a part of your dream, a part of your destiny as you call it. Alchemist says, he wants the boy to continue toward his goal. If you have to wait till the war is over, then wait. But if you have to go before then, go on in suit of your purpose. The dunes are changed by the wind, but the desert never changes, that is the way it will be with our love for each other. As there is a tribal war during his stay at Oasis. He also learned the secrets of travel, as he says, "I have inside me winds, desserts, oceans, stars and everything created in the universe". While staying, he became tribal counselor of oasis as the tribal chieftain also presented him with fifty pieces of gold. As he reported the story about Joseph of Egypt and about omens regarding the impending war. He uses knowledge of soul of the world by which he could recognize the impending circumstances. The boy turned himself into a wind by which he and alchemist could let themselves free while taken captive for three days. During the adventure, he envisions the attack of tribes as they were always in search of their treasure also. The girl said, as if she had guessed what he was thinking. Fatima says the dessert takes our men from us, they do not always return. Those who do not return become a part of animals that hide in ravines, clouds, and water that comes from the earth. They become a part of everything...they become part of soul of the world and we are used to it. So, The women of the desert are proud of their tribesmen. She never ask the boy to stay, a women of a dessert knows that she must await her man. In the meantime, the boy meets an Arab who said about the happenings in the life of a people that, everything that happens once can never happen again. But everything that happens twice will happen surely a third time.

"I have learned from sheep, crystal merchant and I thought can learn from desert because it seems old and wise." (70)

Each thing has to transform itself into something better, and to acquire a new destiny, until, someday, the soul of the world becomes one thing only. It is a part of soul of God. And he saw that the soul of God was his own soul. That he as a boy could perform miracles. He realized that every second of search is an encounter with God. When he has been truly searching for treasure, every moment has been luminous, because he has known that everything was a part of dream that he would find it. He has discovered things along the way that he would never have seen, if he had not courage to try things that seemed impossible for a shepherd to achieve. The boy fell to his knees and wept. He thanked God for making him believe in destiny, and for leading him to meet a king, a merchant, an Englishman and an alchemist. And above all for his having met a woman of the desert, who had told him that love would never keep a man from achieving his/her destiny. At last he listened to his heart; it had told him to dig where his tears fell. The boy begins to dig into the dunes, which often flew the sand back into the excavation. His hands were abraded and exhausted, but he listen to his heart. . During digging he is attacked, his clothes were torn out apart, swell and bled. The boy stood up shakily and looked once more at the pyramids. They seemed to laugh at him, he laughed back with his heart bursting with joy.

Because now he knew where his treasure is.

## **Conclusion**

Therefore, the point of case here is that we should listen to our self while achieving any goal. Paulo Coelho is using the story of boy and his encounter with people with whom he meets during his journey to depict an idea of following one's personal legend. His aim of conveying the message is direct. What we wanted is already there perhaps, the next day, we are looking for. We seek things elsewhere and then find on our doorsteps. But we reject simple things to write tracts, interpretations and philosophical studies. Who interferes with the destiny of another then never discover his own. If we have the courage to disinter/exhume our dream, we are then faced by the second obstacle: love. We know



what we want to do, but afraid of hurting those around us by abandoning everything in order to pursue our own.

When, “We strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better, too”.

Therefore, this is an unforgettable novel by Paulo Coelho about the essential wisdom of listening to our heart and above all following our desires.

### **Works Cited**

Abrams, Meyer Howard, and Geoffrey Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Cengage, 2011.

Birch, Dinah. *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. 7th ed., Oxford UP, 2009.

Coelho, Paulo. *The Alchemist*. Harper Collins, 2017.

Rehman, Zaka Ur. *Story of the Alchemist*.

Stringer, Jenny. *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth Century Literature in English*. Oxford UP, 1996.

## George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: Today's Reality

---

*Nisha Paliwal*

*Nineteen Eighty Four* is one of the most influential novels written in 20<sup>th</sup> century. Published in 1948, it represents the horrors of living in a dystopian society. George Orwell wrote the novel not as a prophecy but as a warning against the totalitarian regime that he himself experienced during Stalin's time. The society that Orwell tries to imagine is a futuristic dystopian surveillance state, where Ingsoc (English Socialism) has taken over England that is now called Airstrip One and the government runs, watches and manipulates everything. There are four divisions of government- Ministry of Truth, Ministry of Peace assigned with the task of managing the constantly fought wars, Ministry of Love dealing with the maintenance of law and order through strict policies and methods of torture and Ministry of Plenty concerned with economic affairs, therefore, each performing functions contradicting their names. The citizens of Oceania suffer from a constant state of depravity as there is scarcity of everything and the food they consume is of low quality, the Outer Party members live in poverty, the condition of the Proles is even worse. However, the Inner party members are not affected by this and lead a quiet comfortable life with good food and a humble dwelling. A constant state of surveillance with telescreen inscribed with 'BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU' is present everywhere monitoring every move of the citizens. The protagonist works in the Ministry of Truth where he is assigned the task of tampering history, erasing unacceptable speech that goes against the ideology of the party, entertainment, education and the fine arts.

Our modern society is no different from what Orwell imagined in his novel, the misuse of power by powerful people for socio-political gain

and suppressing the 'other' is not unheard of. It exists in numerous layers, the people in power often try to create and manipulate narratives benefiting themselves, thus, exploiting the weaker section of the society. The social stratification in the novel consists of a hierarchy among groups that enjoy power according to their distinct statuses. The figure of Big Brother is placed atop of the class system who is the leader as well as the face of the party. The inner party is placed below Big Brother, that communicates messages to their subordinates, performs the function of controlling the information to be broadcasted, they live in better housings, clothes, enjoy privileges such as better quality of tobacco, drink, food, tea and coffee which rest of the citizens are deprived of believing scarcity. Below the Inner Party stands the Outer Party which functions as the administrative unit of the entire system, they execute the commands and implement the policies of the party. The lower level consists of a large number of uneducated Proles (short for Proletariat) that perform menial jobs and labour for the party.

The power dynamics visible in the novel is indeed evident in the society that we live in. The state extends its support to global imperialism that has taken over the world and resulted in wiping out culture and exploitation of land by encouraging capitalists to extract natural resources from the so-called poorer section of the society. The capitalist agencies, on the pretence of civilization with their notion of development and progress modelled on the dictum of western thought, exploit the poor people by seizing their tribal land for manufacturing in their industries and mining activities, making those tribals work on that very land for meagre wages in order to sustain themselves. Because of the capitalist policies of the state, the indigenous people feel alienated from the very land that belongs to them. With various forest preservation policies, they have been marginalised from their land because of the bordering of forest areas for preservation. This hierarchy is also very much visible in the corporate world, where surveillance is used as a tool to maintain order and monetize the workers to their best capacities by the capitalists.

The renaming of places in itself is an act of erasure of history. The underlying purpose of renaming England to Airstrip One is stripping

away any memory of the past from the citizens of Oceania and without any memory, people can't know the past. The Ingsoc party slogans run as "*Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past*" justifying the amount of power the party withhold. Any memory from the past is called 'Oldthink' and considered as illegal. The streets, the buildings have been renamed, the citizens are devoid of history as nothing can be believed, the only thing that can be accepted is the present. In a similar fashion, renaming cities, streets is not a new phenomenon however, in recent times there has been a spike in the activity. It not only robs a place of its identity, glorious history and culture but also memory. Name of places works as a collective memory, however, when altered it not only leads confusion in the shared sense of that place but also creates confusion in documents. In many instances, religion or language fanaticism works as a driving force in the cause of changing names by the political parties. The state focuses more on changing names of places rather than enhancing the socio-economic status and productivity of the country.

The suppression of individual thought and self-expression by controlling the minds of the people is not forced, the citizens of Oceania have been conditioned in a way that they have completely submitted themselves to the party. The mind control works through the propaganda created by the Ministry of Truth that Winston works in. The party works in a way to make them believe that the time before the party took control was horrible to live in and that they live in a beautiful world now. The Ministry of Truth creates propaganda, rewrites or deletes history to suit the party ideology, creates social control through disinformation and surveillance through telescreens. The party allows only those truths to pass that will support its cause. Those who even hold contradicting thoughts against the party ideology can be charged with 'Thoughtcrime' and arrested by the 'Thought Police'. In the contemporary times, the people in power try to influence its people with their ideology leading to communal violence, rioting and hatred, books that are considered controversial are being banned, certain chapters from the history books of students are

being removed like the unacceptable speeches in the novel, films are banned and censored, the press has no freedom.

The telescreens polarise the people's mind and opinions by feeding them propaganda, misinformation and fake news to promote their extremist ideology and hate speech. In our society, the role of telescreens have been fulfilled by the television and media that broadcast fabricated stories and narratives designed to intentionally mislead the viewers. News channels function as the prime propaganda machinery of the people in power where they disseminate hatred and manipulate information to suit their objectives. The telescreens are not only limited to television but also our smartphones and social media that simply govern our life. The social media observes and records every move that we make on the internet, manipulates our brains and tries to grab our attention by rewiring algorithms to construct or reconstruct our ideology. There is constant surveillance like 'BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU'. The use of social media in election campaigns to manipulate the voters by governments and political parties by using algorithms and automations has become worse in recent times. A research conducted by the University of Oxford states 'Although propaganda has always been a part of political discourse, the deep and wide-ranging scope of these campaigns raise critical public interest concerns'. Various techniques are employed by the state to circulate propaganda such as amplifying hate speech, micro targeting, using armies of 'trolls' to harass those who dissent and question.

The most accessible platforms by the people become the major channels of spreading propaganda and fueling fake news and violence by the people in power. Social media companies such as Whatsapp and Facebook have been widely used as a convenient medium to spread fake news in the form of rumours, morphed photographs and videos. In our country, the circulation of fake news around child kidnapping, cow killing, ethnic and religious tensions has spikes in the recent times increasing violence, mob attacks and lynching. Fake messages are customised with specific local details and circulated with real photographs and videos of unrelated incidents to instill fear and hatred in the targeted

group. In a similar fashion, the party in Oceania runs its propaganda with the image of Emmanuel Goldstein. He is the leader of the Brotherhood, an organization of the rebels dedicated to wrecking the party and its ways. However, it is revealed that Goldstein is not a real person but a propaganda tool designed by the party to stir up fear and hatred amongst its citizens. The party tries to create an atmosphere of fear and hatred by constantly indulging in war, creating a need amongst the citizens to trust their leaders. The malevolent actions of the party that affects its own people are also blamed on the Brotherhood. The book *'The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism'* supposedly written by Goldstein is also a trap designed by the party to draw in thought criminals. The social media companies, in order to prevent 'thought crime' have deployed armies of humans as well as algorithmic moderators that constantly monitor the users and delete any unacceptable speech. Whereas, those who are seen to be frequently violating the platform are banished to the status of 'unperson' by suspending their accounts. Like the memory hole that erases every evidence of the existence of 'unperson', every memory/record of the person banished from social media is wiped away.

The Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in order to abuse the huge amount of power it withholds controls every aspect of the life of its citizens. For Michel Foucault, the freedom of people was above everything else and he believed that knowledge is connected to power and that knowledge is power. He writes: "Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of 'the truth' but has the power to make itself true. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has effects, and in that sense at least, 'becomes true.' Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practice. Thus, 'there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations". This is justified by his theory of Panopticon view that was designed to regulate power and knowledge. In the 19th century, prisons, mental asylums, factories, schools and hospitals were designed in the Panopticon which offered a

Panoptic view of the entire structure from the top of a high tower standing in the center. The view from the tower offered a constant observation of the inmates without the guard being seen which acted as a control mechanism. Similarly, in today's world we are constantly under surveillance through devices and cameras that follow us wherever we go. The public as well as the private spaces are equipped with CCTV cameras, the offices, schools, streets, cafeterias, restaurants, airports, etc. constantly monitor our actions. This constant surveillance affects the behaviour of the people forcing them to behave in a certain way repressing them to follow a social order due to the penetration of power leaving them powerless.

In contemporary times with the advancement in technology, we are ever surrounded by cameras and CCTVs present in the public as well as private spaces devoid of any privacy and recording all our activities. This monitor is not only limited to the physical world but also virtual reality, we are now surrounded by a vast network of surveillance like the internet, satellites, GPS technology etc that records and stores our every move. The vast telescreens have been shrunk to become handy and fit in our pockets in the form of the smartphone. The internet has become the world's largest platform for commercialization letting consumers avail products from all over the world. The internet and social media are used by profit-driven corporations to surveil the users in order to understand the markets and the needs of the consumers. In recent years, the biggest social media companies have been in the business of selling their users, since the applications that are being used by the people are being paid for by the advertisers, hence the advertisers become the consumers who the people are being sold to. These companies snoop on user's internet activities and generate conclusions regarding their shopping behaviours and preferences which is then used by advertisers for manipulating the user into buying them.

Similarly, we are putting our lives on social media by sharing our photos, videos, locations etc. so every one of us becomes a Big Brother monitoring each other's life and actions. Over the years, the social media companies have grown and gained an abundant amount of users

who are greatly getting affected in terms of behavior, morals and education. Even though the purpose of social media is to connect people, ironically, it is mostly leading to isolation and disconnection from our surroundings. The Two Minutes Hate observed in the novel takes the shape of online trolling and bullying where the cyberbullies hurl hatred and abuse at the people they see on their screens leading to issues such as anxiety, depression, inferiority complex, alcohol and drug abuse and even suicide.

The Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* had designed the language Newspeak to meet their ideological requirements and ‘diminish the range of thought’ of their citizens. The restricting vocabulary limits the thought process and articulation of concepts such as identity, freedom and self-expression. Newspeak has now evolved into the modern day acronyms and lingos used by netizens such as LOL, BTW, IDK etc is quickly changing language.

The novel states ‘If there is hope, it lies in the Proles’. Eighty five per cent of the population of Oceania belong to the Proles or the lower class who the party doesn’t find the need to monitor as they are not considered a threat to the functioning of the state despite the population. The book ‘*The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*’ states that it is only the proles that need to be awakened to make a move to destroy the government, the rising up of the Proles can only overthrow the party, however, they are already distracted by the Party that support them with alcohol, gambling and pornography designed by the party itself. Similarly, the largest class of people, i.e, the middle class is distracted from the burning issues of the country either by their own problems or by indulging in entertainment. The youth, that is considered the most influential, is distracted by social media follies, online gaming, etc. failing to recognize their power.

