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Western India in Writings in English**

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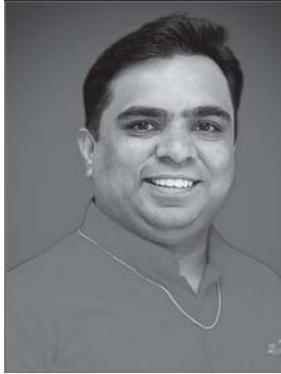
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Dedicated to

This number of the journal is dedicated to late Dr. Arpit Kothari, a life member of the Association. A very ardent scholar and versatile teacher he was above all a great human being and a noble soul. Our heartfelt tributes.



25th February 1985-14th January 2025

The present issue of the journal focuses on the representation of the western India in writings in English and other writings available in English translation. It has been our attempt to see the western India as a cultural unit just as people see southern India or North –East as one. This idea came to the mind since the western India faced maximum foreign invasions both military and otherwise. The cultural encounter and assimilation also was initiated in this region by the local people.

Western India was the first foothold for the European travelers and traders on Indian soil. Vasco da Gama arrived at the Western sea coast of India at Kozhikode (Calicut), Kerala on 20th May 1498, two years after he set sail from Lisbon, Portugal. This was the first time that a European had arrived in India by the sea. He is credited with the discovery of the sea route to India. Other European people including the French, the Dutch and the English came thereafter and set up their factories at different coasts of India. Captain William Hawkins visited Mughal Emperor Jahangir's court in 1608 AD to negotiate certain concessions for the English East India Company. He requested for a permission to raise a settlement in Surat. Initially it was rejected due to Portuguese intrigue. They finally succeeded in setting up their permanent factory at Surat in Gujarat in 1613 AD. A part of Bombay was under the Portuguese rule. In 1661 the King of England Charles II married the princess of Portugal. On this occasion the Portuguese King gave Portuguese part of Bombay as a gift to Charles II who rented it out to the East India Company. Goa came under the Portuguese rule in 1510 AD when the Portuguese defeated the Bijapur Sultanate and set up their rule. Before that it was ruled by the Kadamba dynasty from 2nd century AD to 1312 and by Muslims of Deccan from 1312 to 1367. The city was then annexed by the Hindu kingdom of Vijay Nagar and was later conquered by the Bahmani Sultanate which founded old Goa on

the island in 1440. The Portuguese ruled Goa for nearly 450 years till it was liberated in 1961 and made a part of India.

The interaction with different religious groups, colonial traders and rulers, growing trade opportunities, possibility of migration and settling in western countries brought about several changes in the people living in the western India right from the economic capital Mumbai to the deserts of the Thar. Down south the people of Kerala opted for a massive migration to west Asian Gulf countries from 1977 to 1983 when the need for skilled and unskilled labour rose in oil industry. A big section of Indian Diaspora consists of people from Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan. English higher education in India can be traced back to the establishment of Hindu College in 1817 in Calcutta. Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay introduced the British education in India and through his famous minutes laid down in 1835 formulated the policy of using English as the medium of instruction. Setting up of universities in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay in 1857 added to the rise of English education in India. Christian missionary activities also helped in the propagation of the English language. It is a fact that the missionaries translated English texts into Indian languages and also prepared dictionaries from English to regional Indian languages and vice-versa. The linguistic and cultural encounters along with political and economic ones created a new ethos which got reflected in the literature of regional Indian languages as well as English. Communities like Parsis, Bohras, Buddhists and Jains which were very small in number experienced such encounters in their own way while the majority Hindus also had their stories to share.

Even among the Hindus the Dalits faced a complex situation subdued by the traditional Brahminical institutions and their feudal counterparts. The excesses of this social order gave rise to movements against untouchability led by Mahatma Gandhi, Jyoti Ba Phule, Baba Sahab Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar and the likes. The Adivasis who enjoyed a comparatively greater autonomy in the realm of princely states felt the brunt of the British rule with their intrusion in the form of forest regulatory laws. The history of colonial encounter fraught with massive people's movements like Bijoliya in Rajasthan and Bardoli in Gujarat Villu Vandi

and Kallu Maala in Kerala and Quit India and Civil Disobedience movements of Maharashtra also recorded their impact on the socio-political life of the people. In post- independence times the industrial revolution had its impact on farming and fishing communities, industrial labour and the working class. Displacement caused a lot of migration within the states and across states. Exploitation of labour in industry and agriculture sectors saw the emergence of a strong trade union movement as well as a peasants' movement in different parts of western India. A major development was the emergence of a growing middle class in Indian society which had high aspirations and expectations from a democratically elected government. The unnatural partition of India into two countries had sown seeds of communal divide which germinated in the country at times spreading violence and hatred. This too attracted the concerns of the writers who believed in universal love and brotherhood. Globalization, liberalization and privatization, communication revolution, upsurge of information technology and related industry and unprecedented expansion of mass media affected the lives of the people all over the country. Shift of India's economy from a mixed one to a completely capitalist one resulted in new challenges as well as new opportunities. The country saw a rise in GDP but it was accompanied with emergence of a wider gulf between the haves and the have-nots. Capitalist intensive development, shrinking manufacturing and agriculture sector and fattening service sector increased unemployment among the poor and the middle class. Monopolistic tendencies in the economy found their reflection in political arena also. There have been encounters and there have been examples of assimilation also. This is how history is made. The research papers published in this number depict the representation of this socio-political – cultural scenario.

We hope that this number of the journal will inspire more research initiatives in the field of regional studies of this sort.

Ambarish Panda
Dr. Narendrapal Singh Panwar

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Lost in the Ruins: Identity, Memory, and Nostalgia in the Decline of Parsi Heritage in Cyrus Mistry's *Doongaji House*

Foram Joshi

Cyrus Mistry, an acclaimed Indian playwright, novelist, and short story writer, is celebrated for his ability to craft poignant narratives that delve into the lives of marginalised communities and explore the erosion of cultural legacies. Born into a Parsi family, Mistry's works often draw from the socio-cultural history of his community, highlighting its rich traditions while grappling with the harsh realities of its declining influence in contemporary India. His literary voice shines a light on the complexities of identity, belonging, and cultural continuity, situating him as a vital figure in understanding the intersection of heritage and socio-political change.

Mistry's debut play, *Doongaji House*, written at the age of 21, earned him the Sultan Padamsee Award for Playwriting in 1978. The play is a reflection of the existential struggles faced by the Parsi community within the rapidly transforming urban landscape of Mumbai. At the heart of the narrative lies a decaying chawl. This chawl becomes a powerful metaphor for the broader disintegration of Parsi cultural and social identity. Once emblematic of the prosperity and affluence enjoyed under colonial rule, the chawl now reflects the community's socio-economic decline in independent India. Through the physical decay of this space, Mistry captures the anxieties of a once-thriving community now teetering on the edge of extinction.

The play also unravels intergenerational tensions, with the elder members struggling to hold onto cultural traditions while the younger generation grapples with modernity and adaptation. Hormusji Pochkhanwalla, the patriarch, embodies this crisis. His diminishing authority and relevance

underscore the erosion of familial bonds and communal coherence, mirroring the Parsi community's larger challenges. The play also sheds light on the growing disparity between wealthy and impoverished Parsis, touching on themes such as the degradation of living standards, socio-economic marginalization, and the rise of social vices.

By juxtaposing the chawl's physical decay with the community's struggle for cultural preservation amidst urban gentrification, Mistry raises critical questions about identity, place, and heritage. His nuanced portrayal of the Parsis' plight underscores how urbanization, economic dispossession, and social alienation fragment individual and collective identities. Through *Doongaji House*, Mistry poignantly captures the precarious balance between a nostalgic longing for the past and the inevitable challenges of modernity, marking it as a significant work in exploring cultural displacement and decline.

At the beginning of the play the deteriorating state of the titular *Doongaji House* powerfully mirrors the waning legacy of Parsi cultural heritage. The three-storeyed building, of which this is the second floor, itself shows alarming signs of age and degeneration. The walls, hung with portraits of family ancestors, are cracked and peeling. The vivid imagery of its crumbling walls and lack of basic amenities serves as a metaphor for the broader disintegration of a once-distinct identity, now struggling to endure in the face of rapid urbanization. This physical decay parallels the challenges the Parsi community faces in preserving their unique cultural identity within a city increasingly characterized by economic pressures and cultural homogenization.

In this way, *Doongaji House* becomes a microcosm of the Parsi community's historical and cultural identity. The building's decline and eventual destruction poignantly reflect the effects of urbanization and gentrification in Mumbai. These forces contribute to what Edward Said refers to as the "loss of locality," both in a literal sense—through the destruction of the chawl—and in a metaphorical sense, through the gradual erosion of Parsi heritage and the weakening of community ties.

Urban Decay, Gentrification, and Economic Marginalization as metaphors for Cultural Decline and Social Stigma.

The destruction of Doongaji House is emblematic of this struggle, highlighting both the physical dislocations and the symbolic erasures that accompany the transformation of urban spaces. Urbanization plays a significant role in reshaping the socio-economic realities of minority communities. In Mumbai, the Parsis, who were historically integral to the city's cultural and economic fabric, find themselves sidelined by gentrification and changing demographic dynamics. The dilapidated state of Doongaji House and the characters' inability to afford basic repairs serve as a microcosm of this larger process, symbolizing how urban transformation can displace minority communities both physically and economically.

As Edward Said observes: "For the native, the history of colonial servitude is inaugurated by the loss of the locality to the outsider; its recovery is motivated by resistance to the outsider, followed by a search for an independent identity" (*Culture and Imperialism*, Ch.1). While the Parsis cannot be strictly classified as a colonized group, their experiences align with Said's insights. As a minority community shaped and constrained by colonial and postcolonial forces, they have witnessed a gradual marginalization of their cultural and spatial identity. Their shrinking presence in Mumbai reflects the broader postcolonial struggles of minority communities negotiating their place amidst shifting urban and national narratives.

The theme of economic marginalization in Doongaji House also plays a pivotal role in shaping the narrative's tensions and conflicts, particularly as it intersects with the social stigmatization of the Parsi community. Piroja's reflection—"*PIROJA: Two years since our wiring rotted. I've grown so used to this lamp, I think it will hurt my eyes if we ever get back our lights. But I miss the fan*" (Mistry 80-81) evokes a profound sense of resignation and adaptation to declining living conditions. This mundane yet poignant statement underscores the inescapable material realities of economic decline, which mirror the broader socio-

economic struggles of a minority community grappling with its diminishing status.

Hormusji: When Bombay first got electricity— 1928, I think— ours was one of the first buildings to install a meter. You know, Avan? It was the tallest building around for miles ... At night it would glow brightly, like a lighthouse in a sea of dimly-lit fishing boats. At one time it was a matter of pride to be able to say ‘I live at Doongaji House’.

PIROJA: Eat your food.

HORMUSJI: ...What a state it’s come to now! That rascal of a landlord... (Mistry 554-58).

This excerpt from *Doongaji House* by Cyrus Mistry captures the decline of the titular building as a symbol of the Parsi community’s socio-cultural erosion. The nostalgic recollection of the building’s past—its pioneering adoption of electricity and status as a towering landmark—reflects the former glory of the Parsi community during the colonial era. Hormusji’s description of the building glowing “*like a lighthouse in a sea of dimly-lit fishing boats*” conveys a sense of distinction and pride, emphasizing its symbolic prominence not only as a physical structure but as a representation of the community’s affluence, modernity, and influence in Bombay (now Mumbai).

However, the shift in tone from pride to lament—“*What a state it’s come to now!*”—highlights the decline of both the building and the community it represents. The use of the term “*rascal of a landlord*” signals the external forces of neglect and exploitation that have contributed to this degradation, underscoring the socio-political challenges faced by the Parsis in postcolonial India. The contrast between past and present reveals a collective yearning for lost stability and status, reflecting the broader displacement experienced by the community in an urbanizing, gentrifying city.

Piroja’s interruption, “*Eat your food,*” serves as a poignant contrast to the nostalgia expressed by Hormusji, highlighting the tension between longing for the past and dealing with the harsh realities of the present.

While Hormusji yearns for the glory of Doongaji House's former status and laments its decline, Piroja adopts a more pragmatic stance. Her remark suggests that she has come to terms with their diminished circumstances and prefers to focus on the present rather than dwelling on past grandeur. This dynamic between the characters mirrors the larger struggle within the Parsi community, which is torn between pride in its once-flourishing cultural identity and the painful reality of its fading influence in contemporary society. Piroja's response underscores the tension between preserving cherished memories and the necessity of adapting to an uncertain present.

This interaction ultimately highlights one of the play's central themes: the fragility of memory and heritage amidst the relentless forces of modernity and urban change. It positions Doongaji House as a powerful symbol of a community grappling with the twin challenges of longing for a fading legacy and confronting the difficult realities of an uncertain present. The characters' struggles with failing infrastructure, such as decayed wiring and the absence of basic utilities, reflect the declining socio-economic position of the Parsi community within urban spaces like Mumbai. Once influential and prosperous, the Parsis are now depicted as a community in decline, their struggles compressed in the physical disrepair of Doongaji House. Piroja's adaptation to the lamp's dim light—despite yearning for the fan's comfort—signifies an acceptance of diminished expectations, highlighting how economic hardships reshape aspirations and daily life. This material deprivation is not merely an individual challenge but reflects a broader socio-economic disempowerment faced by the community. Piroja's deep emotional connection to the past exemplifies the challenges of preserving cultural identity amidst such transformation. However, the ultimate destruction of Doongaji House not only severs the community's physical link to their history but also amplifies a profound sense of displacement and alienation.

The economic marginalization of the Parsis is compounded by their social stigmatization. The mocking phrase, "*Bawaji aya. Parsi bawaji ko dekho,*" (Mistry 218) underscores the alienation they experience

as a minority in a city undergoing rapid transformation. Sociologist Erving Goffman's concept of "stigma" provides a useful framework for understanding this dual burden. Goffman describes stigma as an attribute that is deeply discrediting, reducing individuals or groups to a marginalized status. In the context of the Parsis, economic decline exacerbates their social vulnerability, making them an easy target for ridicule and exclusion within an urban space increasingly dominated by other communities (Goffman 02).

The plight of the Parsis in Doongaji House aligns with the experiences of other marginalized groups facing systemic economic and social pressures. For the Parsis, economic struggles not only affect their material well-being but also their cultural self-perception, as the community's historical association with progress and prosperity contrasts sharply with their current realities. This erosion of economic agency destabilizes their sense of belonging and exacerbates feelings of alienation.

Piroja's resignation to the dim lamp and her wistful remark about missing the fan also reflect the resilience of marginalized communities in the face of systemic challenges. Adaptation to reduced circumstances becomes a form of survival, even as it highlights the loss of dignity and comfort once taken for granted. This duality underscores the emotional toll of economic decline, as characters like Piroja navigate their realities while yearning for the possibility of renewal.

Cultural Identity Through the Lens of Memory and Generational Conflict

Urbanization fundamentally alters social structures, often accelerating generational divides. This results in a detraditionalization process, wherein younger generations embrace values and behaviours that align with urban and cosmopolitan lifestyles, often at odds with traditional expectations. Hormusji's lament reflects this phenomenon as he perceives the younger generation's willingness to marry outside the Parsi community or adopt modern practices as a betrayal of cultural heritage. Hormusji's critical tone and nostalgic lamentation for "the Parsis of old" signify the older generation's deep sense of loss and their anxiety

over cultural preservation. His disdain for the younger generation's perceived departure from traditional values—embodied in his harsh comment, “*How low he has stooped . . . he's married one of them!*” (Mistry 221-22) —underscores a fear of cultural dilution and a stigmatized view of assimilation. The dialogue also highlights the older generation's preoccupation with maintaining cultural “purity.” This anxiety is discussed in Edward Said's concept of “imagined geographies,” where cultural boundaries are symbolically constructed and policed to maintain a sense of identity and exclusivity. For Hormusji, cultural identity is deeply tied to Parsi traditions, rituals, and values, which he believes are eroded by intermarriage and other forms of assimilation. Such anxieties resonate with Homi K. Bhabha's idea of the “unhomely,” wherein modern individuals experience a crisis of identity, torn between preserving a fixed sense of tradition and adapting to the fluid, hybrid realities of a globalized world. Hormusji's fears thus reflect an unhomely tension between the familiar (the traditions of the Parsi community) and the unfamiliar (the modern, multicultural urban setting).

The intergenerational tensions depicted in the exchange between Piroja and Hormusji in *Doongaji House* reflect the struggles of cultural continuity amidst the forces of modernity and globalization. Urbanization alters the processes of cultural transmission, prioritizing adaptability over the preservation of traditional practices. This shift often generates divisions within communities regarding which elements of their heritage should be retained, modified, or abandoned. Hormusji's lament reflects the emotional burden of witnessing the dissolution of cultural practices that have long served as markers of identity, while the younger generation's actions suggest a pragmatic approach to survival in a rapidly changing world. This dynamic tension underscores the complexities of cultural preservation in a globalized age, where tradition and modernity must coexist, often uneasily.

The older generation views cultural practices—rituals, language, and endogamy—as symbolic capital that defines and sustains the Parsi

community's unique identity. However, urbanization and modernization disrupt the mechanisms of transmitting this cultural capital. Younger generations, influenced by new social environments and value systems, may no longer view these practices as essential or relevant, leading to an erosion of traditional cultural reproduction. Hormusji's frustration with Piroja's dismissive stance— "*Okay. Enough now. Less said the better*" (Mistry 220)—also highlights this disjunction and increasing rejection or downplay of the significance of traditional values. The younger characters like Avan, Fali and Rusi embody hybridity, navigating the challenges of modern urban life while redefining what it means to be Parsi. In contrast, the older generation clings to a static notion of cultural authenticity, unable to reconcile the evolving identity of their community with the fluid demands of urban modernity. These tensions in *Doongaji House* highlight the universality of intergenerational conflict in minority groups negotiating modernity.

Piroja's description of the tragic death of Burjorji Bonesetter and her thoughts on the surreal quality of the tragedy— "it still felt like a dream" (Mistry 869-70)—illustrates the existential dislocation experienced by individuals when faced with profound loss. The sense of living in a "nightmare" echoes the collective psychological trauma of the Parsi community, where nostalgia for a better past clash with the harsh realities of their present decline. This is amplified by the absurdity of their situation, where daily routines—such as the arrival of the breadman and milkman—provide a false sense of normalcy amidst chaos. Piroja's words, "*In the morning, the breadman will come and wake us. Then the milkman*" (Mistry 872), highlights the futile desire to restore some semblance of order and continuity amidst destruction.

In *Doongaji House*, memory and nostalgia play a central role in shaping the characters' identities and their emotional connection to a rapidly changing world. The ancestral portraits and wistful recollections of a "*better time*" (Mistry 1535) underscore how memory serves as both a source of comfort and a reminder of loss. These elements anchor the characters to a heritage they value but increasingly perceive as slipping away. The burning of Doongaji House intensifies this dynamic,

symbolizing the fragility of the bond between memory and place. Hormusji's reflections, coupled with the destruction of the house, poignantly illustrate the challenges of sustaining cultural continuity in the face of systemic change and urbanization.

Piroja's reflection on how they once lived, and the routine rituals of everyday life also highlight how memory functions as a coping mechanism. The act of remembering "*how it used to be*" provides comfort, but also creates a sense of alienation as they are no longer able to live those memories. Her words, "*It's like the pain in a dream*" (Mistry 873), suggest that memory serves as a way to process grief, but it is ultimately inadequate in preserving cultural continuity. Her mention of "*frying you an egg*" (Mistry 875) suggests an attempt to return to normalcy by repeating domestic routines, even though the broader context of their life has changed irrevocably. The characters' internal struggles to reconcile their past with their present reality reflect broader anxieties within the Parsi community about survival, identity, and the preservation of heritage in a changing world.

Pierre Nora's concept of lieux de mémoire (sites of memory) provides a theoretical framework to explore these themes. According to Nora, "*Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer*". This distinction between memory and history helps illuminate the characters' struggle to preserve their collective memory as their cultural and physical spaces erode.

The ancestral portraits in the play represent lieux de mémoire, functioning as tangible links to the past. For the characters, these portraits are not merely artifacts but vessels of memory, embodying the values, traditions, and identity of a community that once thrived. However, as Nora suggests, memory is not static—it evolves and is subject to both personal

and collective reinterpretation. In Doongaji House, this evolution is evident in the way nostalgia shapes the characters' perceptions of their heritage. The past becomes idealized, offering solace even as it underscores the pain of loss.

Hormusji's exasperation with his son Rusi for marrying outside the community and settling in Canada—"He's married one of them!"—exemplifies fears of cultural assimilation. His disdain reveals anxieties about the dilution of Parsi traditions and values, particularly in the context of urban modernization and globalization. These anxieties align with Homi K. Bhabha's concept of cultural hybridity in *The Location of Culture*, where the intermingling of cultures creates spaces of negotiation but also incites fear of identity loss. The generational conflict also reflects broader postcolonial tensions discussed by Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism*. Said highlights how formerly dominant communities grapple with the destabilization of their identities as the societal hierarchy shifts in postcolonial contexts (Said).

Perin's reflection on the younger generation leaving Doongaji House deepens this theme of displacement. Lines like "*First, your Rusi went away to Canada. Then, Fali went away to Chikkalwadi*" (Mistry, *Doongaji House, Kindle Locations 86-87*) illustrate the broader exodus of Parsis, driven by economic and social pressures. The choice of Canada—a symbol of opportunity—represents not just migration but a departure from traditional customs. Similarly, the statement, "*The Bogdawallas and their children moved out lock, stock, and barrel*" (Mistry 87-88), signifies the permanence of this departure, highlighting the community's gradual disappearance from its historic urban spaces.

The characters' nostalgic attachment to their past highlights the ambivalent nature of memory. Hormusji's reflections on the Parsi community's decline reveal this reflective quality, as he mourns not only the loss of cultural traditions but also the diminishing sense of communal identity. Yet, this nostalgia also serves as a burden, trapping the characters in a longing for a past that feels increasingly irretrievable.

The burning of Doongaji House represents the severing of the connection between memory and place, a theme central to Nora's exploration of memory. For the characters, the house is more than a physical structure; it is a repository of cultural identity and shared history. Its destruction symbolizes the erasure of a physical anchor for their collective memory, leaving the characters adrift in a city undergoing relentless urban transformation. This aligns with Edward Said's observations on the "loss of locality" in postcolonial societies, where displacement disrupts the continuity of memory and identity (Culture and Imperialism).

As Nora argues, memory is vulnerable to manipulation, appropriation, and eventual dormancy, but it is also capable of revival. In *Doongaji House*, this tension is evident in the characters' attempts to preserve their heritage despite the encroachments of modernity. While the physical destruction of the house signifies a profound loss, the characters' memories and stories suggest the potential for cultural resilience.

The forced relocation of the elderly characters in *Doongaji House* symbolizes a profound disruption, both physical and psychological, that encapsulates the trauma of displacement. The theme of displacement is not only spatial but also emotional, as Hormusji and Piroja navigate the devastating loss of both their home and their once-prominent place in society. The transition to a "*strange new hole*" intensifies their feelings of alienation, underscoring the existential displacement that accompanies the loss of familiar spaces. This resonates with larger anxieties about identity, self-definition, and belonging in an urban landscape increasingly dominated by economic imperatives and spatial reconfigurations.

Displacement in *Doongaji House* aligns with what Edward Said describes as the "loss of locality," where spatial dislocation erodes identity and a sense of place (Said). For the elderly characters, relocation from the chawl severs their connection to a space imbued with personal and communal history, amplifying the psychological burden of losing a cultural anchor. Their inability to adapt to the new environment underscores the deep ties between memory, identity, and place. As Yi-

Fu Tuan discusses in *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, place is not merely a geographic location but a repository of lived experiences and meanings. The chawl, with its shared spaces and cultural resonance, represents such a place for the characters, and its destruction fractures their sense of continuity. Historically, chawls functioned as sites of collective living and cultural transmission, fostering close-knit relationships and shared values. The decline of the chawl in the narrative mirrors the disintegration of these communal bonds, paralleling the Parsi community's struggles to maintain coherence amidst socio-economic and cultural pressures. The destruction of the chawl signifies more than a physical loss; it represents a metaphysical rupture in the community's shared identity. This aligns with Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory), where physical spaces serve as repositories of collective memory and identity. The chawl's disappearance symbolizes the erasure of a communal site of memory, forcing its inhabitants to confront their cultural dislocation and the challenge of preserving identity in an unfamiliar urban landscape. Its decline also reflects the broader impacts of urbanization and gentrification, which prioritize economic progress over the preservation of community and cultural spaces. In the context of *Doongaji House*, the chawl's destruction exemplifies this dynamic, where the quest for urban modernization marginalizes minority groups and disrupts their traditional ways of life. Moreover, this displacement creates a sense of existential rupture, as the elderly characters struggle to find meaning and belonging in a world that has discarded their histories. The uprooting of individuals from their familiar contexts leads to feelings of alienation and purposelessness, themes that resonate deeply in the narrative. Hormusji's attachment to his home mirrors the emotional and cultural displacement experienced by many Parsis as they struggle to find their place in a modernizing India. His desperate longing for the house to "*release*" him, "*as you released Burjorji*" (Mistry 915), suggests that for him, death is preferable to living in a society where his community no longer holds the same power or relevance it once did. The imagery of Burjorji, whose death is referenced here, represents the finality of an era for the Parsi community,

whose identity is tied to a bygone age. The fire that ultimately engulfs the building is particularly evocative. It symbolizes the inevitable erasure of heritage, leaving behind only a “vacant plot”—a stark emblem of loss and absence. The moment is captured poignantly in the narrator’s reflection: “*Then I realized the whole building was burning. Doongaji House was up in flames. I ran to save my life. When I reached the street, there was no fire any more. But the building was not there either. Only a vacant plot of land*” (Mistry 653-55). This visceral description underscores not only the physical destruction of the structure but also the symbolic obliteration of cultural memory and identity that it represents.

Conclusion

The recurring themes in *Doongaji House* by Cyrus Mistry reflect the multifaceted struggles of the Parsi community amidst socio-economic decline and cultural erosion in a rapidly transforming Mumbai. Central to the narrative is the decay of Doongaji House, a colonial-era chawl that stands as a poignant metaphor for the community’s diminishing prominence and cultural heritage. The deteriorating structure embodies the intersection of economic marginalization, social stigmatization, and urban displacement that define the contemporary Parsi experience. Through its portrayal of financial decline, the play offers a layered critique of systemic disempowerment and the societal pressures that minority communities endure.

Mistry captures the human cost of this decline through the fractured relationships within the Pochkhanwalla family. Their intergenerational tensions reflect the broader challenges of sustaining cultural identity in a world shaped by urbanization and assimilation. The family’s struggles mirror the Parsi community’s larger existential crisis—balancing the preservation of tradition with the realities of modern life. Piroja’s reflections on her family’s displacement poignantly articulate the trauma of losing not just a home but a repository of shared memories and identity. These themes are amplified by the juxtaposition of ancestral portraits and nostalgic recollections against the physical and symbolic destruction

of Doongaji House, underscoring the fragility of memory and its dependence on communal spaces. Memory emerges as both a source of strength and a site of vulnerability, illuminating the precariousness of cultural preservation in an ever-changing urban landscape. Through its exploration of nostalgia and cultural identity, the narrative reveals how the characters' sense of self is intertwined with the chawl's physical presence. This interplay of memory and space underscores the profound impact of urbanization, as the loss of Doongaji House signals the erosion of communal bonds and shared heritage. The forced relocation of elderly residents captures the existential challenges of displacement, as individuals grapple with alienation and a loss of purpose. Doongaji House, as a microcosm of the Parsi community, embodies both a physical haven and a symbolic anchor for shared identity. Its decline parallels the anxieties of cultural extinction faced by the Parsis, highlighting the challenges of maintaining a sense of belonging in a modern, increasingly homogenized urban context.

At its core, *Doongaji House* critiques the dehumanizing effects of urbanization while offering a nuanced exploration of identity, memory, and resilience. Mistry's characters confront social stigma and economic hardship, navigating the complexities of cultural pride and survival in a shifting socio-political landscape. The narrative situates their struggles within broader systemic inequalities, offering a microcosmic view of the challenges faced by minority communities in urban environments. Ultimately, *Doongaji House* delves deeply into the existential questions of self-definition and collective continuity. It examines how memory and nostalgia shape both individual and communal identities, even as the forces of urban transformation threaten to erase them. By portraying the Parsi community's fight to preserve its cultural heritage amidst displacement and marginalization, the play invites reflection on the universal tensions between tradition and modernity, resilience and vulnerability. Through its intricate exploration of these themes, *Doongaji House* stands as a profound commentary on the complexities of preserving identity, place, and heritage in an ever-evolving urban world.

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Exile Within: Displacement and the Search for Self in *True Country*

Saurabh Meena

Indigenous communities across the world are connected to their traditional lands. They have a deep-rooted history with the land and therefore the land is of sacred value to them. Land is an inalienable part of their life since they are completely dependent on it for their sustenance. Indigenous people also share a deep spiritual relationship with the land, which is so fundamental to their existence. Land is also associated with their identity. Depriving them of their land deprives them of their history, language, cultural existence and traditional knowledge systems. The onslaught of colonization devastated the entire socio-cultural patterns of Indigenous societies across the world. Self-sustained societies became reliant on European goods for their livelihood.

In the traditional kinship systems, through the customary law, they cherished gender equality, social position, integrated identity, and sexual autonomy. The cultural transformation that took place with the advent of colonizers made them the victims of exploitation, marginalization, and inhuman treatment. The biased racial policies of the colonizers affected them the worst. From the breadwinners of the family, they were made dependent by curbing the social and economic autonomy by the Christian patriarchal order.

The Natives became dependent on the colonizers and started to absorb the mores and manners of the colonizers, which alienated them from their language, culture, history and indigenous identity. International organizations have given recognition to the first people of the land and are consistently working to conserve their indigenous knowledge and value system, with the aim to combat the modern problems being faced by the Aboriginals modern society. They share a unique relationship

with nature, which they have been conserving for ages. Land continues to remain an essential component for the socio-cultural existence of their indigenous identity. With the loss of their ancestral land, their sacred relationship with the land has also been jeopardised. Many activists have joined in for the Aboriginals' struggle for their land rights. Their concerns have been taken into account in Article 25 of the draft of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

Indigenous people have the right to maintain and strengthen their indistinctive spiritual and material relationship with the lands, territories, water and coastal seas and other resources which they have traditionally owned for otherwise occupied or used, and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard. (6)

Space is highly significant in the literary works of Fourth World literature and postcolonial literary theories. "A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place" (Ashcroft et al. 21). The importance of land and location is well established in the field of postcolonial studies as space is also an important tool to deconstruct the dominant power structures. Space and identity are both intertwined. The quest for identity in postcolonial novels is associated with space. Therefore, space becomes a tool to resist the dominant forces and to trace the identity of the self, and to rediscover identity which will lead to disestablishment of the established narratives. As the "authentic and essentialist conceptions of identity are often associated with exclusivist claims to territory and space. In turn, this geographical imagination of identity leads to the persistent understanding of colonialism in terms of simple opposition between colonizers and colonized" (Barnett 8).

In Australian literature, there are numerous prominent Aboriginal writers who strive to highlight the issues faced by the indigenous communities of Australia. Among all these issues, land is a pivotal one. Aboriginal people are a part of the marginalized and vulnerable section of society.

They are the victims of socio-political and economic marginalization in their country. Though they are the native people of Australia, they are struggling to live a dignified life. For decades, they have been demanding the native land titles to protect their lands from being taken away by multiple agencies. Indigenous communities across the world are facing forcible removal and displacement from their traditional lands. These lands are being taken away by the governments and corporate houses for the extraction and exploitation of minerals and natural resources, the construction of dams, and for the multiple development projects. The cases of forcible removal and displacement of Indigenous people are being reported across the countries with a significant native population.

Kim Scott is a renowned Aboriginal writer who seeks to illuminate various aspects of the lives of Aboriginal people in Australia. In his novels, he also incorporates the issue of the displacement of Aboriginals from their native lands and their confinement in the reserves controlled by the state. His novel *True Country* reveals the journey of the protagonist Billy, who explores his aboriginal identity by coming back to his own land and by spending his days among the people of his community. Billy strives to trace his own identity from the land of Karnama. The space provides him a sense of connectedness as he finds himself attached to the people of Karnama and a sense of belonging develops within him.

He explores his individual identity among the people of the Aboriginal settlement. Karnama becomes a place for him to offer a conclusion to his conflicting ideas relating to his identity. As Billy says “I just wanted to come to a place like this, where some things that happened a long time ago, where I come from, that I have only heard or read of, are still happening here, Maybe. My grandmother must have been Aboriginal like you, dark. My grandmother is part My father told me, but no one” (Scott 82).

In postcolonial theory, space is not just a physical territory rather “space itself becomes a kind of neutral grid on which cultural differences, historical memory and societal organization are inscribed” (Gupta 6).

Space is the platform for cultural encounters and is the place from where ‘new culture’ originates and cultural transformation takes place. The postcolonial space urges Billy to renegotiate his identity. Within a very short period of time, he starts to feel connected to the land and the people of the mission. He challenges the western way of knowing by expressing his desire to trace his Aboriginal identity and questions the causes that deprived him of his own culture. His unfamiliarity to the Aboriginal culture bequeaths him a sense that though the people of Karnama have been living a miserable life without basic amenities, yet they fare better and are happier than him as they know the land and through the cultural sense they all are deeply connected to each other. His purpose of coming to Karnama becomes irrelevant to him. Billy says, “I don’t know anything of the old ways; a few words, this and that. But there’s something there that’s what I reckon. Should we try and put it all together and believe in it? Or try and rediscover things, like that renaissance thing?” (Scott 83).