Even though it has been decades since *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was published, the significance of the text hasn’t been even slightly diminished. The futuristic dystopian society that was imagined by Orwell has now become a reality where the state as well as capitalists supported



by the state control every aspect of the lives of their citizens by constantly monitoring and manipulating them. The rise in technology has also resulted in spreading of hatred on a vast scale because of propaganda run by a specific group. Though, it also has positive implications that brings together people in the time of need. But the negative impacts weigh heavier sometimes also causing people their life through attacks, killings and suicides. The amount of insensitivity with which Winston kicks the severed hand justifies the lack of empathy that is the result of the brainwashing done by the party, a similar kind of brutality also reflects in the mob attack and lynching that is become so common now. We are surrounded by the digital world that not only consumes us but also robs us of our privacy and moulds us into a caricature designed by the people in power. The existence of individual thought becomes intolerable for the party, therefore, they try to manipulate every action of its citizens to fit into their ideology. Through this manipulation, the people are made to believe every lie that is being fed to them and hold contrary beliefs like Double Think.

## Works Cited

- Aldridge, Olivia. "Dystopian Days: Are Hashtags Modern Day 'Newspeak'?" *The Red & Black*, 18 Oct 2013, [www.redandblack.com/views/dystopian-days-are-hashtags-modern-day-newspeak/article\\_01ca322c-37a5-11e3-bd2d-0019bb30f31a.html](http://www.redandblack.com/views/dystopian-days-are-hashtags-modern-day-newspeak/article_01ca322c-37a5-11e3-bd2d-0019bb30f31a.html).
- Ameerudheen, TA. "NCERT decision to remove chapter on caste struggle in Kerala from history textbook draws criticism." *Scroll.in*, 22 March 2019, [scroll.in/article/917353/ncert-decision-to-remove-chapter-on-caste-struggle-in-kerala-from-history-textbook-draws-criticism](http://scroll.in/article/917353/ncert-decision-to-remove-chapter-on-caste-struggle-in-kerala-from-history-textbook-draws-criticism).
- Beale, Lewis. "We're Living '1984' Today." *Cable News Network*, 3 Aug 2013, [edition.cnn.com/2013/08/03/opinion/beale-1984-now/index.html](http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/03/opinion/beale-1984-now/index.html).
- Bradshaw, Samantha, and Philip N. Howard. "The Global Disinformation Order 2019 Global Inventory of Organised Social Media Manipulation." The Computational Propaganda Project, U of Oxford, 2019.
- Brown, Ian. "Social Media Surveillance." *The International Encyclopedia of Digital Communication and Society*, 1st ed., 2015.

- “Does Changing Names of City’s Rob Its Glorious History, Culture and Identity.” *The New Indian Express*, 24 Oct. 2018, [www.newindianexpress.com/cities/chennai/2018/oct/24/does-changing-names-of-citys-rob-its-glorious-history-culture-and-identity-1889116.html](http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/chennai/2018/oct/24/does-changing-names-of-citys-rob-its-glorious-history-culture-and-identity-1889116.html).
- Gleason, Abbott. “Totalitarianism” in 1984.” *The Russian Review*, vol. 43, no. 2, Apr. 1984, pp. 145-159.
- Groening, Stephen. “What Orwell’s ‘1984’ Tells Us about Today’s World, 70 Years after It Was Published.” *The Conversation*, 12 June 2019, [theconversation.com/what-orwells-1984-tells-us-about-todays-world-70-years-after-it-was-published-116940](http://theconversation.com/what-orwells-1984-tells-us-about-todays-world-70-years-after-it-was-published-116940)
- “Lynchings Due to WhatsApp Rumours Claim 19 Lives in Two Months.” *The Quint*, 17 July 2018, [www.thequint.com/news/india/lynchings-due-to-rumours-spreading-on-whatsapp](http://www.thequint.com/news/india/lynchings-due-to-rumours-spreading-on-whatsapp).
- Mclaughlin, Timothy. “How WhatsApp Fuels Fake News and Violence in India.” *Wired*, 12 Dec 2018, [www.wired.com/story/how-whatsapp-fuels-fake-news-and-violence-in-india/](http://www.wired.com/story/how-whatsapp-fuels-fake-news-and-violence-in-india/).
- Mohomed, Carimo. “The abolition of the Past: History in George Orwell’s 1984.” *2nd International Conference on Humanities, Historical and Social Sciences*, vol. 17, 2011, pp. 71–6.
- Orwell, George. 1984. Mumbai. Amazing Reads. 2014.
- The Social Dilemma. Directed by Jeff Orlowski, Netflix, Argent Pictures, Exposure Labs, The Space Program, 26 Jan 2020.
- Wang, Huaiqing. “Consumer Privacy Concerns about Internet Marketing.” *Communations of the ACM*, vol. 41, no.3, March 1998, pp. 63-70.

## Crime and Space: Heterotopias in Jeet Thayil's *Narcopolis*

---

*Tripti Soni*

We do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not super imposable on one another. (3)

The above lines explain the notion of 'heterotopia' from Michel Foucault's *Of Other Spaces* (1984). Foucault's ideas are based on deconstruction. The production of the place is the social process of valuing space, which involves but is not limited to the study of geography, history, sociology, environment, culture, architecture, and literature. Foucault believes that by giving importance to history and time, we unwillingly forget to see the ideological conflicts and crises in heterotopias.

John Berger, in his book *The Look of Things* (1974) also observes that the spatialization of critical thoughts needs to be established to understand heterotopias in the literary text. He says:

There are so many reasons why this should be so: the range of modern means of communication: the scale of modern power: the degree of personal political responsibility that must be accepted for events all over the world: the fact that the world has become indivisible: the unevenness of economic development within that world: the scale of the exploitation. All these play a part. Prophecy now involves a geographical rather than historical projection; it is space not the time that hide consequences from us. (40)

What the above theorists or critics have said long before is still not established in our theoretical concern. The area of spatial study is still

not focused or explored. There is a need to mold or shift our critical sensibility to the spatiality of social life where we can emplace social being in the making of history and the configuration of human geographies. To understand the present epoch and its crisis, we must develop a spatial or geographical consciousness over temporal context.

Bertrand Westphal, in his book *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (2011), gives spatial theory known as Geocriticism, which incorporates an interdisciplinary method of literary analysis. It involves the study of geographic space and other forces that look at a space as heterogeneous space. It is a homonymous theory that analyses the presentation of fictional and real places in the literary text. It studies the physically existing environment where an event, an incident, or a story is created by the author. A Geocritical study focuses on a single place and then looks at many textual representations of that place. There may be different representations of a single place by characters of a literary text, or there may be different representations of a place by many authors. In this way, we can put the identity of that place in question.

This research paper is an extension of Geo - critical analysis, which discusses the presentation of physical and mental spaces and associated crime in Bombay during the 1980s. In the context of Jeet Thayil's *Narcopolis* (2012), it attempts to answer a few questions like, how does spatialization define power structure. How does the geographical spatialization affect the social, political, religious, and cultural forces in the metropolis? How does a space affect criminal practices? What are the different conditions on which crime is generated in a metropolitan space? Furthermore, how does space create heterotopias?

The history of Bombay has its root in its geography. It did not hold its current geographical configuration always. According to the article *Bombay: History of a City*, the space of Bombay was formed by uniting the archipelago of seven islands. Reconfiguration or spatialization not only gives vent to the physical shape of a space but also gives

meaning to its social, political, religious, cultural, architectural, and historical forces, which are purely dominated by power structure i.e., capitalist society. Moreover, there has always a dispute between capitalist and proletariat society. The production of the place always has two histories of migration: first, the historical geography of capitalism in which capitalists always considered the creators; the power structure, and own both vertical (the height of skyscrapers) and horizontal (the size of big skyscrapers on land) geography. Another side is the historical geography of proletarianism, which remains hidden and creates a history of survival. Their history, like their geography, is small, squeezed, dense, and horizontal (small houses/ slums/ Kholi). Rich always attains both power and authority, but those who are benevolent and charitable become popular and earn respect from the poor. In contrast to this, the exploitation of the proletariat leads to economic inequality and motivates criminal practices for survival.

The physical setting of Narcopolis is based on such economic inequality by which the criminal stratosphere drastically rose with the organized crime network in Bombay during the 1970s. According to the article, *The Mafia: A Brief History*, the trio of Karim Lala, Haji Mastan, and Varadarajan Mudaliar made a new power structure in Bombay and controlled Bombay's underworld till the 1970s. After struggling in childhood, they were migrated to Bombay, initially indulged in petty crimes and then gold, arms and drugs smuggling at dock area and became prosperous, and celebrity dons of Bombay. These immigrants ruled the Bombay and made it their city.

The emergence of Shiv Sena in 1966 with its anti- South Indian migrants and anti- Muslim agendas (Thayil 193-198, Roberts 52-55), the 1992-93 bomb blasts by Dawood Ibrahim in response to Sena's communal violence and then the inter-gang rivalry of underworld dons (Dawood Ibrahim and Chotta Rajan) after Bombay bombings, for controlling power, created chaos and ignited communal riots in Bombay (Mehta 144-145; ch.5). Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray had strong communal sentiments. For him, immigration was one of the reasons for unemployed Marathi youth and developing the criminal culture in Bombay. Sena created

bloodshed in Bombay because most of the underworld dons were either Muslim or South Indian migrants or both. Whether they were marginalized Muslim migrants of South India or Maharashtrians, their struggle was for survival, space, and power, so crime became the way to get all. (Thayil 23, Mehta 104-120; ch.2)

Jeet Thayil called India a religion obsessed country of living saints. In the novel, the narrator Dom Ullis, a South Indian Christian, was his own replica who, even by mistake, did not speak Malayalam to the locals because he knew that he might lose his life by doing so. In the 1970s-90s, the people's identity was first known by their religion then profession. Rashid said to Dom, "the city has been changed; people wear their religion on their faces" (216). *Narcopolis* stands on the bases of such religious and political conflicts in Bombay. Everywhere there was a curfew. The fight between Hindu and Muslim did not spare a single locality amongst which Kamathipura became the center of all criminal practices. Smuggling of narcotics, prostitution, contract killing, murder, kidnapping, and religious riots prevailed in every street.

The space, on which *Narcopolis* is based, is a famous red light area, Shuklaji Street, in Kamathipura, which was also an area of Indo-Chinese opium trade, which made Bombay a financial capital of India. In an interview published in *The Hindu*, Thayil reveals his aim behind writing this novel is to unveil the historical geography of Bombay. He says:

The thing about the opium dens is that it was all in one area—the old red-light district of Bombay, which was also historically the area from which the British East Indian Company and a bunch of Parsee ship-owners of Bombay got together to send opium from India to China. It is this Indo-Chinese opium trade which made Bombay a metropolis.

Narcotic trade was the real cause of spatialization and reconfiguration of Bombay. Other than this, the construction of the causeways also attracted proletariat society to get work. According to the article, *Bombay to Mumbai- Reclamation of the Seven Isles*, Kamathipura was developed by joining Mazagaon and Malabar

Hills in 1793. The construction of causeways attracted many poor workers to work on construction sites. The already existed opium trade influenced the laborers, which eventually led men into drug smuggling and women into prostitution. In this way, the small space of Bombay was transformed into khana (opium dens) and brothels.

During the curfew, Rashid's khana and other khanas were closed by the Custom & Excise department; even police stations were closed, but heroin, charas, cocaine business were spreading everywhere because there was more money to be made than the smuggling and selling of opium (Thayil 198). Shiv Sena had power, but it did not have money. Sena was desperate in the flow of arms from Pakistan and Afghanistan, which could not be done without the flow of heroin and cocaine (Roberts 53). Because Sena was fighting for Maharashtra's rights and most of the police officers were Maharashtra's, Sena had an influence on police and other state power that helped it to close down opium dens and to earn money through drugs and arms smuggling. When Dimple, a eunuch prostitute, asked Salim, a drug dealer, why the supply of drugs was not affected by political turmoil? Salim explained the politics behind the selling of narcotics to Dimple. He said:

Garad sales are protected, it doesn't matter that it comes from Pakistan. They'll [Shiv Sena] make speeches about Mussulmans [sic] and burn our homes and shops but this is a multi-Crore business and in Bumbai [sic] money is the only religion. (199)

Suketu Mehta also revealed Sena's geopolitics in *Maximum City* (2004) when he was told by a Congress worker about bribe prevailing in voting. Mehta wrote:

Fifty rupees if they [voters] are with the Sena-BJP and a hundred rupees if they are with Congress, plus puris, bhaji, and sheera... you have to be paid more to support a loser. 'The Congress has already eaten. Its stomach is full. The Sena hasn't eaten. Everybody's a thief, but the Congress won't eat any more'. (75)

In the veil of Hindu-Muslim riots, money becomes the religion that is worshipped, and politics is the way to get it and drug becomes the

culture where people live. Social, political, religious, and cultural forces define the social relation, origin of the crime, and destiny of the space.

Thayil revealed that the cheap drugs were being sold easily at Shuklaji Street or many such places because that space belonged to marginalized people who could not afford a good quality of drugs. In fact, these people sold it as the only source of their living. All men were indulged in drug dealing or working for a gang, and women were into prostitution. When due to riots, food was not available; they were spending their days on smoking drugs only. The spatialization of drugs from opium to chemical made their life squeezed. They all were confined to Rashid's khana, which also shifted from Shuklaji Street to Arab Gully and then at Pila House, where now instead of opium, garad was available.

As per the article *Pila House*, it was a well-known area that comprised cinema theaters, brothels, and markets at Shuklaji Street, opened by the British as Play House in 1857. Pila House was famous for European prostitutes. Later poor and marginalized local women replaced White prostitutes. Thus, this space also claims a history of spatialization. The Pila House which was considered the heart of Bombay during British period was transformed into a place for drug addicts to die. Rashid asked a very significant question about politics, religion, and economy of Bombay city:

What kind of government would see anything in heroin but poison? Which god would welcome such a drug? Not the Hindu gods and not even the god of the Christians. So what did it mean that the Pakistanis, who worshipped the same God as he, were sending garad to India? It meant that politics, or economics, overrode every other thing in the world. They share the same faith, but in other ways they were enemies. Above all, Pakistanis were sworn enemies. (142)

The power structure of politicians and police was entirely controlled by another bigger power structure, i.e., the underworld's dons. They controlled the economy or better to say ran the economy of Bombay city in which politics and religion became the medium.



Rashid's khana was the best place that offered the best quality of opium in Shuklaji Street. However, due to social-political and economic tensions (as opium was not available and politicians and dons were making money out of heroin) he had to start heroin business at his chandu khana for the survival of his family which was a great suffering to him because he knew that he would be dying sooner than earlier. It was a quiet irony of life that all drug addicts in the novel knew that they would die one day or be killed, but they could not leave the addiction. Dimple rightly said, after asking about the reason behind addiction, to Carl, who treated her at rehab center Safer:

Because it isn't the heroin we are addicted to, it's the drama of the life, the chaos of it, that's the real addiction and we never get over it; and because, when you come down to it, the high life, that is, the intoxicated life, is the best of the limited options we are offered—why would we choose anything else? (231)

The characters in *Narcopolis* are the victim of a corrupt social-political system, which creates heterotopias at Bombay. Heterotopias are parallel worlds that are real and can equally disturbing, lie under the loophole of the system. They are treated as 'other.' The space that once belonged to seven islands became a land then a place Kamathipura, then transformed and divided into more places like brothels, drug dens, cubicles, and now clubs. The transformation of the social structure of any space cannot be understood by a historical and geographical concern, which according to Edward Soja is the process of modernization in the context of space, time, and being (27).

Kamathipura is a heterotopia. Within this, khana is another heterotopia where all the opium drug addicts come to share a collective consciousness, i.e., to live in a world of intoxication. To understand heterotopia, we need to understand a space with a story of struggle, crisis, voices, principles, beliefs, and values of those social beings who transform a space into a place for living. The study of space is intertwined with time, social being, and crime because spatialization affects the social structure and the life of social being.

American politician Carrie P. Meek once stated that “If we were really tough on crime, we would do more to stop it from happening in the first place” (“Crime Quotes”). She was afraid of the consequences of crime prevailing in the world. To stop the horrible outcomes of crime in society, we should know the changing structure of society where it is taking place. V.S. Naipaul’s horrified portrait of emergent Africa in his novel *A Bend in the River* (1979) is also one example of widespread paranoia of urban violence. It also claims new historicists and post colonialists get nexus among state power, social structures, historical and cultural differences, and look into the reconfiguration of geography and social life of the people.

More than a physical, *Narcopolis* presents the mental space where all the drug addicts live. They walk through with dreams, which is the journey of their life in mental space. They do not need a physical place to survive except khana, where they have only one culture i.e., the culture of drugs that help them dive into their mental space, a space for escape, a world of hallucination, and life beyond reality. Social, political, religious, and cultural forces create heterotopias in Bombay’s secret history of sex and drugs. By understanding the significance of spatiality, we are actually mapping the literature that transcends Marxism, Modernism, Realism, Imperialism, and Historical territories.

## Works Cited

- “Bombay: History of a City.” *British Library*, [www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/trading/bombay/history.html](http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/trading/bombay/history.html). Accessed 17 Oct. 2019.
- Berger, John. *The Look of Things*. Viking, 1974.
- Crime Quotes*. [www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/c/carrie\\_p\\_meek.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/c/carrie_p_meek.html). Accessed 16 Oct. 2019.
- Dutta, Madushree. “Pila House: Interview with Abdul Bhai of Delhi Darbar Restaurant.” *Pad.ma*, 17 Oct. 2005, [pad.ma/OZ/info](http://pad.ma/OZ/info). Accessed 3 Nov. 2019.
- Foucault, Michel. “Of Other Spaces.” Translated by Jay Miskowic, *Architecture/ Mouvement/ Continuïte*, Oct.1984, [web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf). Accessed 21 Oct. 2019.

- Mehta, Suketu. *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found*. Penguin Books, 2004.
- Menezes, Saira. "The Mafia a Brief History." *Outlook*, 29 Oct. 1995, [www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/the-mafia-a-brief-history/200285](http://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/the-mafia-a-brief-history/200285). Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.
- Naipaul, V. S. *A Bend in the River*. 1979. Pan Macmillan India, 2012
- Nazia D. "Bombay to Mumbai: Reclamation of Seven Isles." *ESENSE*, 20 April 2010, [dilernaziya.blogspot.com/2010/04/bombay-to-mumbai-reclamation-of-seven.html](http://dilernaziya.blogspot.com/2010/04/bombay-to-mumbai-reclamation-of-seven.html). Accessed 2 Nov. 2019.
- Roberts, Gregory David. *Shantaram*. 2003. Abacus, 2013.
- Soja, Edward W. *Postmodern Geography*. Verso, 1989.
- Thayil, Jeet. *Narcopolis*. Faber and Faber, 2012.
- Westphal, Bertrand. *Geocriticism: Fictional and Real Spaces*. Translated by T. Robert and Jr. Tally, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Zachariah, Preeti. "A Love Offering." *The Hindu*, 17 Aug. 2013, [www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-metroplus/a-love-offering/article5029922.ece](http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-metroplus/a-love-offering/article5029922.ece). Accessed 20 Oct. 2019.

## Apropos Tagore's *The Home and the World* (GHARE BAIRE): Transcending Conjuality

---

*N Suman Shelly*

Multiple meanings could be read into Tagore's *The Home and The World* (1916) which is a translation of *Ghare Baire*, which has been consistently and viciously contested over years, in terms of nationalism and gender. Many scholars across the world have adopted this reading strategy in the recent times. This has grabbed the attention and attraction of many scholars. The debate of how to read a text has paved way for textual, contextual to author centric divisions in literature. These schools have opened up new horizons for the interpretation of a text moving beyond the simple literal meaning and to decode new meanings into the characters and events within the text. The Cambridge historian Quentin Skinner's emphasis on authorial intention was an extension of the textual and contextual approaches to interpretation. For that matter, even Terence Ball's *Reappraising Political Theory* (1995) which discusses the theory of interpretation is a significant one. It dismisses the authorial intention behind the text and firmly opens door for the reader's response as the mode of reception. Text is not merely an artifact produced by the author but it is something to be communicated for the reader/ interpreter to receive it. It is in this logical premise that the text *Ghare Baire* is grounded on. Even for Terence Ball, there is no single method of interpreting a text. One rather selects from the variety of strategies depending upon the nature of the interpretative problem. This advocates the text having a life of its own and that it could very well be interpreted and re-interpreted. This whole process of interpretation and re-interpretation over the years enable texts either to be relevant or irrelevant in the contemporary times. It is with this objective that most of Tagore's novels with highly debatable political agenda are taken into close introspection.

My paper intends to re-read Tagore's *Ghare Baire* in terms of figuring out, how the concept of gender has been incorporated with new meanings and its usage in the configuration of the Indian New Woman which is very different from its western counterpart. I would also use two sub-themes which inherently run throughout my paper. First is the concept/configuration of New Woman in India, specifically in Bengal, and second is nationalism. The novel with an explicit political agenda has gender deeply in its aboriginal land. If we look at Edward Said's concept of *Orientalism* (1975) which was later on followed by post-modern emphasis on cultural differences, *Ghare Baire*, in this light becomes quite relevant in order to project Tagore's view point in a different manner.

Rabindranath Tagore was quite unsettled with his creation of *Ghare Baire*. Published in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, this novel created havoc in the then Bengal society. It paved way for serious criticisms and debates. *Ghare Baire*, the Bengali original of *The Home and The World* was written and serialized in a journal *Sabuj Patra* which significantly created a new trend in the Bengali literature. Roughly published between May 1915 and February 1916, the novel vividly unpacks the key social and political issues of Bengal.

As a brief insight, *Sabuj Patra* introduced two different innovations. First innovation was the use of 'Chalit bhasa' i.e. the use of colloquial language instead of 'Sadhu bhasa' i.e. the formal Sanskritized language. Tagore had previously employed informal language but it was personalized letters and diaries. The second innovation was the appropriate concentration on gender, specifically to the question of women's desires and choices. This part of *Sabuj Patra* was very significant because it created a new gender equality in the then Bengal. In fact, most of the stories that Tagore wrote for the journal dealt with the issue of women question and treated women as individual subjects. It is same even in the case of Bimala, the pivotal character of *Ghare Baire*. On the surface level, the novel appears to be a simple story revolving around three main characters- Bimala, Nikhilesh and Sandip. Nikhilesh, Bimala's husband is a young, enlightened, introspective upper-class zamindar who believes in women's independence. He desires for

his wife to be empowered and learn English and western manners from Mrs. Gilby, a governess appointed for the same. The story gains momentum only with the entry of Sandip, Nikhilesh's charismatic Swadeshi friend. Sandip received regular financial help from Nikhilesh against Bimala's wishes. Nevertheless, Bimala's dislike for Sandip transformed the moment she sees Sandip delivering a political speech in a public place. Carried away by Sandip's attractive personality and eloquence, she soon developed an erotic relationship with him. Sandip, being an impassioned advocate of power, strongly desires to control everything including human relationships for that matter. Nikhilesh having known very well about the growing relationship between Bimala and Sandip stays composed though his mental conflict tears apart his heart. Apparently, the novel seems to be a love triangle but soon it goes beyond it to project an undiscovered nationalism, conjugality and patriarchy in the then Bengal. In this light, it is very important to first know Tagore's view point on nationalism and then study its critical reflections into the text.

*Ghare Baire* has questioned the stereotype mainstream conjugality of the then Bengal society which to some extent echoes even in the current times. The institutionalized conjugal life permitted a couple to stay under one roof without knowing each other's interest. It is this novel that projects a new kind of conjugality and the significant aspect of this is equality of men and women. Such a new kind of conjugality was aspired only by Nikhilesh. Initially, the sincere motive of Nikhilesh's aspiration did not interest Bimala as she was functioning in a very conventional manner-

The first two anniversaries of our married life spent in Calcutta where I went through my examinations. But from the next year onwards, for seven years without a break, we have celebrated our union among blossoming water-lillies. Now begins the next octave of my life. It was difficult for me to ignore the fact that the same month of August had come round again this year. Does Bimala remember it, I wonder? –she has given me no reminder. Everything is mute about me (n.pag.).

To Bimala, conjugality was premised in a traditional role played by a woman while serving selflessly to the family. In fact, she was firmly impacted by her mother's chastity and practised that legacy in her own domestic life. Thus, the initial years of her married life was thoroughly invested in worshipping her husband in a much institutionalized format. She even wanted to replace her beauty with chastity. But conventionally speaking, she wasn't that beautiful. Doing all these sort of activities, she was cheating herself as well as her relationship. So by now, we get a clear picture that Bimala and Nikhilesh were neither in good communicating terms nor in sharing their lives which they vowed for. This gap in the understanding of life silently existed despite their physical proximity just like many other Bengali middle class families then and even now.

Tagore's creation of Bimala is a manifestation of his deep desire to construct a 'New Woman' who would be more genteel i.e. educated, sophisticated, upholding the Victorian values unlike the common women who were coarse, vulgar, loud, quarrelsome, devoid of superior morality, sexually promiscuous, subjected to brutal physical oppression by males. Her education is validated until she perfectly plays the role of an intellectual and emotional companion to her husband. Tagore has very interestingly developed the character of Bimala as a New Woman. In his opinion, Bimala should not cross the limited sphere of activity framed essentially for her and if she does, she would be penalized both from inside and outside. So does Bimala at the end of the novel. Traditionally, the New Woman seeks emancipation and steps out of the threshold.

Essentially opined from the perspectives of gender, *Ghare Baire* has a significant narrative style. It is designed as an autobiography of three characters, as if each of them is telling their own tale holding back their secrets from others and yet in debate with one another. It seems like the author is dead and we are engrossed in reading the autobiographies of three different individual, their characters designed in a very unique and different manner from one another. Amidst all these, the most striking feature is woman speaking out her own self—"The self-representing woman is not only a newcomer in Rabindranath's writing, she is startling

new character on the Bengali literary and social landscape” (Sarkar 29).

The trials and tribulations which she as well as women in general encountered is vividly represented through her narration. Many female characters like Nikhilesh’s sister-in-law were pushed hard not to born again as a woman. “No, brother dear,” she replied with a sigh, “I would not live my life again—not as a woman! Let what I have had to bear end with this one birth. I could not bear it over again” (n. pag.).

Further, Tagore has interestingly designed both his male characters as poles apart. Throughout the novel, Nikhilesh describes his relationship with Bimala and others in a very contemplative and non-masterful manner. In other words, he is very much inclined towards the autonomy of women. Sandip is just the opposite of it. He is a man of pelf and power. Sumit Sarkar in his article argues that, Tagore suggested an alternative approach, one that is different from the traditional concept of masculinity while designing Nikhilesh’s character as opposed to the aggressive mainstream represented by Sandip. It is important to be noted that even though both the males are opposite to each other, still there is one thing common about them. If we carefully study, Nikhilesh and Sandip had their own mental parameters to construct Bimala discarding her autonomous subjectivity. Both of these versions of nationalism treated Bimala as their extended colony and desired her to function within their parameters. It is when their authority is challenged; they either disassociate with her like Nikhilesh or dismiss her like Sandip, from their respective lifestyles. Perhaps, Tagore has tried to project nationalism practised in whichever form, lands up in pursuing one’s own self- interest; be it a nation or an individual for that matter. Possibly his nationalism transcends to the horizon of cosmopolitanism and is thus, manifested undiscovered in this novel.

Tagore’s emphasis on morality has been represented very firmly through Bimala. It is just like the women in the novel were enabled space but at the same time monitored by certain code of principles beyond which there lies the prohibited area. Bimala’s exposure to the outside world,



her education and emancipation all meant only for companionate relationship. It is only when she responded to the nationalist call as well as Sandip, and she moved out of the threshold, things took new shape. For that matter, though the call of nationalism could be excused but her attraction and impassioned complicity towards Sandip was thoroughly a violation of the moral code of conduct.

Does that mean that Tagore's novel has lost its relevance for women of contemporary era? Though we might differ from his patriarchal construction of feminine figure which seem to be largely dominated by the then mainstream nationalist discourse yet, is it not true enough that his novel provided a space to women in order to think differently? It is very important to understand Tagore's concept of gender in order to answer these questions. It would be a herculean task to work out on Tagore's view on gender in an intractable manner. His view was marked by occasional shifts and changes. At times, it appears as though his ideas are submerging with the general opinion but it actually stands grounded to its own existence and in reality. For instance, Tagore's early work *Ramabaiyer Baktrita Upalaksh*e published in 1889 when he was just 28 years old discusses the antagonism between the world of a man and a woman as an essential condition of law of nature.

Upholding the age old logical argument of law of compensation, Tagore has argued because of the existing natural differences men and women would complement thereby taking recourse into each other. To him, it is a woman's womb which confines her to the inner world and thus, compels to occupy the backseat against her male counterpart. Tagore strongly objected to the existing differences because he believed in the ultimate objective to retain a harmonious relationship between the inside and the outside. In his opinion, woman's dependence on men is not an obstruction to her liberty rather a greater act of morality. But if we look at Tagore's later creation *Steer Patra* (1914), it seems as though his earlier view has shifted more in favour of women's emancipation. In order to understand the shift, one has to demarcate between women's liberty and women's emancipation. Women's liberty highlights expansion of their socio-cultural, political and economic rights but the concept of

women's emancipation or 'narimukti' is more autonomous in terms of its depth and pervasiveness and has a much wider and larger connotation. Women's gradual discovery of their own selves while pulling down the shackles of patriarchy and culturing their self-reliant powers, uplifting in new ways is what 'narimukti' encapsulates. Thus, 'narimukti' verticalizes itself with an objective to construct a gender-neutral and humane world. Tagore's perception of 'narimukti' has motivated him to create characters like Mrinal in *Steer Patra*, Bimala in *Ghare Baire* and Ela in *Char Adhyay* (1934). Mrinal was a self-made character and has emphatically manifested this idea of 'narimukti'. But in the case of Bimala and Ela, the same idea is manifested in a subdued manner. Tagore's other women characters such as Charulata in *The Broken Nest* (1901), Sucharita and Anandamoyi in *Gora* (1910) epitomize the same. Therefore, it is very important to learn Tagore's women characters in order to comprehend his configuration of the Indian New Woman.