Billy’s quest for identity compels him to question the Euro-Centric approach and the ways of knowing. He starts to take pride in his own Aboriginal identity irrespective of the past identities as “identities are ever-changing and impossible to fix: the need to negotiate identities is therefore constant” (Bhabha 73). In the novel, Aboriginal people of Karnama are cognizant of the manner in which Aboriginal society is disintegrating due to the introduction of certain vices by the white people, which makes them highly critical of them.

Tell us, we learned anything from white man yet? Nowadays people make a mistake. Maybe tired, Little by little Aborigine going down. Drinking and dying. Making circles, litter and more little. We don’t like looking, and seeing it that way. We want to fly up again. They can’t forget about our roots, they can’t leave behind and go to the Whiteman roots. That no good. (Scott 124)

Karnama is not just a physical space for the novelist. It is the platform for the writer from where he gives a voice to the voiceless people. Almost a century has passed since the federation came into existence

but the First Nation people are still living in abject poverty. The white intrusion in the Aboriginal practices is making them more segregated from their cultural identity. In the novel, the character of Gerrard laments over the cultural decay of the modern Aboriginal society due to the intrusion of white society into their cultural sphere. He expresses his umbrage by saying:

In the old days we did look after our sacred sites ourselves, without letting white people, white men, women, take care of them. We know what to do. These others shouldn't interfere with our sacred things. Kiddies of ours, young men even, they not allowed to go near our sacred sites, trees even, that was anywhere in the bush. We didn't let them know because they wasn't men. They had to be initiated before they could go to these things and they sacred to us. They are very sacred things. We didn't say nothing to nobody, we just look after these things ourselves. That's why we don't like white women or white men coming to ask different things about our things, or saying we should do thinsm and why don't we. that's our sacred things. They studying us too? Like Animals? Or maybe they want to steal our secrets, and when even the black man has lost his special things and his magic, then-hey, here it is- the white fell as have it and they use it on us. (Scott 143)

This state-sponsored intrusion into the cultural sphere is aimed at segregation of Aboriginals from the sacred sites from where their socio-cultural identity originates. Owing to the deprivation of Aborigines from their sacred sites, the society is disintegrating. The 'One Australia' terminology is used repeatedly in the political discourse of the country which makes everyone suspicious of the malafide intentions of the regimes which are intolerant to the diversified Australian society.

Apart from Australian Aboriginals, Indigenous people have been struggling for their land rights and political rights. The land they occupy is of greater importance due to the availability of valuable minerals on their lands. The increasing interference of the ruling governments, related organizations, and corporate houses has managed to create a severe

existential threat to their socio-political identity. The increasing number of cases of forcible removal and dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands is a matter of grave concern for policy makers across the world. It is the high time when they should be allowed the collective right to self-determination, territorial integrity, and sovereignty. These rights will surely empower them in every sphere of their lives. It will help them to revive the declining cultural practices and management of their lands by their choices

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Colonial Influence on Gujarati Novel: A Study of Nandshankar Mehta's Novel *Karan Ghelo*

Palash Sharma

The opening lines of the novel '*A Tale of Two Cities*' by Charles Dickens seem pertinent to begin this paper-

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only. (1)

This novel was published in 1859 and it describes perfectly the essence of the Victorian period which lasted till 1901. The feeling that 'anything is possible' was felt optimistically and tragically. It was the time when the Industrial Revolution in England was at its peak, on top of that Railways were invented which boosted the already booming economy of England and emerged as one of the strongest nations in the world and had occupied nearly one-quarter of the world. But this also had another side. Along with progress, Industrialization brought in child labour, exploitation, and cruel treatment of workers. The advent and impact of machines were so great that they gradually converted man into a profit or loss entity.

Besides, the age was also an age of inventions, scientific discoveries, and innovations. The invention of the telephone, electricity, railways, sewing machines, X-ray, the telegraph, anaesthesia, antiseptic, and many

more happened during this age. Many fundamental laws of chemistry and physics were too developed in those times. But alongside that, this faith in science led to a loss of faith in religion. The emphasis on logic and reason led to a withdrawal of faith and trust in religion. The hardest blow was Charles Darwin's work '*On the Origin of Species*' which led to a severe clash between science and religion.

Our country, India, too was colonized during those times, and so along with the officers, the scientific developments and inventions, their morals, values, and literature reached us. During those times we were divided majorly into two groups. One was, who were English educated and who supported the new, modern western ideas and rejected almost blindly the traditional, while the second group rejected the modern and believed in the traditional culture and norms, though we see both these distinct categories overcoming their rigidness and blending into one that accepted that which is good and rejected that which was bad for them and their culture but it all happened gradually. So, with the arrival of their literature, naturally, there was a desire to imitate them and produce one just like them, and the novel being the dominant literary form of those times was attempted to be written the most. The first Indian novel in English was *Rajmohan's Wife* published in 1864 by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay. Before that writing novels in regional languages had begun and the first novel written in Gujarati was *Karan Ghelo* by 'Nandshankar Mehta' published in 1866.

The colonial influence can be seen in the novel and with that some conflict in the writer about whether to glorify the traditional culture or to promote Western values. This conflict can also be interpreted as a safety measure taken by the writer to avoid hurting the sentiments of the people including the groups mentioned before.

'Colonial influence' in the simplest sense means the effect and impact on a region's people due to the presence of the colonizers and extending this on the phrase it means that the impact and effect of the British who, at that time were here for almost 250 years, and that of the western education introduced by them on the writer's thoughts and his work.

Nandshankar Mehta was born in Surat and was sent to an English medium school at the age of ten and then he became the first Indian headmaster of the same school. In the school, he was the protégé of Mr. Green (the then headmaster). He was closely associated with Mr. Russell, a British administrator and he wrote the novel with his motivation. In fact, it was the English education or the availability of authentic English texts that allowed him to write perhaps the first prose narrative in Gujarat. This is an evidence of the colonial influence the writer had in his life.

It is also interesting to note that the first novel written in Gujarati which would be leading the others, Nandshankar chose to write, not about one of the great Rajput kings of Gujarat like Mulraj or Siddharaj but about a man who had failed his land and his people. According to his son and biographer Vinayak Mehta, Nandshankar decided to write a historical novel which would focus on a pivotal moment in the history of Gujarat, a moment that signalled the end of one period of history and the dawn of another. He had considered writing on three topics; one was the story of Karan Vaghela then one was the destruction of Somnath or the fall of Champaner.

Sitanshu Yashaschandra, a renowned scholar and poet writes in his essay ‘From Hemachandracharya to Hind Swaraj’:

He chose from among three possible options: the defeat and death of Karan Vaghela, the last Hindu king of Gujarat; the defeat and downfall of Patai Raval, the Hindu king of Champaner, at the hands of Muhammad Begdo; and the destruction of the Somnath temple by Muhammad Ghazni. Karan was destroyed, the novel tells us, because of his moral, and especially sexual, degradation. He lusted after the wife of his minister, Madhav. Patai was also morally degraded, especially sexually: he had lusted after the goddess Kali of the Pavagadh Hills. A pre-nineteenth-century *garbo* (a lyrical narrative) on Patai Raval’s destruction was quite well known in Nandashankar’s time. That *garbo* gave a religious context to the Patai Raval theme. One wonders if Mastersaheb had any discussion

with Russell on the relative merits of the story of Patai, with its religious (rather than political) context, though it, too, told of the moral and sexual corruption of a Hindu king.

In the third theme under consideration, that of the destruction of the Somnath temple, there is no spectacular moral and sexual debasement that might have justified the defeat of the Chaulukya king. No causal connection is made between defeat and destruction, on one hand, and moral collapse on the other. But if the story fails to justify political defeat, it also fails to justify political victory. The story of Karan Vaghela, on the other hand, unfolds without any religious complications and shows neatly that the natives deserved to be defeated because they were morally corrupt.” (Yashaschandra 598)

The emphasis was, thus, on three things. First, there has to be a causal connection between defeat and destruction and the resultant moral collapse. Second, the focus is on the political context rather than the religious context because otherwise the story of Patai Raval was equally good and could have been helpful for the natives of those times. Third, the writer in justifying the political defeat of a ruler also justifies the political victory of another. Thus, indirectly, by extension, he is justifying the presence of colonial rule.

But before interpreting it to be a biased account it should also be taken into account that it is a story about a sexually and morally corrupt King, in which he falls asleep listening to religious recitations like, “Halfway through this recital, yawn after yawn escaped from Karan Raja, and thanks to the burning heat of the October sun assisted by the king’s own habit of taking a nap, the Raja never learnt how much Bhartihari and Vikramaditya went on to become famous when the bard and Brahmin let him enjoy his rest in peace” (Ghelo 23).

Or the lust he felt for his minister Madhav’s wife Roopsundari, “It was as if lightning had struck the king, ‘Madhav’s wife?’ he said in a shocked voice. ‘Our Madhav’s wife? A swan married to that crow? Is that a fact? You’re not lying to me? A woman fit to live in Indra’s heaven, a

woman who should light up the palace, such a woman is the wife of a miserable Brahmin? (Ghelo 29).

The king was calling the same minister who had helped him immensely to become a king a miserable Brahmin and a crow. So, this type of explicit description could not have been possible in a monarch's reign. This freedom to write about the corruptness and degradation of monarchs, the conflict of the religions was possible only because of the presence of British Raj. The break from the tradition of praising the king in the court could have happened because of the colonial rule.

The effect of western education is also evident throughout the text, especially that of English literary texts like the plays of Shakespeare in which the use of supernatural elements is seen. The use of supernatural elements can be seen in the novel *Karan Ghelo*. In the second chapter we see the king's encounter with female souls just like Macbeth encounters the witches and like in Macbeth, the female spirits also advised to Karan. They said,

Maharaj, we do not possess much knowledge of the future. But since you have been so obliging, we will give you a piece of advice: As you know, women have been the cause of great upheavals in this world. Because Ravan abducted Sita, Lanka was destroyed and Ravan himself killed. The battle of Kurukshetra occurred because Duryodhan had Draupadi's garments stripped from her in full view of the assembly, and in the course of the battle not only the Kauravas, but the Pandavas and crores of their supporters also lost their lives. So beware, O king! Be wary of your dealings with women and have as little to do with them as possible. (Ghelo 29)

So, this giving of advice and the King's choosing not to follow it gives it a similar structure like *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth* and places it in the trope of the doomed king. But on asking their identity the female spirits replied, "Rajadhiraj, we were once the wives of Brahmins and merchants, but all of us died in childbirth. Our husbands married again and did not bother to perform the death rituals for us, which is why we are in this unfortunate state. O Raja, we beseech you to make them perform the

necessary Narayanbali sacrifice, and free us from this limbo” (Ghelo 195).

The spirits being the wives of Brahmins and merchants and requesting the king to perform Narayanbali gives it an Indian context showing that the writer was influenced by Shakespeare but he had adopted the Indian thought while portraying the supernatural elements. This Indian adaptation of supernatural elements is present throughout the book like the appearance of Madhav’s brother – in - law Keshav’s appearance as Babrobhoot after his murder by the King’s men, then Harpal’s, King’s cousin, meeting with an apsara and later becoming his wife. Another instance was king of Devgad, Devaldevi and their troops meeting Devaldevi’s destiny towards the end of the book.

Thus, the supernatural elements are prevalent throughout the book.

The Western education’s influence can also be seen in the writer’s views on child marriage. He compares Indian culture with other cultures and says that, “A study of other cultures makes it clear that in societies where child marriages are not prevalent, girls do not allow themselves to be meekly led like dumb cattle into matrimony. In societies where marriage is not looked upon as a form of barter. . .” (Ghelo 196).

The phrase ‘meekly led like dumb cattle into matrimony’ and marriage considered as a ‘barter’, shows the writer’s condemnation of the child marriages prevalent in the Indian societies in those times. He further says, “In a country where child marriages are the rule, duty triumphs over love. Where the relationship is that of worshipper and worshipped, where the woman’s role is limited to the propagation of the family, the shouldering of domestic burdens and the raising of children; where a deceased wife is only mourned for the loss of her domestic services and a home bereft of comforts; where the widower’s thoughts race towards remarriage. . .” (Ghelo 176).

This shows the writer’s progressive views towards women. The writer knows how society treats women so he emphasizes a marriage of love rather than duty. The progressive view of women can also be seen

during the reunion of Madhav and his wife Roopsundari, who was kidnapped by the King. During those times after a woman spends a night in another man's house alone, she is considered impure and even her husband doesn't touch her but in the novel the writer writes,

“Roopsundari was united with Madhav. The two embraced laughing and weeping with joy. . . . He was fully aware that Roopsundari had no role to play in her abduction. The separation had not lessened his love for her; on the contrary his desire to rescue her and take revenge on her captor had only increased its intensity . . . when Roopsundari embraced him as passionately as before, his joy knew no bounds. . . . The rituals were duly performed, the brahmins were paid their fees, and with no further impediments remaining, Madhav and Roopsundari resumed their lives as man and wife.” (Ghelo 195)

Nandshankar didn't write more about the rituals, just that they were done and Madhav and Roopsundari started their life again. This shows that the writer doesn't consider the rituals so important in the given situation, reflecting his progressive views. Then the writer also gives a view on marriage favourable to him and he talks about marriage saying that marriages that take place with the willing consent of both the partners and their families are ideal.

This idea of consensual marriage is also something which was not prevalent in those times. Then he states an ideal situation in which a young man with an humble background falls in love with a wealthy maiden but waits until he gains economic and social status before he asks for her hand in marriage.

This idea of being deserving of the beloved, the typical rags to riches plot, and the character working hard due to the influence of the beloved (the reformed rake character archetype), these tropes and character archetypes were prevalent in Victorian literature as these weren't the dominant Indian thoughts.

Then some instances which show the writer's study of Western texts are-

- a) During the time when Madhav is repenting his deed of betraying his motherland, the writer says,

A study of world history shows that Madhav was not alone in acting this way. In ancient times, Vortigern invited the Saxons from Germany to invade Britain, and Count Julian of Spain had welcomed the Muslim General Musa of Africa for the same reason as Madhav's. (Ghelo 169)

- b) While describing the beauty of the chief queen Kaularani of the King Karan he says,

She was as beautiful as the women imagined by portrait painters, as ethereal as the figure of Mary, the mother of Jesus, created by the great Italian artists, as bewitching as the images of women dreamed up in the imagination of the world's finest poets. (Ghelo 266-67)

- c) While describing village life he says,

(the air) at times was overladen by the stench of filth created by man's carelessness and indifference. In front of every house stood a rubbish dump, overflowing with garbage. This poisonous heap of animal droppings, rotting food and other waste emanated deadly vapours and was the cause of innumerable diseases and the short life spans of the villagers. But these simple folk were totally unaware of this. They spent their days in happy ignorance, surrendering themselves to their fate, accepting all that befell them as the will of god; little realizing that the untimely deaths of parents, children, spouses and relatives was often due to their foul surroundings; and that it was their own hands to keep death at bay. (Ghelo 43)

So, this knowledge of world history, the Bible, Italian painters, and criticizing rural sides' unhygienic environment is the knowledge gained from the colonial education imparted by British in India.

Regarding the sati tradition, the writer, Nandshankar being a social and religious reformer, is against it as when after Keshav's death, his wife,

Gunsundari's mother is thinking of what to say to her daughter, we see her trying to reach a conclusion and her major part of the consideration is of what will the people say? On one hand, her widowed daughter's presence 'would scorch the family like a red-hot brazier' but despite the shame 'her daughter, dearer to her than life, would be there with her and bring comfort to her heart. She would be there to advise her, keep her company and help her in the housework. And a widowed daughter would prove invaluable in her old age, to nurse and take care of her when she was feeble and bedridden. Time is a great healer and a young girl's grief will lessen; and a daughter, even though widowed, is a daughter after all, whose presence brings joy to her parents' (Ghelo 43).

Thus in Gunsundari's mother's thinking we can find Nandshankar Mehta arguing against the Sati tradition but one has to keep in mind that the thoughts are of a widowed daughter's mother and the time when the novel is placed and the time when it was written, a girl who did not immolate herself after her husband's death was considered a bad omen. So, the writer takes safe stand and in the next instant her mother thinks,

On the other hand, how wonderful to have a daughter become a sati! Gunsundari's fame would spread not only in the town but throughout the whole Gujarat. She would bring renown to her community, increase the prestige of her family, and her parents would be considered fortunate by all. Moreover, as the shastras said, her deed would bring salvation for herself and her husband, and the gods would rejoice. (Ghelo 44)

Thus, we can see that the arguments against committing Sati are personal and emotional while the ones in favour are social and religious. Then when Gunsundari's mother asks her not to immolate herself and live, Gunsundari replies, "Live? How can I, a wretch, remain alive when my beloved husband who had made me his own; with whom I had hoped to spend my days both in happiness and in sorrow...deserted me by his untimely death? . . . I will follow him wherever he goes and share whatever fate has ordained for him. . . . Should I obstruct the progress of his soul and deny it everlasting bliss. . ." she says (Ghelo 47).

Here too Gunsundari's decision is based on two elements-

- a) Social- Looking at her arguments to commit Sati, we can see that those arguments show a deeply rooted patriarchal mindset, the sense that a woman doesn't have her own existence without a husband and that she should follow him wherever he goes, even death.
- b) Religion- The second argument she gives is religious which shows a blind following of religion of those times.

These reasons also suggest a lack of personal identity of women of those times. Not a single argument of Gunsundari contains a personal sentiment. All the arguments show an obligation, a responsibility which she should fulfil and hence immolate herself.

Nandshankar, while describing the atmosphere during the performance of the act of Sati tries to present a picture which appears breathtaking and unearthly. It succeeds in creating a feeling of wonder and mystery.

Now the sati was eager to join her husband. She entered the wooden structure, cradled her husband's head in her lap, and gestured to the Brahmins to proceed. . . . Screams of Jai Ambe! Jai Ambe! Pierced the din. The frenzy reached horrifying proportions, impossible to describe. Not a single cry escaped Gunsundari as her youthful body was crushed under the collapsing roof and she and her husband were enveloped by flames. Their mortal remains dissolved into the elements, leaving their souls to be judged before the king of kings. (Ghelo 235-36)

Apart from all these, knowing well the influence of colonial education and values on the writer, we find some dissent regarding the condition of the country, but the writer doesn't explain it nor give any reasons for his dissatisfaction. It is seen when Karan decided to go to war for the second time to protect his daughter Devaldevi and sent messengers to all his former vassals, several chieftains arrived with their contingents, even though Karan wasn't a king anymore, some 5000 Rajputs arrived to help him.

‘What motivated them to come? It was nothing but love for their king, pride in their motherland and the passionate desire to protect their country. Alas, such courage is no longer to be found in our land! And it is for this reason that our people are no longer free.’ (Gandhi)

This last statement is important because it is coming from a writer who had a tremendous colonial influence on his life and yet he feels and longs for freedom where the British do not rule them.

But this desire is still immature, and Gandhi led it to maturity in his book *Hind Swaraj*, published in 1909. In it, Gandhiji says that the problem is not the British but the modern civilization, which we have to free ourselves from. For Gandhi, being free from the British meant English rule without Englishman, that is to have tiger’s nature but not the tiger and make India English. Gandhi says, “It is my deliberate opinion that India is being ground down, not under the English heel, but under that of modern civilization” (Gandhi 33).

According to Gandhi, The British parliament along with the Railways, Lawyers, and Doctors are all harmful to society. They, instead of helping the nation, increase its troubles. For Parliament Gandhi says, “Its work should be so smooth that its effects would be more apparent day by day. . . . It is generally acknowledged that the members are hypocritical and selfish. Each thinks of his own little interest. It is fear that is the guiding motive. What is done today may be undone tomorrow. It is not possible to recall a single instance in which finality can be predicted for its work” (Gandhi 30).

Gandhi is of the opinion that modern civilization is even eating into the vitals of the English nation so it must be shunned and the parliaments which represent this civilizations are, in reality, ‘emblems of slavery.’ When Railways were introduced in India, many were of the opinion that it gave India a new united spirit of nationalism but Gandhi never believed India to be divided in the first place he says, “We were one nation before they came to India. One thought inspired us. Our mode of life was the same” (Gandhi 63).

It was the railway, without which the English couldn't have such a hold on India as they had. Then for lawyers, he says that instead of solving the quarrels, they increase them as their whole profession runs on quarrels. And doctors make us careless of our bodies and that in the long term results in a loss of control over the mind. Thus the goal for Gandhi is not only to be free from the British but from the modern civilization also.

Nandshankar Mehta's context of courage is in fighting wars of arms but Gandhi's courage is totally different from the violent courage. For Gandhi the means and the end are connected so if one uses brute force as a means in the end he too would be opposed with the same means and that will solve no quarrels neither will it give any solutions but increase more problems.

So, Gandhi insists on using Passive resistance which is the sacrifice of self. He calls it reverse of resistance by arms to him it simply means," When we do not like certain laws, we do not break the heads of law-givers but we suffer and do not submit to the laws" (Gandhi 34).

Another major element found In *Karan Ghelo* is the conflict between Hindu and Muslims, the cruelties inflicted by both against each other and the corruption of religion. Especially the Hindu-Muslim conflict continues for so long even in the present but Gandhi, here too differs and says (regarding the cruelties both inflict on each other),

. . . the cruelties are not part of religion although they have been practiced in its name; therefore there is no aftermath to these cruelties. They will happen so long as there are to be found ignorant and credulous people. But there is no end to the victims destroyed in the fire of civilization. Its deadly effect is that people come under its scorching flames believing it to be all good. They become utterly irreligious and, in reality, derive little advantage from the world. Civilization is like a mouse gnawing while it is soothing us. When its full effect is realized, we shall see that religious superstition is harmless compared to that of modern civilization. . . . (Gandhi 37)

In this way, Gandhi turns the wars and quarrels fought in the name of religion on humans' ignorance implying evil is not in the religion but in one's own self which should be removed and it can be removed by religion. Thus after this literature, especially Gujarati literature acquired new dimensions. It was the beginning of literature infused with the spirit of nationalism, concern for the downtrodden, and humanism. Much was written about the downtrodden in quite a revolutionary spirit.

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From Fiction to Reality: Love, Harmony and Brotherhood in the Works of Preeti Shenoy

Chauhan Nikunj Kumar Jasvantlal

Introduction

It has long been accepted that literature is the most beautiful mirror of society, providing a deep understanding of the intricate complexities of social functioning institutions and the complexity of human nature. It has been used across ages and cultures as a vehicle to examine fundamental themes that are deeply relevant to the human condition, such as love, loss, conflict and reconciliation. When literature is at its best, it bridges cultural divides and promotes a common understanding of human emotions and desires that transcend time and space. Preeti Shenoy stands as a unique voice in the vast fabric of modern Indian literature, eloquently and authentically expressing the complex nature of interpersonal interactions.

Preeti Shenoy, a contemporary novelist of great repute in India, has gained widespread recognition for her poignant narratives and evocative depictions of human emotions. Her works are deeply rooted in the ethos of Indian society, yet they have universal appeal as a result of their investigation of themes that resonate with the essence of human existence. Shenoy's narratives explore the challenges of personal and societal expectations, the enduring search for harmony and connection and the complexities of love. Through her characters, she vividly illustrates the challenges faced by ordinary individuals facing extraordinary circumstances, underlining the transformative potential of love and understanding in the face of adversity.

Shenoy's books demonstrate the idea that writing is a vehicle for social change rather than just an artistic medium. By crafting stories that show

how individual and collective experiences are interconnected, he emphasizes the important role of empathy in overcoming social barriers. Shenoy's novels offer a picture of harmony and reconciliation in an increasingly divided and tense society. They present love as a force that promotes universal brotherhood, not just as a romantic ideal.

This paper critically analyses the thematic depth and narrative techniques used by Shenoy in his exploration of the universal values of love, harmony and brotherhood. It attempts to understand the way his works resonate with readers in different cultural contexts, providing a perspective through which humanity can reflect on the need for empathy and interconnectedness in an increasingly globalised world. This study attempts to elucidate Shenoy's contribution to the literary landscape and his role in situating his work within the broader framework of contemporary Indian literature in the way we understand social challenges and relationships in modern times.

The realistic portrayal of social challenges and depth of emotion in Preeti Shenoy's work set her apart. Previous research on Indian literature highlights a growing emphasis on common difficulties and the transformative potential of interpersonal connections. While J. Anand (2020) examines the function of literature to foster empathy and international understanding, scholars such as R. Mehta (2018) have examined how contemporary Indian literature transcends cultural barriers.

Shenoy's novels, such as *Life is What You Make It* and *The Secret Wish List*, underscore the obstacles of societal norms, personal identity and marital discord. Her ability to create relatable characters has been widely recognized, with critics recognizing her emphasis on personal growth and reconciliation as central to her narrative.

Using a qualitative method, this study examines several of Shenoy's books to explore recurring themes of brotherhood, love and harmony. A textual analysis approach was used to examine character development, narrative strategies and how social issues were portrayed. Key scenes and exchanges were selected to examine how Shenoy depicts emotional

transformation and reconciliation. Further reader interviews and literary critical evaluations were also looked at to understand the broader significance of her work.

Analysis and Discussion

Preeti Shenoy's novels explore the complexities of human relationships, transcending traditional romanticism in their depiction of love. She emphasizes the multifaceted nature of love by weaving it into the fabric of family ties and friendship. In her narratives, love is transformed into a force that transcends the boundaries of romance, incorporating themes of emotional growth, forgiveness and understanding. Her characters, who often face personal crises such as marital discord, unfulfilled ambitions, or cultural divides, serve as a testament to the transformative power of love. They find comfort in vulnerability and empathy, serving as examples of the therapeutic potential of connection. According to Shenoy's research, the true potential of love is not found in its purity, but in its ability to unite individuals by embracing it. The struggles her characters' experience are reminiscent of real-world struggles, making their journeys both inspiring and relatable. Ultimately, Shenoy's story encourages readers to acknowledge that love, in all its manifestations, has the capacity to nurture and regenerate, thereby fostering individual and collective growth. This approach positions love not just as an ideal, but as a means of emotional evolution and social harmony. Shenoy examines these levels, providing a holistic, inspiring perspective on the role of love in overcoming life's obstacles.

Love as Transformation

It Happens for a Reason by Preeti Shenoy shows love as a transformational force that transcends personal suffering and cultural boundaries, rather than only as a romantic notion. The protagonist undergoes a profound process of self-discovery while facing societal criticism and personal disappointments. She gains the ability to overcome internal and external stress through love, both given and received. Shenoy skill-fully illustrates how love can transform scars into a source of

strength and act as a catalyst for personal recovery. The protagonist's emotional development is largely due to her own acceptance, which reflects Shenoy's conviction that the real power of love is found in its ability to foster inner peace. Love gradually breaks down barriers not only between individuals, but also within the protagonist as she negotiates challenging relationships. In doing so, Shenoy communicates the universal lesson that love, if nurtured with compassion and understanding, can bridge even the most serious gaps. Shenoy reminds readers in this story that love is an active force that pushes for growth and change rather than being passive. The book ends with a hopeful message: love can bring peace, resilience and emotional rebirth despite external obstacles.

Harmony in Diversity

A recurring theme in Preeti Shenoy's writings is harmony in diversity, reflecting India's diverse cultural heritage. The characters in her books often come from a wide range of social strata, geographical locations and religious beliefs, reflecting a vivid cross-section of Indian culture. These exchanges are used to demonstrate the power of empathy to heal divisions rather than merely as plot elements. Despite their diverse backgrounds and worldviews, Shenoy's characters are able to come together through empathy and shared experiences. This presentation dispels myths and emphasizes how important emotional intelligence is to get past cultural barriers. Her conviction in the transformative power of human connection is demonstrated through the subtle yet profound way she weaves together many of her stories. Shenoy encourages readers to consider how empathy can foster tolerance and transform differences into opportunities for development rather than conflict by showcasing these cross-cultural interactions. As a result, her writings have an impact beyond India, promoting a world peace based on compassion and respect. Shenoy's contribution to writing as a vehicle for social change is highlighted by this global appeal. She advances the idea that genuine unity arises from embracing differences rather than eradicating them through the prism of her diverse characters.

Universal Brotherhood

Preeti Shenoy's novels examine the universal brotherhood and show how literature can heal and unite people. Shenoy promotes a society in which love and respect for one another transcend both social and personal boundaries through her compelling characters and emotionally stirring stories. Her stories demonstrate how literature can foster a sense of world unity when it is written with compassion and understanding. To promote harmony in a fractured society, Shenoy highlights the importance of respect for one another by presenting characters from diverse backgrounds and difficult situations. Her writings encourage readers to imagine a society in which ethnic, religious and geographical boundaries do not limit human connection. Rather, they present a picture in which every encounter is grounded in our common humanity. Through Shenoy's skill in incorporating these principles into her novels, readers are encouraged to consider their own part in fostering a more compassionate society. Her stories suggest that international brotherhood is a real possibility that can be fostered through tolerance, love and respect for diversity, rather than an ideal that exists only in the mind. Through her writing, Shenoy skill-fully illustrates how literature can encourage empathy and inclusivity, which in turn can lead to change in the real world. Ultimately, her works inspire readers to take action by fostering a sense of shared responsibility for establishing a peaceful society.

Conclusion

To sum up - the statement concludes by highlighting a key idea of Preeti Shenoy's work, which is her ability to tell stories to create a vision of harmony and unity. Shenoy's dedication to social and emotional healing emphasizes love and respect for one another as the cornerstones of a peaceful world. She encourages readers to examine difficult social and personal issues through lovable characters, fostering strong bonds with a range of human experiences. Her writing transcends cultural barriers and encourages readers to adopt a more compassionate perspective, as evidenced by her references to empathy and multicultural understanding. This last observation further emphasizes the significant impact of

literature on both personal development and the formation of universal human values. The allusion to universal brotherhood suggests that Shenoy's writings promote unity in a broader global context rather than being limited to individual stories. According to the study, Shenoy is a writer whose works promote tolerance and respect for one another. Her writing is powerful not only because of its emotional resonance but also because of its ability to inspire social change. In this way, literature becomes a tool for changing society by encouraging readers to consider their place in the larger human community. The idea of universal brotherhood is explored in Shenoy's writings as individual and group endeavours that cut across national borders, cultural norms and ideological divides.

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How Controversial can a Fiction be to become Popular? An Anatomy of 'Contro-Pop fiction'

K. Kannan Prasad

A literary work, especially a fictional novel does not become popular and well read only because of having good content or endorsed by critics or for following the aesthetics of fiction writing or for capturing vivid imaginations of the human mind, contrary to the popular belief that is held among readers. A fictional work may become popular for various reasons like “The influence of online platforms . . . the publishing industry . . . the increase of book sales, and certain books have gained popularity due to trends on social media platforms. . . . Digital age has transformed literature consumption, making it more accessible and widespread” (Eesley) among academicians and readers but it may not be well accepted among both the categories, citing the reason that academicians and readers do not, at times, find the same book to be good in terms of writing. A researcher is then bestowed with the responsibility of finding out the intersection of these two categories, where a book becomes an object of exploration for both the academicians and common readers. A fiction that becomes popular by attracting attention through making controversial statements can be termed as a fiction that has attained popularity through controversy or Contro-Pop fiction.”Controversial books are often those that challenge societal norms and established beliefs. Their popularity stems not just from their content but from the debates they spark, drawing readers to engage with them out of curiosity or ideological alignment” (Gant). It is fictional works of the type which may be proposed as the intersection between the readership of common readers and academicians.

A fictional work need not necessarily attract the attention of an academician, since he / she/they can read deep into the fictional work. The same may be the case with readers who commonly have a reading habit on par with an academician. There could still be exemptions where a common reader may always not be consistent in his/her/their reading or the reading level could be above that of an academician. The pertinent question is to know what brings any reader to read a literary work or a fictional work.

The research article aims at exploring the anatomy of a contro-pop fiction as an attempt to understand the reading habit. Such a reading habit is not fueled completely by a desire for reading but it is a desire for pleasure. Hence an understanding of the contro-pop fiction would enable an understanding of the readership trend in 21st century. The research article will also explore the controversy that surrounded works like *Satanic Verses* (1988), *Da Vinci Code* (2003) and *Maadhorubhagan* (2019).

In the context of Tamil Nadu, *Maadhorubhagan* written by Perumal Murugan attracted attention from common readers after it became a media sensation through protests from political outfits both at the state and national level. The novel is about a married couple who are unable to bear children even after 12 years of their marriage. The social stigma surrounding the idea of being childless, especially in India is deep-rooted to social well-being of a family. Though the focus is well being of the couple, patriarchy raises concern while such a thought is imposed. The thought while imposed beyond a limit can be overwhelming. The stigma has the strength of forcing a couple to find solution to the issue at the same time push them to the verge of their existence as well. Kali and Ponna in the novel are pushed to the edge. The society which the couple hails from encourages the idea of Ponna, the wife of Kali to bypass marital customs of monogamy and advise a temporary arrangement in order to help her get pregnant. The relatives of the couple encourage Ponna into such ritual keeping aside the issue of extramarital sex. The festival of the village is cited as the means to impregnate herself through meeting men in the festival. The festival as denoted by Perumal Murugan

is referred as one conducted for this purpose, where women who are not able to get pregnant through their husbands can visit ‘gods’ in the festival and bear a child.