Tagore thoroughly cultivated 'Atmashakti' in the social and political course of his life. Based on it he developed his concept of 'Atmamukti'; though at times both seem to lose their distinctiveness and merge with one another. Tagore through his principles strongly validated as well as endorsed the Indian philosophy of nationalism in opposition to the western materialist civilization. Beside the characters, the conclusion of the novel too creates a sense of enigma in the readers' minds. For instance, Ajit Kumar Chakraborty considers *Ghare Baire* to be an unfinished novel. A similar kind of opinion has been shared in a review by the Times Literary Supplement—"at the end the story grows confused; the counterpoint of the cause and the characters is lost in a mere muddle of both and we are left hardly knowing what has happened. It is, in fact, not an end at all but merely a stop; and we wish to ask a number of questions which the author does not answer." In opposition to this, Rajshekhar Basu opines through one of his articles published in *Prabashi* that the readers often misinterpret the author and his creation. When the characters speak, the reader approaches with a deductive tendency for having spoken on behalf of the author. Basu has even perceived that if the author is less popular the entire attention of the readers fastened

with the characters. As a result, the author seems to be exempted from the critical comments. But if the readers are curious about the author himself, then either he has to meet their expectations or he fails to dispense justice. Such is the case with Tagore. Krishna Kriplani as an erudite critic regards *Char Adhyay* to be the continuation of *Ghare Baire*— in this short but powerful novel he returns to the theme he had discussed earlier, in a different setting in his novel. *The Home and The World*— human values and political ideals. The setting is the underground revolutionary movement in Bengal, against his heroism and its terrorisms depicted the frustration of love and the gradual debasement of human values. The author's analysis of the motives that inspire and condition political heroisms marked by deep insight into the psychology of the characters in this tragic drama of frustrated idealism and is expressed in language of great vigor and beauty. The novel aroused a storm of controversy in Bengal and the author was mercilessly reviled. He had uttered too many home truths (Kriplani, 402).

It is very important to understand the time and context in which Tagore has written in order to avoid mechanical judgement. As an example, Nikhilesh at the end of the novel feels satisfied for having found the ultimate path of truth. Thus, he thinks to have attained freedom along with the acknowledgement of others' freedom, specially 'the world'. Michael Sprinker critically observes this idea—"Nikhilesh's discovering the secret of self- liberation discloses that the subject, which is the agent of his own freedom, depends on the world to realize its freedom" (n.pag). Sprinker was arguing on the point that freedom cannot be given to anyone, one can rather achieve only for oneself. The family structure in the then Bengal society, their interdependence with one another, concept of marriage, mental make-up, and relationships with the family and with the society was very different from that of the west. It was quite unconventional for a woman to step out of their 'andarmahal' and reach the world outside. Even Bimala for that matter, was initially very hesitant to do so only because of the so called conventional concept of socialization. She stepped out only when Nikhilesh insisted her. She could have never realized the true spirit of liberty had she not been

exposed to the world outside. Her association and interaction with Nikhilesh as well as Sandip portrays her perfect exercise of her freedom. Her acquisition of freedom is possible only because of her individual subjectivity. Therefore, universalizing freedom would be inappropriate. When Nikhilesh said, "... I shall allow freedom to others", he might on the surface level appear a liberal humanist but his statement could be interpreted in two different ways. First, freedom is not something to be allowed or enabled but it is a moment of epiphany proclaimed by an individual self. But here, Nikhilesh wants to 'allow' freedom which is again problematic so far as the concept of freedom is concerned and projects him as a conservative patriarch. Second, perhaps he wishes to respect others' freedom unlike the typical husbands of that time and not allowing the social tyranny over the freedom of others, no matter whether it is his wife. From this, I would like to revert back to my introduction on interpretation where I suggested that there is no conclusion to a text. The conclusion is just another packing to be unpacked. *Ghare Baire* has undoubtedly questioned the understanding of conjugality in the Bengali society, yet Bimala's return to her husband without the compulsion of the outside world is very significant. Bimala might be motivated by Sandip for the nationalist call but her dedication towards the nationalist movement was an honest one. Thus, it cannot be questioned. An inner conflict created within her a split personality—"On the one hand I eager that my husband should win in argument and that Sandip's pride should be shamed. Yet, on the other, it was Sandip's unabashed pride which attracted me so" (n.pag). Like Nikhilesh, Bimala too has undergone mental turmoil but unlike her husband her pangs could not afford catharsis before the readers of that time, since she had violated the social code of conduct. Nevertheless, her return to Nikhilesh depicts the importance of family which is the most important characteristic of the Indian New Woman. Family is always at the center and thus, stepping out for self liberation transcends to the manifestation of self- emancipation. The self emancipation or Atmamukti sounds Utopic but has an important tangent of salvation in Indian philosophy. Tagore being a strong believer of Atmamukti would never deprive his women characters from this state of spirituality. Therefore, his creation

Bimala achieves this ultimate objective of Atmamukti standing on the foundation of Atmashakti. This in fact confirms and upholds his unbiased position with regard to gender. Moreover, Bimala's return to Nikhilesh indicates one's commitment germane to one's own relationship. This commitment is not merely retaining the relationship but a commitment to discover one's true self and to realize the self-reliant powers inspecting one another which is otherwise ignored and thus, disappears amidst the thirst of consumerism. This is something which is entrenched deep in our culture; the form changes but the underlying philosophy remains intact. Further, it supports women to re-map their pathway and thus, to relocate themselves within a new literary trend.

### Works Cited

- Ball, Terence. *Reappraising Political Theory*. Oxford UP, 1995.
- Chatterjee, Partha. "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women Question." *Recasting Women*, edited by Kukum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, Zubaan Publications, 1989.
- Kriplani, Krishna. *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*. Grove P, 1962.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Patheon Books, 1978.
- Sarkar, Sumit. *Beyond Nationalist Frames- Relocating Post Modernism, Hindutva, History*. Orient Blackswan, 2004. .
- Sarkar, Tanika. "Country, Women, and God in the Home and the World." *The Home and The World: A Critical Companion*, edited by P. K. Datta, Permanent Black, 2002.
- Skinner, Quentine. "Gender and Nationalism: Tagore's Home and the World and Four Chapters." *Women and Tagore Recreating the Space in New Millenium*, edited by R. Basu, Abhijeet Publications, 2002.
- Sprinkers, M. "Homeboys: Nationalism, Colonialism and Gender in the Home and the World." *Rabindranath Tagore's The Home and The World: A Critical Companion*, edited by P.K. Datta, Permanent Black, 2002.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. *The Home and The World*. Translated by Surendranath Tagore, Penguin, 2005, [www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/rt/hw.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/rt/hw.html). Accessed 15 July 2020.

## Literature of Change :A Conflict between Faith and Knowledge

---

*Abrar Ahmed*

### **Introduction**

It is a fact, that society has set out violent adventures and measures to discover the potentiality of man. It appears to them but a very few have believed in the 'power of pen' to mould the minds of men. It also never believed in its ability to produce uprisings with revolutions, to ruin reputations and turn kingdoms. The 'mighty pen' sowed the seed of literature of protest. It poured out and is used as weapon to demonstrate the struggle between ideologies of Secularism , religious belief, Modernism and Fundamentalism. The primary objective of the present paper is to ponder upon literature, which carry the torch of change and stir the thinking of those who come across.

A single paper falls short to comprehend the entire changes with fluxes that came between 15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries during inevitable movements like 'Italian Renaissance', 'The Protestant Reformation', 'The Price Revolution', 'The Scientific Revolution', 'The Enlightenment Period', 'The American Revolution', 'The French Revolution', and 'The Russian Revolution'. It is also herculean for a paper to count all changes that are happening round the world nevertheless , it will try to trace the footprints that are still visible in the erosion of moral values in politics, the spreading separatist movements, the exploration of religious sentiments for political ends resulting in the slow but sure degradation of Tagore's idea of freedom. In addition, it assesses the degree to which these works are still a boon for the society.

### **Need of the Analysis**

It has no doubt that literature can be a chief tool to bring awareness among the people. It can sensitize the people to give equal and mutual

respect to people of all caste, tribe, sect or nation. There is a huge task for literature to bridge the gap between people at regional, national and international levels. The researcher felt the urge to search online about the literature of change but none of the direct subject papers were spotted ,so the brief revisit was planned.

### **Primary Objective**

This paper tries to revisit the major change bringing works and writers associated with the major movements. Art and literature are the main tools to propagate the necessary politics. These also play an important role in the process of nation building and propagating peace.

### **What is Literature of Change?**

The literature of the world today shaped itself after a long journey. It also brought change as it stirred the imagination of the present world. The impact of literature in modern society is at its peak. It acts as a carrier of expression of an author. Some books reflect society and allow us to know the world. It is also a reflection of humanity and a way for us to understand each other. It keeps on changing time to time. Langston Hughes writes in regard to change, “That all these walls oppression builds / will have to go!” Others seek ways to actively “make peace,” as Denise Levertov implores, suggesting that “each act of living” might cultivate collective resistance.

The ‘history of change’ unfolds an ocean of ideas, most of which were propagated through writing. The thirst of men for freedom in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were quenched through the writings of great men like Jean Jacques Rousseau, in France and Karl Marx, in Germany. They gifted identity to the people in chains. They brought about a paradigm shift in the social climate. The ideas and historical scenario of the world directly or indirectly shaped literature. Today, in the field of literature we also have ‘protest literature’ this can be termed as literature of change.

### **What is Protest?**

According to *British Oxford Dictionary*, “Protest is a statement or action expressing disapproval of or objection to something”(04). A protest

is an objection of words or actions to specific events, policies or situations. It can be of various forms, from individual statements to joint gatherings. Protesters may influence public opinion or government policy, or can undertake direct action to attempt for a change.

Deconstructionists make an argument that all literary writings are a form of protest. Social and historical critics aim that it should contain a political aim, such as changing of law. A Marxist critic might prefer to scrutinize the social order in terms of the justice to social classes. A feminist critic carry the view that protest does or does not promote a gender bias. A psychologist design it as a manifestation of the subconscious. A traditional literary critic take it as a the moral relationship between aesthetics and the political message of protest literature. Our overall mission is to understand all these approaches and more as we embrace the plurality and diversity of protest literature.

The Italian Renaissance carries the development of naturalistic works of art, the study of ancient Greek authors, above all Plato, and the critical study of Christian texts. The implications of this movement cannot be compared with the modern political and social revolutions but it somehow bought fundamental changes in values and institutions, the effects of which were not confined to Europe's elites. The wealthy cities began to finance the great artistic achievements of this Renaissance. The rise of Humanism became a major theme during this time period. Majority of the artists, thinkers and philosophers had a strong belief in God but saw a lesser intimidating role of God in daily lives. Thus, began the search for Humanism or the proper study of life. Some of the other great philosophers, scientists, artists and literary writers produced by this period are Descartes, Sir Francis Bacon, and Isaac Newton. The thoughts and writings of these thinkers changed the outlook of the people.

Another revolution was the Protestant revolution of the sixteen century. It was a protest against Roman Catholicism. This movement began with Martin Luther (1483-1546), the religious reformer born in Eisleben, EC Germany. He is associated to the emergence of Europe from the shadow of the Catholic Church. The Reformation was not to get away



from the Church but a thoughtful effort to amend the many mistakes Martin Luther saw in the Church. The Price Revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century resulted because of the discovery of new world resources such as Silver and Gold that resulted in high rates of inflation, especially for food prices and led to economic despair throughout the world.

### **The Major Change**

Scientific revolution initiated when Nicolaus Copernicus published his work *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* (1543). This revolution laid the foundations for the evolution of Modern Science. The revolution booted in the field of Astrology by men like Galileo who overturned much of the old beliefs and teachings of establishments and was even persecuted for those ideals. But the questioning of ideas and the physical world led to more thinkers who began to revolutionize the fields of Astrology, Biology and Physics and soon set the basis for modern day Science. Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1830) revolutionised the concept of the origin of man. It was a fatal threat to the belief of Christianity. To the Christians, God created man in his own image and likeness, Genesis chapter 1 verse 26 of the *Bible* says "Let us make man in our image" But Darwin's theory rejected any supernatural activity in the evolution of man as it proves that it originated from pre-cells ,here onwards this theory challenges the facts of Islam also as it claims that Adam(A.S.) was sent from Paradise. The world has seen huge debates over it and it has changed the outlook of Biology. This change in thinking and perception in the scientific community has bought the world to the present day.

The age of Enlightenment began around the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the major philosophical arguments for human reason or rationalism and was not marked by any set of unifying ideas. Some famous people who influenced and revolutionized the world of this period were, Thomas Abbt, Beethoven, Edmund Burke, Thomas Hobbs, Immanuel Kant and Thomas Jefferson. Another significant revolution that elevated the living standard of the people was the Industrial Revolution of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It changed the productive capacity of England, Europe and United States and transformed them to its very roots. The

Industrial Revolution initiated the origins of modern Western society. The American Revolution (1765-88) is another revolution that changed the course of history. It was the political upheaval during the last half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in which thirteen colonies in North America joined together to break free from the British Empires combining to become the United States of America.

### **Who are the Writers?**

It will be difficult to count the writers as they are large in number and are not from some specific era or group. To take for instance, Salman Rushdie and Dan Brown wrote with a different approach. In this regard Temjenwala says “The approach of Rushdie is controversial hurting religious elements but his magic realism bought a new dimension in literary fiction. Both Rushdie and Brown’s work of art bought a new revolution”(30). Other icons namely Om Prakash Valmiki, Munshi Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand, Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, Sadat Hasan Manto, Arundhti Roy and Taslima Nasrin came exposing the ills of society around them using their boldness as a weapon. They booted autobiographical elements in their fiction which shaped realistic novels. Their experiences are well-traced in their works that the reader can feel the silent protest vibrating with the ink.