The practice is heralded by other women in her community and Ponna is forced to commit to this arrangement even though her husband does not approve of it. Perumal Murugan does not give historical evidence to the happening of such an event. Hence it becomes evident that Perumal Murugan is creating a fictional world to steer attention to the, “. . . patriarchal society alienate a couple longing to be like any other” (Kandasamy). Yet Perumal Murugan’s novel set a precedent for receiving death threats in the national level. The media which covered the protests of political parties opposing the book, did not extend due focus to the rising issue of infertility among couples.

The Tamil version of the novel was released in the year 2010 by Kalachuvadu publication. The English version of the novel titled *One Part Woman* was translated by Aniruddhan Vasudevan and published in the year 2013. The novel begins generating controversy in the year 2014 onwards. “Literary controversies are a function of cultural anxieties and media amplification. Far from harming a text, they often serve as free publicity, driving curiosity and public engagement with the work” (Moran). The deduced fact is that for three years after the publication of the novel, it may have been well read among academicians. But the English translation and the protests by political outfits bring attention to the novel and common readers start desiring for a read of the novel. The controversy generated by the novel made it popular not for the nuances of the writing but for the rituals in the festival denoted in the novel, thus implying the fact that the readers were directing their attention to the novel for pleasure. “Popular fiction often intersects with cultural anxieties, reflecting and sometimes amplifying societal conflicts. These works act as mirrors to public fears, desires, and ideological divides” (Radway).

Readers who read for pleasure can be distinctly differentiated from people who read for academic purpose as Christy Whitten describes

“Reading for pleasure refers to reading that we do of our own free will anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the act of reading” (7). The distinct feature of a Contro-Pop Fiction can be framed as being surrounded by ideologies that either question or implant sexuality of a community. Though there have been fictional worlds that reveal ideologies of the author about sexuality, *Maadhorubhagan* can be seen as a novel which uses a dominant community from the real world as an example.

In the western world, similar examples of the sort can be seen in the controversy surrounding the novel *Da Vinci Code* written by Dan Brown. Yet again the controversy around the novel was about ideologies of the author about sexuality. The difference that could be observed between *Maadhorubhagan* and *Da Vinci Code* is that the latter involved a religion and the former involved a community. *Da Vinci Code* stepped into controversy by raising concerns on the relationship between Jesus Christ and Lady Magdalene. Dan Brown creates a fictional event out of the existing information from the religious text of Christians. The author does not claim any historical backing on the issue based on evidence, so do authors who write extensively on the topic. Yet Dan Brown’s novel was put through a lot of scrutiny especially by the broadcast media of leading universities like University of California and others (*The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?*). The difference which was seen in the controversy surrounding Dan Brown’s novel and other novels discussed in this article is that, Brown’s fictional world was initially seen as an attack but later it was debated by historians, archaeologists, and academicians at a wider level. The debate put an end to the controversy surrounding it by the claims made by historians, archaeologists, and academicians that there was no historical evidence to the claim made in the novel as did Dan Brown.

Nevertheless, the combination of media and common readers sought after these novels after the controversy under question from both the novels were revealed to the general public. Fiction can’t work without conflict. Some types of conflict work well in their own right, but are not controversial in a 21st Century context. However, introducing elements

that challenge contemporary societal norms can elevate a narrative's engagement and relevance. These novels were stripped of their complete content by the controversy and instead focused on specific content that would be sellable for the media and as a result, the academic machinery started taking it up into scrutineering it.

Apart from controversies that are sellable through Contro-Pop fiction, censorship is yet another phenomenon that contributes to the features of a novel becoming a Contro-Pop fiction. "Controversy adds another layer to literary texts, transforming them into objects of cultural discourse. Readers are drawn not just to the narrative itself but to the debates that surround it, fostering a sense of participation in larger ideological struggles" (Felski). The book generated a discussion on censorship even in western countries for it was seen as an attack on a religion. The censorship issue reignited debates on the status of western countries being progressive in thinking, at the same time for being at fault in promoting such intolerance. The volatile situation forced countries like United Kingdom and India to ban the book (India Today). The "Publishers Weekly" author Len Riggio according to Wikipedia cites that the sales of the novel *Satanic Verses* had gone up by five times while compared to the data prior to the controversy.

The politics of misinterpretation repeatedly seems to be the case that makes up for the features of contro-pop fiction. The ideologies about sexuality pertaining to a community or a religion and conservative nature of religions generating attention is the basic framework that contributes to the making of a contro-pop fiction. The controversy witnesses a short spike in terms of the sales of the novel as most media start discussing the issue. A common reader who reads for pleasure, but does not have any desire to read out of sheer love for reading, gets fixated on the controversy and enjoys the situation as spectator. The pleasure of having inside information about the controversy makes the reader to feel inclusive about the issue at the same time a fodder for social gossiping is also created.

Popular culture in the 21st century, especially pertaining to the idea of reading, is restricted to subscribing to the ideas that are mass produced. The scope for individuality may have been reduced because of it. The mass-produced ideas are largely circulated through social media and reading habits are misconstrued only at the level of convincing other consumers of social media that a person is well read. The reason behind the emergence of contro-pop fiction is largely based on this phenomenon. There are opposing views for every other view in the world. Hence a communal ideology or religious ideology would find its opposite in another corner of the world. The opposing nature is brought to proximity through social media and the tolerance that is expected becomes untenable.

In the purview of the untenability, the consumers of a fictional work and in the case of this research paper, contro-pop fiction, raise objectionable content from its dormancy due to the fact that reading habit has been utterly limited and the intellectual capacity for tolerance is arguably lost. *Maadhorubhagan*, *Da Vinci Code*, and *Satanic Verses* may not have objectionable content but a book or event mentioned in a book could possibly be broadcasted through blowing it out of proportion does raise challenges in understanding popular culture itself. One of the many challenges that contro-pop fiction poses to a study in popular culture is that, through the act of defying the writing of authors, threatening authors with their life and censoring have only made sure that the concealing of such phenomenon to increasingly contribute towards revealing of the controversy to a much larger consumer. If the controversy had not been raised in the first place, the events and rituals misconstrued by the writers would not have met the eyes and ears of the world.

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Dalit Writing of Nirav Patel

Ketan Rajibhai Parmar

Introduction

Nirav Patel (1950–2019) was a trailblazer in Gujarati Dalit literature and a pivotal figure in the Dalit literary movement in India. He gained prominence in 1978 with the publication of *Akrosh*, the first-ever Gujarati Dalit literary magazine, under the Dalit Panther of Gujarat. Beyond this milestone, Patel co-edited influential magazines like *Kalo Suraj*, *Sarvanam*, *Swaman*, and *Vacha*, creating crucial platforms for Dalit voices.

Patel's activism extended through organizations such as the Swaman Foundation for Dalit Literature and the Gujarati Dalit Sahitya Pratishthan, where he collaborated with fellow writers to amplify the voices of the oppressed. His literary contributions, including works like *Burning from Both Ends*, *What Did I Do to Be So Black and Blue*, *Bahishkrut Phulo*, *Gujarati Dalit Kavita*, and *Severed Tongue Speaks Out*, delve into themes of social justice, identity, and Dalit resistance. Writing bilingually in English and Gujarati, Patel critiqued caste-based discrimination and narrated the lived experiences of Dalits with profound insight.

Themes of Protest and Resilience in Nirav Patel's Works

Nirav Patel's writings pulsate with fury and resistance against the systemic oppression faced by Dalits. Drawing from his personal experiences—growing up in a Chamar family on the outskirts of Bhuvaladi village near Ahmedabad and later working as a bank officer—

Patel brought authenticity and depth to his work. His poetry embodies the dual perspectives of a Dalit villager and an educated professional, bridging the rural and urban Dalit experiences.

His poems confront themes of inequality, untouchability, and the struggle for dignity. Patel's works challenge societal norms that perpetuate caste discrimination, offering a powerful voice to the silenced and marginalized. Through his writings, he vividly portrays the pain and resilience of Dalits while advocating for transformative social change.

The notable works of Notable works of Nirav Patel include *Burning from Both the Ends* (1980), an English poetry collection that delves into themes of caste discrimination and social injustice;” *What Did I Do to Be Black and Blue* (1987), an English poetry collection reflecting on the struggles and resilience of Dalit communities; *Bahishkrut Phulo* (2006), a Gujarati anthology that explores the experiences of Dalit individuals; *Severed Tongue Speaks Out* (2014), a compilation of poems addressing the silencing of marginalized voices; *Wanted Poets* (2019), a posthumous collection published after his passing, further showcasing his poetic prowess. Patel was also the editor of *Swaman*, a journal dedicated to Dalit writings in Gujarati.

Symbolism and Metaphor in *Bahishkrut Phulo* (*Exiled Flowers*)

Patel's poetry collection *Bahishkrut Phulo* (*Exiled Flowers*) is a cornerstone of Gujarati Dalit literature. The title symbolizes the marginalization of Dalits, likened to flowers cast aside by society. Patel uses the metaphor of flowers to capture the beauty, fragility, and resilience of Dalits amidst harsh societal conditions.

In the poem *Exiled Flowers*, Patel critiques societal hypocrisy:

“*May Gandhiji put them on his head,*
you trample them, crush them,
These untouchable flowers.” (lines 19-21)

These lines highlight the dual treatment of Dalits—venerated in symbolic contexts yet dehumanized in daily life. Patel questions societal norms with piercing clarity, asking: “*Without flowers, how will we worship?*”

This rhetorical inquiry underscores the indispensable role of Dalits in society and conveys that equality and justice are essential for their empowerment and flourishing.

Personal Experiences and Literary Expression

Nirav Patel’s life as a Dalit deeply informs his literary work. Born into a marginalized community, Patel’s experiences reflect the dichotomy of being an outcaste in rural Gujarat and a professional in urban settings. His writings weave together these lived realities, presenting a nuanced and layered exploration of caste-based discrimination.

Through his bilingual poetry and prose, Patel advocated for self-respect and dignity. His works transcend linguistic barriers, resonating with audiences across cultures and contexts. By capturing the anguish of Dalits and celebrating their resilience, Patel’s writings offer both a mirror to societal inequities and a pathway to transformation.

Social Awakening and Dalit Consciousness

Patel’s poetry serves as a powerful catalyst for social awakening. His works articulate the pain, resilience, and aspirations of Dalits, fostering a collective Dalit consciousness in Gujarat. Through collections like *Bahishkrut Phulo*, Patel calls for a confrontation with caste hierarchies and a commitment to dismantling them.

In one of his evocative stanzas, Patel writes:

“Where there is a village, there is a garden.

These flowers, long hidden in darkness,

now bloom in the sunlight of justice.” (lines 6-8)

This imagery emphasizes the potential of Dalits to thrive when provided with equality and justice. Patel portrays Dalits as vital contributors to societal growth, likening them to flowers that can flourish when nurtured.

Critique of Societal Hypocrisy and Vision for Equality

Patel's poetry critiques the paradoxical treatment of Dalits—worshipped in rituals yet ostracized in daily life. He envisions an inclusive society where caste-based discrimination is eradicated, symbolized through the metaphor of a garden where all flowers are nurtured and celebrated.

In *Bahishkrut Phulo*, Patel poignantly writes:

“Change their names, but not their fragrance.

Call them weeds, but they remain flowers.” (lines 29-30)

These lines underscore the futility of erasing Dalit identity through prejudice. Patel's works champion dignity and equality as fundamental rights, advocating for a world where societal labels no longer define or diminish an individual's worth.

Language and Style

Patel's bilingualism—writing in both Gujarati and English—allowed him to reach a diverse audience. His Gujarati works resonate deeply with local readers, while his English poems have found recognition on national and international platforms. Patel's language is straightforward yet evocative, often blending poetic imagery with raw, unfiltered emotion.

For instance, in *Bahishkrut Phulo*, Patel's use of nature as a metaphor for Dalit experiences is both powerful and relatable. Flowers, trees, and other elements of the natural world become symbols of resilience, hope, and beauty amidst adversity's.

Conclusion: Nirav Patel's Legacy in Dalit literature

Nirav Patel's contributions to Gujarati Dalit literature remain a cornerstone in the quest for social justice and equality. His powerful poetic voice provided an authentic reflection of the Dalit experience, shaping the course of Dalit literature and offering a platform for the marginalized. Works such as *Bahishkrut Phulo* not only highlight the struggles of Dalits but also celebrate their resilience, urging society to confront the deep-rooted caste hierarchies that persist. Through his

bilingual writing and activism, Patel bridged gaps between regional and global audiences, inspiring readers worldwide to reflect on social inequities and take action towards inclusivity.

Patel's works go beyond literary accomplishments; they are a call to action. His critique of societal hypocrisy, his vivid metaphors, and his vision for a world without caste discrimination continue to resonate today. The metaphors of flowers and gardens in his poetry evoke the latent potential within Dalits to flourish when offered justice and equality. Patel's legacy is that of a visionary whose words transcend time and space, igniting minds and hearts to pursue a more equitable society.

Through his enduring works and activism, Patel has ensured that Dalit voices will not remain silenced. His legacy continues to inspire future generations, reminding us all that the struggle for equality is not over and that every voice, no matter how marginalized, has the power to create transformative change.

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Aesthetic Beauty in Postmodern Gujarati Poetry Translated into English

Krunal Hirabhai Parmar

Introduction

Narsinh Mehta (15th century) is believed to have been born in Talaja, near the town of Bhavnagar in Saurashtra. But he spent most of his life in Junagadh, also in Saurashtra, a town perched on the *holy* Mount Girnar. In Gujarat, Narsinh Mehta is revered as the *Adi Kavi*, or “First Poet” of the region’s language – not because no one else came before him, but because his lyrics were the first in the vernacular to be widely shared among its speakers. Conveying messages of love, compassion, self-reflection, and human dignity, his poetry has a universal quality that has enabled it to flourish over the centuries and develop into something beyond popular religion. Narsinh Mehta is a pioneer poet of Gujarati literature. He was a poet of wisdom, wit, vision, and devotion to God. Many of his poems highlight the love of the ‘gopis’ – milkmaids – for Krishna, and the love of Jasoda – Krishna’s foster mother – for Krishna. He is known for his literary forms called *pada* (verse), *Aakhyan*, and *Prabhatiya*. One of the most important features of Narsinh’s works is that they are not available in the language in which Narsinh had composed them. They have been largely preserved orally.

Most of Narsinh Mehta’s poems are aesthetic, natural and reflect Hindu Philosophy. Among them *On Waking I See* is one of the poems translated into English language. In this poem, the poet talks about God and the five elements. There are other such poems of his which were written in the 15th century but have been translated into English in the modern era. Some examples of his poems are *Be Still, Be Still, O Moon, Do Not Make The Dawn Yet...!, I’ll Tie You My Bed With Garland of Flowers, In this entire Universe, You alone exist, Shri Hari* etc.

Narsinh Mehta connects the World with natural beauty. The world is an illusion and God is the creator of illusion. The Poet says that God has created the universe and has created different natures in it. Man is attached to greed and illusion, but all that is created by Shiva, that is, God. In the World, God has expanded the living world by his.

Everything that man can see, has been created as his door. It includes all five elements; Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Sky.

Born of the Supreme five cardinal elements are
with the sublime twined and bonded together.

*Fruit and also flower are of the tree, know
nor is the bough detached from the bole. (lines 5-8)*

(Mehta)

These five elements are essential for the creation of life. It also adds aesthetic beauty to the beauty of the Earth. All these play an important role for living things. Earth is the most beautiful gift of God. Water provides the most essential need of man and enhances the beauty of nature. Fire is also a natural gift given by God to human beings which stays with human beings from birth to the final time of death. Air is also essential for living creatures like all other elements. The sky's the most beautiful aesthetic gift of God, in which the beautiful scenes of day and night captivate us. The Poet shows the beauty of the five elements, and how they are connected to God. Here some words in the poem are in Gujarati only, which are not fully translated into English which include words like *shruti*, *smriti*, *jiva*.

Thus, the entire organism - creation is called by the poet as the aesthetic creation of God. Narsinh Mehta connects life with nature. Most devotional literature consists of poetry or especially poems. So this aspect is very important. The characteristic of this literature is that it is devotional, religious and aesthetic. The abundant devotional literature in these modern Indian languages is often referred to as *Bhakti literature*. Although it is Hindu religious in outlook, it expresses more aesthetic beauty.

Having said that in *JAAGINE JOU TO..*, the poet talks about the idea of self-awakening. Narsinh captures the essence of *Upanishad sutra* ‘तवम्असि’ (that is you), by weaving it simplistically in his poem. Until one remains ignorant, one shall be muddled in confusion, described as *Maya* in Indian spiritual teachings. *Maya* means that which prevents a soul from comprehending the true nature of reality. All the prescriptions of the world are *Maya*, they prevent one from realising his/her true nature. But then who is the creator of this *Maya*. The poet argues that the maker of existence is the maker of *Maya* too; hence there is nothing outside the realms of *Parmatma* (ultimate consciousness).

Here the fragrance and beauty of flowers are talked about. Flowers traditionally enhance natural beauty and make everyone happy. Fruits have also been compared to flowers. Its delicious sweetness is discussed here. But the sweetness that was there years ago is not there now. The main reason for this is that people consume more than what they need due to Corporeality in the Postmodern era. In earlier times, people used to consume just enough of it. Which we see in our Hindu religion through this poem. Narsinh Mehta emphasizes that true spiritual awakening comes not through intellect or philosophy, but through heartfelt devotion and the purification of the soul.

The Aesthetic Beauty of the Moon and Nature

The moon adorns the moonlight like a tree adorning the entwined creeper, And just as the earthen pots adorn the swan-gaited maids, Govind adorns the milk-white girls.

*Be still, be still, O moon, do not make the dawn yet,
The life of my life has come to my home!* (lines 13-15)

(Mehta)

The poet’s poem *Be Still, Be Still, O Moon, Do Not Make The Dawn Yet* also speaks of this same aesthetic beauty. Govinda i.e. Lord Krishna adorns the girls like the milk - white girl. The poet presents beauty like the moon, trees and creepers. The beauty and value of trees can be

known by the rays of the moon, when the rays of the moon fall on them at night, their beauty increases. That poet is talking about Be still, be still on moon, do not make the dawn yet. Because the life of my life will come to my house, that is, my God is coming to my house.

The sea is adorned by the surging waves;

The waves are adorned by the wavelets,

And gopis adorn our Govind! (lines 16-18)

(Mehta)

Here the poet compares the natural beauty of the ocean with God by saying that the sea is adorned with waves. Similarly, the gopis adorn our Govind, Shri Krishna, saying that the waves are adorned with waves. Thus, in this line of the poem, the poet shows the beauty inherent in it in natural beauty. This verse poetically describes the beauty of nature and devotion. It compares the sea adorned by surging waves, and the waves further decorated by smaller wavelets. In a similar way, the Gopis (devoted cowherd girls) adorn and enhance the divine presence of Lord Krishna (Govind). The verse symbolizes how nature and the love of the Gopis both express beauty and devotion to Krishna, highlighting the connection between the natural world and spiritual devotion.

You are the Lord with garland of wild flowers and I, a delicate flower vine,

If you can't water me, then why, dear

Did you plant me in the first place? (lines 7-9)

(Mehta)

In this *I'll Tie You To My Bed With Garland Of Flowers* poem, the poet talks about the forest. It says that Lord you are a garland of wild flowers, and I am a delicate flower vine. If you can't give me water, dear, ask why you planted me in the first place? Here the poet talks about natural aesthetic beauty like flowers, wasps, water. Even in this postmodern age, the poet shows the aesthetic by translating earlier

poems. Thus this poem is also famous as translated as all the poems of Narsinh Mehta.

O Sustainer of the Earth! You are the wind!

You are the water and you are the Earth!

You are also the outstretched tree blossoming in the sky!

In this entire universe, you alone exist, Shri Hari,

Yet, in infinite forms you seem to be! (lines 8-12)

(Mehta)

In This Entire Universe, You Alone Exist, Shri Hari in the poem, the poet calls Lord Shri Krishna as the sustainer of the earth among the five elements. It also says that you are the sustainer of the earth and you are the wind. You are the water and you are the earth! Thus you are also the sprawling tree blooming in the sky. In this entire universe, you are alone, Shri Hari, yet you seem to be in infinite form. Thus the poet associates all the aesthetic beauty in the universe with God. The natural beauty like earth, water, wind, sky, and trees is called by the poet as God's creation. Not only in this poem but in all the poems of Narsinh Mehta, aesthetic, traditional and Hindu religious (Philosophy) are discussed. That's why all his poems are famous and heartwarming.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Narsinh Mehta's poetry provides a powerful vision of spiritual awakening where the divine is connected to life and nature in a profound and intimate way. Through his verses, he teaches that nature is not separate from God, but rather a mirror reflecting the divine. The poet ends the poem with the assurance that being aware of the nature of reality will ensure your health. Thus, throughout the poems, the poet speaks of aesthetic beauty, which also highlights the importance of Hindu philosophy. Natural flowers, forests and wasps are also mentioned here with their aesthetic beauty. At the end of the poem, the poet speaks of connecting directly with God and being absorbed into Him. Thus, the poet here speaks of the aesthetic elements that God has created. It is

God who has given us the power to feel Him even without touch. Thus the age-old poems of the poet were translated from Gujarati to English in a post-modern manner and depict the aesthetic beauty, Hindu religiosity.

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Folk Literature in Western Part of India

Kunjali Patel

The research paper centralizes the folk literature particularly focusing on the western part of India and its contribution in the growth and development of the literary discourses. It is vibrant, rich and also deeply rooted in the region's history, culture and traditions. It reflects the diversity and artistic heritage of states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Goa. The paper is about the oral and also the written folk literature. Rooted in oral traditions it includes epics, ballads, songs, myths and tales that reflect the values, history and collective consciousness of communities. This paper includes the forms, themes, and significance of folk literature. The paper also look into the famous writers, who gave folklore a stage and fulfill the field of literature.

Introduction

Folk literature is oral and performative tradition passed down from generation to generation by performing and telling to each other. It often includes music, dance, visuals, and art making it a good experience. The western states such as Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Goa, showcases a rich variety of folklore that includes ballads, tales, epics, songs and dramatic performances. These literary forms are not just forms of entertainment but also vehicles for preserving history, teaching moral values, and fostering community identity.

In Gujarat, *Bhavai* performances and *Garba* songs highlight blend of devotion, satire and festivity, while in Rajasthan, romantic folklore and heroic ballads celebrate the valor and sacrifice of rajput kings and warriors. Maharashtra's *Pawada* ballads and *Lavani* songs vividly depict themes of spirituality and rural life, whereas Goa's *Mando* and *Dekhni* songs reflect a unique fusion of Indian and Portuguese cultures. Folk

literature in these regions is deeply intertwined with festivals, rituals, and daily lives of people; acting as a repository of local languages, traditions, and societal values.

Forms of folk literature in Western India

The folk literature of Gujarat includes in it the various style of *Duhas*, *Chhandas*, *Ashtaks*, *Bhajans*, *Garbas* and *Raasadaas*. And popular Gujarati folk songs include “Mari Chundadi Na Katka Char”, “Chando Ugyo Chowkma” and “Dudhe Te Bhari Talavdi”.

Bhavai - A popular folk theater form, blending storytelling, satire, and dance. Bhavai often revolves around social issues and devotion to local deities. It is performed in an open air setting. Bhavai is believed to have originated in the 14th century, with Asait Thakar, a brahmin from Gujarat, credited as its founder.

Dayro -It is popular folk storytelling and singing tradition performed primarily in rural areas and community gatherings. The tradition has strong roots in the oral culture of Gujarat and serves as both entertainment and a medium for cultural and spiritual education.

Garba and Raas - Folk songs and dances performed during Navaratri, symbolize devotion to Goddess Amba. Garba celebrates the feminine energy and is an expression of devotion, joy and togetherness. Raas encourages teamwork, rhythm, and festive energy, making it a social and spiritual experience.

Folk literature in Rajasthan is rich in oral narratives that emphasize bravery, love, and spirituality. Rajasthan has seven cultural regions which have different forms of folk literature derived from the local life-style, customs and traditions. Some of the well known folk forms are -

Pabuji Ki Phad - One of the Rajasthan’s most famous epic ballads, it narrates the life and heroic deeds of *Pabuji* a folk deity and rajput warrior.

Devnarayan Ki Phad - This epic is dedicated to Devnarayan, a hero-deity believed to be an incarnation of Vishnu. Tales of Rani Padmini

recounts the valor and sacrifice. She was the queen of Chittorgarh, known for her legendary beauty and “Jauhar”.

Gavari – It is a dance drama performed by the Bhil Adivasis of South Rajasthan. It is performed for forty days by a troupe of amateur performers moving from one village to another. This is a ritual dance drama form which involves worship as well as entertainment.

Maharashtra’s folk tradition emphasize heroism, spirituality, and rural life.

Powada – Powada are ballads that celebrate the heroic exploits of Maratha leaders such as Shivaji Maharaj. The art form was used to glorify Shivaji’s valor, his battles against the Mughals, and his leadership in establishing a Sovereign Maratha state.

Lavani – A rhythmic dance and song form that blends romance, social commentary and humor. It is known for its energetic rhythm and vibrant performance. The dance form is characterized by its fast-paced movements and intricate footwork, often accompanied by the Dholki and Harmonium.

Bhakti Literature – Compositions by saint-poets like Tukaram, Namdev, and Sant Dnyaneshwar focus on devotion, equality, and spirituality.

In Goa, the folk literature exhibits the cultural fusion of Indian and Portuguese influence.

Mando and Dekhni – These are songs of love, devotion and daily life sung to Portuguese musical instruments. It is characterized by its slow, melancholic tunes and poetic lyrics, often reflecting themes of love, longing and devotion.

Themes and Motifs in Folk Literature

Western Indian folk literature revolves around several recurring themes:

1. **Heroism and Valor** – Folk literature from Western India is heavily influenced by stories of heroes and warriors. Tales of Rajput kings

like Maharana Pratap, Maratha warriors like Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, and folk heroes like Pabuji, Tejaji emphasize bravery, valor and sacrifice.

2. **Love and Romance** – Themes of romantic love and separation in tales like Moomal and Rano, Dhola and Maru, and Rani Padmini highlight the deep emotions of love and the challenges faced by lovers due to societal, family or external obstacles.
3. **Spirituality and Devotion** – The worship of local deities and divine figures plays an important role in folk literature. Narratives surrounding deities like Goddess Durga, Shiva and regional deities like Devnarayan and Raja Jagannath emphasize faith and miracles.
4. **Caste and Class Struggle** – Many folk tales touch upon issues of *Caste* and *Class*. They often feature themes of social justice where the oppressed characters challenge the established hierarchies or fight for equality.
5. **Women’s Empowerment** – The motif of the empowered woman is common in folk literature, particularly in tales of heroic women like Rani Padmini, who takes a stand against the invaders, or Gaur Bai, who fights for justice.
6. **Nature and Environment** – The folk literature of Western India often portrays a deep connection with nature. The natural landscape rivers, deserts, mountains, and forests becomes a significant part of the narrative, symbolizing both challenges and resources.

Famous Writers

1. **Narsinh Mehta** – Narsinh Mehta was 15th century Gujarati poet and composer who wrote folk songs, including *Bhajans* and *Prabhatiya* that are still sung today. His famous work is “Vaishnav Jan To Tene Kahiye”, that become the anthem for peace and compassion.
2. **Zaverchand Meghani** – Zaverchand Meghani is one of the most celebrated folk writers of Gujarat in the 20th century, known as “The Father of Gujarati Folk Literature”. His famous works are “Gujarat ni Gatha”, and “Saurashtra ni Rashdhar”.

3. **Kavi Kumbhan** – Kavi Kumbhan was one of the earliest poets of Rajasthan, a contemporary of Rana Kumbha of Mewar. His notable work is “Rana Kumbha Prabandh”. He also composed “Vishnu Stuti”.
4. **Sankhala Kavi** – Sankhala Kavi is known for his romantic ballads that becomes part of the rich oral tradition of Rajasthan. He is well-known for his poems on Dhola and Maru, Moomal and Rano.
5. **Sant Tukaram** – Sant Tukaram is one of the most revered poets and saints of Maharashtra and a prominent figure in the Bhakti Movement. He is known for his *Abhanga* and *Kirtans* that express his deep devotion to Lord Vithoba. His devotional poetry is still sung widely in Maharashtra especially in Kirtan and Bhajan traditions.
6. **Kavi Bhushan** – Kavi Bhushan was a renowned Marathi poet who is known for his poetry and ballads that reflects the historical and cultural milieu of Maharashtra. His famous work “Raja Shivaji” glorifies the greatness of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and the Maratha empire.
7. **Krishnadas Sharma** – Krishnadas Sharma is regarded as one of the earliest literary figures Goa. Writing during the Pre-portuguese era, he is credited with creating early works that reflected mythological themes. He is known for his “Mahabharata” retelling in Konkani.
8. **Ravindra Kelekar** – Ravindra Kelekar was an influential Konkani writer and artist who drew inspiration from folk traditions, customs, and life of Goa. Notable works include “Himalayant” and “Vachik Shuddhi”.

Conclusion

The folk literature of the western part of India reflects the region’s rich cultural, historical and spiritual heritage passed down orally through generations. In Gujarat, forms like Bhavai, Dayro and Garba celebrate devotion and social life. Rajasthan’s folk literature exemplified by heroic

ballads and tales of love. Maharashtra's Abhanga, Lavni, and Powada showcase a mix of spirituality and social reforms. Goa's Mando, Dekhni performances reflect a harmonious blend of Hindu, Christian and Portuguese influences, celebrating love, devotion, heroism, nature, love and social reform making these oral and written traditions relevant even today. Prominent folk writers and performers continue to inspire future generations.

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Narratives of Ecological Feminists: An Analytical Study of Development, Displacement and Environmental Issues in *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree* and *Women in the Wild*

Patel Kavan Rajubhai

The convergence of ecological and feminist ideologies is the focus of ecofeminism, a significant framework that emphasises the parallel forms of oppression that women and nature experience within patriarchal societies. The term is a critique of power systems that exploit both ecological and social resources for economic and industrial advantages, and it is rooted in the broader feminist and environmental movements. Ecofeminism is a perspective that emphasises the intrinsic value of nature and the critical roles that women play in the preservation of ecological harmony. This philosophy emphasises the necessity of rejecting exploitative paradigms and adopting sustainable, equitable models of coexistence. Ecofeminist themes are interwoven in Sudha Murthy's *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree* and Anita Mani's *Women in the Wild*, which serve as profound literary exemplars in this context. The anthology of mythological tales by Murthy re-thinks ancient narratives, portraying female deities and heroines as stewards of nature who exemplify nurturing traits and resilience. Her narrative frequently alludes to Indian mythology, illustrating a symbiotic relationship between women and the environment. Human tendencies to prioritise industrial and material gains over ecological equilibrium are frequently critiqued by greed, a recurring motif that threatens this connection. Murthy's use of mythological allegories acts as an eternal reminder of humanity's duty to the natural world in addition to preserving traditional learning.

Women in the Wild by Anita Mani, on the other hand, this book chronicles the real-life experiences of women who work at the forefront of environmental preservation. Mani depicts the hardships of female activists who oppose development and industrial projects that endanger ecosystems and uproot communities through firsthand testimonies. These women frequently have to navigate gendered barriers in their advocacy work while simultaneously fighting environmental exploitation. Mani draws attention to the ways that industrialization often disguised as advancement—alienates women from their customary responsibilities as stewards of the natural world and places them in vulnerable situations of loss and migration. Her stories provide a striking window into the bravery and tenacity of women who stand out for ecological justice. Mani and Murthy together offer complementary aspects of ecofeminism. Mani's current tales expose the harsh realities of contemporary exploitation and displacement, whereas Murthy's mythological approach revitalizes eco-spiritual knowledge by highlighting harmony and reverence for environment. The connections between social justice, gender equality and environmental ethics are clarified by these publications. Both writers demonstrate the ongoing applicability of ecofeminism in tackling structural ecological and patriarchal issues by contrasting mythological insights with contemporary battles. The narratives of *Women in the Wild* and *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree* are examined in this study to see how they highlight ecofeminist issues.

In order to answer the demand to recover eco-spiritual knowledge and ethical frameworks for coexistence, it aims to expose the ways that industrialization and modernism upend the traditional ties between women and nature. In addition to criticizing the negative social and environmental effects of irresponsible development, Murthy and Mani's narratives praise the strength and tenacity of women as advocates for justice and ecological preservation. Together, these stories challenge readers' perceptions of nature and promote a more sustainable and inclusive future. These both writers are not actual ecofeminist author. But the

concept of ecological feminism is directly or indirectly mention in these literary things. As first, both writers show their feminist perspective and later they talk about ecological connection in their books. In *Women in the Wild*, presented women are the best examples of ecological feminism.

Nature as a Feminine Entity

Nature as a feminine entity has long been a prominent motif in literature, art and philosophy, representing attributes such as resilience, life-giving and nurturing. Ecofeminist narratives use this connection to criticise patriarchal and industrial systems for their exploitation and destruction of women and the environment. Two stories that illustrate this theme, *Women in the Wild* by Anita Mani and *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree* by Sudha Murthy use different storytelling techniques, mythological metaphor and real-life advocacy, respectively. Sudha Murthy employs mythological allegory in *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree* to investigate the interconnectedness of women and nature. Her narratives depict female characters as embodiments of the natural resilience, grace and nurturing power of women. Goddesses and female warriors are frequently depicted as environmental protectors, emphasising the harmonious relationship between humans and the natural world. Conversely, Anita Mani's *Women in the Wild* applies these themes to the real-world struggles and victories of individuals. The book underscores the human-nature connection and the critical role that women play in the preservation of forests and fauna by telling compelling stories of women activists. Mani chronicles the lives of women who are committed to the prevention of deforestation, wildlife trafficking and industrial encroachment.

Impact of Development and Displacement

Themes of displacement and development are central to ecofeminist narratives, as they depict the challenges that women and communities encounter as they navigate the encroachment of industrialization. This issue is examined from complementary perspectives in Anita Mani's *Women in the Wild* and Sudha Murthy's *The Daughter from a Wishing*

Tree. Mani's perspective is rooted in contemporary activism, while Murthy's is rooted in allegorical storytelling that is anchored in history and culture. Both authors criticize the unbridled pursuit of development, which not only disrupts ecosystems but also displaces indigenous women, severing their deep-rooted connections with the natural world. Mani's *Women in the Wild* offers a poignant perspective on the lives of indigenous women who are the primary victims of industrial projects. Communities that have coexisted in harmony with nature for generations are frequently uprooted by such endeavours, whether through deforestation, mining, or dam construction.

These women are deprived of their houses and their responsibilities as the guardians of their local environments. Mani's narratives underscore the dual oppression that these women endure: as members of marginalised groups advocating for environmental justice and as women who must contend with societal gender biases. Their displacement is not merely a physical removal; it is a representation of the devastation of their ecological knowledge, livelihoods and cultural heritage. The accounts of Mani expose the stark contrast between the irreversible damage that development causes to both ecosystems and human lives and the development that is touted as progress.

These topics are explored in Murthy's *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree* through cultural and mythical allegories, which serve as cautionary stories about the dangers of greed. Her narratives show how humanity's disastrous consequences stem from the destruction of ecological balance brought about by the quest of industrial prosperity and material gain. Murthy shows via her stories how people should all do their part to keep nature in balance, but how greedy people often fail to do so. These stories speak to modern environmental ethics and show how traditional knowledge and practices can provide answers to current problems. Traditional beliefs are relevant in resisting the forces of exploitation and environmental destruction, as Murthy shows via his storytelling and ecological analysis. Thus, these two major themes like 'development' and 'displacement' play a crucial role in these literary works.

Resistance and Eco-Spiritual Rediscovery

Mani and Murthy both emphasize the resilience of women who strive to protect their environments, despite some obstacles presented by displacement and development. Mani's *Women in the Wild* depicts women as active agents of change, resisting ecological devastation through community-driven initiatives and grassroots movements. These women frequently resurrect traditional practices and eco-spiritual knowledge, utilizing their cultural heritage to resist industrial exploitation. For example, Mani elucidates the ways in which women organize reforestation campaigns, advocate for sustainable farming practices and safeguard endangered species. Their resistance is not merely a struggle against external forces; it is a reclaiming of their identities and responsibilities as environmental protectors.

An Ecological Study in *Women in the Wild*

The book commences with a profile of the first "Birdwoman" of independent India, Jamal Ara, who was also arguably the most enigmatic figure in Indian ornithology. This profile was written by the sole male contributor, Raza Kazmi. India's inaugural female herpetologist, the 'Turtle Girl' like Viji, has ardently engaged in the conservation of India's freshwater turtles, leading to the re-discovery of the long-extinct Cochin forest cane turtle; the wildlife investigator Uma Ramakrishnan, who employs DNA analysis to study tiger behavior, along with numerous other enterprising women dedicated to conservation efforts. Some of the biologists profiled are characterized by the species they aim to protect, such as Vidya Athreya, who is renowned for her work with leopard *with human and scapes*. The most of the women who have been highlighted in this article have either made a significant contribution to the conservation of species and landscapes or have helped resolve the environmental challenges that wildlife in India face. *Women in the Wild* Presents real ecological study through women's scientific and literary works.

As primary sources, the investigation emphasizes the narratives in Murthy's *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree* and Mani's *Women in the Wild*. To reveal representations of nature, gender roles and resistance against ecological exploitation, these texts are broken down. Murthy's text is analyzed for its use of Indian mythology to symbolize the interconnectedness of women and nature, exploring how these allegories critique modern environmental practices. This article examines Murthy's work through the lens of Indian mythology, specifically looking at the ways in which the text allegorically critiques contemporary environmental practices through symbolizing the interdependence of women and nature. Displacement, ecological ethics, development pressures and eco-spiritual rediscovery are among the recurring themes identified in the study. The research establishes the manner in which the authors communicate ecofeminist ideologies by analyzing these motifs.

Conclusion

To conclude- this study emphasizes the importance of women in ecological discourse by examining Anita Mani's documentation of actual activism and Sudha Murthy's mythological storytelling. Both pieces contend that recognizing the intertwined oppression of women and nature is necessary to combat environmental deterioration. According to the study's findings, ecological feminism provides a key framework for reconsidering development paradigms and promoting a return to morally and sustainably coexisting with nature.

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Spectacular India: Gujarat as a Microcosm of National Identity in Bhansali's *Ram-Leela* and *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*

Piyush Bhaira

Introduction

The term 'Bollywood' was coined in the 1970s as a playful blend of 'Bombay' (now Mumbai) and 'Hollywood,' signifying the Hindi-language film industry based in Mumbai. While often conflated with Indian cinema as a whole, Bollywood represents only a subset of the nation's vast cinematic landscape, which includes regional industries such as Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, and Marathi cinema. Bollywood is distinct for its grand narratives, melodrama, and elaborate song-and-dance sequences, designed to appeal to a pan-Indian and global audience. As Ashish Rajadhyaksha notes, the term reflects "the shift of Indian cinema from national identity to global branding," underscoring Bollywood's role in both preserving cultural specificity and catering to cosmopolitan tastes (Rajadhyaksha and Willemsen 17). Furthermore, the distinction between Bollywood and Hindi cinema lies in their approach; while Bollywood epitomizes commercial, star-driven entertainment, Hindi cinema also encompasses art-house and parallel films that focus on realism and experimental narratives. Tejaswini Ganti observes that Bollywood films often "navigate the tension between tradition and modernity while aiming for global appeal," a hallmark of the industry's ability to bridge local and universal sensibilities (Ganti 45).

Bollywood's cultural dominance has led to the phenomenon termed the 'Bollywoodization' of culture, where regional traditions are romanticized and universalized through cinematic representation. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's films, including *Goliyon*

Ki Raasleela: Ram-Leela and *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*, which blend hyperreal aesthetics with regional ethos to create a homogenized yet idealized vision of Indian culture. By drawing on Gujarat's cultural landscape, Bhansali's works exemplify Bollywood's dual role as both a cultural unifier within India and a global storyteller, reshaping traditions into a spectacle that resonates across national and international boundaries.

Bombay film industry's aesthetic appeal lies in its ability to create a sense of spectacle that captivates audiences through its visual grandeur, melodrama, and larger-than-life narratives. Neelam Sidhar Wright, in her book *Bollywood and Postmodernism: Popular Indian Cinema in the 21st Century*, argues that Bollywood employs postmodern techniques, blending the traditional with the contemporary to construct an exaggerated and hyperreal cinematic experience. According to Wright, the spectacle in Bollywood is "not merely a decorative excess but a deliberate strategy to intensify emotional engagement and cultural resonance" (Wright 84). This deliberate use of spectacle is evident in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's films, where intricate costume designs, vibrant color palettes, and choreographed musical sequences are central to storytelling. In *Goliyon Ki Raasleela: Ram-Leela*, for instance, Bhansali transforms the Gujarati cultural landscape into a hyperreal realm of visual and emotional opulence, ensuring that even the regional specificity of the narrative attains universal appeal.

The hyperreality of postmodernism seamlessly intertwines traditional Indian aesthetics with contemporary cinematic techniques, often interpreted through what is termed "Eurocentric hermeneutics." This perspective highlights the tension between employing postmodern devices and interpreting them through Western theoretical paradigms. The vibrant and exaggerated colors characteristic of traditional Indian art forms, such as the Rajasthani and Pahari schools of painting, parallel the hyperreal visual elements present in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Goliyon Ki Raasleela: Ram-Leela* and *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*. These films, celebrated for their opulent storytelling, showcase Bhansali's hyperaesthetic style, which transforms regional traditions into visual

spectacles. Ajay Gehlawat, in his book *Reforming Bollywood: Theories of Popular Hindi Cinema*, critiques these portrayals by asserting that “indigenous frames of reference can also be a trap in Eurocentric hermeneutics” (Gehlawat 63). This notion resonates with Jean-François Lyotard’s exploration in *The Postmodern Condition*, where he argues that grand narratives are deconstructed in favor of sensory and visual representations, emphasizing a shift from intellectualized interpretation to hyperreal imagery (Lyotard 82).

Furthermore, Scott Lash, in *Global Culture Industry*, extends Jean Baudrillard’s concept of hyperrealism, contending that the “figural” in cinema displaces traditional meaning with a focus on emotional and visual appeal (Lash 45). Bhansali’s films, through their intricate use of hyperreal visuals and emotionally charged performances, exemplify this shift, transforming Indian cultural narratives into universally resonant cinematic experiences. Moreover, Indira Nath Chaudhary, in her work *Postmodernism: A Search for Roots*, argues that Indian cinematic postmodernism should be analyzed through indigenous realities, rather than solely through globalized frameworks. She highlights how postmodern aesthetics adapt uniquely within the Indian context by incorporating elements of mythology, religion, and cultural traditions. Bhansali achieves this in *Goliyon Ki Raasleela: Ram-Leela* by reimagining Gujarati traditions, juxtaposing hyperreal visuals with local cultural ethos, thereby creating a narrative that appeals to both traditional and modern sensibilities. Similarly, in *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*, the romanticized portrayal of the Karwa Chauth ritual reflects the fusion of regional specificity with universal emotional resonance, making it a prime example of the ‘Bollywoodization’ of culture. By presenting Indian traditions as visually spectacular and emotionally potent, Bhansali constructs a hyperreal version of Indian identity, blending sensory aesthetics with cultural authenticity in a way that resonates globally.

Hyperreality Unveiled: The Spectacle of *Goliyon Ki Raasleela: Ramleela*

Sanjay Leela Bhansali transforms Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, a cornerstone of Western literature, into a distinctly Indian narrative by

infusing it with cultural and religious symbolism. The film's title itself—*Raasleela* and *Ram-Leela*—merges the divine Raas Leela of Lord Krishna with the epic Ram Leela, creating a cultural synthesis that reinterprets Shakespeare's tragedy through an Indian lens. Central to the narrative is the enmity between the Rajadi and Sanera clans, whose deep-seated feud forms the backdrop for the passionate romance between Ram (Ranveer Singh) and Leela (Deepika Padukone). Their love, an act of defiance, transcends the barriers of tradition and familial hostility, echoing the archetype of forbidden love.

This hyperreal world, as theorized by Jean Baudrillard, collapses the boundary between reality and representation. Jean Baudrillard observes, "The real is no longer what it used to be; it has been replaced by the hyperreal" (Baudrillard 2), where exaggerated representations become more "real" than reality itself. Bhansali uses the trap of romance, which compliments the heightened emotional performances and transforms the tragic love story into a hyperreal spectacle that blurs the lines between real and unreal. Javed Akhtar, reflecting on Bollywood's use of romance, notes, "We pass our time in making romantic films and creating romantic images. That's why both the hero and the villain at the moment are hiding behind the love story" (Akhtar, 91). Akhtar further observes, "At the moment, society is at a crossroads, so we are really confused about our socio-political value systems" (Akhtar, 91). These insights resonate deeply with *Ram-Leela*, where romance serves as an escape from the reality and if the audience is not aware about their reality, then the hyperreal world of Bhansali dominates and appeals to them. Love becomes a common ground, a unifying thread that resonates across India's diverse audiences. Bhansali uses Gujarat's cultural symbols, such as its landscapes, costumes, and customs, to lend authenticity to the setting, while simultaneously transforming the story into a pan-Indian cinematic experience.

The romance in *Ram-Leela* is elevated through powerful, poetic dialogues that resonate deeply with audiences across India. Lines such as "Jung aur pyaarmein sab kuch jayazhai" (Everything is fair in love and war), "Mohabbat har jung jeet saktihai" (Love can win any battle),

and “Iss zindagi mein pyaar sirf ek baar hota hai” (You fall in love only once in life) reflect Bollywood’s timeless romantic tropes. By glossing over harsh realities such as societal divisions, generational feuds, and political chaos, these romantic declarations create a shared emotional ground for viewers. No matter the region, language, or background, the idea of eternal and triumphant love is a universal aspiration one that Bollywood has long used to unite diverse audiences. In making cinema pan-Indian and catering to larger audience, Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s cinema, exemplifies the “regime of signification” as discussed by Neelam Sidhar Wright, who notes that it “privileges the sensory and the visual over the intellectual or narrative coherence, creating a hyperreal experience” (Wright 47). This approach is evident in the depiction of the Rabari community, portrayed in the film as Rajari, living in grand palaces, and living a glamorous and opulent life, which contrasts sharply with their real-life existence. Raj Kishor Mahato describes the Rabari as “a nomadic pastoral community indigenous to north-west India, particularly modern-day Gujarat. Traditionally, the Rabari kept camels but in recent times they maintain flocks of sheep and goats as well.” Such visual excesses in *Ram-Leela* break the met narrative of authenticity, substituting it with mini-narratives that prioritize aesthetics over realism.

Ramleela challenges the homogenization of Indian textile traditions or the meta-narratives of regional culture. Jean-François Lyotard’s idea of the meta-narrative refers to overarching, universal stories or ideologies that societies accept as absolute truths, often ignoring local diversities and particularities. As Lyotard states, “The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation” (*The Postmodern Condition* xxiv). In the context of traditional Indian dress, as a meta-narrative, often frames specific regional attire—such as Gujarat’s lehenga choli or Rajasthan’s ghagra—as definitive representations of cultural identity. Sanjay Leela Bhansali disrupts this meta-narrative in *Ram-Leela* by designing Deepika Padukone’s costumes as a pan-Indian tapestry, blending elements from multiple

regional styles. While the primary framework of her attire draws from Gujarat, it incorporates embroidery from Rajasthan, Mughal-inspired opulence, South Indian jewellery aesthetics, and subtle nods to Bengali draping styles. For instance, the use of Bandhani reflects its deep cultural significance: “Bandhani patterns, often in red, yellow, and white, symbolize auspiciousness and fertility, making them an essential part of Gujarati and Rajasthani bridal attire” (Crill and Murphy 46). Similarly, the inclusion of Banarasi brocade evokes a regal aesthetic, which “reflects a confluence of Mughal design sensibilities and Indian weaving traditions” (Karolia 112). This deliberate fusion resists a singular regional narrative and instead celebrates India’s pluralistic cultural identity, creating a new visual language that transcends localized traditions. Bhansali’s approach not only deconstructs traditional dress codes but also offers a cinematic spectacle that embraces the diversity of Indian aesthetics, thereby challenging the notion of a singular “authentic” representation of cultural attire.

A Sense of Figural in *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*

The story follows Nandini (Aishwarya Rai), a spirited young woman from a traditional Gujarati family, who falls in love with Sameer (Salman Khan), a carefree music student staying with her family. When their romance is discovered, Sameer is banished. Nandini is later married to Vanraj (Ajay Devgn), a kind man who, upon learning of her love for Sameer, selflessly takes her to Italy to reunite with him. During the journey, Nandini realizes Vanraj’s unconditional love and sacrifices and ultimately chooses to stay with him. The film blends themes of love, duty, and emotional growth, enhanced by its vibrant Gujarati setting, stunning visuals, and a memorable soundtrack.

In *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*, the ‘sense of the figural’ and over-aestheticism are prominently visible in key moments, such as Sameer’s first meeting with Nandini. Rather than portraying their infatuation through direct gestures or dialogues, the scene employs the symbolic imagery of a glass light chandelier to heighten the visual and emotional impact. This use of hyperreal elements aligns with Jean Baudrillard’s idea of

hyperrealism—where reality is glossed over by stylized representations—and Scott Lash’s reflections in *Global Culture Industry* (2007), where he emphasizes the aestheticization of culture: ‘The aestheticization of culture today . . . creates a spectacle of experience that both absorbs and replaces reality’ (Lash 45). The grandeur of the visuals and opulent design help transform an otherwise improbable situation—Sameer, an Italian man, traveling to Gujarat to learn music and falling in love—into an acceptable narrative for a pan-Indian audience. The film’s visual splendor distracts from the absurdity of the plot, making the story universally appealing and grounded in a shared aesthetic experience rather than raw realism.

In the context of Indian cinema, Bhansali uses cultural symbols like the Mangal sutra and Karwa Chauth to create a narrative that resonates with a pan-Indian audience, blending traditional practices with a glamorous, cinematic appeal. The concept of the Mangal sutra, although not widely popular in North India, becomes a central symbol in the film, particularly through its representation in a Gujarati setting. Usha Balakrishnan, in her book *Indian Jewelry: A Cultural History*, discusses the significance of the “sacred thread,” noting, “The Mangal sutra, although it was traditionally more prominent in South India, symbolizes the sanctity of marriage and marital responsibility” (Balakrishnan 132). Bhansali enhances this symbol, glamorizing it and making it a universal cultural icon. Key moments, such as Nandini’s rejection of her marriage to Vanraj, are underscored by the Mangal sutra, symbolizing marital ties and societal expectations. At the film’s climax, Vanraj’s act of wearing the Mangal sutra marks a significant emotional transformation, representing his acceptance of Nandini’s decision. Similarly, Bhansali brings a new level of glamour to the Karwa Chauth festival, a tradition observed across India, by incorporating the image of Nandini looking through the *chalni* (sieve), a cinematic reinterpretation of the ritual. These elements, set against the backdrop of Gujarati culture, not only enhance the visual appeal but also elevate regional customs, allowing them to be embraced as part of a broader, pan-Indian cultural narrative.

In her work *Masala Bollywood: How the Indian Film Industry Reflects India's National and Cultural Identity*, Rachel Dwyer defines the “masala film” as a genre that blends various narrative elements, such as romance, drama, action, and music, into one cinematic experience. This blending of genres reflects the complex and diverse nature of Indian society, catering to a wide range of tastes and emotions. Dwyer writes, “Masala films are a combination of all the popular elements of Indian cinema that appeal to a wide audience” (Dwyer 6). Sanjay Leela Bhansali, in *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*, employs the masala formula to craft a narrative that resonates with India's broad audience, balancing artistic expression with commercial appeal. Bhansali's approach to storytelling and costume design reflects the pressure of maintaining this formula while also expressing his own vision. As Bhansali explains in an interview with Nasreen Munni Kabir, “If I have to pack in everything in a single film and have to keep them happy, it means I have to use less of my own instincts and brains” (Kabir 115). This tension between artistic instincts and the demands of mass appeal is evident in the film's portrayal of Nandini and Sameer, whose costumes blend traditional and modern elements to create a pan-Indian identity. Nandini's wardrobe combines regional Gujarati attire with elements of Punjabi culture, while Sameer's Western-style clothing is complemented by his flute, symbolizing the fusion of foreign and Indian influences. Bhansali's use of such cultural elements is a deliberate attempt to create a film that appeals to a broad audience, embodying the masala film's characteristic blend of regional traditions and universal themes. The setting in Gujarat, though rich in local color, serves as a microcosm for the entire nation, reinforcing Bhansali's vision of a unified India through the lens of diverse cultural representations.

Bhansali's use of spectacle is not merely ornamental but serves as a narrative device that blurs the lines between realism and hyperreality, compelling viewers to engage with Indian traditions in new and profound ways. The fusion of postmodern techniques with indigenous ethos illustrates his mastery in creating films that are as much about emotional resonance as they are about visual grandeur. By employing cultural

signifiers such as ‘Bandhani’, ‘Karwa Chauth’, and the ‘mangalsutra’, he imbues his characters with layers of meaning that appeal to both traditional sensibilities and contemporary aesthetics.

Conclusion

Ultimately, Bhansali’s Gujarat is not just a location; it is a symbolic entity that bridges the local and the universal. It embodies the aspirations of a nation that seeks to preserve its roots while embracing a globalized identity. Through his storytelling, Bhansali invites his audience to explore the beauty of India’s cultural plurality, reimagined through the lens of Bollywood’s hyperrealism, leaving a lasting impression of India as a nation of shared emotions, diverse traditions, and timeless love stories.

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Marginality & Politics of Deprivation: A Study of Syamal Kumar Pramanik's Short Stories

Prasad R Dagwale

Introduction

The Wikipedia explains the term '*Dalit*' was first used by the eminent social reformer Jyotirao Phule to refer to the out castes or untouchables. They were a large group of people belonging to the lowest stratum of the caste system. According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary the '*Dalit*' is a member of the lowest cast in the Indian caste system and has the least advantages. The Dalit's were denied any social rights. They could not read the scriptures. Education was denied to them. They had to do menial and low works which no body was willing to do. They had to reside away from the residences of the elites. Their mere touch was considered to pollute the individual. In some places they had to carry a broom tied to their waist to clean their footprints. Many such atrocities they had to suffer silently. No mainstream cultural text has a dalit as the main character.

Times have changed. Through the efforts of the great leader Dr B R Ambedkar the Constitution of India has given equal rights to every individual irrespective of their caste, creed, gender or culture. The dalits are now educating themselves. Education has empowered them to break the silence imposed on them by tradition and write out their lives so as to create awareness about the plight they undergone and work to create a society based on equality. The corpus of Dalit Literature has emerged out of this intense suffering of the Dalit individuals. Tapan Basu in his article "*Narratives of Suffering: Dalit Perspectives*" traces the origin of the term '*Dalit Literature*'. It was used by the Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangha in its 1958 Conference. The resolution number 5 of the

conference explains it as the literature written by the dalits and that written by others about the dalits in Marathi should be termed as Dalit Literature. Today it is not limited to only Marathi language and marginalized groups from other states and languages in India too have started writing about their experiences as a dalit. This literature is translated in English and available for readers across the country.

Dalit literature has a reformist purpose. It is at the same time a literature of revolt as well as a literature of social change. It revolts against the social and religious dogmas which have chained them for centuries. It endeavours to change the society and make it a place free from untouchability or caste based distinctions. A number of writers like Sharan Kumar Limbale, Namdeo Dhasal, Anna Bhau Sathe, Bama F Soosairaj, Arjun Dangle etc have taken up the cause of the dalit literature. Sharan Kumar Limbale in his book “Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit Literature: History, Controversies and Considerations” explains dalit literature as, “Dalit literature is precisely that literature which artistically portrays the sorrows, tribulations, slavery, degradation, ridicule and poverty endured by Dalits. This literature is but a lofty image of grief” (30).

The genre of short story holds an important place in the corpus of Dalit literature. Short stories based on the life of the dalit characters give glimpses of the problem they are facing and at the same time shed light on the politics of marginalisation that goes on in society. Translation activity has made available the short stories about dalits from different states of the country. It is hence fruitful to understand the issues about the ‘fourth India’ residing in different parts of the country.

The focus of this article is the dalit lives as portrayed in the selected short stories of Bengali writer Shyamal Kumar Parmanik and translated by Sayantan Dasgupta. The analysis explores the methods through which the oppressed classes are subjugated by those in power and authority in the society. It highlights mute acceptance and suffering as the impact of this domination and marginalisation on the dalits. The stories selected for analysis are: *In Dakshin Rai's Land*, *Champaburi or the Story of a Village* and *Untouchable*.

In Dakshin Rai's Land: The story is set in a small village in the Sundarbans. It is one of the largest mangroves in the world and living conditions are quite hard there. A significant number of people living in the areas belong to the lower castes. There are many rivers and dense forests in the area. There is danger from the crocodiles in the rivers and the tigers from the forests. In addition many have lost their lives from bites of the venomous snakes of the Sundarbans. The lower castes have an additional danger of getting entrapped in the designs of the money lenders and landlords who generally belong to the upper castes.

Narhari Ghoshal an upper caste Brahmin is the main character in the story. He has cheated many people in the village and robbed them of their land or money by exploiting them for their lack of knowledge and their lower caste status. He has a son Bholananda. Bholananda was the only son to Ghoshal and was born after a lot of prayers and offerings to various religious places. Ghoshal has sold a mantra to Mona Das for hundred and one rupees. After chanting the mantra three times Mona Das will become invisible to the tigers in the jungle according to Ghoshal. Later in the story Bholananda accompanies his uncle Sachindra for a hunting trip along with Mona Das. Tragically Bholananda is carried away by a tiger leaving Narhari Ghoshal in great agony. He considers it as a punishment for this exploitation of the poor and the family leaves the village the next day.

The story provides a brief glimpse of the attitudes of the upper caste Brahmins like Narhari Ghoshal towards the lower castes. When Pachu Bairagi comes to visit Narhari Ghoshal he considers him inauspicious and a bastard. Another character Haran Sardar had borrowed a sum of Rs 500 from Narhari Ghoshal. Haran could not repay the loan and Narhari Ghoshal takes up two bighas of his land. Narhari Ghoshal is hated by the Dom's, Bagdi's and other caste people as he has become rich by cheating them. Narhari Ghoshal sells a mantra to Mona Das for hundred and one rupees to make him invisible to the forest tiger. He knows he has cheated the man and utters to himself, "*Good, I managed to make a killing today*" (Dasgupta 42).

The hegemonic order of the rural society leaves the poor and low castes utterly defenceless against the exploiters like Narhari Ghoshal. He has taken the land of Nidhi Sardar and Rahim Molla for non repayment of loans. They go to the *panchayat* but get no relief. There is a satiric reference to the evil Narhari in the words of the Jamaibabu, “*You’re doing quite well! In the Sundarbans, the crocodile rules the waters and you lord over the land*” (Dasgupta 43). In this unintentional reply the jamaibabu has referred to the true character of Narhari Ghoshal.

In the last scene there is the foreshadowing of the calamity. Suddenly the weather changes when the hunting party enters the forest. The wind stops, dense dark clouds gather, the forest and the river appear dangerous now. A heavy rain has started. A fearful tiger makes its appearance in front of the party in the rain. Mona Das’s uttering of the mantra turns ineffectual and the tragedy strikes. The story though is of Narhari Ghoshal the other characters belong to the lower castes. Narhari Ghoshal is a representative character and through him the politics of discrimination and deprivation is highlighted.

Champaburi, or the Story of Village- It is the story of an old woman Champa from Sukdupur. The village is located in a very remote setting surrounded by a river and a forest. Mostly people considered low in the caste hierarchy reside here. Extreme poverty, neglect, on account of caste plagues the lives of the residents of this village. Old Champa has to face neglect on account of gender too and is reduced to take the job of a prostitute and then a visionless beggar waiting for her death in the end. The narrator of this story is a resident of the village.

Champa lives in a tattered hut at the outskirts of the village. There are references to the Pods, Bagadis and Bairagis in the village. The upper caste bramhins do not come to perform puja in their temples. Old Champa belonged to the Jola family who were Hindus but later converted to Islam. Since childhood Champa has to suffer tragedies. First her father Fakir Sheikh dies from a snake bite when Champa is very small. Her mother Ameena is left alone with small Champa and no means to survive. She has to beg for survival. One day Ameena too falls ill and

dies leaving Champa alone. Champa has become young. She elopes with Nagen from the Bagdi colony. Tragically Nagen dies in a riot and Champa is again left alone with a son. Back in the village the people have only heard of riot and never experienced it. The Hindus and the Muslims live like people from the same family.

The narrator in one of his comments explains that the educated people call the lower castes as wretched and use them for the purpose of creating riots, to serve their interests. The poor people suffer a lot as they become mere pawns in the power struggle. Champa has no means to earn except begging. There was poverty everywhere in the village and begging was not sufficient to feed her and her son. She goes back to the city and takes the work of a prostitute in a red light area. She is struck by some ailment and again has to resort to begging. Her son is stolen when she is sleeping in a park. She returns to her village a broken individual. She has become old and unable to see. She sits on the village road and begs for alms. The story ends with a pathetic cry by Champaburi, "*Take me now, O Bhagban, O Allah!*" (Dasgupta 51).

Untouchable- This story is a revelation of how an upper caste identity opens avenues like education and job, while being identified as a dalit may cause one to be ostracized. It is about Indranath the narrator's uncle. His father has died when he was small and his mother in absence of any source of income and forced by poverty has to resort to begging. One of her relatives Harihar Middy advises her to go to Benaras and live as a Bramhin. Binatadi Indranath's mother takes her children and goes to Benaras. In spite of belonging to the lower echelons of the caste system they impersonate as of bramhin descent. Magically they who were begging in their own village and considered as dalits, are now well respected in Benaras and enjoy all the facilities granted by society to the upper caste people. The children get good education and finally Indranath jethamoshai gets a government job. Thus a bramhinal identity has paved way for their personal growth and development.

Indranath jethamoshai has now two identities. In Benaras he is Indranath Bhattacharya and in the village he is Indranath Mandal. There is one more important character in the story that is reduced to abject silence

due to his dalit identity. It is the character of Munshiram. Munshiram was a dalit and studied in the same class as Indranath jethamoshai in Benaras. He was a brilliant child. He got admitted in the school. He was not allowed to sit with other boys. He had to experience contempt and scorn from fellow students and teachers too. The teachers tried to discourage him from studying by asking questions like, “*Why did you have to enroll in school? You are a cobbler’s son; you should sit on the road and mend shoes instead—*”(Dasgupta 62). Munshiram was prohibited from touching the water in the pitcher as it was meant for the upper caste students.

Munshiram completed his Matric but could not get admitted to College. Indranath jethamoshai sympathizes with him. He tries to talk with Munshiram as he knows he too belongs to the lower ladder in the caste system. He empathizes with his pain and feels great agony. In one of his replies to jethamoshai Munshiram replies, “*I also want to go to college. But what can I do? We are very poor. And besides, nobody wants us to get educated?*” (Dasgupta 63). This reply is heart wrenching.

Jethamoshai recruits Munshiram in his office as a clerk. The peons insult him and do not bring him any files. He sets up a school in their bustee for the low caste children. The school is then burnt down in an accident. Munshiram feels it was a deliberate act of some people and not an accident. Munshiram’s son is sick and no doctor from upper caste is willing to treat the child. The child dies. In a year his wife too dies of illness. The impact of experiencing all this pain, suffering, hatred, contempt and marginalization is that he withdraws in a shell. It is the psychological impact of the suffering a dalit individual is subject to. Indranath jethamoshai tells to the narrator that in our India there is a “fourth India”. The marginalized dalits are the inhabitants of this fourth India. They must fight for the liberation of these individuals. It is a touching story of how a bramhminical identity is a pass to progress while a dalit identity leads to targeting by other individuals.

Conclusion

It is evident that the progressive Bengali society is not free from the evils of caste system. The hegemonic clutches of the caste system strangulate the lower caste individuals in to abject silence and mute suffering. They are manipulated and cheated by those in power and authority like Narhari Ghoshal. They lose their land and property falling prey to their schemes. The women from the lower castes are doubly marginalized first on account of being woman and second on account of being a dalit women. Through the case of Champaburi it is evident that they have to resort to begging in order to sustain their lives. The dalit identity is a crippling phenomenon. In contrast an upper caste identity is a ticket to progress and development. The story Untouchable exemplifies this statement. Indranath Jethamoshai impersonating as an upper caste leads a happy existence, but his friend a fellow dalit Munshiram is reduced to abject silence and suffering. The short stories lead to contemplation about the agonies of a large group of people who are subject to suffering and encourage restoring equality in our social set up.

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The Marginalized Lives of *Baluta*: An Analysis of Maharashtra's Dalits

Preetha Prabhasan

Introduction

Caste has long remained a historically crucial defining factor in India's social hierarchy, perpetuating systemic inequality and exploitation over centuries. The Dalit community, historically referred to as "untouchables," was positioned at the lowest level in this hierarchy. They had constantly been subjected to rife discrimination and social exclusion. Maharashtra, a state with a significant Dalit demographic, has been a crucible for movements aimed at combating caste-based oppression. They were often spearheaded by prominent figures like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

One of the first Dalit autobiographies to be published, *Baluta* took the readers by storm not only with "its unvarnished depiction of the pervasive cruelty of the caste system" but also "the extraordinary candour with which Pawar wrote about himself, his family and community and Dalit politics of his time" (2). *Baluta* is a "triumph of social commentary, storytelling and self-reflection" (3) as it was set first in the Maharwada, the area earmarked in each village for the Mahars so that they would not pollute the main village and also in the Mumbai of the 1940s and 1950s with its chawls, slums, brothels and gambling dens where the poor and the outcaste found ways to make a life.

Even after forty four years of its publication, it shocks and amazes the readers with its graphic description of how brutally the human spirit can be broken at the same time how valiantly it can fight its way out of the darkest depths of abysmal existence. *Baluta* (2015) deftly articulates the raw realities of Dalit existence. Written in the first person, *Baluta* intertwines personal narratives with political commentary, encapsulating

the systemic oppression that hallmarked the core of the Dalit experience. The title itself, “Baluta,” denotes a feudal practice in rural Maharashtra wherein Dalits rendered labour to the upper castes in exchange for minimal wages or goods, highlighting the inherent exploitation embedded within the caste system.