The works of the enlightenment authors Rousseau, Voltaire and Montesquieu all reshaped the changing ideas of liberty and forms of government, which contributed to the start of the French Revolution. Rousseau died in 1778 .It was the time when France was at the height of its enlightenment. He effected the French perception of civilization’s consequences upon liberty and most of his works deal with the mechanisms through which humans are forced to give up liberty. In Russia, the revolution of 1917 is closely associated Karl Marx. Though he did not anticipate a revolution during his time, it happened after his death in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with his thoughts penned in *Das Capital*. His book was a libratory force. It gave strength to the oppressed. His theory gave rise to modern critical approaches to literature and criticism. It gave literature a new form of art. According to Marxism the economic and social conditions affect every aspect of an individual’s life from

religious beliefs to legal systems and to cultural frameworks. It gave the idea that the role of art is not only to represent such conditions truthfully, but also seek to improve them. To dare to be different is an ingredient of change. In the romantic period the romantics wore fantastic costumes with shinning hair, glowing face to differentiate themselves from the bourgeois as a sign of protest. Eliot's poetry from that age speaks volumes to the modern day man. The influence of various literary sources be it written, oral, or through media, is immense. Rousseau and Marx left behind them their thoughts implanted on written pages which turned the world. Next to the Renaissance, the Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century also played a significant role in seeking a remedy for injustice. It was an intellectual movement that sought the perfection of human society through applied reasoning. The two glorious historical movements gave the world the leading figures and influential thinkers like William Shakespeare, Francois Rabelais ,Leonardo Da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Miguel de Cervantes, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

### **The Shaping of Present Age**

Inspired writers are different from the common people. It is so because they elevate human lives. This gives the idea of how a writer connects the people and society side by side. So, as literature progress the consciousness of the society was aroused subtly penetrating the hearts of the readers. The revolutionary thoughts gave birth to humanity and gave modernity the present shape.

Temjenwala has observed "When we look at the writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century like "George Bernard Shaw in England, Maxim Gorky and Sholokhov in Russia, Lu Xun in China, Prabha Neruda in Chile, Prem Chand and Subrahmanyam Bharti in India all faced hostility and were marginalised" (14).

### **A Different Prospective**

These writers were different in their approach to literature. They tried to portray life in society in all their totality. Slowly the mentality of the people became broader and people began to identify themselves with the characters in literary writings. Literature is larger than life. Just like

the cartoon features portray larger than life messages, literature plants the seeds of change. The literary shifts and developments show that class struggle, economic imbalance, political upheavals and religio-scientific temper greatly influences literature.

In the same way , Angela Observes, “Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* is an example of pure fiction, yet the book is written in a style that renders it a cursory believability. Salman Rushdie’s prose is world class, though untraditional. It offers a new literary genre”(65).Also, Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci code* as a novel exerts suspense at its best. It is another work of fiction , which viewed from an aesthetic angle opens scope for a new dimension in writing. With the same measure to Rushdie, we can say that he caught attention of people with the thrilling plot and the connecting sub-plots. Christian denominations did not like the book. It is charged for attacking on the Roman Catholic Church as it has historical and scientific inaccuracies.

The Indian Government’s ban on *The Satanic Verses* has been supported by a large number of distinguished Hindu, Sikh, Christian, as well as Muslim intellectuals of the country. A letter to *The Indian Post* was signed by J P Dixit, Nissim Ezekiel, Jean Kalgutker, Vrinda Nabar, Vaskar Nandy, V Raman and Ashim Roy, asking whether India’s ban of the book was a case of building a repressive society? *The Times of India* answered:

No, dear Rushdie, we do not wish to build a repressive India. On the contrary, we are trying our best to build a liberal India where we can all breathe freely. But in order to build such an India, we have to preserve the India that exists. That may not be a pretty India. But this is the only India we possess (*Al-Qalam*, Nov-Dec 1988: 56).

The next comes Taslima Nasrin, she as a humanist, a rationalist, an atheist is the well-wisher of all humans in the world. A humanist reacts to the human sufferings anywhere in the world. When Hindus are butchered by Muslim culprits in Bangladesh she condemned them. Similarly when Muslims are butchered in Gujarat (India) by Hindu culprits she condemned the Hindu culprits. She deeply studied the reasons for

human suffering and writing for the human welfare in the world. The religious fundamentalists have misunderstood her. She is not against any religion. She is against those exploiters who are causing human suffering. Enmity between religions is causing wars between nations in the world. As a humanist, she is against extremism and fanaticism in religion. Humanists have explored all religions

Valmiki as a writer has done much to stake out a space for Dalit literary expression, well exemplified by his narrative. His novel *Joothan (The Left-Over Food)* (1992) is a fascinating cultural and personal history. It is about a searing memoir of the life of a sensitive and intelligent dalit youth in independent India. *Joothan* tells us how Valmiki overcame contempt, humiliation, and violence to gain education and join the slowly growing ranks of Dalit intellectuals in India. It is also an account of the untouchables in India of the 1950s

In India, amidst its propagation of “Unity in diversity” one negative aspect of dividing the people into caste system is that people are segregated and there is less room for giving an environment of oneness. Individualism and casteism are rampant where people belonging to the oppressed group are made to divert from their group in search of status. In India, it has become a common practice where people from deprived castes in order to clinch a niche for themselves change their religion and names. Social recognition and appreciation are achieved through educational achievements. But according to Om Prakash Valmiki, no matter how much one achieves one does not receive the respect and acknowledgement from one’s own village. It is sad to see such marginalised group in the world’s largest democratic country. Though India is considered as the largest democracy in the world, there is much to be done to remedy the injustices and discrimination meted to the minority and other such groups.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Research**

1. It carries no doubt that literature holds the key to progress towards constructive revolutions and also trigger seeds of unrest. There is much scope in literature to venture in the arena of peace-building forces through the power of pen.

2. Literature need to be explored beyond what we have today. The thoughts of great men and the waves created by them need to be pondered and researched to add colour to literature.
3. Literature receives and reflects the life of man and society. The circumstance in which a writer writes is important but the effect produced by his writing is more important.

We find that the creation of great literature and its assimilation enable those fortunate enough to be able to devote themselves to it to relish the play of their own mental powers in a way that is far beyond the animal. Literature is power. There is immense 'cure' in literature if one searches it with a global humanistic perspective. It can bring out the goodness of human nature.

### Works Cited

- African-American Literature. Wikipedia.com, retrieved from [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American\\_literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American_literature). Accessed 10 Oct. 2019.
- "All About Protest." daily. jstor.org. com, retrieved from [bu.digication.com/syiport/What\\_Is\\_Protest\\_Literature](http://bu.digication.com/syiport/What_Is_Protest_Literature). Accessed 12 Oct. 2019.
- Carter, Angela. *The Rushdie File*. Fourth Estate, 1989.
- Dan, Brown. *The Da Vinci Code*. St. Martin's P, 2003.
- Hughes, Langston. "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." *Modern American Poetry*, [www.modernamericanpoetry.org/content/langston-hughes-negro-artist-and-racial-mountain-1926](http://www.modernamericanpoetry.org/content/langston-hughes-negro-artist-and-racial-mountain-1926).
- Literature as Resistance*. daily.jstor.org. com, retrieved from [daily.jstor.org/friday-reads-literature-resistance](http://daily.jstor.org/friday-reads-literature-resistance). Accessed 10 Oct. 2019.
- Marx, Karl. *Das Capital*. U of Chicago P, 1867.
- . *The Communist Manifesto*. Penguin, 1967.
- "Poems of Protest, Resistance, and Empowerment." daily.jstor.org. com, retrieved from [www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/101581/poems-of-protest-resistance-and-empowerment](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/101581/poems-of-protest-resistance-and-empowerment). Accessed 10 Oct. 2019.
- Rocha, Prema Angela. "Salman Rushdie: A Critical Study of His Novels." Unpublished Ph.D. Diss., Goa U, 2008.
- Temjenwala, A. "Literature of Revolution, Violence and Protest." Unpublished Ph. D. Diss., Nagaland Central U, 2013.

## Crossing Inner Borders: Multiculturalism in Anita Desai's *Bye Bye Blackbird*

---

*Poonam Charan*

In today's world it has become difficult to capture the identity and the history of immigrant community. The United Kingdom is still considered to be a multicultural society and a heaven for immigrants across the globe despite the fact that problems like racism still persist. Britain's former Prime Minister David Cameron's controversial statement that multiculturalism in the United Kingdom has failed, stirred the conscience of immigrant community.

The term multiculturalism is not new to the world but it gets special meaning if we consider it as a result of colonization. It has influenced every aspect of human life. In a multicultural society, several cultures coexist and they contribute in the process of acclimatization. America and other European countries having multi-ethnic societies helped to grow multiculturalism with support of civil rights movements and feminist movement. *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* defines multiculturalism as the practice of giving importance to all cultures in a society and it includes people of several different races, religions, languages and traditions.

It is compared to the terms such as 'melting pot' where ethnic minorities give up their identity to mix with the general society and 'bowl of salad' where every piece maintains its taste. In a multicultural society each individual has opportunity to preserve his identity. Multiculturalism is an ideology which describes the coexistence of many cultures without any one culture dominating the other to overcome racism, sexism and other discrimination. James Trotman in his book *Multiculturalism: Roots and Realities* states:

Multiculturalism is valuable because it uses several disciplines to highlight neglected aspect of our social history, particularly the histories of women and minorities... and promotes respect for the dignity of the lives and voices of the forgotten. By closing gaps, by raising consciousness about the past, multiculturalism tries to restore a sense of wholeness in a postmodern era that fragments human life and thought (66).

Anita Desai's novels are concerned with the socio political themes of the East-West encounter. She presents the theme of immigration and uprootedness with graphic details. Anita Desai's novel *Bye Bye Blackbird* is about problem of adjustment in an alien land. The story revolves around two men from India who find it difficult to acclimatise in the postcolonial London. Dev is an ambitious man who comes to England to pursue higher degree and return back armed with a foreign degree, his friend and host Adit is an Anglophile but still convinces himself of his new life and homeland. Significant changes take place during the course of the novel. Adit leads a happy and peaceful life in London with his wife Sarah. The heroine of the novel Sarah is weak and becomes president victim of social and psychological alienation. Both Adit and Sarah suffer humiliation because of cultural prejudices. Sarah cooks Indian food and listens Indian music for Adit's sake. Adit's friend Dev arrives in England to stay with them. They live together and the story revolves around number of their outings together. After some time it turns out that Adit is not satisfied with his current situation and longs to return to his native place, while Dev starts to find England appealing and decides to stay there. The two friends Adit and Dev undergo drastic changes as the story unfolds with regards to their characteristics and their life in England.

New Historicism helps us to distinguish and comprehend any text as a product of a particular culture, and every text modifies our understanding of a period in history. We read facts in history books, but literary texts help us to observe the hidden meaning. Anita Desai's novel *Bye Bye Blackbird* helps us to understand the possible reasons behind the failure of multiculturalism in Britain, if indeed it has failed.



The doubts and dilemma of the first generation of immigrants who came to England immediately after the partition of the Indian subcontinent are depicted in the novel in great detail. In the novel Dev wonders why he came to England and why India was not enough. He ponders over the question and satisfies himself with the answer, "I am here, to interpret my country to them, to conquer England as they once conquered India, to show them, to show them" (123). But he knows the real reason behind his migration, "All I want is- well, yes, a good time". In the above excerpt we can clearly observe that while the colonial period was over, the common man still felt them to be quite alive.

In the era of globalisation where people migrate in huge numbers it become difficult to locate the culture and endings and beginnings of a nation. Due to constant migratory process national boundaries have become vague and indeterminate, whereas physical boundaries still exist. Homi K. Bhabha in an essay "Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation" states that, "the space of the modern nation people is never simply horizontal" (293), implying that every nation has a diverse background, and that it is difficult to capture its essence. The text presents the trials and tribulations of first generation immigrants' community and the issue of identity which is probably one of the reasons behind the failure of multiculturalism.

In *Bye Bye Blackbird*, the protagonists are victims of social issues and they start feeling racism related troubles. During the 1960s Briggs noticed that immigrants had become an accepted part of the British landscape, if not yet the community(367). This aspect is visible in *Bye Bye Blackbird*, the two men are financially stable, but they do not mingle with English friends, and don't participate in Britain's social life. They are mainly alone and find peace interacting with the Indian friends. Sarah on the other hand is very different from Desai's other heroines. Sarah loves Adit but she hides her relationship from her own people. Sarah is almost in an exile in her own country.

Bindulata Chaudhary in her essay 'The Role of Women in Modern Indian Society' remarked that Sarah is painted as a lifeless character,

with a spectacular spiritual death with inside and whole is given to herself Sarah feels loneliness after marrying an Indian and tries her best to adjust in the present conditions. She performs her domestic and official duties with patience. Adit is a typical Indian husband who is least bothered about the feelings and convenience of his wife. She has lost her identity and appears meek and submissive, "...if Sarah had any existence at all and then she wandered, with great sadness, if she would ever be allowed to step of the stage, leave the theatre and enter the real weather English or Indian, she did not care, she wanted only sincerity its truth..."(35).

In *Bye Bye Blackbird* there are strong depictions of racial related incidents. When Adit and Dev wait for a bus, a boy yells "Wog" at them. In the neighbourhood an old lady shout, "Littered with Asians! Must get Richard to move out of Clapham, it is impossible now" (16). Even Sarah is insulted because of her husband. When she goes to work children call her:

"Hurry, hurry, Mrs Curry" (34). She feels ashamed to talk about her marriage.

In an essay on multiculturalism, Bhikhu Parekh states that, "citizenship is about status and rights; belonging is about acceptance, feeling welcome, a sense of identification". The novel clearly shows that it is not necessary if a person has been granted citizenship of a country, he would be able to fit in and feel at home. At the beginning of the novel, Adit is cheerful and proud, he sings all the time and then, without providing any explanation whatsoever, Desai writes:

But now his own education, his "feel" for British history and poetry, fell away from him like a coat that has been secretly undermined by moths so that its sinews and tendons are gone and, upon being touched, crumbles quietly to dust upon the wearer's shoulders. Unclothed, Adit began to shiver in the cold and fear the approaching winter. (182)

In above example the protagonist's identity is presented as a coat which is the outer self, while his inner self is quietly being eaten away. Adit is not able to bear the present circumstances, but at the same time he

cannot run away from his present. He longs for the past, the free life in his homeland. Adit's life in London had been unhappy all the while, at the level of the subconscious, and felt that he did not truly belong in Britain, although he pretend otherwise. The theme of character alienation offers glimpse into the deeper psychic state of the protagonists. R. S. Sharma states "the tension between the local and the immigrant blackbird involves issues of alienation and accommodation that the immigrant has to confront in an alien and yet familiar world".

In the beginning Adit appears to be living the immigrant dream: he has a pretty and caring English wife, he lives in a nice flat and has a pleasant job. Whereas Dev finds it difficult to adapt in his new surroundings. He always wears watch, it is something that helps him organize his day and wonders if his watch, "had died in the night of an inability to acclimatize itself" (5). He becomes nostalgic about the cup of tea he would have gotten in India, "It was the first lesson his first day in London taught him: he who wants tea must get up and make it. (6).