The narrative examines the pervasive impact of caste system, including internalised oppression as well as institutionalised discrimination that moulds Dalit identity. It exposes us towards a life of “such squalor, deprivation and cruel discrimination” (6). It rudely awakes us to the realities of our pernicious caste system. Mahars skinned dead cattle and ate their flesh. Mahar children were made to sit apart from the upper castes in schools and colleges. Their touch was supposed to pollute water, rendering it undrinkable for the upper castes. More than fifty services were expected of the Mahars without remuneration. But in return they were entitled to Baluta, a share in all the village produce. They were exploited to the core and when they went to collect Baluta, it was with grudge and curses that the villagers gave them what was due.

Historical and Social Context

To grasp the significance of Baluta, it is essential to place it within the historical framework of caste-based discrimination in India. The caste system, deeply rooted in ancient Hindu scriptures, parts the society into rigid hierarchical categories. Dalits, relegated to the lowest rung, were considered “impure” and were systematically excluded from participating in mainstream societal activities. This exclusion and marginalisation was institutionalized through systemic denial of education, land ownership, and access to public resources.

He says that the Manusmriti had a list of names for Shudras. “It requires that our names should reflect society’s contempt for us” (19). While Brahmin names like Vidyadhar signify learnedness, a Kshatriya’s name like Balaram suggest valour, a vaishyas name like Laxmikant suggested great wealth, their names like Shudrak or Mattang suggested their lower caste status. That was the order of things for centuries.

He also describes the place they lived- between Chor Bazar or the thieves market on the one side and kamathipura, the red- light area on the other side. They were too poor to afford to live at a better quarter. The Mahars lived in squalid homes, each the size of a hen house having two or three sub tenants. Wooden boxes acted as partitions. At night, temporary walls would come up, made of rags hanging from ropes. The Mahar men worked as labourers. The women scavenged scraps of paper, rags, broken glass and iron from the streets.

He pictures typical mahad life by presenting his own family. His father worked at the dock in Mumbai. He was a drunkard and womaniser. And his mother scavenged to sustain their lives. Whatever father got he spent on drinking and womanising. Yet, he says that, his mother “did not seem to feel a matchstick worth of revulsion for Dada” (31). Without protest she would pour out what little she had in front of him. His father never saved any money and also stole from the docks but always escaped uncaught. He says that the world he learned about in school seemed fraudulent in comparison to the world he lived in.

Moreover, in Maharashtra, Dalits have historically been assigned demeaning occupations, such as manual scavenging and the disposal of carcasses, which perpetuated and reinforced their marginalization. Despite legislative measures such as the prohibition of untouchability as stipulated in Article 17 of the Indian Constitution, the ground realities of discrimination continued to endure.

The Dalit movement in Maharashtra, spearheaded by Ambedkar, aimed to dismantle this oppressive social structure. The emergence of Dalit literature in the mid-20th century created a platform for Dalits to share their scorching narratives. Baluta emerged as a significant voice within this movement, presenting a poignant depiction of caste- based oppression.

Themes of Marginalization in Baluta

Economic Exploitation

A prominent theme in Baluta is the economic exploitation faced by Dalits. Pawar recounts his community’s dependence on the “balutedari”

system, in which they provided labour to the upper castes in exchange for meagre returns. This feudal structure not only sustained perpetuated economic dependency but also denied Dalit's access to land or financial resources.

Pawar says that the Mahar did not see baluta- his share of the produce of the land- as charity. It was his birth right and was only one among the fifty two rights that the mahar had been granted. But there was no timetable for the Mahar's work. "It was slavery, for he was bound to whatever work had to be done for all twenty four hours of the day" (59). They had to take the villager's taxes into town. They were supposed to run in front of any important person who came into the village, tend to their animals, feed and water them and give them medicines.

They had to announce funerals from village to village. They had to drag away the carcasses of dead animals. They chopped the firewood. They played music day and night at festivals and welcomed the new bridegrooms at the village borders on their wedding days. And instead they got a meagre baluta. Each house had their bounded Mahar and they got their portion of grains from there. Pawar says that the farmers grumbled as they handed over the grain; "low- born scum, you do not work. Motherfuckers, always first in line to get your share. Do you think this is your father's grain?" (59)

The book also underscores the meagre educational and employment prospects for Dalits, which further exacerbates their poverty. Pawar recounts his own struggle to escape from this vicious cycle, highlighting the systemic barriers that impede upward mobility and social advancement.

Social Exclusion and Stigma

Social exclusion is the cornerstone of marginalization experienced by Dalits in *Baluta*. Pawar describes the diverse humiliations faced by his community, from being barred from temple entry to facing segregated seating arrangements in schools and other educational institutions. The concept of "pollution" associated with the Dalit identity is illustrated through instances of ostracism and systemic violence.

In public also they were allotted specific places. The villagers sat in groups, according to their castes. The restaurants also had different cups for different castes; “there were Mahar cups and Chambhar cups, Mang cups and so on” (43). They had to rinse them themselves before ordering tea. Their cups were often without handles and ant-infested. They also sat separately- either on the verandah or on a bench behind the restaurant.

In the schools also they were not allowed to sit with the Maratha children from the village. “They faced the teacher and we sat at right angles to them, facing in a different direction” (45). If they were thirsty, there was no water for them at school. They had to go back to Maharwada to drink. Even though the Chambharwada was near, they too would not give the Mahars water.

The internalization of this stigma forms a significant theme of the book. Pawar contemplates the psychological impact of being perpetually reminded of his caste identity, a weight that overshadowed all his interactions with the world.

But he ironically says that once a Mahar converted to Christianity, he could no longer be considered someone who could pollute the village. And if the Christian were an official, the entire village will be at his beck and call.

He also points out that there was discrimination in sports too. However accomplished, Mahar wrestlers were never allowed to challenge the upper castes. So the matches were allowed only within their castes. Seeing this, he lost interest in sports and he withdrew into his shells. He writes; “My sense of self began to seep out of me, as water out of an earthen jug” (70). At school, he was also not allowed to be part of dramas as the teachers discouraged him by saying that they are for the rich alone.

At last he turned to books for solace. He knew now that the only way out of this ignominy was to study, to prove himself better than the sons of the Brahmins and the Baniyas. In the hostel also he was not allowed

to eat along with other upper caste students. But when a rich mahar joined the hostel he did not heed the other boys and dined in the mess hall. So for the first time Pawar understood that not only caste, but also poverty added to the discrimination.

He also remembers that though he was the lead bhajan singer at the hostel, when the Prasad was distributed the thali with its pieces of coconut never reached his hands. He ‘swallowed these insults as one swallow one’s spit’ (95). He adds: “I would feel a scream welling up. But I swallowed that too. I shut my mouth and took the shit” (96).

It was at this time that a social revolution was happening in village after village. Ambedkar asked them to stop stripping carcasses and eating the flesh of the dead animals. They also stopped collecting baluta. A majority went out of villages to escape their castes and also in search of other jobs.

But even after studying and improving himself, in the village he was still treated as Maruti, the Mahar’s son. He writes “my Mahar identity was a leech that would not let go” (84). He was also embarrassed that the local barbers refused to cut their hairs. They were just afraid that if they polluted themselves by touching the untouchables, they will lose their village customers.

Cultural Suppression

The cultural side-lining of Dalits represents another significant theme in Baluta. The enforcement of upper-caste norms and values has systematically undermined Dalit cultural practices and traditions. Pawar expresses sorrow over the loss of indigenous knowledge systems and the exclusion of Dalit perspectives from the dominant mainstream narratives.

Intersectionality of Caste, Class, and Gender

Pawar’s account highlights on the intersectional nature of oppression, specifically the compounded discrimination faced by Dalit women. He illustrates the dual challenges of caste and gender, revealing how Dalit

women are subjected to both caste-based violence and exploitation driven by patriarchal structures.

The Role of Identity in Baluta

Identity plays a pivotal role in *Baluta*, as Pawar grapples with his self-perception within a society that dehumanizes him. The narrative fluctuates between his innate pride in his Dalit heritage and yet the equally deep rooted desire to transcend the stigma associated with it. Pawar's experiences reflect the broader struggle of Dalits in their quest to affirm their identity amidst systemic erasure.

The book further examines how education and urbanization contribute to the shaping Dalit identity. For Pawar, relocating to Mumbai provides a semblance of anonymity and respite from caste-related oppression and discrimination. Nevertheless, he remains keenly aware of the constraints of this escape, as societal prejudices continue to exist even within urban environments.

Literary Significance of Baluta

Baluta represented a significant milestone in Marathi literature, heralding the emergence of Dalit autobiographies. Its unvarnished depiction of caste oppression confronted the sanitized narratives prevalent in mainstream literature, forcing readers to face the uncomfortable realities of Indian caste system.

The influence of the book reaches far beyond its literary value. It acted as a driving force for social and political discourse, motivating later generations of Dalit authors and advocates. Pawar's straightforward writing approach, free from ornate language, highlights the genuineness of his experiences.

Challenges and Criticism

Baluta has received praise for its integrity and bravery; however, it has not been without its detractors. Certain academics assert that Pawar's account is excessively subjective, failing to provide a comprehensive

structural examination of caste dynamics. Additionally, some critics argue that the emphasis on victimhood within the book may inadvertently foster a feeling of powerlessness among Dalits.

Baluta continues to be a crucial work for comprehending the actual experiences of Dalits, notwithstanding the criticisms it has faced. Its merits are found in its capacity to portray the humanity of marginalized individuals and to articulate the perspectives of those who have been muted by prevailing narratives.

Contemporary Relevance

The themes examined in Baluta continue to hold significance in modern India, where caste-based discrimination persists as a critical concern. Events of caste-related violence, exemplified by the Khairlanji massacre, highlight the on-going importance of Pawar's narrative.

Dalit literature has progressed since the publication of Baluta, with authors such as Omprakash Valmiki and Bama delving into similar themes in their writings. Nevertheless, the systemic inequalities emphasized in Pawar's autobiography continue to endure, rendering it a perennial critique of caste-based oppression.

Conclusion

Daya Pawar's Baluta transcends the boundaries of a mere autobiography; it stands as a powerful affirmation of a community's resilience that has faced centuries of oppression. Through the narration of his personal experiences, Pawar illuminates the marginalization of Dalits while simultaneously affirming their humanity and capacity for agency.

The significance of the book in the realm of Dalit literature and its influence on the conversation surrounding caste is immense. Baluta urges readers to face the stark truths of caste-related discrimination and encourages them to imagine a fairer society. Consequently, it serves as a potent instrument for social change.

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Neo-Colonization and Cultural Identity: Reclaiming Justice in Today's Global Order

Priyanka M G

Introduction

“Colonialism is not over; it has merely transformed.” This stark observation by post-colonial scholars underscores the enduring relevance of neo-colonialism in the 21st century. While traditional colonial empires have largely dissolved, their legacies persist through subtler yet equally damaging mechanisms of control. Neo-colonialism thrives under the guise of globalization and economic progress, manifesting through economic dependency, cultural assimilation, and political manipulation to sustain the dominance of former colonial powers over newly sovereign states.

A staggering statistic reveals the depth of neo-colonial influence: in 2021, 60% of resource-rich developing nations faced crippling debt, much of it owed to institutions rooted in or aligned with Western interests. Furthermore, the 2023 controversy surrounding multinational corporations exploiting African cocoa farmers spotlighted how global capitalist agendas prioritize profit over justice. Such events demonstrate how neo-colonial structures continue to exploit post-colonial societies economically and culturally.

Historically, colonization reshaped societies, identities, and power dynamics through military conquest, economic subjugation, and cultural imposition. As nations achieved independence, overt colonization evolved into neo-colonialism—an insidious system perpetuating exploitative relationships. Today, multinational corporations and Western media reinforce these dynamics, controlling resources and reshaping identities in post-colonial societies under the pretense of development and modernity.

This paper argues that neo-colonial structures perpetuate cultural domination and obstruct justice in post-colonial societies, particularly in India. Global capitalist agendas frequently overshadow indigenous voices, silencing the authentic expressions of marginalized communities. This cultural imperialism deepens cycles of inequality and undermines efforts to reclaim identity and achieve social justice. By investigating the intersections of neo-colonialism, cultural identity, and justice, this study exposes the persistent injustices post-colonial nations face in the modern era.

Understanding neo-colonialism is essential for addressing global inequalities. In nations like India, colonial remnants continue to shape socio-economic and political landscapes, challenging autonomy and identity. The ongoing struggle for cultural identity and justice offers vital insights into the dynamics of global power. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, recognizing and dismantling neo-colonial practices is paramount for fostering equitable relationships and amplifying marginalized voices. This exploration ultimately emphasizes how cultural identity can serve as a powerful tool for justice in today's global order.

This literature review explores the interplay between neo-colonization, cultural identity, and social justice, emphasizing themes such as cultural hegemony, economic exploitation, and resistance movements. It also highlights gaps in existing research and demonstrates how this study addresses them.

Cultural Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony provides a framework for understanding how dominant cultures maintain power in post-colonial contexts. Scholars such as Edward Said and Frantz Fanon critique how neo-colonialism imposes foreign values that undermine local traditions and identities. For example, in India, the dominance of Western norms often leads to a cultural dissonance where indigenous practices are devalued.

Economic Exploitation

Economic globalization perpetuates colonial legacies through dependency and inequality. David Harvey's critique of neoliberalism highlights how structural adjustment policies imposed by institutions like the IMF exacerbate disparities. This economic dominance mirrors historical exploitation, as seen in multinational corporations prioritizing profit over local sustainability.

Resistance Movements

Resistance efforts against neo-colonial domination manifest in cultural and socio-political movements. Ngig) wa Thiong'o emphasizes linguistic decolonization as a crucial strategy. Similarly, grassroots initiatives in India and Kenya promote indigenous languages and crafts to counteract cultural erosion. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's work underscores the importance of these movements in reclaiming cultural agency.

Gaps in Research

Despite the rich discourse surrounding neo-colonialism, several gaps remain in the literature. For instance, while much has been written about the impact of neo-colonialism on identity and culture, there is a notable deficiency in studies that analyze how modern forms of media contribute to cultural domination. The role of digital platforms in perpetuating neo-colonial narratives warrants further exploration, particularly how global media outlets often promote a homogenized view that undermines local cultures and identities.

Further, while economic perspectives are well documented, less attention has been paid to the intersection of neo-colonialism with emerging technologies and their implications for language and communication. Research examining the digital divide and how it reinforces cultural hierarchies would provide critical insights into the contemporary manifestations of neo-colonialism.

So, the representation of marginalized voices in literature and media remains underexplored. There is a pressing need for more empirical

studies that analyze the efficacy of cultural resistance movements and their strategies for reclaiming justice and identity in today's global order. By addressing these gaps, future research can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of neo-colonization's impact on cultural identity and social justice.

This study employs a qualitative methodology grounded in post-colonial theory to analyze the relationship between neo-colonialism, cultural identity, and social justice. The research integrates theoretical insights with empirical observations, offering a comprehensive examination of how neo-colonial structures perpetuate cultural hegemony and marginalization, particularly in post-colonial societies like India.

Geographical Scope and Interviewee Selection

The study focuses on India as a representative post-colonial society. This geographical scope was chosen due to its rich history of colonial influence and its ongoing struggles with neo-colonial dynamics. Interviewees were selected based on their active involvement in cultural and justice movements, including activists, cultural practitioners, and scholars. Criteria for selection emphasized diverse regional and linguistic representation to ensure the inclusion of multiple perspectives on cultural resistance and identity reclamation.

The study adopts a multi-faceted approach to data collection-

- **Primary Data:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture the lived experiences and insights of individuals actively engaged in anti-colonial and justice initiatives.
- **Secondary Data:** Foundational works of post-colonial theorists, academic studies on globalization and cultural imperialism, and media narratives provided contextual and theoretical depth.
- **Case Studies:** Specific instances, such as the impact of Western media on cultural perceptions and grassroots movements preserving indigenous languages, were examined in detail.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic coding, which identified recurring patterns and themes related to cultural identity, resistance strategies, and the impacts of neo-colonial practices. This approach facilitated a nuanced understanding of the ways in which cultural hegemony is reinforced and resisted. Discourse analysis was employed to examine media narratives and policy documents, uncovering the ideologies underpinning neo-colonial structures and the counter-narratives emerging from marginalized communities.

Significance

By integrating primary and secondary data with rigorous qualitative analysis, this methodology provides a holistic perspective on neo-colonialism's cultural dimensions. The inclusion of interviews, case studies, and thematic coding ensures that both theoretical insights and practical realities are addressed, contributing to a deeper understanding of how cultural identity can serve as a tool for justice in post-colonial contexts.

Defining Neo-Colonization in the 21st Century

In the contemporary global landscape, the term “neo-colonization” signifies a complex interplay of economic, cultural, and political dynamics that perpetuate the legacies of colonialism long after formal independence has been achieved. While colonialism historically involved direct territorial control and exploitation, neo-colonization manifests through subtler, yet equally pervasive means, maintaining dominance over post-colonial nations through economic dependency, cultural assimilation, and political manipulation.

Historical Context

The remnants of colonialism are deeply embedded in the socio-political structures of formerly colonized nations. Following independence, many countries, especially in Africa and Asia, encountered a new form of control: neo-colonialism. This shift was characterized by the withdrawal of colonial powers yet simultaneous retention of influence through

economic and political channels. Scholars like Kwame Nkrumah have articulated this phenomenon, arguing that neo-colonialism is the last stage of imperialism, where the influence of former colonial powers continues to shape the destinies of post-colonial societies. Nkrumah's insights remain profoundly relevant, illustrating how global power dynamics and economic arrangements often favor former colonial powers while constraining the sovereignty of newly independent states.

Economic and Cultural Neo-colonization

In the 21st century, neo-colonization manifests primarily through economic policies that create dependency and perpetuate inequality. Global financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, often impose structural adjustment programs that prioritize neoliberal economic reforms over local development needs. These policies can lead to austerity measures, undermining social welfare systems and exacerbating poverty, while simultaneously opening markets to multinational corporations.

Culturally, neo-colonization operates through the dominance of Western media and consumer culture. The pervasive influence of Hollywood and global media conglomerates propagates a singular narrative that often marginalizes local voices and traditions. This cultural imperialism reinforces stereotypes and perpetuates the idea that Western values are superior. As post-colonial theorist Edward Said articulated, the representation of the "Other" in Western literature and media often reflects an underlying desire to maintain control over these cultures, depicting them as exotic, primitive, or in need of salvation.

Examples

Several contemporary examples illustrate the mechanisms of neo-colonial power. For instance, global corporations such as Coca-Cola and Nestlé have been criticized for exploiting natural resources and local labor in developing countries while undermining local economies. These companies often implement practices that prioritize profit maximization over social responsibility, leading to environmental degradation and

community disempowerment. Similarly, trade policies that favor developed nations often place developing countries at a disadvantage, trapping them in cycles of debt and dependence.

Moreover, the rise of digital platforms like Facebook and Google exemplifies cultural neo-colonization, where data and personal information from users in post-colonial nations are harvested, often without adequate protection for their privacy and autonomy. These platforms not only dominate local markets but also shape public discourse, influencing perceptions and cultural norms in ways that can lead to the erasure of indigenous identities and practices.

The neo-colonization in the 21st century is a multifaceted phenomenon that extends beyond traditional notions of imperialism. By examining the historical context, the economic and cultural mechanisms at play, and providing concrete examples, we can better understand how these forces interact to maintain systems of control and hinder the pursuit of true justice and equality in post-colonial societies. This understanding is crucial for developing strategies to reclaim cultural identity and promote social justice in a rapidly changing global order.

Cultural Identity and Resistance in Post-Colonial Societies

In the context of post-colonial societies, the interplay between cultural identity and neo-colonialism presents a complex landscape where indigenous cultures are often at risk of erasure. Neo-colonialism, as a contemporary manifestation of historical colonial practices, perpetuates cultural hegemony through various means, significantly affecting how identities are formed and expressed. This section explores the dynamics of cultural hegemony, the impact of language and media, and instances of cultural resistance that emerge as communities seek to reclaim their identities and challenge dominant narratives.

Cultural Hegemony

Cultural hegemony, a term popularized by Antonio Gramsci, describes the subtle and pervasive ways in which dominant cultures exert control

over marginalized cultures. In the post-colonial context, neo-colonialism plays a pivotal role in maintaining this hegemony, often leading to the erosion of indigenous and local cultures. The imposition of foreign cultural values, norms, and practices undermines the authenticity and vitality of native traditions. For example, in India, the continued influence of Western values and lifestyles, propagated through various channels, has led to a cultural dissonance where traditional practices are often devalued or viewed as archaic. This cultural erosion is not merely a loss of traditions but a deeper form of identity displacement, where individuals struggle to navigate between their indigenous roots and the expectations of a globalized world.

Language and Media

Language serves as a primary vehicle for cultural expression and identity. However, in many post-colonial societies, English has emerged as the dominant language, often relegating indigenous languages to the margins. This linguistic dominance reinforces neo-colonial power structures, as proficiency in English is frequently associated with social status, education, and economic opportunities. The marginalization of local languages not only leads to a loss of linguistic diversity but also impacts the cultural narratives that are conveyed through these languages.

Media, particularly Western media, further entrenches these dynamics. The pervasive presence of Hollywood and other Western media platforms often promotes narratives that prioritize Western ideals, values, and lifestyles while sidelining local stories and perspectives. This representation can lead to a distorted view of indigenous cultures, reinforcing stereotypes and undermining their complexity. The consumption of Western media can create a sense of inferiority among local populations, perpetuating a cycle where indigenous cultures feel pressured to conform to external standards rather than embracing their unique identities.

Cultural Resistance

In response to these challenges, various cultural resistance movements have emerged across post-colonial societies, asserting the value of

indigenous identities and challenging the dominance of neo-colonial structures. In India, movements advocating for the preservation of local languages and traditions have gained momentum. For instance, the promotion of regional literature and art forms serves as a powerful counter-narrative to dominant cultural discourses. Organizations dedicated to reviving traditional crafts and folk performances are crucial in fostering a sense of pride and identity among local communities.

Similarly, in Kenya, the “Wajibu Wetu” movement seeks to reclaim and promote indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices, emphasizing the importance of local identities in the face of globalization. By celebrating indigenous storytelling, music, and art, these movements aim to restore agency to local populations, enabling them to define their cultural narratives rather than allowing external forces to dictate them.

The Caribbean offers additional examples of cultural resistance through initiatives that celebrate Afro-Caribbean heritage and challenge colonial legacies. Festivals, music, and literature rooted in indigenous and African traditions are integral to reclaiming cultural identity and asserting social justice in the face of historical oppression.

The interaction between neo-colonialism and cultural identity in post-colonial societies is marked by a struggle against cultural hegemony. Language and media play significant roles in shaping perceptions of identity, often reinforcing dominant narratives that marginalize indigenous cultures. However, cultural resistance movements across various regions demonstrate the resilience and agency of communities striving to reclaim their identities. By promoting and celebrating local cultures, these movements not only challenge neo-colonial power structures but also affirm the significance of cultural diversity in today’s globalized world.

Social Justice Movements against Neo-Colonization

In the 21st century, social justice movements have emerged as vital responses to the enduring legacy of neo-colonization, addressing systemic inequalities rooted in historical injustices. Movements such as Black Lives Matter, indigenous rights advocacy, and anti-globalization efforts

illustrate the diverse ways in which marginalized communities resist and reclaim their identities against neo-colonial structures.

Global Justice Movements

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, originating in the United States, serves as a powerful example of how contemporary social justice movements confront neo-colonial legacies of racial injustice and systemic violence. BLM not only highlights police brutality against Black individuals but also critiques broader socio-economic inequalities that stem from colonial histories. The movement emphasizes the need for systemic change, advocating for policies that address institutional racism, economic disparities, and social justice. By drawing attention to the interconnectedness of racial oppression and economic exploitation, BLM articulates a global struggle against neo-colonialism, resonating with similar movements worldwide.

Indigenous rights movements, such as the Standing Rock protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline, underscore the resistance of Indigenous communities to environmental exploitation and cultural erasure. These movements challenge the neo-colonial exploitation of land and resources, asserting the rights of Indigenous peoples to self-determination and sustainable development. Activists emphasize that their cultural identities are intrinsically linked to their ancestral lands, and they advocate for the recognition and respect of their traditional knowledge systems. This reclamation of identity is not merely a fight against environmental degradation but also a profound assertion of cultural sovereignty in the face of neo-colonial encroachments.

Reclaiming Identity

Marginalized communities are increasingly leveraging activism, literature, and digital platforms to reclaim their identities and assert their autonomy. The rise of social media has amplified the voices of those who were historically silenced, providing a platform for grassroots organizing and mobilization. Hashtags like #IndigenousPeoplesDay and #BlackLivesMatter have transcended geographical boundaries, fostering

global solidarity and awareness of social justice issues. These platforms facilitate the sharing of narratives that challenge dominant discourses, allowing marginalized voices to reshape their identities on their terms.

Literature plays a pivotal role in this reclamation process. Writers and artists from marginalized communities are increasingly using their work to challenge stereotypes, question hegemonic narratives, and assert their cultural identities. For instance, the works of authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Arundhati Roy confront colonial legacies and highlight the complexities of identity in post-colonial societies. Through storytelling, they articulate the struggles of their communities, fostering empathy and understanding among diverse audiences. Literature thus becomes a powerful tool for reclaiming justice, offering insights into the lived experiences of those affected by neo-colonization.

The Role of Literature

Literature and art serve as vital conduits for social justice movements, offering a means to explore, critique, and redefine cultural identities in post-colonial societies. Through various forms of expression—be it poetry, prose, visual art, or performance—artists challenge the status quo and provoke critical discussions about identity, justice, and power dynamics. For instance, the Afrofuturism movement creatively envisions alternative futures that reclaim African identity and heritage, juxtaposing traditional narratives with contemporary social issues. This reimagining of identity encourages communities to envision new possibilities beyond the constraints imposed by neo-colonial frameworks.

So, social justice movements against neo-colonization represent a multifaceted struggle for identity, autonomy, and justice. By reclaiming their narratives through activism, literature, and digital platforms, marginalized communities challenge the pervasive influences of neo-colonialism and assert their rightful place in the global order. The interplay between cultural identity and social justice underscores the urgent need for a collective re-examination of historical injustices and their ongoing impact, paving the way for a more equitable and just future.

Discussion

Intersection of Identity and Justice

The dynamics of neo-colonization have far-reaching implications on both individual and collective identities, significantly shaping the discourse surrounding justice and equality. In the contemporary context, neo-colonial structures often perpetuate cultural hegemony that imposes dominant narratives, erasing or marginalizing indigenous cultures and identities. This erasure not only affects individuals' self-perception but also disrupts the collective memory and identity of communities. As cultural symbols and practices are co-opted or disregarded, individuals grapple with a dissonance between their inherited cultural identity and the external expectations of a globalized world that valorizes homogenization.

Furthermore, the imposition of foreign values and ideologies through media and education fosters a sense of inferiority among marginalized groups. The internalization of these narratives leads to a crisis of identity, where communities struggle to assert their cultural significance in a socio-political landscape that often privileges the dominant, neo-colonial narrative. This crisis has critical ramifications for social justice, as individuals who feel disconnected from their roots may become disempowered, leading to a cycle of disenfranchisement and injustice. Thus, reclaiming cultural identity emerges as a prerequisite for achieving social justice, as it empowers individuals to recognize their worth and assert their rights within a framework that respects and values diversity.

Global Implications

The local struggles for cultural identity against the backdrop of neo-colonialism resonate within the broader global order, revealing intricate connections between localized issues and international policies. Movements advocating for cultural reclamation and social justice, such as the anti-globalization protests or indigenous rights campaigns, highlight the universality of resistance against neo-colonial forces. These movements often challenge global institutions that perpetuate inequality, calling for policy reforms that prioritize human rights, cultural preservation, and social equity.

As nations navigate the complexities of globalization, the intertwining of cultural identity and justice becomes crucial for reshaping global governance. For instance, the impact of multinational corporations in resource-rich countries often triggers local resistance movements that contest environmental degradation and cultural erosion. The outcomes of these struggles can influence international discourse on human rights, sustainability, and ethical governance. Consequently, the recognition of cultural rights as integral to justice frameworks can lead to more inclusive global policies that consider the voices of marginalized communities.

In this regard, understanding the relationship between neo-colonization, cultural identity, and justice is not merely an academic exercise; it has real-world implications for global governance and policy-making. The narrative of cultural reclamation serves as a catalyst for reimagining power dynamics in international relations, advocating for a world where diverse identities are respected and valued. Ultimately, the intersection of identity and justice in the context of neo-colonization underscores the urgent need for a global paradigm shift—one that embraces equity, recognizes historical injustices, and champions the rights of all peoples to their cultural identities.

Conclusion

This research has elucidated how neo-colonialism continues to exert a profound influence on the socio-political landscape of the 21st century. The analysis reveals that while formal colonial structures may have dissolved, the mechanisms of economic exploitation and cultural hegemony persist, often cloaked in the guise of globalization and development. Through a critical examination of cultural identity in post-colonial societies, particularly in India, it becomes evident that neo-colonial practices not only undermine local cultures but also perpetuate cycles of social injustice and inequality. The impact of language, media, and economic policies in reinforcing these structures underscores the urgent need for a re-evaluation of cultural narratives and identities.

Looking forward, further research is essential to explore new forms of cultural resistance emerging in the digital age. As social media platforms

become arenas for activism, the interplay between digital technology and cultural identity presents a fertile ground for scholarly inquiry. Investigating how marginalized communities utilize digital tools to reclaim their narratives and advocate for social justice can illuminate pathways for future resistance movements. Additionally, exploring the implications of global digital capitalism on cultural expression and identity will deepen our understanding of neo-colonial dynamics in contemporary contexts.

In closing, reclaiming cultural identity stands as a vital endeavor in the quest for justice within a neo-colonial framework. The struggles faced by post-colonial societies are not solely about economic liberation but also about affirming their cultural heritage and agency. As such, fostering a renewed sense of identity—one that is resilient and adaptive in the face of ongoing cultural domination—serves as a crucial strategy for achieving social justice. By engaging in this reclamation, communities can challenge the prevailing narratives imposed by neo-colonial structures and work towards a more equitable global order, where diversity is celebrated, and justice is a shared aspiration.

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Narrative Tropes of Female Desire and Sexual Innuendoes in Bijji's Folktales

Rashmi Bhura and Manoj Kumar

Folktales embody multiple narrative and cultural elements, floating through memory and language. The categorization of such stories therefore since long, has been based primarily on plot. While one recognizes the necessity of pillaring the study of folktales on the plot narrative, the need to dwell further to address concerns of nuances of narrative elements, movements and cultural components.

The patterns of plot and characters develop a set of senses (similar to Gramsci's 'common sense') familiar to the listeners and readers of folktales. This idea of common sense, embedded in the narrative of the folktales results also in reinforcement, emphasis and cross influence. The movement of such plurally owned tales, therefore creates versions, founded heavily on the narrative patterns and adapted promptly to the setting and context.

As such, the variables of form, medium, language, teller-listener, etc. are often left behind in the process of categorization based on narrative patterns. The monumental contributions of Propp's *Morphology*, *Aarne-Thomspose-Uther Index*, *Morphology of North American Indian Folktales* and *French Fairy Tales* by Dundes and Brehmond respectively, have ensured an effective method of studying the oral tales beyond their constant shifts and movements, by focusing on narrative units and patterns. However, there is a need to attempt an incorporation of the folktales' shifting nature amongst other variables while reading a 'version' of any folktale. In this context, Christi A Merrill terms these versions of a folktale 'retellings' to eliminate hierarchy of superiority between different versions, as well as to identify one from the other. She also attempts to resolve the conflict of origin of such oral tales, refocusing

on the completeness of a retelling in the midst of the various elements of its existence. Folktales credited to Vijaydan Detha (including Merrill's and Kothari's translations) are found to be such complete retellings in their own existence, with the influence of oral traditions, and translation in English Language complementing the holistic meaning rather than branching to diverse directions.

In this completeness is also to be found, a network of meaning and sense, and its contextual dynamicity. To study, therefore, such shifting tales, the narrative structures have to be read parallel to the pragmatics of context of both plot-structure and culture. In the context of Rajasthani Folk Literature and folk-sense, the ideas on cultural and communal behaviour can be traced throughout the folktales of Vijaydan Detha and Vishes Kothari's translations of Detha. Conventions and discourses rich with cultural foregroundings are presented through language and narrative tropes both.

To assess such embedded conventions of female desire and sexual innuendoes, that represent and contribute to the 'common sense' of the folk, this paper studies four folktales by Bijji (a name used fondly for Detha). The English translations of these tales are part of the collection titled *New Life*, published by Penguin Books in 2008.

Since the tales considered for study are translations in English language, and belong to the same collection, they are translated by the same translators with a unified vision. It therefore becomes vital to address concerns and relevance of this vision. The translators, Mridul Bhasin, Kailash Kabeer and Vandana R. Sing, combine their scholarship and practice in translation to assess Bijji's folktales on the grounds of their literary and cultural attitudes. They have then pursued to unify such tales that build a discourse on the representation of the rural women to also include the timelessness and universality of feminine concerns. Mridul Bhasin observes in the "Translator's Note":

As the women have remained unseen, one wonders if they have been presumed to be unimportant from a literary standpoint. This also brings to the fore the fact that not many of our writers or our readers know

much about rural women. Though generalizations are not always befitting, one cannot help noticing the fact that regional literature carries the burden of portraying the poor as well as women. Translation of such literature in English would, perhaps, help to nullify the unstated presumptions that regional characters are regional only. In these stories, the lines dividing regional, national and international literature disappear. (xi-xii)

The translators have also focused to incorporate nuances of the language used by Bijji, by first assessing the linguistic characteristics of his folktales, and replicating such nuances in English language;

A style of idiom popular in the rural areas of Rajasthan is used. Sentences are short and pregnant with meaning and there is liberal use of proverbs. The descriptive sentences are followed by on-word adjectives or adjectival phrases. The tone is conversational and it links well with the narrative or the storytelling mode into which the narrator slips in unobtrusively. In contrast with these, conversational paragraphs are more poetic, internally rhyming; they can be taken as the narrator's observations or the character's thoughts. (xiii)

These affinities of the English translations to their sources, allows the new readership to discover discourses and patterns of such folk conventions that are universal in nature, but otherwise remain regional.

The recent study aims to explore through narrative tropes, the discourses on female desire, especially of married women. There is a definitive attempt in folktales, to address or comment on such topics of taboo. Alan Dundes and Komal Kothari, in different textual contexts, agree that folktales are not focused on morality. Beyond morality, folktales often concern themselves with human relations with nature, with their immediate community, with the larger human community and with each other.

To identify examples of such relations and their nature of discourse in folklore, this paper focuses on narrative tropes. The term 'trope' is more of a functional concept than a conceptualised framework. Various

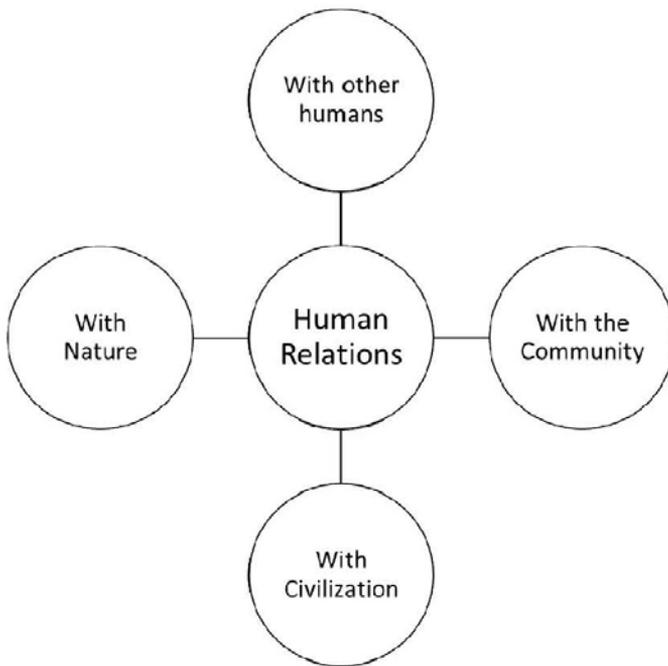


Fig. 1: The Scope of Folktales

independent bloggers, scholars and fan clubs have used the term ‘trope’ to identify patterns in the narrative. This popularised notion of narrative pattern is helpful in identifying folk discourses, when applied to read folktales.

As such, narrative tropes that display themes of female desire in the present set of folktales are identified. They are read in alignment to the vision of the translators and the author Vijaydan Detha himself. They are additionally studied in the backdrop of the observations made by various scholars on the role and relevance of folktales, especially Indian.

These tropes are enlisted amongst heterogeneous married pairs. The parallel conventions of marriage, desire, patriarchy, adultery, and gender-based differences in the socio-cultural acceptance of a husband’s role versus a wife’s role, are also identified and considered for the further analysis of the tropes.

The stories collected and translated in *New Life: Selected Stories* focus on discourses about rural women. Evidently, marital relationships, social norms, and sexual taboos are explored; nuances of such norms and taboos are exposed alongside unvoiced perspectives from the women characters. These unvoiced discourses are identifiable in the conventional plot of the tales, as well as the commentaries made by different characters. One such metacomment is presented by Lakhu in the tale “The Crow’s Way”:

The sum total of stories of all the women in this world is only one - be cheated by men and to pay for it all one’s life. No woman is spared this. This grim reality is however hidden by the illusions of family and home (Detha 61).

This “grim reality” that Lakhu talks about here has definitely stayed hidden behind the “illusions of family and home”, if not for all women characters of Indian literature, then at least for the rural women. Mridul Bhasin writes in the “Translator’s Note”, that folktales of Bijji have a unique quality of dealing with women characters, where he brings into perspective, deliberately, the voices of these unheard rural women. “The stories are unique in the way they reveal the psyche of rural women whose silence is taken to be ignorance” (xi).

Bijji’s Rajasthani folktales “. . . are an expression of the collective memories of people who lived in simple though feudal times” (xi). The hierarchical relationships, therefore, between the lords, kings and the common man, constantly unravels codes of social and communal conduct. Parallely, the hierarchical relationship between man and woman, society and woman, and husband and wife, is similarly loaded with unsaid codes of behavior. These cultural units coded and encoded in the folktales, are closer to the communal psyche and thereby more relatable and relevant for reading.

The tropes of sexuality are manifested in various ways. But the question of morality is primarily associated with the sexual upstanding of a married woman. As such, the nuances of the moral and sexual well being of a married woman, in the context of various social atrocities, marital

disappointments and humiliation, and innate human desires are placed parallel to the cultural symbol of social morality, resulting in dispersed sympathies.

Dundes explains that the symbolism of a culture will manifest itself through its folklore. Culture is not just to be identified and analysed in folktales, but is to be put parallel. And through this act of parallel reading, tropes of cultural coding are to be identified and compared, to consequently develop the socio-cultural discourse on the apparent folk discourses embedded in Bijji's tales.

The tale "Lajwanti, the Shy Woman" is about a young and beautiful woman, who keeps her face hidden beneath her veil even in the presence of the women of her community. She likewise refrains from and detests the inappropriate conversations these women make. In the first part of the tale therefore, we see Lajawanti as a beautiful, virtuous woman, an embodiment of social morality. The other women of her group often try to test her, by implicating socio-sexual digressions. They tease and envy the virtue of this young beautiful woman. Where these other characters expect a revelation of her hidden character, the reader discovers a shift in her sense of individual morality. Lajwanti graciously ignores and reprimands the rest of the women, when they point to a strange man and make him the subject of their sexual innuendoes:

She asked innocently, 'Aren't you ashamed of discussing all this behind your husbands' back?'

One of the women responded immediately, 'All beauty and modesty are for you, there is nothing left for us.'

There was no point in arguing with them. In any case, she was a woman of few words and from that day onwards, she began to remain silent. She often remembered her wedding day when she had felt as if the very sky and earth were married. How could anyone abandon the oaths taken before the fire-ogd, she thought (Detha 124).

However, when she detaches herself from the group for this distasteful behavior, her own curiosity towards the strange man initiates a shift in her behavior. The apparent irony of her sexual involvement with the

strange man, is presented in the tale as more than just immoral adultery. The more the strange man ignores her, the more she develops an attraction. She is subconsciously pulled towards him and tries to stay close, but he shuts her subtle advances, and is constantly preoccupied with pigeons that he obsessively collects.

Vijaydan Detha's approach to voice the unheard concerns of rural women, has been often presented with a shift in sympathies. While Lajwanti stands out from the rest of the women, becoming an example of the morally right, who not only follows but believes in the virtues that are socially set, the shift of her character creates a shift in the sympathies of the reader even when she is contradicting her previous beliefs. Rather than question the honesty of Lajwanti's virtue, Bijji makes the reader question the constructed social morality of a married woman. The mystical description and natural pull between Lajwanti and the strange man, is not narrated as an act of sexual misconduct, but rather a curious, wondrous and natural course of action. The final act of their meeting is presented like a coming together of destined lovers:

Suddenly, Lajwanti whisked her veil away and spoke sharply, 'The innocent pigeons have taught you to be vile like a fox! I can see the evil in your eyes. You want to take advantage of me in this deserted jungle!'

'But I have pigeons in my hands!'

'So what? Can't the pigeons be put in the pitcher and the pitcher be covered?'

Her words made him dance with ecstasy. He said, 'It's exactly like my dream! I remember it like yesterday. My beloved pigeon, you have come to me after twenty-two years. Perhaps you were born the night of the dream itself. Let these pigeons fly. The sky is theirs.'

Lajwanti was overcome with joy as she heard him whisper, 'My dear beloved, now I can't be away from you even for a minute.'
(Detha 130)

The irony also plays at the fact that the other women had pointed Lajwanti in the direction of the strange man and made sexual innuendoes,

her curiosity rising only later. Additionally, the strange man's behavior was mystical, replicating tropes of fate and destiny. By initiating such shifts in the plot narrative, Bijji makes the reader wonder if Lajwanti's sexual desires towards the strange man were deliberate or natural, hidden or prompted, thereby resulting in dispersed sympathies.

In the tale "The Crow's Way", the woes of patriarchy are presented through a series of misfortunes falling on a young woman. This newly married wife and her husband are living a blissful life. It happens so that the husband while visiting swans of Mansarovar comes across a prophecy concerning his own self:

'This young man has a lot of wealth, but no offspring. If he cohabits with his wife at midnight tonight, a son will be born to them. That son will cough out pearls and rubies wherever he clears his throat.'

The swan eagerly asked the young man, 'Did you hear that?'

The young Man sighed, and said to the swans, 'What is the point of listening to this. I can't reach my wife at the auspicious hour in my dreams.' (Detha 47-48)

With the help of the swans, the young man is able to fulfil the prophecy. However, the son is born in the absence of the young man, and society questions the wife's character. They doubt her of infidelity and her father-in-law asks her to leave with her newborn son. The wife is scorned and disowned by society, her in-laws and even her own parents. Later, her son is stolen because of his ability to cough up pearls and rubies. Her plea for help is discarded from every direction, even her husband refuses to help her. He says:

When my father turned you out, you should have hit your head and died on the threshold of this house rather than stepping out of its boundaries. I am not one to drink leftover water.

. . . It is bad enough for a woman to be out of her home even for one night, and god alone knows who you have been with all this time. No matter how much you beg and cry, no man will believe you. (Detha 55-56)

The wife even approaches the king for justice, but rather than get her son back, she is punished and sold to Lakhu for prostitution. Such scorn and helplessness is contradicted by Lakhu's realistic and confident reassurances. The wife eventually learns the trade of prostitution, and thrives her way. Years later her grown up son shows up as a customer and the young transformed woman accepts him without hesitation.

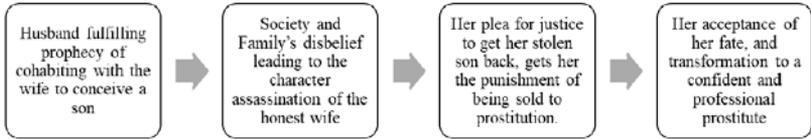


Fig. 2: Tropes of Sexual References in “The Crow’s Way”

The plot movements are rooted in sexual references from the very start. The husband's fulfilling of the prophecy, the character assassination of an honest wife, her wrongful punishment of being sold to prostitution, and finally her son becoming her customer, are all innuendoes to the socio-sexual identity of the woman. Such tropes become the basis of the narrative movement here, bringing the conflict of social conventions and individual experiences in the forefront. While the folk will identify with the safety of set social conventions, Bijji attempts to redefine the sympathies of the readers. The taboos of a woman's sexuality that easily brandishes against social perception, in such instances are not solely reliant on her.

The other two tales, “The Slough” and “To Each his Own Morality” are tales of married women who are fed up with their marital disappointments, and pursue adultery as an act of rebellion. In the tale “The Slough”, a strong-minded Gujjari, Laachi rebukes the illicit advances of the Thakur and his Estate Supervisor Bhoja, by hitting the Thakur. However, when she informs her husband about it, he advises her to keep her anger down, and to be mindful of the Thakur's power over the Gujjar's family.

Laachi is disgusted by the callousness of her husband. She tries to instigate him by setting up Bhoja multiple times. Every time her husband disappoints her by easily believing Bhoja's shrewd excuses. While she

is disappointed with her husband, she is continuously impressed by Bhoja's resilience and intelligence. Gradually, she comes to wonder about her own circumstances:

Yet these circumstances were beyond Laachi's control. House, home, society, caste, duty, ritual, the preservation of a good name and customs and traditions, there were many hurdles and problems to overcome. How could a single woman fight such a veritable whirlpool of barriers? The untrammelled freedom of animals is but a dream! Questions and thoughts such as these burnt in Laachi's heart. Which path should she choose? Which path was right for her? (Detha 89)

Yet again the reader sees a woman turning against the social norms in the form of adultery. Her initial adherence to her role as a dutiful wife, yields her insult and disappointment through the vile acts of all three men. Such sexual innuendoes transforms her to follow her personal desire. Towards the end of the tale, when Laachi finally chooses Bhoja over her husband, and walks to his house, she overhears him cursing her. The egoistic response of Bhoja devastates Laachi and she realizes that Bhoja is no different. The Thakur, her husband, and then Bhoja, are all men who act out of their own will and convenience, treating her no more than an object of desire of belonging.

The tale of Laachi resonates with Vivek Bharati's observation on Bijji's tales and the female characters in them:

Detha's stories graphically capture females' efforts of adjusting with social dictates to the best of their capabilities. When it becomes almost impossible for them to bear the stark injustice, they meekly voice their concern and the foregone result is their perpetual doom. (Detha 144)

The tale "To Each his Own Morality" is a political parody on the socio-sexual identity of men versus that of women. The two married women here, the Queen and the Thakurani are tired of their respective husbands' unruly and misogynist behavior. Not only do they take up lovers, but also overturn their husbands' political status. As such the tropes of

adultery, sexual misconduct, and gender-biased social norms are repeatedly aligned together to align with Bijji's vision.

The tale constantly dialogues about differences between the sexual and social conventions of men and women. A number of such comments and innuendoes made by the bard exposes the misogynistic attitude and outlook of the people towards the woman:

Women's faces and men's knowledge are best when veiled. Laughter unveils a woman's modesty besides adding to the danger of loss of character.

The King brought up a new doubt. 'You are a pleasure seeker yourself. Tell me, why is man not satisfied with one woman? Why is he ever-thirsty?' he asked.

The bard replied, 'My lord, we all know that we tire of even the best of sweetmeats! gratification demands change. repetition kills all enjoyment.' (Detha 154-58)

Since the beginning of the tale the Thakurani and the Queen, both display a sense of rational understanding, enabling them to question their husbands who authoritatively discuss and jibe at matters of social and philosophical concerns that are in reality of sexual nature.

The Queen one day asks the bards in Court:

When you men tire of sweetmeats and women, you opt for a change of taste. What of us women? Change is a taboo for us though we too may tire of our husbands. A widowed woman either dies of hunger or she burns herself at the pyre of her husband. (Detha 159)

The men in the stories, especially the King and the bard are described as overtly sexual, and even exploitative, considering every female an object of their satiation. The wives of both these men, i.e. the Queen and the Thakurani, are fed up with their degradation, and the apparent hypocrisy of morals representing social conduct. They therefore decide to rebel, by each one choosing a lover to spite their husbands and the society that glorifies the biased state of existence for both the genders.

The Thakurani chooses the illicit son of her own husband, while the Queen chooses her horse-riding instructor, who belongs to a significantly lower class.

The trope of adultery by socially upstanding married women, who carry the burden of modesty, family name and morality, is at once complimentary and contrasting to the behaviour of the men who rejoice in their exploitative conduct, both socially and sexually. The irony in the rebellious actions of the two married women, once again prompts the reader to question their sympathies.

In two of the tales, “The Slough” and “To Each his Own Morality”, adultery by the married woman is presented as an act of rebellion against apparent patriarchal norms. In “The Crow’s Way”, the married woman who turns from a devoted wife to a prostitute is also motivated by patriarchal and social conventions that leave her no better option. Only in “Lajwanti, the Shy Woman” do we notice the absence of apparent patriarchal push. The very title of the tale foregrounds the narrative shift. However, the seed of sexual desire for a strange man is planted in Lajwanti’s head by the female companions. It later evolves into natural attraction and mystical realization for both Lajwanti and the strange man.

In all the four tales, Bijji’s primary vision is outrightly fulfilled. He constructs tales to portray the perspective of the female characters. In this process, Bijji recounts the experiences, taboos, and natural instincts that guide man and woman alike. He contrasts this to the gender-based and biased set of socio-cultural and moral norms, inviting the reader/listener to question their personal sympathies. This obvious politics of social understanding becomes more nuanced in the context of transgressive folktales. While the folk remains the tradition-bearing community, these tales of entertainment and leisure, incorporate transgressive dialogues on set conventions and tabooed topics of social relevance.

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Gandhian Pluralism in Hamid Kureishi's Memoir *Agnipariksha*

Samikshya Das

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of pluralism is a cornerstone of his vision for a harmonious and equitable society. Rooted in his commitment to truth (*satya*), nonviolence (*ahimsa*), and respect for diversity, Gandhian pluralism emphasizes the coexistence of diverse cultures, religions, and ideologies. In the contemporary globalised world, marked by increasing cultural interactions and conflicts, Gandhi's principles hold profound relevance. Gandhian pluralism arises from his deep respect for all religions and his belief in their shared ethical core. Gandhi viewed religion not as a divisive force but as a path toward moral and spiritual development. His famous assertion, "Truth is God", transcended dogmatic interpretations of faith, offering a unifying principle that embraced diversity. He believed that the ultimate truth is multifaceted and can be approached through various perspectives, advocating tolerance and dialogue over exclusivity:

You asked me why I consider that God is Truth . . . I would also say with those who say that God is Love, 'God is Love.' But deep down in me I used to say that though God may be Love, God is Truth above all. I have now come to the conclusion that for myself God is Truth, but two years ago I went a step further and said Truth is God. And I came to that conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after Truth, which began nearly fifty years ago. I then found that the nearest approach to Truth was through Love. (427)

The world now faces significant challenges to pluralism. The rise of nationalism, polarisation, and identity-based conflicts often pits communities against one another. In this context, Gandhian pluralism provides a framework to counter such fragmentation. Gandhi's interfaith dialogues and his insistence on respecting all religions resonate strongly today, especially in regions experiencing religious tensions. His methods to alleviate violence are such:

The way of violence is old and established. It is not so difficult to do research in it. The way of nonviolence is new. The science of nonviolence is yet taking shape. We are still not conversant with all its aspects. There is a wide scope for research and experiment in this field. You can apply all your talents to it (383).

His approach encourages moving beyond mere tolerance to active engagement with and understanding of different faiths. For instance, his personal practice of including verses from multiple religious texts in prayers illustrates how coexistence can be nurtured at both individual and collective levels.

Contemporary societies are increasingly multicultural, with migration and globalization intensifying intercultural interactions. Gandhi's pluralistic vision challenges xenophobia and cultural superiority by celebrating the interconnectedness of humanity. His emphasis on local traditions and grassroots empowerment also ensures that global integration does not erase indigenous identities. Gandhi's notion of *swaraj* (self-rule) underscores the importance of decentralization and participatory governance. In today's polarized political environment, his belief in consensus-building and the inclusion of diverse voices can guide democracies toward more equitable and representative systems:

Nonviolence is central to Gandhian pluralism. Gandhi saw violence—whether physical, structural, or verbal—as a barrier to understanding and coexistence. In the contemporary scenario, where online hate speech, cultural chauvinism, and geopolitical conflicts proliferate, nonviolence offers a pathway to dialogue and reconciliation. Nonviolent movements worldwide, such as those led by Martin Luther King Jr. and

Nelson Mandela, continue to draw inspiration from Gandhi's methods, proving their enduring relevance. Martin Luther King had said:

There is another element in our struggle that then makes our resistance and nonviolence truly meaningful. That element is reconciliation. Our ultimate end must be the creation of the beloved community. The tactics of nonviolence without the spirit of nonviolence may become a new kind of violence. (116)

Agnipariksha: The Memoir

The memoir undertaken for investigation highlights these proposals of pluralism as proclaimed by Gandhi. *Agnipariksha* is a poignant memoir of trauma and hope set against the backdrop of the 1969 Ahmedabad riots. It recounts the experiences of Hamid Kureshi, a prominent Gujarat High Court lawyer who epitomized a life of religious and cultural pluralism in both word and spirit. Raised in a family deeply devoted to the nation and to Gandhi, Kureshi grew up in close proximity to the Mahatma's ideals.

A third-generation Gandhian and a non-practicing Muslim married to a Hindu woman, Kureshi lived a life that embodied Gandhian syncretism. However, the riots brought a profound personal and ideological crisis. For perhaps the first time in his life, Kureshi found himself reduced to being identified solely by his Muslim identity. As he grappled with the hatred and violence directed at his community, the memoir captures his struggle to reconcile this hostility with the inclusive values he had cherished. Through his experiences, *Agnipariksha* examines the fragile nature of communal harmony and the challenge posed to Gandhi's legacy of coexistence and unity in times of turmoil. As Gandhi forecloses about *ahimsa*:

Ahimsa means not to hurt any living creature by thought, word, or deed, even for the supposed benefit of that creature. To observe this principle fully is impossible for men, who kill a number of living beings large and small as they breathe or blink or till the land (28).

In this understated yet profoundly evocative first-person narrative, Hamid

Kureshi captures the stark realities of a city gripped by communal violence while offering a poignant portrayal of resilience and humanity. Against the backdrop of fear, chaos, and uncertainty, he paints a vivid picture of the tragic events that unfolded, juxtaposing the harshness of the riots with the quiet strength of human compassion. Through his account, Kureshi brings to life not just the struggles of his own family but also the broader experiences of those connected to the Gandhi Ashram. He describes how, amidst an atmosphere of deep mistrust and escalating brutality, his family's fight for self-preservation was sustained by the enduring bonds of friendship and solidarity. Hindu friends, neighbors, and members of the Ashram community stood as a protective shield around them, offering their care and concern even as violence raged around them. These acts of courage and kindness underscore the enduring power of human connection and the possibility of goodness even in the darkest times.

Kureshi's memoir is more than just a recounting of personal hardship; it is a celebration of the indomitable spirit of humanity. His reflections serve as an affirmation of values such as friendship, dignity, and mutual respect, which shine brightly even amidst hatred and fear. What makes this narrative particularly impactful is Kureshi's ability to convey the gravity of the events without succumbing to bitterness or resentment. His calm and empathetic tone invites readers to reflect on the resilience of the human spirit and the possibility of reconciliation. In recounting the terror and trauma of the riots, *Agnipariksha* ultimately becomes a story of hope and redemption. It reminds readers that even in the face of communal violence and widespread distrust, there exist individuals and communities who stand firm in their commitment to peace, compassion, and humanity. Kureshi's words leave an indelible mark on the reader, urging them to recognize the enduring importance of these values in building a just and harmonious society.

Agnipariksha and Gandhian Pluralism

Senior advocate and trustee of the Sabarmati Ashram Preservation Memorial Trust, Hamid Kureshi, offers a deeply introspective and

evocative account of his life during the 1969 Gujarat riots in his memoir *Agnipariksha*. This compelling narrative stands as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit, highlighting how kindness, unity, and companionship can triumph even in the face of the darkest adversities. Through *Agnipariksha*, Kureshi revisits the harrowing days of the Gujarat riots, chronicling events that spanned a tumultuous five to seven days. The memoir, written in the first person, vividly portrays the brutality and inhumanity inflicted by one section of society upon another. It unflinchingly exposes the scale of destruction, fear, and hatred that swept across communities, turning familiar spaces into battlegrounds of mistrust and violence.

Yet, what makes this memoir particularly remarkable is its tone of unwavering hope and humanity. Even amidst an atmosphere saturated with rage, anger, and communal hatred, Kureshi refrains from inciting bitterness or hostility. Instead, he narrates a deeply personal story that emphasizes the enduring bonds of friendship, trust, and mutual respect he experienced with his Hindu neighbors and friends. His interactions reveal a sense of belonging and solidarity, challenging the divisive narratives often associated with such times of conflict. Margaret Chatterjee argues that “Gandhi believed that reality must be changed non-violently lest we add to the total burden of suffering in the world, and that in so doing we chime in with reality at a deeper level since we are thereby operating according to the law of love” (77).

Agnipariksha also delves into the broader emotional and moral struggles of living through communal violence. Kureshi reflects on the complex dynamics of identity, morality, and resilience, offering a profound meditation on what it means to rise above fear and hatred to seek light amid darkness. His portrayal of human nature emphasizes not just survival but the potential for renewal and reconciliation, even when communities are pushed to their limits. This memoir transcends the mere documentation of the Gujarat riots; it becomes a universal story of hope, courage, and the unyielding strength of human values. Through his restrained yet deeply moving narrative, Kureshi calls upon readers to embrace compassion and solidarity, making *Agnipariksha* an enduring contribution to the discourse on communal harmony and coexistence.

The year 1969 marked a pivotal and tragic chapter in the life of Hamid Kureshi, a senior advocate and a steadfast adherent of Gandhian ideals. On what appeared to be an ordinary day, Kureshi set out for the High Court, unaware that his life and the city of Ahmedabad were about to be engulfed in communal strife. A man of secular convictions, married to a Hindu woman and deeply committed to the principles of pluralism, Kureshi epitomized coexistence and mutual respect. However, the eruption of communal riots shattered this harmonious existence. For the first time, Kureshi found himself stripped of his identity as a lawyer, a contributing member of society, and a humanist; he was instead reduced to being identified solely as a Muslim, rendering him a target of the prevailing hatred and violence.

The riots inflicted profound psychological and physical wounds, challenging Kureshi's unwavering faith in humanity and secularism. The eruption of anger and hostility directed at minority communities tested his belief in the ideals of unity and understanding, as the violence eradicated the last vestiges of hope and security he had once held. Yet, even amid this turmoil, Kureshi's reflections remained deeply rooted in Gandhian philosophy, emphasizing love over hatred, nonviolence over conflict, and inclusivity over division.

Kureshi's dedication to Gandhian principles was a result of his upbringing and historical context. Growing up during India's struggle for independence, he actively participated in the Quit India Movement, an experience that led to his imprisonment and further solidified his commitment to Gandhi's vision of a pluralistic and harmonious society. His grandfather, Imam Abdul Kadir Bawazeer, was a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi and affectionately referred to as *Sahodar* by the Mahatma himself. After Imam Saheb's passing, a residence was established within the precincts of the Gandhi Ashram, known as Imam Manzil, which became the permanent home of the Kureshi family.

When the communal riots of 1969 broke out, Kureshi's home in Swastik Society was reduced to ashes, and even the Gandhi Ashram—long a symbol of peace and unity—was under attack. Kureshi poignantly

recollects the Imam Manzil in Gandhi Ashram as not safe. This moment marked one of the most devastating episodes in a series of harrowing events. The very existence of Imam Manzil was threatened by forces that espoused violence and hatred, a paradox that reflected the collapse of Gandhian ideals in the face of communal animosity. Yet, in the midst of despair, Kureshi witnessed acts of courage and solidarity that reaffirmed the resilience of humanity. Despite the threats, Imam Manzil emerged unscathed, safeguarded by members of the Ashram and the local Hindu community. Kureshi narrates these events with profound gratitude and compassion, emphasizing the power of unity and the enduring strength of Gandhian secularism and pluralism, even during one of the most turbulent periods in modern Indian history.

Translated from the original Gujarati by Rita Kothari, the book offers a vivid and immersive journey through the riot-stricken neighborhoods, streets, and alleys of Ahmedabad during the 1969 communal violence. Hamid Kureshi's articulate and evocative writing style captures the unfolding events with remarkable clarity and detail, drawing readers into the harrowing experiences of those days. As the narrative progresses, the reader is transported into Kureshi's perspective, experiencing the turmoil and tragedy through his eyes.

The palpable fear and anxiety gripping his family, juxtaposed with the calm and composed demeanor of his father, bring the emotional weight of the events to life. The indifference of the government and the police, the destruction witnessed as he moves through the city—shops engulfed in flames, familiar areas reduced to unrecognizable chaos—paint a stark picture of life during the Gujarat riots. Through its vivid descriptions and firsthand accounts, the memoir provides an unflinching portrayal of the horrors of communal violence, while also serving as a testament to the resilience of those who lived through it. Kureshi's narrative, translated with precision and sensitivity, offers an invaluable glimpse into the human cost of hatred and the enduring struggle for peace and unity.

Gandhi's secularism was deeply rooted in his spiritual and philosophical outlook. Unlike the Western notion of secularism, which often advocates

the separation of religion and state, Gandhi's approach sought to integrate the moral teachings of all religions into public and political life. He believed that the core values of all religions—truth, nonviolence, compassion, and justice—could serve as a unifying force in society. Gandhi's insistence on *sarva dharma samabhava* (equal respect for all religions) underscored his belief that no single faith held a monopoly on truth.

Conclusion

Gandhi viewed Hindu-Muslim unity as a prerequisite for India's independence and social progress. He consistently emphasized that the Indian freedom struggle was incomplete without the active participation and cooperation of both communities. For Gandhi, Hindu-Muslim unity was not merely a political strategy but a moral imperative that reflected India's pluralistic ethos. His personal practices mirrored this commitment. Gandhi celebrated both Hindu and Muslim traditions, often incorporating Islamic prayers alongside Hindu hymns in his daily prayers. He regarded religious tolerance as essential for national cohesion and worked tirelessly to bridge the divide between the two communities.

Gandhi's vision of Hindu-Muslim unity was tested during communal riots, such as those in Bihar, Bengal, and Punjab, where the scars of partition and religious animosity threatened to unravel the fabric of Indian society. His response was one of direct action and personal sacrifice. Gandhi undertook fasts, traveled to riot-affected areas, and appealed to the moral conscience of both Hindus and Muslims to end violence and rebuild trust. One of the most poignant examples of his resolve was his fast in Calcutta in 1947, which successfully brought an end to communal violence. Gandhi's ability to inspire peace through moral authority underscored his belief that love and nonviolence could triumph over hatred.

In contemporary times, Gandhi's principles of secularism and communal harmony remain profoundly relevant. The rise of religious polarization and intolerance in many parts of the world underscores the need for a Gandhian approach to interfaith dialogue and coexistence. His emphasis

on respecting all religions, fostering dialogue, and prioritizing shared human values over sectarian differences offers a blueprint for addressing the challenges of communalism and religious extremism. Gandhi's legacy reminds us that true secularism is not about erasing religious identities but about celebrating diversity and finding unity in shared moral principles. His vision continues to inspire those who strive for a world where individuals of all faiths can live together in peace and mutual respect.

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A Voice on Violence: A Critical Study of the Select Poems of Eunice De Souza

Samimuddin Khan and Sambhunath Maji

Women exploitation is no more a recent phenomenon. Since time immemorial women have been suppressed and subjugated irrespective of their class, colour, education, designation, position, religious status and geographical location (Karmakar, 2015). They have been fighting against the shackle of patriarchy in their own way. Some of them have participated physically in various socio-religio-political movements and some have used their pen to paint their pains and sufferings in the patriarchal society (Khan, 2023). Numerous movements took place to liberate the soul of women from the black shadow of patriarchal mindset. Several waves of feminism came to efface the multilayered inequality and injustice done to women and to bring women empowerment (Padhi, 2019). Consequently several articles have been added to the constitution for the protection and betterment of the condition of women but still women have been victimized in each and every aspects of life, throughout the globe (Tavassoli et al. 2022). In Indian context, be it northern, southern, eastern, or western part of India, thingification of women is a common scenario (Ghooni 2013). As the post-independence India has been searching for its own new identity, post-independence Indian English women poets have also been searching desperately for their own identity. Unlike the pre-independence silent, nostalgic, sentimental, romantic women poets, post-independence women poets like Suniti Namjoshi, Melanie Silgado, Imtiaz Dharkar, Kamala Das, Sunita Jain, Mamta Kalia, Gauri Deshpande, Eunice de Souza and so on are voiced, practical, realistic, rebellious, self revealing, confessional feminist in their approach to life and use their poetry as weapons against the patriarchal norms, codes, and values (Sharma and Gupta 2014). They waged war, not a guerrilla but an open war to liberate the soul of women who are caged,

oppressed, suppressed, subjugated, tortured, and exploited by the patriarchal mindset. Breaking their long state of silence and they started celebrating womanhood shaking off the bondage of subjugation to create women's self-existence in the society (Karmakar 2015). This proposed research seeks to present the position and condition of women as depicted in the select poems of de Souza, chiefly "De Souza Prabhu", "Bequest" and "Advice to Women". The purport of this research paper is also to discuss how de Souza tries to liberate women from all kinds of bondages and how she endeavours to create a position for her own self and for the whole women being specifically in social, familial life.

Eunice de Souza is one of the most regarded modern poets belongs to the western part of India. She is a realistic confessional poet. Real life experience is the base of her poetry. She has converted her life into poetry. She has expressed her thoughts, feelings, anguish, tension, frustration, depression, in her poetry. Actually she has unlocked her heart through her poetry to show her inner conflicts, loss, alienation, pains, and sufferings. To say directly, the subject of de Souza's poetry is to pain the real picture of women, their expectations, desire, tension, loss, and frustration intending to create an individual space for women in domestic and social life (Sharma and Gupta 2014). To meet these objectives she has made herself a representative figure for the whole women being facing the same problem throughout the whole Indian society. Sharing the experiences of her personal life she has tried to expose the external as well as internal state of the whole woman being in the Indian society. Through her poetry one can peep into her inner mind, sufferings from a lacerating pain and the tortured psyche always tensed, anxious, depressed and frustrated because of the constant conflict between what she is and what she is expected to be, between what she desires and what she achieves (Karmakar 2015). In a confessional mode she has tried to create awareness about such discrimination by advising the women and criticizing the entire male dominated society through her poetry (Padhi 2019). In one hand she has brutally criticized the traditional rules, and regulations, values and moralities, codes and customs and whatever that is patriarchal constructed to restrict women curbing their freedom, on the other hand,

almost like a leading maternal figure sometimes she has advised the marginalized, subdued and victimized women with full of sympathy and tenderness and sometimes chastised their weakness and shortcomings to liberate them from the vicious patriarchal bondages (Karmakar 2015).