At the end of the novel Adit moves into a dark depression. He feels like a stranger in his London flat, "like a stranger arrived at an hotel in a strange city"(179). It appears that Adit is satisfied with his decision to return to India, "now he was going to carry the message of England to the East- not the old message of the colonist, the tradesman or the missionary, but the new message of the free convert, the international citizen, a message of progress and good cheer, advance and good will" (225).

Whereas Dev is the one who stays in England. He decides to stop talking about the London School of Economic and talks about finding a job in London. He tells Adit that he cannot waste his time in school and that the streets of London are a rich education: "it is partly the reasons. The other part is something he cannot explain, even to himself, for it is only a tumult inside him, a growing bewilderment, a kind of schizophrenia that wakes him in the middle of the night and shadows him by day, driving him along on endless tramps in all weathers while he wonders whether he should stay, or go back (85-86).

Ashcroft in his postcolonial theory refer to, “the colonized others who are marginalized by imperial discourse, identified by their difference from the centre” (170). Adit and Dev’s migration was voluntary, but they still not feel at home. As the story progresses their inner selves keep changing. Adit and Sarah’s estranged relationship further states the point of his otherness. Sarah has mixed feelings about her marriage and even about the child she is carrying, but she does not wish to leave him. Nevertheless she goes to India with Adit.

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011, UK’s Prime Minister David Cameron declared, in a speech to an international security conference in Munich that state multiculturalism in the UK has failed. It was said regarding Government’s announced anti terrorism strategy, but it caused a great public stir. Some read this statement as an attack on Britain’s ethnic minority groups, but others saw it as a true depiction of the state of modern British society.

The first generation of immigrants faced multiple challenges and were in the most difficult position. But even today immigrants are facing similar problems and they find it difficult to fit into their adopted community. The possible reasons for the failure of multiculturalism has constantly being assessed and reassessed. Desai’s novel presents the obstacles which first generation immigrants faced.

## Works Cited

- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. Routledge, 1998.
- Bhabha, Homi K. “Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation.” *Nation and Narration*, edited by Homi K. Bhabha, Routledge, 2009.
- Briggs, Asa. *A Social History of England*. Pelican, 1987.
- Desai, Anita. *Bye Bye Blackbird*. Orient Paperbacks, 1985.
- Parekh, Bhikhu. “What is Multiculturalism?” *Seminar Magazine on CD-ROM* 1988-1999.
- Sharma, R.S. “Alienation, Accommodation and the Local in Anita Desai’s *Bye Bye Blackbird*.” *The Literary Criterion*, 1979.

## Autonomy in the English Teaching Classroom in India

---

*Rekha Tiwari*

Autonomy, today is an extensively used term in the context of higher education. The concept of autonomy is as complex as the blend of freedom and responsibility. In fact, autonomy well balances between learning and teaching and there is a considerable shift in this approach from “teaching” to “facilitating” in which it positively turns towards responsibilities of both teacher and learner. Learner autonomy, learner responsibility and motivation are always related with each other as no one can learn new things if they are not enough motivated.

The Teacher, no doubt, has got a very important place in any EFL and ESL classroom. It is most often told about him that he is the best of all the equipments and his method is the best. The point in all this is that it is on the teacher’s resourcefulness, his confident handling of the subject, his dynamism, his vision and his insight into the complexities of character and functioning of the EFL and ESL classrooms that much depends. If marvel and magnificence are the goals, if laurels and success are the objects of achievement, certainly the teacher has to be made independent.

This paper attempts to trace the possibilities in linking autonomy with EFL and ESL in higher learning system and to allow freedom of situation to the teacher and specifically on the freedom to select and teach pieces of literature. Under a totally surveillance full atmosphere when given to work, the teacher would automatically feel compelled to work to the time of the dictates of his conscience.

His dedication part and his commitment may be the factors left to worry the administrators and planners and progress-reviewers and result-watchers/ analysts, but in the character and integrity of the teacher

rather confidence should be reposed. It needs be a guiding principle of teacher-administration to leave things to himself and allow him to employ his abilities, his skills and his imagination to develop the learners under him. Because performance-assessment-conscious every individual teacher by nature is, it must necessarily be his honest and sincere endeavour to put in all his manifold skills to service to see that his price and honour are not staked. It is to this kind of a challenge of the situation that the teacher needs be exposed. Under a totally surveillance-free atmosphere when given to work, the teacher would automatically feel compelled to work to the tune of the dictates of his conscience. And when this be the case, the teacher cannot but most involvedly put his services to chisel out the raw and rough stuff at his control to the finest possible polish and finish.

On the need to allow freedom of situation to the teacher and specifically on the freedom to select and teach pieces of literature, comments S. Krishnamoorthy: "The main point I want to drive home is whatever literature we might teach and, however much we might teach of it must be planned with the language knowledge, the maturity and the interest of the learner in mind and the planning must be done by no one but the teacher, who is the only one competent to do it and also, this plan must be open to any modification at any time. That is to say the syllabi must be kept open and the teacher must have his freedom of choice of literary texts, which he should select with the learner in mind" (71) ("The Role and Significance of Literature in ELT in India," Ajanta Publication, New Delhi, 1985, from his article on "Literature in ELT in part-time courses").

On the need to so rely on the ability, concern and responsibility of the teacher, says Krishnamoorthy, quoting Mookerjee, S.K. : "lacking faith in our teachers, we think it necessary to lay down detailed syllabi which include the full range of topics which make up the subject. But the average student today cannot swallow (leave alone digest) so large a dose. He is not in a position to appreciate or enjoy what he is supposed to learn. He does not learn it, he only "learns it up" (70, *Ibid.*, quoted from Mookerjee, S.K. : "Some Modest Reforms in Higher Education," Article in *The Times of India* dated 12<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1983). In context of any

classroom there is indisputable importance of the teacher and he is the only authority with regard to framing of the syllabi, choice of pieces to be included, decision on span of time to be allotted to be spread over to cover the quantum meant to be taught. He asks for a change in our traditional attitude to rigidly insist on a set syllabi that most often is in contradiction with the learners' needs, interests and abilities and thus, leads to defeat the purpose of successful teaching as in consequence the teacher finds himself grappling unnecessarily with a band of disinterested learners whose compelled presence in the class-room is their highest contribution. The teacher in turn himself is infected with disinterestedness resulting mostly out of frustration. He is not able to move up and ahead with the class.

In this case it is an imperative to be weighed adequately to respond to the dynamic teacher's vast possibilities to contribute to the cause of student development which is what an efficient ESL teaching learning system should ensure. Assumptions have to be that the teacher is committed and resourceful. Time that he can spend with students will be made available to him as per his needs and demands. Not a rigid class-timing of 45 minutes, but at times less or more as per needs should be adjusted. A highly responsive and dynamic administrative mechanism is all what such a situation may need. Although adequate information based on proper and well-formulated planning the teacher needs put with his authority, the authority from standpoint of cooperation and understanding must encourage the teacher not even to mind to approach for a change even in the last minute.

In general what in practice is seen is that a routine is thrust upon the teacher. Like a machine only the teacher and the students are made to behave under this situation. Originally the gift of a Behaviourist school of thought, the routine should not be considered to be a flawless and faultless device. It can well be used to discipline the undisciplined, but it will render creativity inoperative as it marks the disciplined, disciplined to the extent of lethargy, inaction and unthinking. A routine may be the most desired tool for an administration working in an over-bureaucratized system. But, for a free thinker and a committed volunteer given to the

dream of raising the young minds to set attainable levels, and a teacher is thinker and volunteer, a routine is the worst detestable thing. It makes imagination a thing not so much cherished to be put to use. Literature, a product of imagination, in such a case becomes a casualty when taught. Bells go on ringing. Students sitting in the classrooms just are compelled to shift on the level of concentration from one grazing pasture to the other like the sheep are led involuntarily by the herd-master.

Teacher-freedom in consistency with the student-interest and choice should go into the framing of the syllabus, especially in literature. In scheme of existing things a team of highly learned scholars and academicians discuss and decide among themselves as to what could be prescribed for different class of students. It is here their tastes and fancies that are understandably brought into dictate terms to the young minds. 'Read this, not that' approach limits the curiosity and explorative potentiality of the young students. What the young students are made to face is a battle of books. A good library is an answer in this situation. Ideally, the students in groups should be made to choose books from the library and recommend the same to be taught to them. The teacher on his part may include, say, all the books picked up by the groups (each group picking only one book) and send the list to the University (with the coverage-plan if possible). Because the students have selected their books of interest, let them cover up the same at their own pace. Without confining only to one book at a time it will be better if portions done by all the groups are done simultaneously or adjustably alternately. This will bring real readership and criticism qualities among students. The teacher here may just remain to indicate, guide, provoke, question, analyse and explain things to students. Freedom of students and their involvement in choosing books, in framing syllabus being thus ensured, they could be encouraged to do writing assignments. Because mostly things have among themselves been done, students may not find it uninvolved and uninteresting. Then their error occurrence rate will, as it is hoped, be less than when an uninteresting thing rigidly is forced upon them.



Even, if possible, making the University system equally responsible and responsive, attempt may be made at creating specialists out of students in particular forms of literature. Say, groups can be identified and led to emerge as specialists in poetry, in drama, in novels and in other such areas. Where script production ability is discovered, groups can be assigned the task to develop manuscripts and with a little editorial assistance these manuscripts can be improved to be later accepted as texts, indigenous library enrichment and creative writers boom can thus be ascertained. Assignments on texts developed out of students' manuscripts for the same students may be of the nature of abstracts writing on the aspects variously relating to their experiences in the society which make their vision and bring them their voice as they manifest in their writing. For the rest of the batches of students who follow the nature of assignment may be of those that are asked traditionally, with the only suggestible improvement introduced in distributing the questions on heads of skill, application, knowledge, etc.

To most such a model may look ridiculous. But the author is optimistic that if such an experiment is allowed keeping in view the autonomy of all within the higher-learning system, the result will be rewarding. The spectre of loss of creativity in our classrooms can innovatively be warded off.

### **Works Cited**

- Krishnamoorthy, S. *The Role and Significance of Literature in ELT in India*. Ajanta Publication, 1985.
- Mookerjee, S.K. "Some Modern Reforms in Higher Education." *The Times of India*, 12 Dec., 1983.

## Post-truth and the Newspaper Discourse

---

*Ankita Swetaparna*

What is Truth? The Oxford dictionary gives the following definitions of ‘Truth’ namely:

- I. [uncountable] the quality or state of being true.
- II. [uncountable] that which is true or in accordance with fact or reality.
- III. [countable] a fact or belief that is accepted as true.

The above definitions of ‘truth’ especially the third definition clearly puts the emphasis on ‘acceptance’ by people, i.e. a fact that most people believe to be true. Now the question arises, what and who defines what is called ‘truth’?

Truth is being defined by those in power. It is mostly laid out by the dominant social groups such as the elites, by institutions and groups in power who define what is to be believed to be true. As Dijk points out, this social power is based on privileged access to socially valued resources, such as wealth, income, status, position, force, group membership, education or knowledge (254). And this power involves ‘control’ where members of one group control the other groups. It is this control which exhibits itself in controlling actions as well as their cognition. Hence, a powerful group eventually limits the freedom of action of others or influences their mind.

In the modern times power is mostly manifested in the form of persuasion, dissimulation, and manipulation to change the minds of others in accordance with one’s own interests. It is here that we see ourselves being caught up in what can be called the ‘post-truth’ world.

Post-truth is not ‘after truth’, but how we define ‘truth’ in such a scenario where it is defined by those in power. Even though the word ‘post-truth’ has entered the Oxford dictionary recently, the form in which the

post-truth world is expressing itself is new, not the idea. Political thinkers for the last 200 years at least have talked about two things: 1) How the structure of power changes social consciousness and 2) about either the impossibility of truth or the multiplicity of truths. Antonio Gramsci on the idea of hegemony had said, if the ruling elites controlled the media and the instruments of cultural communication, they could convince the masses against their interests.

In 2016, 'Post-truth' was selected by the Oxford dictionaries as the 'Word of the Year'. It is an adjective which is defined as a term 'relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief'. In a post-truth world such as today's, objective facts are becoming less and less influential in affecting people's behaviour and their decision making ability whereas subjective opinions are becoming more and more important. Post-truth has gone along with the related phenomenon otherwise known as 'alternative facts', 'fake news' and 'lies' and the end result is very serious as we cannot know who or what to believe. This may have been responsible for the result of the Brexit vote in Britain and may have had a significant influence on the American presidential election 2016. These were the major political issues, which paved the way for the entry of this new word in the Oxford dictionary 2016 and ever since have become a subject of debate among modern thinkers and philosophers. Post-truth has come about through the multiplication of new media which has paved the way for all kinds of assertions made based on one's subjective opinion (those in power) without any validation of the facts. MacIntyre, in his book named *After Virtue* talks about the moral theory known as 'emotivism' where he says that when we lose a sense of objective morality in truth, moral judgements are simply expressions of our personal feelings. Truth disappears and feelings win. And under those circumstances there is no point of being honest, as there is no real truth there to be had and it is the most manipulative, most persuasive lie, that wins.

And the newspaper discourse is no exception as the 'post-truth' phenomenon has its pivotal role to play in persuading the public. As has

been discussed earlier that truth is being defined by those in power, we see that this power is enacted and reproduced by subtle routine everyday forms of text and talk that appear natural and quite acceptable. Some members of the dominant groups and organisations also have a special role in planning, decision making and control over the relations and processes of the enactment of power through the medium of newspaper discourse. Just like any other social practices, the newspaper discourse entails meanings and it is these means which shape and influence what we do and also our conduct (Hall 291).

In a social construction, truth is defined by those in power and hence the facts are also socially constructed. The way we see reality is partially influenced by the objective truth and most of the time social processes end up affecting how we think about the reality or what we think 'truth' really is. Each of us has the very human tendency to go and find information that agrees to what we think. Therefore, we accept a story uncritically, if it confirms what we would like to be true and reject any story that contradicts it and hence tend to be a passive recipient of information most of the time.

Let us look into a few news items as they appeared in two national dailies: *The Times of India* and *The Hindu*.

On 30th October, 2018 the headline in *The Times of India* read:  
*India tops in under-5 deaths due to toxic air, 60,000 killed in 2016: WHO*

There is a sharp tinge of sarcasm in the headline. A dubious distinction has been achieved by India with regard to deaths of children belonging to a distinct age group. It has been further accentuated by pumping in statistical data that forms a part of the headline itself (Mayr 169). The context of the article is created here by emphasizing and highlighting the number of deaths of children in the country. It is done so by using hyperbolic exaggeration in the form of adjectives to convince the readers to have a negative perspective about the air quality of the country such as 'toxic air'.

- I. The headline tries to capture the attention of its readers by giving a very alarming detail regarding the vulnerable, innocent population of the country i.e. ‘under -5’.
- II. In the headline it reports about India which immediately triggers the national sentiment and this has been done successfully by using language as a rhetorical device to arouse sentimentality (Mayr 4).
- III. The event has been selected for a news report for its newsworthiness which is created because it deals with negative events. Hence to further make it alluring for the reader it uses a series of words having a negative connotation in the headline itself .
- IV. The writer in the headline tries to pre-empt the audiences’ interpretation of this news item by providing them with a clearly articulated perspective of ‘health hazards’ which eventually cause deaths. This he does by quoting the health organization like the WHO. By quoting this specialized agency which is concerned with international public health the writer tries to assert that the article is true and authentic.

The use of statistical data helps in convincing the reader about the report being real and conveys that they are more than just numbers. Meanings are drawn on the basis of the way the writer carves them for the reader to believe. The report uses ‘sentimentality’ and ‘sensationalization’ as rhetorical devices to connect with the concerns of the reader and their children.

The same event was reported in *The Hindu* on 30th October, 2018 where the headline was:

Children under 15 at serious risk from polluted air: WHO.

The secondary headline said:

*93% of world’s 1.8 billion children could suffer neuro-development deficits*

The headline talks about an environmental issue which poses threat to the children. To further give authority and legitimacy to the story, the writer quotes the most authoritative and powerful source, WHO, in her narrative (Wodak and Chilton 88). Hence, she warns her readers about

the risk involved when children under 15 years of age inhale it as they are more vulnerable to the effects of pollution than the adults. *The Hindu* tries to cover the event of pollution from an academic point of view and gives details about the various diseases children are prone to when exposed to polluted air.

What is most striking about this headline is that, unlike that of the *TOI*, it does not blame any country in particular, nor does it use any words connoting negative meanings aimed at any country or region. It has used statistics, but in a very limited way, just to press the button of alarm about the huge number of children getting affected by air pollution every day. Though the issue is the same in both the cases, it uses neutral terms to reach out to its readers.

The secondary headline speaks about the health complexity they are going to suffer if necessary steps are not taken immediately:

93% of world's 1.8 billion children could suffer neuro-development deficits.

The use of the modal 'could' is used to warn the public about the effect of polluted air on children. The word 'could' also serves to give a ray of hope to the readers that it can still be stopped if necessary steps are taken. Thus, the word 'could' in the secondary headline sends out a positive message to its readers as opposed to the *TOI* headline which uses negative words and phrases profusely such as 'tops in under-5 deaths', 'due to toxic air', '60,000 killed' in the headline itself.

Though quotations seem to be objective in both the newspapers, they have a purpose which is not objective, but is used as a linguistic strategy to insert subjective opinion into the news article (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001). Hence we see, though both the newspapers quote the WHO, each newspaper quotes different statements released by the WHO as they are subjective and opinionated by the newspaper agency.

Here in the post-truth world, the truth that is defined by facts, itself gets manipulated by the influence of power where facts are socially constructed. This is also manifested in the newspaper discourse where

various rhetorical devices are employed to persuade the readers into believing an event to be true based on carefully chosen facts that are devised to shape their opinions as per one's personal choice.

## **Works Cited**

- Dijk, Teun A. van. *Discourse and Power*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Routledge, 1972.
- Fowler, Roger, et al. *Language and Control*. Routledge, 1979.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selection from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. Translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, International Publishers, 1971.
- Hall, Stuart. "The Determination of News Photographs." *The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance and the Mass Media*, edited by Stanley Cohen and Jock Young, Constable, 1973.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue*. 3rd ed., U of Notre Dame P, 2007.
- Mayr, Andrea. *Language and Power: An Introduction to Institutional Discourse*. Continuum, 2008.
- Reisigl, Martin, and Ruth Wodak. *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism*. Routledge, 2001.
- Wodak, Ruth, and Paul Chilton. *A New Agenda in Critical Discourse Analysis*. Vol.13, John Benjamins, 2005.
- Wrong, Dennis H. *Power: Its Forms, Bases, and Uses*. Harper and Row, 1979.

## The Politics of Domination: West VS West through Orientalism

---

*Anant Dadheech*

Politics as a concept has been seen as a struggle for power. Power is an essentially contested concept. Different social groups practice power as a means to acquire domination over resources both natural as well as human. Power flows through the entire social and political body and is experienced differently by different social groups. According to the liberal view of the politics these resources belong to the entire mankind but there is a sort of open competition to gain them and this competition is operated through politics. For the allocation of the resources politics operates through policy which consists of a network of decisions and executions. Roberts writes, " Politics refers to both an activity and to the study of that activity... as an activity, politics is the process in a social system ... by which the goals of that system are selected, ordered in terms of priority both temporally and concerning resources allocation, and implemented. (20) The social phenomenon is formed by various interest and pressure groups which look for power to catch hold of these resources. This process undergoes both cooperation and the resolution of conflict by means of the exercise of political domination. This domination sometimes also goes to the extent of coercion. Orwell in his famous essay *On Gandhi* says that even a saint figure like Gandhi compromised his own principles by entering into politics, which by nature is inseparable from coercion and fraud .(1) Widening the scope of the politics Roberts points out that it usually involves the activities of groups of various kinds , including sometimes groups of a specifically political type, such as political parties . The peculiar character of this political process may be distinguished from other social processes by its concern with the public goals of society.(25) Thus politics is exclusively concerned with the allocation of the resources and this allocation requires power



structure . This power structure refers to conflicts, disputes and wars among various groups of society where the powerful triumphs over the powerless. These resources include power, enlightenment, wealth, health, skills, arts and so on.

The international system as a whole entails a system of states \ nations which seek to take over the resources in their interests. This process is operated through domination. How to create domination over the world has been an indispensable feature of International relations. On international level this power is defined as the ability to get another actor to do what it would not otherwise have done. It may also be defined as an influence to influence others. From the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century International system has been reflecting this power dynamics. A few great powers and their military alliance dominate the world order. Two superpowers with their allies defined the system during the cold war, and a lone superpower world order shapes the post cold war era. The present unipolar system has a single centre of power around which all other revolve.

But this concept of a new world order headed by US has been debatable and controversial in the world of academics and politics. As a thought there have been group of scholars which claim that a new world order has come into existence which is solely dominated by US. This new order has only one option that is capitalism to regulate the life on this earth leaving all other options meaningless and irrelevant. This world order is further established through hegemony both on economical and cultural fronts .Dasgupta observes that the end of the cold war brought to an end a period of international bipolarity. Academics, social activists and policy makers have since then tried to explore exactly what kind of power structure would replace it. (37)The rise of US as lone superpower has made it able to influence world politics like never before. Smith writes, " ... no one power or group of powers could challenge US hegemony for the foreseeable future. And of course there were those who saw some kind of self interested combination of these two positions being the likely outcome, with the US pulling back from international commitments that were not seen as central to its interests while

aggressively pursuing other interests through its overwhelming economic, political, cultural, and military power. (57) The theorists often point out the conflict between homogenizing, commercialized, and Americanised ways of the global economy and culture with traditional cultures and economy which resist the process of this world order. On this behalf Theory of Dependency propagated by Samir Amin is to be kept in view which relates that after the collapse of Soviet Union the triumph of unfettered market forces and accelerating globalization have left the eastern countries helpless. The new world order introduces such system where these countries have to depend on the superpowers for their economic growth and development. The network of capital along with technology is being spread inevitable for survival. Amin points out, that in economic globalization the nation-state is merely a political system having little control over the economy. He observes, "... An important aspect of the crisis of the state, and more particularly of the nation- state, however the notional, the nation in question may in reality be. In my opinion, this crisis of the state is the product of the growing contradiction between the trans nationalization of capital (and behind it the globalisation of economic life of the capitalist countries of the world generally) on the one side, and on the other the persistence of the idea that the state is only political system that exists in our world." (57)

The process of this political domination over the world may be analysed through two theorists Gramsci and Marx who use to underline the concept of hegemony by propagating that the ruling classes have been able to gain consent for their legitimacy. These two thinkers are of the view that the process of domination is operated through justification on the part of the oppressed people. The main purport of this theory is that the ruling classes have always been able to colonize not through direct force but through indirect means. Under the hegemonic order people accept the subjugation as their means of redemption from the dark world and they work actively by becoming the tools. On this behalf Gramsci differs from Marx in saying that the imperialistic forces first attack the superstructure of the oppressed people. This change in superstructure brings out a sort of transformation in the psyche of people and they start accepting the domination as necessary and inevitable.

Webster says,” ... under hegemonic control people actively work towards their own subordination, which coincides with the contamination of the dominant power groups.” Gramsci stressed in particular the role of culture as central to hegemony so that a whole range of communication from literature to mass media together with activities such as leisure, contribute to this effect of allowing people to make sense of themselves. This hegemony works on two grounds; first, on political front and second is on cultural fronts. Most studies show that Britain exercised the hegemony in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the US has been exercising it after the World War II following the defeat of Germany and Japan along with the disintegration of USSR. In the late 1940s US GDP was more than half the world’s total. Its military power got the rank of invincible with the nuclear weapons. US industry led the world in technology and productivity leaving the world only with the option to follow it otherwise sinking again into the medieval world. It could herald the ‘end of world’ and ‘the end of civilisation’.

The post cold era witnesses the American domination on the front of politics. Following the overstepping of Iraq in Kuwait for the control of Middle East oil US mobilized a coalition of world’s major countries to counter. In 2003 US and Britain tried to assemble a coalition to force out Iraq’s Saddam Hussein on account of threat of some degenerative weapons. It was projected that the dictatorial regime must be brought to an end in the wake of democracy which can exist and bloom under the umbrella of US flag. The superpower’s functioning is prominent from the point of its economical and political interest. Breaking apart of Yugoslavia into several republics, and the overpowering of ethnic Serbs which killed thousands of Bosnians and Croatians, the great power of America took little interest and showed no willingness. In Somalia, a US led coalition was sent to suppress factional fighting and deliver relief supplies. The attack on US on September 11, 2001 ‘led war on terrorism ‘under the leadership of President Bush. In 2001 US and British forces and their Afghan allies attacked on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan which supported the Al Qaeda network led by Osama Bin Laden who was considered to be responsible for attacks on US. The political domination of US could also be seen in the US-Cuba conflict regarding

the missile crisis of 1962. The Vietnam War of 1960 also marks its domination.

On international scenario the post-cold war is one of the globalization which also marks the informal hegemony of US over the rest of the world in terms of control which is exercised through inter-governmental negotiations which are designed to fortify the global market .The unindustrialized past of the nations of Asia and Africa brought out the interpenetration of capital to that an extent that the national productive system got dismantled and started working as segments of a globalized productive system.

The US global hegemony is at the centre of the international affairs even being surrendered by the challenges of Japan and Western Europe. The reason is that confronted even by increasing numbers of the so called 'enemies' the discipline of bipolarity has ceased to exist. This global hegemony has been the outcome of weakening of the enemies by the disintegration of states, and making such an environment where the nations are busy in never ending internal conflicts. With these internal conflicts there has been always a necessity for intervention in the internal affairs. These conflicts include regionalism, linguistics, cultural assertions, tribal or ethnic, communalism, and terrorism. The key- force behind the politics of domination is geostrategic, the constant search for the base resources allow for rapid intervention, and use of military power over the world's natural resources, as it has been seen in the Gulf War where US tried to pressurize its allies, though at the same time it cannot solely afford to renounce them. Amin points out ,For Washington knew well that if political hegemony is lost, it would be impossible for US to maintain its political hegemony status, notably the use of the dollar as an international currency. Those who argue that the US wouldn't have the necessary financial means to its hegemony because international social pressures have forced it to reduce its expenditure on external interventions, forget that its hegemony is also the best way of keeping the flux of resources in its favour ."(57) However despite all such interpretations the superpower remains super. Global politics has been influenced by the events that are favourable to the superpower. The

North South divide in international relations has largely been influenced by US hegemony and the forces of globalization. The US has played a phenomenal role in shaping the structures of global politics. It has intervened in the global events in the name of peace and development. Undoubtedly the immense presence of US cannot be ignored looking to its gigantic capital and financial institutions. This Americanization is projected as democracy. But as the future is always uncertain and empires cannot sustain themselves for a long time because nothing is absolute as events in international relations and global politics keep on unfolding as time moves on. That is why history is politics and politics is the history of present. History shows that international politics is ever changing looking to its dynamic nature. Global politics is an arena of ongoing and accelerating change. World affairs have traditionally been understood on the basis of an international paradigm. It cannot accept any particular order for a long period of time. The threats to globalization in different pockets of the world seem to be challenging its supremacy which may in future mark the multipolar tendencies. The glittering globalisation leading to the creation of a prosperous world has got broken in the present times with the rise of realist paradigms in international relations.

### **Works Cited**

- Amir, Samin. *Capitalism in the Age of Globalization*. Madhyam Books, 1997.
- Chatterjee, Aniket. *International Relations Today*. Pearson, 2010.
- Clarke, Thomas. *International Corporate Governance*. Routledge, 2009.
- Dasgupta, Sameer. *Globalization and After*. Sage, 2006.
- Gandhi, Leela. *Post Colonial Theory*. Oxford UP, 1998.
- Goldstein, S. Johnson, and C. John Pevehouse. *International Relations*. Pearson, 2009.
- Nayar, M. G. *Essays of George Orwell*. MacMillan, 1980.
- Roberts, K. Geoffrey. *A Dictionary of Political Thought*. Penguin, 1981.
- Smith.S. "The US and International Security." Jean Monnet, Lecture Delivered at the Royal Irish Academi, April 2002.
- Webster, Roger. *Studing Literary Theory*. Arnold, 1990.

## Who is a True Writer?: An Inquiry

---

*Devendra Rankawat*

Let me clarify at the outset that in taking up the task of inquiring ‘Who is a True Writer?’, I no way pretend a claim to butt in on the mid- and late-twentieth century debates on whether the author/writer exists or not. Rather, I am fully convinced that writers do exist. But the issue that I have set for myself to explore is: What kind of writings or what elements contained in a writing would qualify the writer as a true writer? So, one assumption that I hold is that some writers are true writers while many others do not reach such a standing. Of course, then my exploring of the issue will be necessarily limited to my little understanding of life-literature relationship, to my own point-of-view, to my ‘situatedness’ in time and space. But still, what I am committed to do is to transcend the biases I can possibly become self-aware of. Thus, I aim to be bias-free but not perspective-free or absolutely ‘unmediated’ or a ‘view from nowhere’. I admit that there is no escape from how you are ‘placed’ in life.

In a general sense, anyone who writes words or uses written words for communication is a writer. By this definition, then, everyone who can write a language is a writer. Likewise, literature, in a very general sense, is anything that is *written*. It might appear that both writer and literature are so easy to define. But, this is exactly where the catch is! We do not count anyone a writer just because he/she can write words, nor do we count just anything written as literature for the sole reason of it being written. Certainly, there is something more to it.