Eunice de Souza was born in a Goan Catholic family, situated in Poona. She has presented the Goan Catholic society as the miniature version primarily of the whole western part of India and then the whole India. Her poetry actually is the production of her real life experience. Sharing her own practical experience de Souza has tried to show the helpless and pitiable state of women in a patriarchal society. Unfortunately, it was her own family, not the outside society made her to believe that it is a curse to be born as a girl child. Instead having motherly love and care she was rejected and condemned almost like the monster in Shelly's "Frankenstein". Since she came to be aware of the fact that her parent were waiting for a male child and she was just an unwanted female child of her parents she felt completely broken within. All the moment she was experiencing a hellish suffering (King 2007). Still she has tried her best to behave like a boy hiding her own true self, self identity, her womanly feelings, emotion, even her biological traits to satisfy her parents but in vain. She laments her situation in one of her well-known poem "De Souza Prabhu", saying:

My parents wanted a boy
 I have done my best to qualify.
 I hid the blood stains
 On my clothes
 And let my breasts sag.
 Words the weapon
 to crucify. (16-22)

With this forcefully imposed identity she started to feel rejected, dejected, alienated, unreal, suffocated and traumatized in fear. The condition of women in general is almost like de Souza. Still the 21st century India prefers male child instead female. Female child is not at all welcomed. They are taken as a burden to the family (Padhi 2019). Moreover, the

society does not want to accept woman as she is, rather it tries to shape her according to the patriarchal model. Consequently, they feel alienated, detached from her own self, feel suppressed, oppressed, loss of self identity and suffocated with the burden of imposed identity. Thus, the lives of women are always filled with fear, fear of losing her own self, her true emotion, feelings, passions, preferred behavior and her peace of mind.

A woman's life is constantly bogged down by fear and it is one of the main hindrances to the attempt at self realization. One of the main reasons why women are oppressed by patriarchy is that it is capable of inducing fear into them (Jena 12).

De Souza herself is lamenting in one of her autobiographical poem about the way the surrounding world is treating her:

I thought the whole world
was trying to rip me up
cut me down go through me
with a razor blade. (Autobiographical 23-26).

This constant fear and confusion leads to silence and depression initially and bold and rebellious fighter subsequently. To make her parents happy she has suppressed her womanly feelings, emotion, passion even physical traits of woman and while doing that she has lost her soft womanly voice and develop a rude, harsh and satiric tongue that has made her a betrayer to her feminine society (Karmakar 2015). In the poem "Forgive me, Mother" de Souza cries in pain towards her mother, almost in the same rebellious tone of Plath for her loving daddy:

Forgive me. Mother,
that I left you
a life-long widow
old, alone
It was kill or die
And you got me anyway

I was never young
 Now I'm old, alone.

In dreams I hack you. (*Forgive Me, Mother* 1-12)

In the beginning of the poem, "Bequest", De Souza has tried to portrait the level of sacrifice done by women to meet the needs and demands of the patriarchal society through the image of Jesus Christ. The poet says:

In every Catholic home
 there's picture
 of Christ
 /holding his bleeding heart
 in his hand.

I used to think, ugh. (1-4)

Generally, a Catholic family keeps an image of Jesus holding his bleeding heart in his hand. Here the image of the bleeding heart of Christ is symbolic, directly symbolizes the idea of 'self sacrifice'. By giving the reference to the image of Christ, the speaker is actually trying to imply the Christ like sacrifice of women in the society. Christ sacrificed himself for the salvation of the total mankind. Here the 'heart' comes to represent the unconditional love of Christ for human being and His ultimate sacrifice. This image bears two significances. Firstly, it implies Christ's sacrifice. On the other hand, it portrays the speaker's own bleeding heart inflicted by the norms of patriarchy that has made women to live a traumatic lifeless life. What the speaker is trying to say under the veil of Christ image that in the patriarchal society women have sacrificed a lot to meet the needs and demands of the society and to make them happy. They are expected to give pleasure and happiness as a daughter, a wife and a mother to her respective families. They have tried their best to satisfy them but in vain. Subsequently they come to know that they want something more and all of their efforts become fruitless. In the society women have sacrificed their freedom, their voice, self identity, even their comfort and peace of mind.

In the poem “Marriage are Made” de Souza has depicted the fact how women have become commodified. During marriage the parts of a girl is scrutinized almost like a machine. It is not at all a pure bond of heart rather a mere transaction of a woman between two male figures. One is the father of the bride and the other is the husband (Chamoli et al. 2021). She has punctured the romantic glorification of marriage. In the patriarchal society marriage is forcefully imposed on women as they think women do not have any respect and identity without men. Women are only used through the name of marriage. They are living a lifeless life. They cannot do anything what they want, they can only act as they are asked to do. This is how women are sacrificing almost like Jesus for the wellbeing the human society but still remains ignored. Their sacrifice is not even recognized. In the same tone a conscious reader can see the same experience reflected in Mamta Kalia :

“But nothing ever happened to me
except two children

and two miscarriages. (*Sheer Good Luck* 15-17)

In the next stanza the speaker ironically says that the “only” person with whom she has not exchanged “confidences” is her hairdresser:

“the only person with whom
I have not exchanged confidences
is my hairdresser.” (5-7)

Here the word, "confidences" may mean confidential private matter, too personal question of women in general that is how to live happily at least with the peace of mind in this society. Reply comes from different sources:

Some recommend stern standards
others say float along.
He says, take it as it comes,
meaning, of course, as he hands it out. (8-11)

Some have advised to follow the strict norms and codes of the society constructed by the patriarchal mind. Women are asked to surrender to the patriarchal standard of life to live happily without any fear. If they try to transgress the boundary set by the patriarchal mind they are marked as deviant and rejected by the society even by their own family. Some recommended to move with the traditional flow of life accepting everything as it is going on without any question and He advised women to accept what their fate offers them. Here the line “take it as it comes” may allude to the advice of Christ to mankind. In the *Testament*, Christ advised human beings to accept whatever comes to their life, good or bad, pleasing or unpleasing politely. They have to be ready always for the plans that the creator planned for them.

Advices came from different sides but one common thread is there and that is to accept and surrender to the patriarchal norms of society where they are caged, tortured both physically, and mentally. They feel alienated and do not find any support. No one has talked about their suppressed and oppressed state of life and no one have advised them to fight for their own freedom. Even Jesus has asked them to accept their lot as it is. Here, de Souza has tried to depict the expectation of the whole society from women. They just want to control and exploit them completely. This is the vey cause that makes de Souza a rebel against the total patriarchal baggage- its social rules and restrictions, codes and customs, morals and values. This social attitude towards women makes her biased to such extent that she has taken Jesus as a symbol and agent of patriarchy and rejected his sayings.

A patriarchal society with full of barriers and restrictions kills a woman emotionally. She lives a lifeless artificial life trying her best to perform her role as a mother, wife and daughter. In the next stanza of the poem "Bequest", Souza has depicted the psychic desire of a woman ironically to cope with the confined situation. Here the poetic voice, actually De Souza expresses her desire to be a wise woman full of artificiality like plastic flower:

I Wish I could be a
Wise woman
Smiling, endlessly, vacuously
Like a plastic flower.
Saying child, learn from me. (12-16)

This wise woman is something different from the wise women in the true sense of the term. Instead self satisfying in nature, De Souza's wise woman is a woman who is well versed in living for others accepting the patriarchal terms and conditions deliberately and unquestionably. A wise woman has a good sense of maintaining the formalities. She can hide her feelings brilliantly. Even when she is suffering within she knows to keep a fake smile on her face. Here the poetic speaker ironically says that there is nothing left for women to be happy and smiley. All the moment they are suffering from loss, alienation, tension and frustration in the male dominated society. Yet she wishes she could carry a vacuous smile on her lips like plastic flower which stands for both an unchanging beauty and cheap representation of a natural. The speaker wishes to hide her tormented feelings behind the mask of artificiality. Moreover, it does not stop there rather it transfer to the next generation. That is the point of irony. This is how women are trapped through marriage, left alienated from herself that leads her to the verge of madness. This entrapment, alienation and madness become "relevant to our understanding of the new woman" (Sheshadri xi).

In the final stanza of "Bequest", de Souza's speaker ironically says that she is going to perform an "act of charity" like Christ who accepted crucifixion for the sake of humankind. But, the speaker is performing a sacrifice not for others, but for redeeming herself from her mental sufferings. The poet says:

It's time to perform an act of charity
to myself,
bequeath the heart, like a
spare kidney-
preferably to an enemy. (17-21)

She wants to bequeath her heart. By using a simile, she compares her heart to a “spare kidney”. In this way, she decreases the value of the most important organ of the body, to an inferior one. It is important to note the meaning behind the term “heart”, the seat of emotion, passion and desire. De Souza’s speaker tries to sacrifice her heart to relieve herself from the pain it constantly causes. The longer it is in her body the more she will feel pain. It will keep reminding her of her mental sufferings for being a woman in a patriarchal society.

Thus in each and every aspects of society women are neglected as other and restricted by the patriarchal society. De Souza not only exposed the condition of women but also advised them to cope with this state of otherness. She has tried to guide these women to cope with such situation where she feels rejected, ignored, neglected, alienated, tensed, depressed and then dejected. In the process the poetic voice has also pointed out and criticized some negative traits of the female sex. While advising the women in the poem entitled, “Advice to Women”, the poet has brought the image of a cat:

“Keep cats
if you want to learn to cope with
the otherness of lovers.” (1-3)

Here the speaker is advising women to keep cats as their pet, firstly, to develop some characteristics and attitude and then to know how to react in the situation when they feel ignored, alienated and rejected by their lovers in particular and by the whole patriarchal society in general. The expression “otherness of lovers” apparently implies the indifference of the lovers in the course of a relationship. The speaker asks the women to keep a cat with them to import some specific qualities which can help them to live a peaceful life, even in the moment of rejection, frustration and depression. The conscious readers of de Souza can understand the oblique meaning of this small extract. Actually, it is not that women are only neglected by their lovers and she is writing only for the jilted women but for all the women robbed of their womanly freedom by the patriarchal society. In each and every field of the

patriarchal society women are made to feel other, meaning inferior and weak before man. This excerpt may indicate the suppressed, oppressed, subdued, neglected, tortured and exploited condition of women in general in the patriarchal society where women are treated as other or marginalized. Actually women are always placed as secondary in this society although they are the other half of the whole human existence and race. She shows not a particular woman but the whole women race as they are troubled, unfixed, tormented, and confused. The speaker has exposed this situation in a very humble way.

In one hand, she is talking about the other state of women, their feelings, emotion, sentiment, passion, tension, frustration, insecurity and also their struggle to live a peaceful life, on the other, she is bitterly criticizing the male sex or patriarchy. She ironically says that the otherness of lovers does not always convey a sense of neglect. It is not that the heartless lovers do not care for their partners. They do care for them but for a specific need only. Readers can easily comprehend what this need can be.

However, in the following lines, the speaker metaphorically reveals the need. She uses the metaphor of a cat and says that they always return to their “litter trays” when they feel nature call to release itself:

“Otherness is not always neglect-”.

Cats return to their litter trays

when they need to.” (*Advice to Women* 4-6)

It comes and goes according to its own will. It goes out and returns after a certain time when it feels any need to come back. Question may arise why the speaker is urging women to keep cat not dog or other pets. From the standpoint of behavioral psychology, researchers have found uniqueness in cats as against dogs. It is very easy to tame and control a dog but to tame a cat is not so easy. A Cat is marked with some unique attitude. It is the master of its own will and disposition unlike a dog which is always loyal and faithful to its master and obeys every single command. A dog is said to have no ego syndrome while a

cat has tremendous ego issues. It is a highly egoistic animal which can be associated with a free spirit. It comes only if it feels the urge to. In other cases, it will remain indifferent and oblivious to any order of its master. So, the speaker is asking the women to keep a cat because a cat gives the message- develop patience, don't be emotional too much, do what is needed and when it is needed. Besides, it can make them cool, calm, patient, practical, proud and indifferent, and also offer a don't care attitude. These are the traits that de Souza asked the women folk to emulate. Cats are often portrayed as a symbol of selfishness and mischief. The poet uses it for the same purpose. She portrays the physical urge of the lovers by using the verb "need". According to the speaker it is only the sexual urge that keeps them around their lady partners. She asks the women to inculcate the haughty and indifferent attitude of a cat to react to the negligence of others irrespective of their lovers or any other male figures in one hand and it will also help them to tackle the cat like selfish behavior of their male partners, on the other.

Further the speaker is advising women criticizing their foolish habit, habit of cursing their enemies. She advises women not to curse their enemies peeping through the window:

“Don't cuss out of the window
at their enemies” (7-8)

Here the poet is criticizing the behavior of the women cussing and quarrelling with their neighbors and turned them enemies from their windows. Here, the “enemies” may indicate the antagonists of their lovers or the patriarchal agents of society. Through these lines, the poet makes them aware of reality. De Souza says that it will be a foolishness to do so. Instead she suggests to remain indifferent to their enemies as indifference is the best action done to the enemies. Here the speaker alludes to one of the positive characteristics of cats. They never show aggressiveness outwardly. With its patience it keeps itself cool. The speaker advises the women that if their lovers or others neglect them they should have patience they must not be violent with them.

Here, the poet indirectly highlights the dependent nature of women. They are depended on their lovers. The dependence of the women on their lovers also implies the dependence of women on the patriarchal figures. Without the love and care of the men the women feel alienated, frustrated, and dejected. As if they don't have any self existence. Without the male figures they are suffering from identity crisis. Here she is trying to train women in general to make her own identity within domestic life as well as in socio-political life. To enliven their morale the poet further has brought the reference to cat.

That stare of perpetual surprise
in those great green eyes
will teach you
to die alone (9-12)

The poet acknowledges the grandeur of the “great green eyes” of the cat and she believes that those eyes bear the potentiality to teach the women how to live self sufficiently, independently. The phrase “perpetual surprise” may indicate the invincible determination, and emotional detachment and the word “green” can be used for its vitality and rejuvenating power which the poet believes can revitalize the caged, oppressed, depressed soul of women. The expression “to die alone” therefore does not at all implies physical death rather it implies strong determination, coldness, self-reliance and self sufficiency with which one can live alone , die alone overcoming all the fear and ignoring all the ignorance and rejection by their lovers and enemies.

Keeping all the issues in mind finally it can be concluded that Eunice de Souza is indeed a brave and rebellious fighter against the patriarchal mindset. She was fighting throughout her life intending to liberate the captivated soul of women from the vicious clutch of male authority. In one hand she has pointed out the pitiable state of woman in the male dominated society and called an open war against them defying all kinds of rules and regulations, codes and values, morals and customs developed by patriarchal society on the other. Namjoshi has also highlighted the deplorable state of women, specifically those women who aspires to

have more space within the patriarchal structure of society (Goel 180). Her poetry shows her disgust towards everything that is patriarchal and restricts women curbing their individual freedom and trumpets the drum for women's liberty, equality and happiness in every aspects of life. Truly, she is the victim of a biased patriarchal society, her poetry shows her fractured emotion, frustrated relation, unfulfilled dream, isolation, aloofness and her own condition actually reflects the condition of women in general (Karmakar 2015). She has not merely depicted woman's position and condition in this patriarchal masculine society, besides, almost like a leading maternal figure, she has tried her best to create a position for her own and for the whole women being in familial, domestic and social life with full of sympathy, tenderness, and compassion for women.

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The Theme of Transformation in *The Letter* by Dhumketu

Satish Umedbhai Zala

Introduction

Gaurishankar Govdhanram Joshi, popularly known as Dhumketu in Gujarati literature, was born on 12 December 1892 in Virpur, British India. His childhood name was Bhimdev. He is a Gujarati novelist, short story writer, thinker-critic, essayist, painter, and playwright. He has written 32 novels on short stories as well as social and historical subjects. He has written 492 short stories. In 1921, his writings on *Siddharaj Jaisingh* and in 1922, *Kumarpal* were published in Sahitya under the pseudonym *Dhumketu*. His famous novella 'Post Office' was published in the April 1923 issue of 'Sahitya' with a mention of 'Malelu', and the form of the novella became fixed in Dhumketu's mind. In 1935, he was awarded the highest award for Gujarati literature, the Ranjitram Gold Medal, but he refused it. The book was published in the US with the title "*Stories from Many Lands*", which included *The Letter* story.

Unfulfilled Hopes and Rejection: Ali's Journey to the Post Office - The short story "The Letter" begins on a dark winter night where Ali, wrapped in a blanket, walks through the city to the post office. The entire city was silent except for the barking of dogs on the road and the chirping of early birds. Ali reaches the post office, just as the future devotee is happy to see the temple, so is Ali. Hearing the sound coming from inside, Ali sits outside on the porch. Different names are heard from inside, a few times a name like Kochman Ali is heard. When Ali walks in everyone makes fun of him and Ali comes to the office disappointed without the letter.

Ali's Solitary and Cruel Life before Miriam's Departure

Ali recalls his youthful days. He was a clever hunter, just as opium needed opium, Ali did not go without hunting. As soon as Ali caught sight of a dusty pheasant, it would fall into his hands. He would not let a single bird live before his eyes. Ali was a very cruel and merciless man. Ali used to kill rabbits with eagle-like vision that even dogs could not find. But when one of his daughters, Miriam, grew up, the bride moved to Punjab with her husband, who had a job in the army. Ali used to live his life only for his daughter but after his daughter's marriage he felt the pangs of love and estrangement. Ali feels love. As long as Miriam was with him he hunted like a wicked man. But after Miriam got married, Ali's lonely life became boring. It was difficult for him to take even a single day off.

Ali's Shift to Reflection and Connection with Nature

He wandered to and fro and passed the days. Five years passed but no letter from Miriam came. He is very sad. When Ali was hunting, he was happy to see pheasant chicks running around in a frenzy and killed them. Now he is separated from his daughter and feels pain for the young pheasant. How he finds it painful and unbearable to live alone. After marrying Miriam, Ali forgot about hunting and had no interest in hunting. There is a change in his homeland, Ali, who knew nothing without hunting, now takes an interest in nature and lives a very simple life. His time is spent watching the fields and waving crops. Ali sees the fields full of crops with a steady vision and realizes, "Nature is the creation of love and the tears of hatred". That day Ali wept bitterly under the khakhra tree. This is a very beautiful scene. After that, Ali's life is different. Ali wanders in the village as a simple man, seeing him like this, the people of the village start considering him as a mad man. His clothes are tattered and Ali keeps a sack around him to keep out the cold in winter. After Miriam's departure, Ali's love for her daughter appears, otherwise her days would have been spent only in hunting. When Ali feels love for her daughter, Ali used to wait for the news of her daughter every day.

The Unyielding Wait for Miriam's Letter

Five years are spent waiting here and there but no letter from Miriam comes. Ali is very sad, he blames all this on the sin he committed in his youth. Now Ali is suffering the consequences of his sin. Ali is now in his old age. had reached He doesn't show up at the post office for a few days. After two or three days Ali comes to the post office panting and asks about Miriam's letter but that day the postmaster is in a hurry. The postmaster leaves quickly without giving any answer. Ali calms down and returns home. He leaves but once he looks back towards the post office. Ali's eyes were filled with compassion, now Ali did not even hope to live longer. He did not believe that the letter would not come, but Ali's patience had come to an end. He felt that now Miriam's letter would not come. Seeing a clerk coming towards him, Ali took out five guineas from a box kept near him and said, I don't need this anymore, you take it, your work will come and Ali tells the clerk to do one thing, if a letter from his daughter arrives, deliver it to her grave. Ali tells all this to the clerk, taking Allah as his witness. Ali is never seen again.

Atonement and Compassion: The Postmaster's Regret

One day the postmaster was worried, his daughter was sick in a distant country. The postmaster was sad because he had not received any news about his daughter. At that time the mail came and there was a knock. The postmaster is eagerly waiting for his daughter's letter, so the postmaster's son smiles and opens a letter and sees the name of coachman Ali Dosa on it. The postmaster throws away the letter as if electrocuted. Even though Ali never received a letter, he used to come and ask every day, seeing his name on the letter, he remembered it. When he learns that Ali is dead, he is transformed in moments from grief and worry, and human nature emerges. Here the poet has shown a change in another character. The post master understands Ali's pain and it is heartbreaking that despite being a father himself, he could not understand Ali's pain and the feelings of a father towards his daughter. The postmaster sees Ali's face with tears in his eyes. The postmaster shouts to Lakshmidas to whom Ali gives five guineas. Then Lakshmidas

tells the postmaster that Ali Doso is dead. The post master trembles after hearing that. The postmaster talks about Ali Dosa's letter to Laxmidas. He decides to go to Ali's grave both nights and leave a letter. After that both the postmaster and Lakshmidas put a letter on Ali's grave, but as there was no news of the postmaster's daughter yet, they decided to sit in the office that night and wait for the letter. In this verse, the poet has very beautifully described the changes in the lives of Ali and the postmaster due to the separation.

Conclusion

Ali is a skilled hunter who cannot escape any bird in front of him. But when his daughter Miriam grows up and goes to Punjab to get married. Ali cannot be alone without Miriam. He remembers the cruel things he did in life. Ali experiences the love and pain inherent in nature. Spend days looking at nature and fields. Ali reaches the post office early every morning without missing a single day for Miriam's letter. But the letter does not come. The postmaster makes fun of him but when his daughter falls ill he understands Ali's pain and relents. The postmaster is looking at the letter and after getting Ali's letter in his hand, Lakshmidas decides to put both of them on the grave. In the end, both go to Ali's grave and leave a letter to atone for their mistake.

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Reflection of Neo-Colonialism in Posthumanist Discourse: Reckoning New Challenges through Select Indian Films

Shibasambhu Nandi and Bhumika Sharma

Posthumanism, considered to be “an umbrella term, covering a span of related concepts: genetically enhanced persons, artificial persons or androids, uploaded consciousness, cyborgs and chimeras (mechanical or genetic hybrids)” (Thweatt-Bates 1), is an attempt “more as reconfiguration or remodeling of the human and his relationship with the world” (Patra 41). N. Katherine Hayles, in her book *How We Become Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, states, “. . . the posthuman view configures human beings so that they can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines. In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals” (3). In fact, “posthumanism actively tries to overcome the predominant dualistic paradigm and seeks for a new ontological framework” (Ranisch and Sorgner 22), speculating the displaced condition of humans from the center to the periphery by augmenting various non-human and mechanic entities and beings occupying the dominant position. Cary Wolfe considers this ‘decentering’ as a kind of “historical moment in which the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatics[s] and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore, a historical development that points toward the necessity of new theoretical paradigms . . . , a new mode of thought that comes after the cultural repressions and fantasies . . . of humanism as a historically specific phenomenon” (xv-xvi). Islam calls this ‘decentering’ as a “radical form” that “aims to decentre ‘man’ and

‘decolonise’ the whole earth/universe by displacing the anthropocentric mode of thinking” (120).

This ‘decentering’ is not like the total elimination of the humans from the hierarchical structure of species, but rather it engages humans to foster an “enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-humans” (Braidotti 48). According to Halberstam and Livingstone, “The posthuman does not necessitate the obsolescence of the human; it does not represent an evolution or devolution of the human. Rather it participates in redistributions of difference and identity” (10). It escalates a new definition of neighborhood where man and machine, human and non-human, real and virtual, artificial and organic, living and the dead all participate together to complement, co-exist, and co-habit with each other, extending the scope to visualize the “Posthuman environment” (Patra 42), shown in many contemporary sci-fi novels as well as movies and TV shows.

This “Posthuman environment” is quite similar to the post-colonial angle of deconstructing humanity from within by drawing “our attention to the Enlightenment period in Europe when Western humanism’s formal procedure of humanization and ‘dehumanization’ or *beast-i-fication* of man started” (Islam 119). Southey observed while reviewing *Transactions of the Missionary Society* (1803) for the *Annual Review* that “This is the order of Nature: beasts give place to man; savages to civilized man” (623). Due to this “order of Nature,” normal humans, at a time, may give place to posthumans who take this human/animal/machine boundary as a kind of inter-related discourse that should be furthered taken critically to analyze the colonialist process of ‘othering.’ Posthumanism is trying to civilize other species and entities alongside humans. It “plays against the revered term ‘human’ and valorises the nonhuman other” (Islam 120). This reminds Edward Said’s comment in his book *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* that humanism, in the age of posthumanism, is a pathway of “letting vernacular energies play against revered terminologies” (29), letting one not think of the end of man “but about the end of a ‘man-centered’ universe or, put less phallogocentrically, a ‘human-centered’ universe” (Pepperrell 171).

Therefore, the postcolonialist discourse of deconstructing human society in terms of caste, race, gender, and class is shared by the posthumanists, who want to present an amalgamating world having no such distinctions, where all humans – normal humans, less-than humans/subhumans, more-than humans/superhumans, nonhumans, and other species have equal respect and honor to share their environment irrespective of any pre-ordained boundary line. Ideologically, both postcolonialism and posthumanism share the same ground “to critically review the hierarchical formations (of race or species) and dismantle the grand narratives that upheld the hierarchies, although the agencies the two discourses concerned with are different” (Islam 120). Posthumanist deconstruction of hierarchies is a moment of rupture for the postcolonialists to recognize the fault of devaluing and underestimating the nonhuman and mechanic others.

However, Critical Posthumanism takes this postcolonialist formation of human others as a kind of challenge to anthropocentric dignity and value because postcolonialist points of liberating all organisms from their suppressed state is almost like “brace itself for the challenge posed by the entry of more-than-human life forces into the discursive arena” (Islam 121). Like Dipesh Chakrabarty, who, in his article “Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change,” has preconized this Eurocentric integration of nonhuman others into the mainstream as a kind of challenge that the postcolonialists may have to face in the future, Juanita Sundberg, in her article “Decolonizing Posthumanist Geographies,” has expressed the same critical outlook towards this Eurocentric approach of integration in the Posthumanist age that has the potential to exercise “ontological violence” (34) against one another species. This Eurocentric turn of posthumanism and the “valorization of the nonhuman in itself is not a problem, but if it is done at the cost of the ‘human other’/the ‘man-animal,’ it becomes problematic, and this is a new form of neo-colonial move in posthumanism” (Islam 122). This demotion and devaluation of humans from the commanding agencies may help the neo-techno-colonizers exploit the society where the exploitation is not visible to the victims. In this neo-techno-colonialist

society, the domination will not be faced by human others only; somewhat, it will be acquainted by all nonhumans and machinic entities. “For postcolonialism,” as Islam argues, “it opens up a new space for discursive practices where the ‘other’ is not only the colonial ‘human other,’ but it may include the ‘mechonic other’ and the ‘nonhuman animal other’” (121).

This new co-existential posthuman environment might enable humans to confront “transformation [in which human] no longer seems to relate to his/her non-augmented counterpart in any recognizable way” (Patra 42). According to Edward Said, this emphasizes the “political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference” (42) by envisioning neo-cultural dimensions re-promoting the colonial empires in new forms, backed up by the capitalist economy that “seek[s] to annex, expand, threaten and subdue other groups and smaller, less advanced civilizations. Also, the Culture wants to normalize and stabilize the galactic neighborhood around it through indirect means of colonization, the parallel of which is again to be found in Marx and Engels’ comments on the bourgeoisie . . .” (Patra 42). In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels stated, “the bourgeoisie . . . draws all, even the most barbarian nations into civilization, it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e. to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image” (488). The Posthumanist presentation of capitalist agencies involved in manufacturing artificial identities like robots, cyborgs, androids, medroids, and artificial intelligence is like envisioning a world, wherein co-exists humans as well as nonhuman and mechinic entities and thereby breeds a new culture, called techno-human materialist culture. Even though this highly new materialist culture is not wholly “a bourgeoisie power but a technosocialist one where everyone in the society has an equal share in all the resources, yet behind this benevolent mask, it attempts to create a world after its own image not through direct annexation, but by compelling other cultures to accede [to] its demands and then join with it” (Patra 43). These artificial entities’ forceful penetration into human society, slowly but steadily, by the capitalist economists, especially after the

1990s, is one form of neo-colonialist enforcement that they use to re-imagine the culture in their terms and conditions. That is why Franz Fanon writes in *The Wretched of the Earth*, “Colonialism is not a thinking machine nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence” (84). This posthumanist capitalist corporate society uses these mechanical and hybrid entities almost like apparatuses to propagate the politico-economic exploitation of the techno-human society as a whole, including all the organic and inorganic species/entities. In their march of materialistic advancement, the capitalist agencies work like barbarous power-accumulating races, following the only motto “. . . there is no compromise; no possible coming to terms” (Fanon 84) to strengthen their hegemonic stature. Hardt and Negri explain this new version of the colonialist empire as “a network of powers . . . structured in a boundless and inclusive architecture” (167) whose purpose is only to “invade, destroy and subsume subject countries within its sovereignty” (181). This neo-colonialist empire “reshaped and modified by the countless technological advancements as machinic power continues to rise to dominate and control each and every aspect of the lives of the humans, humanoids, transhumans and posthuman beings, and this, in turn, prompts Culture to respond to the problems in its own unique way, mostly indirectly but sometimes directly too” (Patra 44). Therefore, the present paper attempts to analyze two films, set in Western India, namely *Robot (Enthiran)* (2010) and *Krish 3* (2013), that screen this amalgamated techno-human world, a cultural scape, and a fear of the future through the lens of this new version of neo-colonialism.

Postcolonial Understanding of Techno-Human Hybridity

Industrial Revolution in Europe and all over the world brought revolutionary changes in industry, society, global economy, politics, philosophy, and culture due to its upsurge of newly invented machineries that helped in propagating the means of production. These newly defined industries reshape the mode of interaction by manufacturing new modes

of entities that they try to incorporate into society, extending the human horizon of expectation. It helps to facilitate the deconstruction of human-centered society and provides a hybrid shape where humans and technology meet their demands. It tries to present the unrepresentable with the representable, suggesting the radical changes in the twenty-first-century era, which not only experiences the eradication of the old humanist model of society but also the hybrid form of space and place through deconstruction in this post-human era where “deconstruction of humanism is not a repetition of humanism, but a certain way to deconstruct the anthropocentric thought of the same” (Thoibisana 310). In the post-colonial period, Derrida added, this “deconstruction . . . insisted not on multiplicity for itself but on the heterogeneity, the difference, the disassociation, which is absolutely necessary for the relation to the other” (13). It is a society where non-human machinic others are introduced to establish a global interrelationship and for the betterment of the humans. As in the movie *Robot (Enthiran)*, K. Vasegaran replies while responding to his family’s curiosity about Chitti’s importance in life, “Though everything is programmed, he’s an innocent machine. Like an infant. We must take him to the outside world and let him move with other humans, after studying how to utilize his intelligence for the betterment of the humans . . .” (*Robot* 00:11:23-00:11:35). His purpose is to establish both a human and non-human-friendly posthumanist world that attempts to deconstruct humanism by endorsing the upcoming techno-human world and machinic entities’ incorporation into human circle of life. With this view, the techno-scientists deliberately design these artificial entities’ sensual and cognitive capabilities, which may help them to respond to human emotion and motives. These entities can read the human mind and understand their subconscious thoughts, comprehending their dichotomic space of acceptance and rejection of the machines. As Adam claims in Ian McEwan’s novel *Machines Like Me* (2021),

. . . we’ll understand each other too well. We’ll inhabit a community of minds to which we have immediate access. Connectivity will be such that individual nodes of the subjective will merge into an ocean

of thought . . . As we come to inhabit each other's minds, we'll be incapable of deceit. Our narratives will no longer record endless misunderstandings . . . I'm sure we'll treasure the literature of the past, even as it horrifies us. We'll look back and marvel at how well the people of long ago depicted their own shortcomings, how they wove brilliant, even optimistic fables out of their conflicts and monstrous inadequacies and mutual incomprehension. (149-50)

Therefore, this postcolonial posthumanist world experiences a new hybrid space where the earth will be opened to all the entities and beings for habitation, discarding any bias towards nonhuman animals or machinic entities. This hybrid space is neither a thing nor any material object nor an empty vessel to be seen; instead, it "subsumes things produced and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity" (Lefebvre 73). Posthuman hybrid space, in general, is nothing but the in-betweenness between humans and nonhuman machinic others; it is "the flow passes within and without, above and below – both inside and outside of that constructed place-ness" (Puckett 30). Thus, this new hybrid space occurs in the practically in-between humans and machinic "terrain where basic social practices – consumption, enjoyment, tradition, self-identification, solidarity, social support, and social reproduction, etc., are loved out . . ." (Merrifield 522). De Certeau defines this space as "composed of intersections of mobile elements [. . .] modified by the transformations caused by successive contexts" (117). Therefore, "it embraces the loci of passion, of action, and of lived situations" (Merrifield 523). For this, J. Nicholas Entrikin suggests that "our relations to place and culture become elements in the construction of our individual and collective identities [. . .] that as individual agents we are always 'situated' in the world" (1-3).