Historically, most human cultures have had some proto-type image or conception of both *writer* and *literature*. Amongst Greeks of ancient times, poets were seen as prophetic, frenzied and possessed souls. This conception is expressed most eloquently in Plato’s famous banishment

of poets from the 'ideal republic'. Similar attacks on poetry (literature) have been made from time to time and defences too have been almost equally numerous, if not more. The essence of most of the arguments in favor and against is that writers do not work solely through reason. Rather, they harness other cognitive, affective powers too. Emanuel Kant also kept arts/ literature out of the reach of 'conceptualisability', hence called it *noumenal* in contradistinction with the *phenomenal* (Kant). In Elizabethan England, Shakespeare echoed a similar view of poets:

"Poets and lunatic are all of imagination compact" (52).

Later still, John Dryden too reinforced it when he said:

"Great wits to madness are near allied" (121).

Parallel to this tradition of mystifying the art and artists/writers, there has also been a tradition that has seen writers as beings that are capable of transcending their 'situatedness in time and space' and address issues of general significance to the entire humanity. Philip Sidney in his *Apology for Poetry* refutes Stephen Gosson's charge on poetry that it is worthless by pointing out that true/good literature can 'move one to virtue' i.e. it can inspire or stimulate one into becoming virtuous (24). So, what is implied is that a true writer is the one whose writings can inspire virtue, can take one to the path of goodness. Such a conception of writer/literature forms the foundation of what rises to the level of greatness. William Hazlit's idea of greatness sums it up: "No act terminating in itself constitutes greatness" (110). It is when an act is capable of sending out ripples, of influencing others in a wholesome way that it can ever qualify to greatness.

Adding a public character to poets, P.B. Shelley in his *Defence of Poesy* struck the right chord in calling poets the 'unacknowledged legislators of mankind' (23). Shelley's elevation of poets to the legislative function is more relevant for the times when *acknowledged* legislators turn a blind eye to the interests and sufferings of the masses.

Writers may have written, in different times, in whatever forms- poetry, novel, drama, essay, biography, film-script, song or even letter- and they

may have employed a range of media (verbal, graphic, image) to get the intended experience across, there have always been in place some tests or ordeals which all writings/artworks and writers/artists have been subjected to, and evaluated by. These touchstones lie scattered across different literary/artistic traditions in the world. For example, in English literary tradition Dryden's definition of drama as a 'just and lively image of life', Wordsworth's idea of 'general approbation', Alexander Pope's idea of 'oft-thought but never so well expressed', D.H. Lawrence's concept of 'the religion of the blood', and Mathew Arnold's conception of literature as 'criticism of life', have all served as some sorts of yardsticks by which to measure the final quality of artworks or literature. Similarly, in our Indian literary tradition the touchstone is whether it serves as *drishtanta* of life, actions and events or not. (Prasad)

Keeping these parameters in view, a true writer is the one who is sensitive to the entire existence- life in all its forms- and writes out of sheer love of it and compassion for others. The love of all life forms can find expression in the wonder felt at the beauty and grandeur of nature. So we find that most of those designated as true or great writers invariably include nature in their writings. The exact function of such description may vary from background to foreground. Another kind of writers *who love not nature less but man more* focus more on issues relating to human well-being on this planet. Their range is pan-species, at least. Human suffering in all its forms stirs their creative faculties and goads their imagination into creating works that reveal the mantic ways in which human hearts are wounded and pain is inflicted ruthlessly by fellow humans. Writers like Premchand, Bernard Shaw, Baba Nagarjun, later-day Wordsworth, Hemingway, Kabir Das wrote to expose the ills and evils of human society (Iyenger). Their aim was just to enable everyone to see life in all its naturalness and thereby to expose the cruelty and man-madness of all the subtle mechanisms of exploitation, discrimination and dehumanization. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela have all written very little but each word they have said in their speeches qualifies them as true writers in



the pure sense. This is so because each word of theirs is laden with the intent of making this planet a better place to live one, of restoring dignity and happiness to all for the simple reason that they are human beings. This is what a true writer's role is.

A true writer is the one who has a vision for humanity and this vision is necessarily egalitarian. Those who can think of everyone's welfare are the true writers even if they might not have written any best-selling books whereas the writers of the best-sellers are not necessarily the true writers. Most write only to be sold. A rare species of writers writes to inspire humanity towards a better form of existence, to uplift the down-trodden, to equalize the unequals, to bridge the chasms of disparities, to eradicate evils, to eliminate suffering, and to present life for what it is rather than what it should be in order to serve the interests of just one class or community or nation.

Another qualification for a writer of this breed is fearlessness in being ever on the side of truth no matter what the cost be. Premchand once averred "Bigaar ke darr se kya imaan ki baat na kare" (156) (Should I not be on the side of truth just because doing so might harm me in some way?). A true writer is always pro-life and instils life energy in the readers.

While literature might have been defined by some, in both East and West, as a special use of language or self-reflexive, the essence does not lie in the mere formalistic paraphernalia. Rather, it is there in the vision for expression of which all formal innovations are contrived. The real beauty of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* is not just in its depiction or artistic presentation. Instead, the sensitivity towards women's plight and boldness of the proposed solution at the end are two features that largely account for the play's lasting appeal. Nor is Shakespeare or Dostoevsky or Goethe praised by generations of readers alike. Despite all of the post-modernist clamor against universality of literature, it is simply undeniable that there are writers who have universal appeal and whose visions immediately click with people of cultures that are far apart in both time and space. It is writers of this breed who are true writers.

## Works Cited

- Carter, Ronald, et al. *The Routledge History of Literature in English: Britain and Ireland*. Taylor and France, 2016.
- Dryden, John. *Absalom and Achitophel*. Createspace Independent, 2015.
- Habib, M.A.R. *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present*. John Wiley and Sons, 2008.
- Hazlitt, William. *On the Pleasure of Hating*. Digireads, 2010.
- Ibsen, Henrik. *A Doll's House*. Lightening Source, 2014.
- Iyenger, K.R. Srinivasa. *Indian Writing in English*. Sterling Publications, 2019.
- Kant, Emanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Penguin, 2007.
- Plato. *The Republic*. Penguin, 2007.
- Prasad, B. *An Introduction to English Criticism*. Macmillan, 2005.
- Premchand. *Panch Parmeshwar and Other Stories*. Diamond Pocket Books, 2018.
- Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Fingerprint Publishing, 2019.
- Sidney, Philip. *An Apology for Poetry*. Axis, 2011.
- Shelley, P.B. *A Defense of Poetry*. Kessinger Publishing, 2007.

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

- **Dr. Abrar Ahmed**, Lecturer in English, Pacific University, Udaipur, abrar786elt@gmail.com
- **Dr. Anant Dadheech**, Associate Professor, Department of English, M.L.V. Government PG College, Bhilwara, dadhichanant@yahoo.in
- **Ankita Swetaparna**, Ph.D. Scholar, Sambalpur University, Odisha, Email:Ankita.swetaparna@gmail.com
- **Aslam Mohammed**, Research Scholar, Govind Guru Tribal University, Banswara, Email: aslam\_mohammed1984@yahoo.com
- **Balveer**, Assistant Professor of English, Govt. Engineering College, Ajmer, balveerpooniam.churu@gmail.com
- **Bhavani Singh**, Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities & English, JIET Group of Institutions
- **Dr. Devendra Rankawat**, Assistant Professor of English, Central University of Rajasthan, M: 8003866759; devdeli@curaj.ac.in
- **Dr. Dipa Chakrabarti**, Head, Amity School of Languages, Amity University Rajasthan, Jaipur
- **Mandeep Singh**, Assistant Professor, English SRK Government PG College, Rajsamand
- **N Suman Shelly**, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English, Sambalpur University, Odisha
- **Dr. Naresh Patel**, Lecturer, Department of English, Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Kupda, Banswara (Raj.) India, Email: nareshpatelbsw@gmail.com
- **Nisha Paliwal**, MA English, Central University of Rajasthan, India, Email: nishoo1997@gmail.com, Phone no. 7727077465
- **Poonam Charan**, Assistant Professor of English, Govt. College, Bidasar, Email.- charanpoonam2016@gmail.com
- **Rajneesh Kumar**, Ph.D Scholar at MNIT Jaipur, And Assistant Professor of English, Govt Engineering College, Jagdalpur, Bastar, C.G.,E-mail-luhanirajneesh@gmail.com, Mob-9571407410
- **Dr. Rashmi Vyas**, Associate Professor, Jodhpur Institute of Engineering and Technology, Jodhpur
- **Dr. Rekha Tiwari**, Lecturer & Head, Dept. of English, Guru Nanak Girls P.G. College, Udaipur (Raj.)

- **Rince Raju**, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of English, Central University of Rajasthan, Kishangarh, Ajmer
- **Professor (Dr) Sabita Tripathy**, Department of English, Sambalpur University, Sambalpur, Odisha
- **Shankar Lal Dholi**, Assistant Professor, Government College, Gogunda, slvermanimbahera@gmail.com
- **Ms. Shashi Kala**, shashi.tolambe@gmail.com, 9468719210
- **Shashi Kant Acharya**, Assistant Professor, English, Govt. Girls College, Nagaur, kants7912@gmail.com,8946899699
- **Sheikh Suheel Meraj**, Research Scholar, Central University of Rajasthan, 2018Phden003@curaj.ac.in
- **Sucheta**, Research Scholar, Department of English, Central University of Rajasthan,,Ajmer Rajasthan
- **Dr. Sumer Singh**, Assistant Professor of English, Govt. Lohia College, Churu (Raj); E-mail:dr.sumer.singh@gmail.com
- **Dr. Sunil Dutt Vyas**, Assistant Professor (Eng.),Govt. Dungar College, Bikaner.emailvyasyasd@gmail.com Phone No. 9413372504
- **Sunita Sadh**, Research Scholar, Dept. of English, Jai Narain Vyas University, Jodhpur; email: sadhsunita@yahoo.co.in
- **Tripti Soni**, Research Scholar, MGS University, Bikaner, tripti.soni24@gmail.com
- **Ved Prakash Saini**, Lect. in English and Research Scholar of Univ. of Rajasthan (India), Posted at Govt.Varistha Upadhyay Sanskrit School, Chirawa, District Jhunjhunu (Raj). Email:-vedprakashsaini1981@gmail.com Mobile No.9413893221

# THE JOURNAL OF RASE

A Refereed Journal of Studies in English

Conference Papers presented at the  
XVI Annual Conference of RASE hosted by  
Smt. Madi Bai Mirdha Govt. Girls College  
Nagaur (Rajasthan)

09-10 November 2019

*Guest Editor* : Dr. Devendra Rankawat  
*Managing Editors* : Prof. Hemendra Singh Chandalia  
Dr. G. K. Sukhwal

## BOARD OF ADVISORS

- **Prof. Galin Tihanov**  
George Steiner Professor of  
Comparative Literature, Queen Mary  
University, London
- **Prof. Roland Greene**  
Mark Pigott KBE Professor  
School of Humanities and Sciences  
Stanford University, Stanford, CA, USA
- **Seyyed Bagher Mirshojaee**  
Department of Foreign Languages and  
Linguistics, Shiraz University, Iran
- **Prof. Z.N.Patil**  
Formerly Professor  
University of English and Foreign  
Languages, Hyderabad, India
- **Prof. A. Joseph Dorairaj**  
Professor of English and Dean,  
School of English and Foreign  
Languages, Gandhigram Rural Institute  
(Deemed to be University)  
Gandhigram, Tamilnadu, India
- **Prof. Sabita Tripathy**  
Professor and Head  
Department of English, Sambalpur  
University, Sambalpur, Odisha, India

## BOARD OF REFEREES

- **Prof. Umed Singh**  
Professor and Head  
Department of English,  
CDL University, Sirsa, Haryana, India
- **Prof. Jaideep Singh Dodia**  
Prof. and Head  
Department of English  
Saurashtra University  
Rajkot, Gujarat, India
- **Prof. P.K.Patra**  
Professor and Head, Department of  
English, Bodoland University, Assam
- **Prof. B.K.Anjana**  
Professor, Department of English  
Vikram University, Ujjain  
Madhya Pradesh, India
- **Prof. A.S.Adhikari**  
Professor and Head  
Department of English  
Kumaun University Campus  
Almoda, Uttarakhand, India
- **Dr. Prakash Joshi**  
Department of English and Other  
European Languages, Dr. Hari Singh  
Gour Central University, Sagar, MP

# RASE EXECUTIVE

## *PATRON*

**Prof. Harish Narang**

Formerly Professor & Head, Jawahar Lal Nehru University, New Delhi

## *PRESIDENT*

**Prof. Rajul Bhargava**

Formerly Professor & Head, Dept. of English, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur

## *VICE PRESIDENTS*

**Prof. Hemendra Singh Chandalia**

Professor, Department of English, JRN Vidyapeeth, Udaipur

**Dr. Sudhi Rajeev**

Former Professor of English, JNV University, Jodhpur

**Dr. Supriya Agarwal**

Professor, Department of English, Central University of Rajasthan, Kishangarh

**Prof. Sunil Bhargava**

Principal (Retd.), Govt. College, Kota

## *GENERAL SECRETARY*

**Dr. K.S. Kang**

Maharana Pratap Govt. P.G. College, Chittorgarh

## *JOINT SECRETARY*

**Dr. G.K. Sukhwal**, SMB Govt. College, Nathdwara (Raj.)

**Dr. Anant Dadhich**, MLV Govt. College, Bhilawara (Raj.)

## *TREASURER*

**Prof. Mukta Sharma**

Dept. of English, J.R.N. Rajasthan Vidyapeeth, Udaipur

## *REGIONAL SECRETARY*

**Dr. Kshмата Choudhary**, Kota Open University, Kota

**Dr. S.K. Singh**, O.P. Jindal Institute of Science & Technology, Raigarh (CG)

**Dr. Gautam Sharma**, S.P.U. College, Falna, Pali (Rajasthan)

**Dr. Taw Azu**, Govt. College, Ita Nagar, Arunachal Pradesh

**Dr. Satish Harit**, Jai Narayan Vyas University, Jodhpur

**Dr. H.M. Kothari**, Govt. College, Nimbahera

## *EXECUTIVE MEMBERS*

**Dr. Sonu Shiva**, Govt. Dungar College, Bikaner

**Dr. Prashant Mishra**, Govt. College, Neemuch

**Dr. Anil Paliwal**, Govt. B.Ed. College, Kherwara, Udaipur

**Prof. Umed Singh**, Prof. & Head, CDL University, Sirsa, Haryana

**Dr. Rekha Tiwari**, Guru Nanak Girls P.G. College, Udaipur

**Dr. Sumer Singh**, Govt. P.G. College, Churu

**Dr. Mehzbeen Sadriwala**, Shaqra University, Saudi Arabia