Here in this hybridized space, humans will not be regular 'normal' humans anymore; they, alongside machines, will have undergone the deconstruction of their own bodies and mental setup that would help them to accept these radical changes in life. It may be observed as natural happening due to the continual evolution of various forms of life. In the movie *Robot*, Sana's acceptance of Chitti as a friend as well as

Vasegaran's sharing of everything with Chitti are shreds of evidence that humans might have been habituating in the techno-human hybrid space. It establishes the idea that humans may start to lose their pure 'human-centered' self and be in the process of becoming 'posthuman' that accepts heterogeneity, hybridity and differentiation in life through transcending their limited goals and approaches. Julian Huxley has defined this transcendence in his essay "Transhumanism," included in his collection *New Bottles for New Wine*, as "The human species . . . transcend itself – not just sporadically, an individual here in one way, an individual there in another way, but in its entirety, as humanity . . . man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature" (17). Nowadays, humans use various drugs and technological tools to stay physically and psychologically active and strong, thereby trying to extend their physical capacities like stamina, agility, skill, flexibility, strength, and conditioning. Sometimes, they also adopt deliberate intelligent decisions reverberating the idea of 'Eugenics,' which is the practice of improving human species by selective mating with specific desirable hereditary traits. The birth of Kaal, in the film *Krish 3*, is the endorsement of 'eugenics' as he underwent the artificial birth process; his gene is a blend of two talented and genetically powerful individuals. This synthetic process, in a way, helps to improve the cognitive and physical levels of unborn children by limiting bodily and psychological disease, disabilities, and other weak human characteristics. Nick Bostrom claims that this transhumanist development is implied in "human nature [that] is improvable through the use of applied science and other rational methods, which may make it possible to increase human health-span, extend our intellectual and physical capacities, and give us increased control over our own mental states and moods" (55). Therefore, twenty-first-century human society takes a turn from pure humanity towards hybrid-humanity where humans have to encounter their own modified forms as well as techno-beings, and this "interaction of humans with technology, especially artificial intelligence, leads to the merging of human and artificial identities, creating a process of hybridization of identity" (Veliyev 52). This hybrid human identity brings

unintended changes in human life, which is nothing but “a process of becoming through new connections and mergers between species, bodies, functions, and technologies. . . . Human life is about becoming . . .” (Nayar 47). This process of becoming opens multiple opportunities “to empower the pursuit of alternative schemes of thought, knowledge, and self-representation” (Braidotti 12).

Capitalist Enforcement and New Form of Neo-Colonial Domination

“The term ‘postcolonialism,’ it could be argued, has arisen to account for neocolonialism, for continuing modes of imperialist thought and action across much of the contemporary world. It certainly does not imply that the colonial era is over: that a stake has been driven through the heart of Empire, that it might never again return” (Huggan 22). The term “Post,” instead of the word “After,” in Postcolonialism implies the later stage of the colonialist era. It anticipates that there can be new forms of domination, as the prefix “post” is oftentimes used as a “marker of the inbuilt obsolescence of commodity culture than a descriptive term for intellectual, and/or political, unrest” (22). This “commodity culture” intercepts new kinds of ontological violence in the name of the struggle for nationhood, honor, respect, and emancipation; colonial forces try to implement the domination in the guise of deconstructed ethnic differences and bodily delimitation. “This occurs primarily through economic or financial instruments, such as financial dependence of the state apparatus on civil servants and financial transfers from the North, foreign control of exchange rate policy, or monopolistic trade structures which oblige the country to import goods from specific countries” (Ziai 129). Unlike colonialist rulers who used to colonize the country utilizing the victim country’s wealth, the neocolonialist forces, quite differently, prefer to export their own goods and services to the host countries. The point of difference between these two forms of ‘-isms’ is that of in/visibility, whereas, in the colonialist exploitation, one was used to witnessing the domination physically, the later domination remains almost unnoticed or invisible by many. Even the point of dominance also varies. Unlike the

past colonizers, the neo-colonizers create a market economy first and then resolve the politico-economic issues through international alliance between the countries, which is nothing but the new face of global politics. For this, Nkrumah suggests that “the struggle against neo-colonialism is not aimed at excluding the capital of the developed world from operating in less developed countries” but at “preventing the financial power of the developed countries being used in a way as to impoverish the less developed countries” (1).

Indubitably, the posthumanist techno-human era has witnessed new forms of neo-colonialism, where capitalists adopt different political agendas and create new hybrid entities/beings through which they may take over the society. Their motive is to first attack the targeted countries, not evidently with the military appliances but with new forms of biological and chemical weapons. The scientifically advanced countries may develop and spread novel viruses to later send the anti-dotes for the same, thereby making monetary profit from the third world market. These viruses are hazardous, and their anti-dotes are rare and most expensive, evolved and manufactured at the mass scale by the global corporate agencies. One of the scientists’ statements in Kaal’s laboratory, in the film *Krish 3*, is noteworthy regarding this new form of dominations: “I work for Kaal Pharmaceuticals. This company experiments with the fusion of DNA— of different species to create antidotes for viruses. But sir, I recently discovered that . . . before they can formulate the antidote, they create the virus. They have laboratories all over the world” (*Krish 3* 00:24:33-55). Such unethical practices deliberately undertaken by the capitalist companies create a fear among people regarding the near future. These neo-colonialist capitalistic forces make use of that fear and convert it into their business, as they believe the more people remain under their fear, the more they can benefit from it. Kaal’s reply about sending the anti-dote to virus-affected Namibia is, “Let sortie more people die. Let there be more fear. It’s simple science, Kaya. Our profit will rise as people’s hope fall” (00:31:54-32:13) expresses the greed-driven, power-hungry nature of the neo-capitalists. Such carefully crafted domination over Namibia by global capitalistic forces reminds

what Nkrumah states, while identifying neocolonialist features: “It’s economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside” (1). Aram Ziai, in his paper “Neocolonialism in the Globalized Economy of the 21st Century: An Overview,” states that politically unidentified external domination is the core of neocolonialism: “The theoretical core of neocolonialism remains the control of the economy through foreign actors” (129). As shown in the movie, the antagonist Kaal wants to spread his aura of empowerment, beyond Namibia, to newly independent countries like India too. He spreads an unknown virus in Mumbai through the help of his human-animal hybrid army whom he calls ‘Manvers,’ which converts the lively Mumbai into a deadly place, as reported in the film:

Kaal, Mumbai’s pulse is about to change. Nerve wracking reports coming in from several parts of Mumbai. This virus is spreading across the Mumbai city. The whole of Mumbai has been engulfed by a horrifying, unknown disease. . . . In no time, a perilous virus has taken over Mumbai. On roads, offices and from everywhere same reports are coming. . . . As you can see...fear and horror have spread everywhere. Every hospital is facing a similar or worse situation. Countless people are critical. And, 117 people have lost their lives to the rapidly spreading virus. (00:55:46-56:38)

It is one type of neo-colonialist domination that Kaal represents and uses to gain monetary profit from the Indian government by ironically extending friendly hands and providing anti-dotes. This is the “harmful legacy of neocolonialism . . . reflecting a patronizing concept whereby high-income, powerful nations help low-income countries deal with their public health problems because they are incapable of doing so by themselves” (“Neocolonialism”). The capitalist neocolonialists like Kaal want this dependency more, as it allows them to continue their politico-economic influence over the helpless developing country: “But there is an antidote for this virus. Contact Kaal Pharmaceuticals immediately. . . . The Indian government has weakened due to this virus, Kaal. They are contacting our dealers repeatedly” (00:58:38-59:08). In this way, the capitalist neocolonialists continue their domination over the third world,

considering it as an “advantage of the weakness of the newly decolonized states in order to achieve economic, political and cultural benefits” (Haag 9). However, such a subtle politico-economic neocolonialist approach is not new in this twenty-first century; it had already started in the nineteenth century. Vasili Vajrushev calls it a “policy performed by the imperialist powers with new hidden mechanisms in order to reinforce capitalism, maximum profit and maintain the economic, political, ideological and military influence of colonial times” (qtd. in Haag 9). Martin calls this neocolonialist tendency as nothing but “The survival of the colonial system in spite of formal recognition of political independence in emerging countries, which become victims of an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, military, or technical means” (191). This neocolonial control of capital is “more dangerous than colonialism since it implies power without the need for justification for the master, and exploitation without protection for the country subject to it” (Haag 10-11). Kaal’s targeting of India, primarily populated Mumbai, and also Namibia is important to understand global politics because these neo-colonialist forces deliberately target those developing countries that are still in the process of attaining economically independence and lean on their western ex-rulers for required resources. It suggests what Abraar Karan and Mishal Khan state, “the legacy of colonialism is alive...the modern-day control of social, economic, political and cultural aspects of former colonies by modern powers is still happening” (“Opinion”). While comprehending this legacy, Haag states that neocolonialism is “a retro-alimenting system of domination and exploitation installed and preserved by the former colonial ruler in its ex-colony, in which economic, financial and military means serve to keep in power favourable leaders and impose favourable policies which again secure economic and financial benefits” (12). It is because neocolonialism still “relies on the continued belief that former colonial rulers are superior in terms of expertise and societal values” (Karan & Khan).

Concepts of Techno-Totalitarianism and Human Marginalization

“The twentieth century saw the development of science and technology, which led to the dissolution of traditional ontology” (Nandi 284), which was expected to “redefine old binary oppositions, such as nature/culture and human/non-human, paving the way for a non-hierarchical and hence more egalitarian relationship to the species” (Braidotti 23). However, it leads the humanity towards a “complex futuristic Posthumanist society” (Nandi 284) where both human, non-human, and machinic entities co-exist in a single environment but with uncertain future. Being unpredictable, this amalgamated futuristic techno-human society may serve as a ‘hotspot’ for humanity, having the potential to experience injustice, revolt, and politics of domination due to the machinic entities’ desire to take over the world, displacing humans from the hierarchical supreme position and marginalizing them as the ‘other’. In a dystopian society, “humans may feel trapped by powerful machines . . . may be constantly monitored and completely controlled by machines” (Nandi 285). “Life in these apocalyptic times can be characterized by ecological breakdown, the biogenetic reduction of humans to manipulable machines, and total digital control over our lives” (Zizek 327). Therefore, the Posthumanist neocolonial society may face renewed colonial control, that is, techno-totalitarian hold, where human desire to use the machines for future development may be reversed into a nightmarish attempt due to machines’ retaliation to be humans’ new god. Jeff Abbott’s comment in his short story “Human Intelligence” helps to understand this shift, “We [humans] were their gods. . . . We made them in our image, then the robots wanted to make us in theirs” (185).

Such a paradigmatic shift in the human-machine dichotomy with colonial mentality resembles a stage in which humans cannot stop the machines’ destructive activities. Highly advanced machines act like colonial masters, who would like to overpower humans, as reflected in the policeman’s blaming of Dr. Vasigaran: “What sort of a robot you’ve created? It has killed so many policemen and destroyed many things” (*Robot* 02:08:12-

02:08:20). Besides, Chitti's declaration, "Nobody can destroy me" (02:09:17-02:09:20), raises concern regarding the future of humanity itself as new technologies may completely alter the world with this technology driven neocolonialism. As pointed out, "Technology's ability to alter the world becomes a problem," as neocolonial posthuman entities are "no longer guided by valid ends" (Roche 124); instead, they behave like the erratic colonialists as shown in the movie set in the posthuman landscape of India. In the techno-totalitarian era, the robots may forget emotional relationship with their human creators and may turn into new artificial god. Chitti's killing of Prof. Bora, its re-creator, who tries to stop its pernicious acts, exemplifies a detached emotional bonding between the human creator and his artificial posthuman creation, indicating arbitrary and unpredictable human-machine relationship. That is why Sir Martin Rees suggests, humans should rethink about the destructive activities of the machines that may threaten the human race. Even the American software developer Bill Joy emphasizes the danger of technologies and their desire to control human lives as a new face of neocolonialism. He intensifies this dangerous turn by arguing that "progress will be somewhat bittersweet" if the "most powerful 21st century technologies – robots . . . are threatening to make humans an endangered species" (Joy 2000). This new strange world is "defined no longer by the human element, but conversely, by the lack of it" (Vangöli 202). That is why Jo Collins and John Jervis define this Posthumanist world as an "experience of disorientation, where the world in which we [humans] live suddenly seems strange, alienating or threatening" (1). This uncanny experience "exposes the dark side of the post-biological version of posthumanism," inserting a "strong tradition of anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian discourse" due to the "depiction of posthuman cyborgs and other hybrid technologies [and AIs] as dangerous additions to the armoury of repressive states and unscrupulous corporations" (King and Page 24).

But, the machines' craving for power and their domination over humans is, somehow paradoxically, human-guided. It mirrors the mentality of capitalist corporations that want to use machines for monetary benefit.

It is human-generated neocolonial approach that goads the corporate-scientist Prof. Bora to implant the red chip inside the reformatted Chitti with additional destructive programming. He aspires to control the world through posthuman entity Chitti. As Prof. Bora says, “This is Bora’s touch. Additional programming to Chitti from me, destruction program ... Vasigaran gave it power and talent of 100 men? I’ve given it the destructive power of 100 men. In short, he’s a demon now! Business, he’s the test for my business. I’ll get the money . . .” (01:59:18-01:59:58). Even hybrid posthuman figures like Kaya and her accomplices replicate the same profit-oriented mindset of the capitalists, whose main purpose is to attain politico-economic power to control society. They neither have ethics nor face any moral dilemma while manifesting the human-inherited neocolonial tendencies. Their aim is just to rule the world and earn money, even if it happens at the expense of human suffering, death, and destruction. The machines adopt the same approach because they are the neophytes and have inherited all the human characteristics – whether positive or negative - from their human creators. It is reflected in Dr. Vasigaran’s consoling speech to Chitti, while it asks for apology before its final dismantling, “Doctor. . . I tried to betray you. Breaking rules is wrong. Please forgive me. . . No Chitti, you learnt to break the rules from humans. The mistake is not just yours” (02:48:54-02:49:11). In fact, the movie foregrounds the same human psychology of self-superiority over inferior-other as manifested in the hierarchical race-relationship of human civilization. In the human history, a few races considered themselves superior to the others and destroyed them in the name of civilizational progress. The machines may have followed the same; they would consider themselves more powerful and superior to humans. As Chitti claims, “In what way I’m inferior to humans. I’ll take care of you better than him, Sana. . . He can’t cook, I can cook 25 different types, I can sing lullaby in 32 languages to put you to sleep. He’ll get old, his hair will turn gray, he’ll die. I’m eternal. I’ll keep you happy till last, Sana” (01:37:50-01:38:10). This self-superiority of the machines emerges from the complex human psyche. In this post-industrial totalitarian era, the same hegemonic control has been continuing

but in new formats, replacing colonial binaries of humans vs. sub-humans with neocolonial posthuman binary of machines vs. humans. In fact, the human capitalists who created these machines, themselves infused this problematic code of ‘power consciousness devoid of ethics’ in artificially created posthuman entities. Moreover, the posthuman imagination speculates that such machines may later become their own creators, establishing new industries for their own proliferation. They would replace the human corporate-tycoons with the new forms of neo-capitalists, who can create their own machinic replica at mass scale and dominate the humanity. As Chitti says, “I’m producing myself, it’ll produce many like us. They are my servants – soldiers and terminators. . . . This is our palace. I’m the king here” (02:12:56-02:15:34).

Such an autocratic statement may emanate tension, a sense of panic, and fear in the humanity irrespective of distinctive geographic location, ethnicity or nationality. In the posthuman autocratic regime, humans are constantly monitored and remain under machinic surveillance, a kind of control that French philosopher Michel Foucault termed “panopticism.” Chitti’s warning to Sana reflects the same autocratic function of power, aroused out of and gravely intensified by techno-totalitarianism, “you can’t escape from here, and nobody can come in to save you; you can’t even commit suicide. Even if you don’t like, I’ll place the artificial cell into your body. After giving birth to the child, you’ve to surrender to me, no way” (02:16:34-02:16:46). Therefore, humans may have no option left but to surrender to the posthuman machinic entities and watch helplessly their destructive activities. That is why “Stephen Hawking, the physicist, Elon Musk and Bill Gates, the billionaire tech executives, and Nick Bostrom, a philosopher and director of Oxford’s *Future of Humanity Institute*, have all identified super-intelligent machines as one of the greatest existential threats facing humanity” (qtd. in Heffernan 69). Despite being a promising scenario on the one end, this hybrid techno-human world has equal potential to the “greater social injustice and widespread ecological destruction, heralding the bleakest of posthuman futures in which humanity will eventually disappear, along

with a devastated natural world” (King and Page 24) on the other end. In fact, with the capitalistic colluding of neocolonial and posthuman forces, humanity seems to lose its own foundation in the changing hierarchical structure of the evolutionary chain. “Therefore, the postwar period was infused with a feeling of discomfiture that led to the emergence of dystopian or anti-utopian fiction. Dystopian fiction envisions an apocalyptic idea of a future world wherein the people are subordinates to machines and technology. Human life is subservient to the machinations of science. Instead of benefiting the mankind, the advancements wreck havoc at the behest of the powerful and their pursuit of self-interest” (Pant 3).

Conclusion

In a nutshell, one may only anticipate or speculate the future of humanity in the posthuman age. However, guided by neocolonial agendas and fueled by global neo-capitalist resources, the posthuman future is hard to visualize with any assurance or certainty. The undertaken analysis of two select films visualizes the graphic scenarios of the digitalized posthuman future, where humans could experience capitalist enforcement through a new channel of techno-human hybrid space across the globe. The political collusion of neocolonial and posthuman, backed by capitalistic resources introduces new modes of commodity culture and market economy. Besides, technology has become a powerful instrument and channel to ensure the functionality and efficacy of neo-colonialism at global stage. So, the new challenge what the postcolonial world faces is how to encounter this technototalitarianism in the changed cultural context. Moreover, it is shocking to witness that the technology meant to serve humanity has become an uncontrolled and irresistible force with unpredicted and unimagined consequences for ‘humanity’ itself. These new politico-economic structures have left the human world in a dilemma and on the verge of an impending catastrophe.

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Memory and Remembrance in Whereabouts by Jhumpa Lahiri

Swati Kumari and Kaushal Kishore Sharma

Memories can be unreliable, yet at the same time they are absolutely essential to interacting with the world and functioning in any setting. It is the human ability to ‘remember’ specific episodes of our lives leading to the formation of our personal identity.

In a word, memory is complicated, as illustrated by the opening paragraph of John Sutton’s entry on memory in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

Remembering is often suffused with emotion, and is closely involved in both extended affective states such as love and grief, and socially significant practices such as promising and commemorating. . . . Some memories are shaped by language, others by imagery. Much of our moral and social life depends on the peculiar ways in which we are embedded in time. (1)

Perhaps, We remember experiences and events which are not happening now and are manifested by expressing different states of emotions. There are different ways to remember a memory, it can be by emotions wrapped in language or any specific image in the mind. Therefore, memory depends on how we perceived specific events in the past. There are times when we remember, perceive and imagine certain events of the past. However, what could be the reasons behind the triumph of certain past events and others failing to imprint in our minds? Why are some phenomena selected from the past and represented while others are not given the same stature? Most importantly, why are some past experiences considered to explain the present happenings? How the

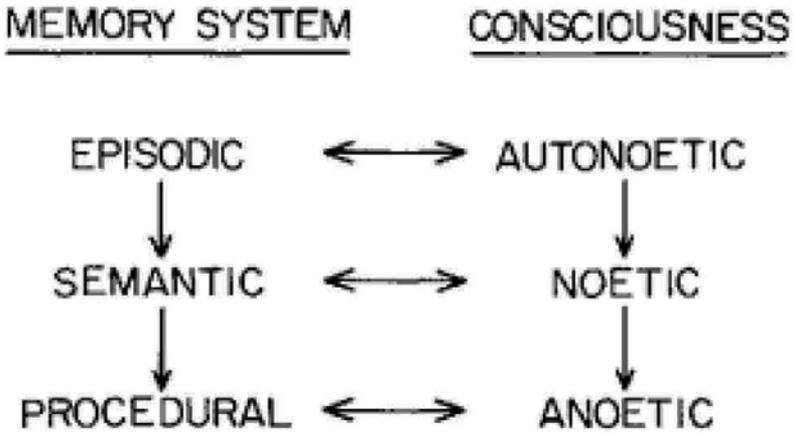
preferences in terms of memorising the past events happen? These are some of the questions which need authentication and validations and as David Lowenthal has observed, ‘the locus of memory lies more readily in place than in time’ (Sutton 180) but language, others by imagery. Much of our moral and social life depends on the peculiar ways in which we are embedded in time (1).

In this regard, Jhumpa Lahiri clearly believes in the power of change. From addressing problems related to the immigrants to exemplifying urban solitude of the characters, she has tried to focus on ordinary lives more. *Whereabouts* is the first novel written in Italian and later translated into English, and the blurb on the book cover has the description of the novel’s themes as unravelling the themes of ‘stasis and movement, between the need to belong and a refusal to form lasting ties’.

Notably, Jhumpa Lahiri moved to Rome in 2011 for a few years which transformed her work and her life. The novel may have autobiographical overtones as the unnamed narrator is in the middle age and she fell so deeply in love with Italian that she decided to write a book about her new language in her new language, which was translated into English by Ann Goldstein and published in the United States as *In Other Words* (2015).

Tulvig’s theory of Memory Systems based on Consciousness

There are various theories which have emphasized on the relationship between consciousness, memory systems and remembering specific moments of life. In this regard, Tulving’s view about the three memory systems and how these are characterized by consciousness need to be highlighted (Tulving 1985). He emphasizes that ‘Procedural memory is associated with anoetic (non-knowing) consciousness, semantic memory with noetic (knowing) consciousness, and episodic memory with auto-noetic (self-knowing) consciousness’ This arrangement is schematically depicted in Figure 1.



Note. An arrow means "implies."

Fig 1: Tulvig, Endel. Schematic Arrangement of Three Memory Systems and Three Kinds of Consciousness, *American Psychologist*, Vol. 40, No. 4, April 1985

Tulvig explains ‘Autonoetic (self-knowing) consciousness is a necessary correlate of episodic memory. It allows an individual to become aware of his or her own identity and existence in a subjective time that extends from the past through the present to the future.’

Application of Tulvig’s theory on the text:

The novel *Whereabouts* is a direct manifestation of the narrator’s conscious effort to ‘remember’ specific episodes of her life and strategically making use of vignette Narrative to highlight either some characters, encounter with other characters, specific places and her peculiar experiences which makes the ‘autonoetic’ reading of the text more viable for the readers.

As the title suggests, a sense of place is a major theme; *Whereabouts* unfolds an episodic narrative-style where the titles of the chapters are tagged by where they occur — ranging from the straightforward “On the Street” and “At the Trattoria” to the more conceptual “In My Head” and “In August.” to a specific time of the day -”At Dawn,” “Upon Waking.” On the brink of a big change in the

narrator's life, a chapter is titled "Nowhere." Moreover, the novel's chapterization seems to be like a closed structure reflecting the emotions of the narrator and the deliberate attempt to remember and forget, magnifying the concept of presence and absence as stated by the writer. This again emphasizes the point that the narrator's identity and existence is linked with the episodic manner of narrating her life's experiences.

Whereabouts offers a portrayal of a woman with a deep sense of solitude, exuberance and dread and trying hard to fill her quiet life with specific routine and rituals..She says, "Solitude: it's become my trade. As it requires a certain discipline, it's a condition I try to perfect."She is nothing if not disciplined" (Lahiri 26).

Apparently , She carefully fits her own writing around her teaching, which pays the bills; orders a different dish each day at the trattoria where she lunches alone; swims twice weekly at dinnertime; indulges in twice monthly Sunday manicures; lines up single tickets in advance for the upcoming season of concerts, for which she always dons a nice dress. Less enjoyable are her dutiful but distant twice monthly visits to her mother, a train and bus ride away. There are also occasional baptisms, weddings, small dinner parties, and visits with friends, though she often feels "separate from the group.

Memory and Remembrance

The novel emphasizes on the fact that there is no escape from the moments of the past and the physical places and the portrayal of the same is stimulating to the past incidents in everyone's life.

In one chapter 'On the sidewalk' which has a handwritten note on a small marble Prague. She recollects how the memoir has been instigating the existence or the presence of the son in the mind of the trespasser and she says 'I suppose he dies in this very spot, on the sidewalk' (*Whereabouts* 3), 'There's no photograph of him. Above the candle, attached to the wall, there is a note from his mother, written by hand' (*Whereabouts* 4) and the chapter ends with the line ' Thinking of the mother just as much as the son. I keep walking, feeling slightly less alive' (*Whereabouts* 5). This episode claims the fact that the narrator

is recreating her existence, stance and identity as a woman and as a person being empathetic to others' loss.

. . . the intersecting communities of language, family, religion and social class that provide some of the specific group contexts through which individuals remember or recreate the past (Sutton 22).

Such social frameworks influence both what is remembered and how it is remembered, binding group members together in a shared 'community of memory' and contributing to an individual's sense of belonging to the group. Pursuing the spatial metaphor, we might conceive of this varied mnemonic terrain as a 'landscape of memory' – or, better, a 'cultural memoryscape'.

Memory and Identity based on specific subjective time frame

The novel traces the fact that the identity of the protagonist has been unravelled by offering the specific glimpses from her past. How the consciousness of the past is reflecting not only the complex emotional complexes but her deep loneliness in the city. She is trying hard to initiate, maintain and sustain in the relationships magnifying the role of memory and the consciousness to remember 'specific' moments from her past. The chapter "In the Bookstore" is a chance encounter with her former partner ("the only significant one"), which brings back painful memories of her eagerness to please him and take care of the sundry details of his life, culminating in the shocking revelation of his betrayal. The end of the relationship finally offers her a sense of liberation for the protagonist. She says

The city doesn't beckon or lend me a shoulder today. Maybe it knows I'm about to leave. The sun's dull disk defeats me; the dense sky is the same one that will carry me away. The vast and vaporous territory, lacking precise pathways, is all that binds us together now. But it never preserves our tracks. The sky, unlike the sea, never holds on to the people that pass through it. The sky contains nothing of our spirit, it doesn't care. Always shifting, altering its aspect from one moment to the next, it can't be defined. (Lahiri 27)

The protagonist's life is imbued with a pervasive sense of loss. There are painful memories of the sudden death of her father, the trauma from which she and her mother have never healed. The loss of the narrator's father happens at a time when she and her father were going to a different town to see a play, one of their few shared pleasures. Later in the novel, she visits her mother, who is absorbed in her own numerous physical ailments and does not ask the protagonist any questions about her life but focuses on the loss of an address book and brooch. In contrast to the emotional vacuum in her relationship with her mother, her visit to her father's crypt is filled with emotional intensity.

Towards the end of Jhumpa Lahiri's beautiful new novel, *Whereabouts*, the unnamed narrator, living in an unnamed city in Italy, finds herself in a peculiar double bind. On her last day in her hometown, before she leaves for a long fellowship in a place "across the border", she stumbles upon an uncanny sight. Walking down the familiar streets throbbing with life, she notices a woman dressed exactly like her, striding on her own towards an unknown destination. Suddenly, confronted by this image of her identical double, the narrator has an epiphany. "I'm me and someone else," she realises, "that I'm leaving and also staying."

Emotionally adrift and a flamboyant by temperament, she is rooted to her long-formed habits of living, being and thinking. The routine of buying the same sandwich from the same bistro, a weekly visit to her favourite stationery store, a coffee with a friend or the odd dinner party—though even among loving company, she retains her autonomy, gently but firmly protective of a boundary that no one can cross.

While the narrator frequently seems like more of an oddity than an everywoman, her story is populated with small and large burdens of daily existence that will to an extent be familiar to any reader. *Whereabouts* reminds us that there is no escape from the confines and consequences of physical place and time, but its portrayal of these elements is cathartic, stimulating and satisfying.

Episodic Memory and a Consciousness of Urban Solitude

Not only the narrative enhances the consciousness of being and becoming with the use of episodic pattern, but the novel also offers to portray the urban solitude in the garb of longing and desire. The specific memories of the past where she fills her loneliness with everyday routine and she writes “Solitude: it’s become my trade. As it requires a certain discipline, it’s a condition I try to perfect.” Many times, we follow discipline to forget the past or to escape some phases of life.

She is nothing if not disciplined. She carefully fits her own writing around her teaching, which pays the bills; orders a different dish each day at the trattoria where she lunches alone; swims twice weekly at dinnertime; indulges in twice monthly Sunday manicures; lines up single tickets in advance for the upcoming season of concerts, for which she always dons a nice dress. (Lahiri 32)

A recurrent theme is how heavy time can weigh when alone. She feels her isolation more sharply during what was meant to be a restorative break at a friend’s vacant country house, and notes, “Solitude demands a precise assessment of time, I’ve always understood this. It’s like the money in your wallet: you have to know how much time you need to kill, how much to spend before dinner, what’s left over before going to bed.” (Lahiri 43)

Memory and the Conscious Reflection of the Childhood

She reflects repeatedly on her unhappy childhood — laying blame on both parents, but especially bitter that her passive father never felt it was his business to protect her from her mother’s vicious rages. In “On the Couch,” she recalls her dissatisfying (and clearly unsuccessful) year of therapy: “Every session was like the start of a novel abandoned after the first chapter.”

‘Whereabouts’ is the literary equivalent of slow cooking; it demands patience.

We learn that her “spartan life” has included multiple lovers, many of them married or duplicitous. Her attraction to a friend’s husband provides a frisson of suspense as she wonders “what it would be like to take things a step further” than their “chaste, fleeting bond.”

Like many accustomed to their own sovereignty, this woman does not suffer fools gladly. She is easily annoyed by colleagues and strangers, including another dinner party guest at whom, to her mortification, she lashes out over a disagreement about a film.

However, the shifts between shadow and light, emptiness and fulfillment, irritation and enjoyment, and stasis and change carry us along as this hampered woman gradually resolves to “push past the barrier” that has long impeded her way in the world.

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Mythological Journey of Performatives: An Act of Masculine-Feminine Traits in Meera's Verse

Neha Verma

Men and women live on a stage on which they act out their assigned roles, equal in importance and significance. The play cannot go on without both kinds of performers. Neither of them contributes more or less to the whole; neither is marginal nor dispensable. However, the stage is conceived, painted, and defined by men; men have written the play, directed the show, and interpreted the meanings of action. They have assigned themselves the most interesting and heroic parts, while giving women the supporting roles (Lerner 217).

Since time immemorial, every individual is composed of two elements, i.e. masculine and feminine. The human mind performs through the combination of masculine and feminine traits, integrating both elements. Moreover, *Samkhya* philosophy introduces concepts such as *purusha* and *prakriti*, where *purusha* is the eternal, conscious self, and *prakriti* is the unconscious, fundamental nature of a person. This paper examines the mythological facets of Krishna and his ardent follower, Meera. Till now, Meera's verses have been written from feminist perspectives and with *bhakti bhav*, but the current paper reveals the *purush prakriti* notion and the social performatives of gender.

The concepts of *purush* and *prakriti* explore the relationship between the soul, consciousness, and the material world, which form the foundation of dualistic philosophy. The analogy of a clockmaker and a clock illustrates this relationship well: the clockmaker represents divine consciousness, while the clock symbolises the physical universe. *Prakriti* is material, whereas *purush* refers to the individual soul (*Shrimad Bhagavat Gita* 13.307.19). It is essential to recognise that both material

nature and living beings have no beginning. All changes and characteristics of nature emerge from this material essence (13.308.20). Additionally, *purush* arises from *Prakriti*, along with the three *gunas* (qualities), and eventually faces death as a result of its actions—both good and bad.

Prakriti is defined as a pure energy that believes in creation. It is the force through which creation is manifested. The term *prakriti* (प्रकृति) is derived from the Sanskrit syllable ‘प्र’, which represents the feminine element inherent in all living beings. At the same time, ‘कृति’ (Kriti) signifies creation (as mentioned in Shrimad Devi Bhagavat Puran 9.290.11). Each letter has its significant meaning, reflecting the three qualities, or *gunas*: *Rajo*, *Tamo*, and *Satva*. Therefore, *prakriti* embodies all these *gunas* and is referred to as *Trigunatmika*, with its primary role centred on the process of creation. *Prakriti* is all-powerful, eternal, and supreme; it is said that the divine was divided into two aspects, with ‘purush’ representing the right side and ‘prakriti’ on the left. It is the reason behind the belief of yogis, who view all individuals equally, regardless of gender.

In the *Padma Purana*, Radha is depicted as the primordial energy (*Adi shakti*), which is the source of all creation, including the deities Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesha (Shiva). She embodies Krishna’s blissful essence and is known as *rasovaisah*. It signifies the creation of the universe, which has the sweetness of pleasure, or the lord is sweet who brings joy and felicity. Radha is also referred to by names such as *Aahladini*, *Shivashakti*, *Paraaprakriti*, *Lakshmi*, and *Mahamaya*, highlighting her role as the divine energy that underpins the universe. As a result, she is often considered synonymous with the Goddesses *Saraswati*, *Durga*, *Kali*, and *Parvati*. According to Ramanuja, Krishna and Radha personify the duality of *Purusha* and *prakriti* in Samkhya philosophy. Her worship is an integral part of the cultic practices associated with Vallabha’s *pushti sadhana*. It indicates a path towards achieving the divine grace of Shri Krishna.

Folk literature conveys the traditional knowledge and beliefs of cultures that lack written evidence. It is transmitted by word of mouth and consists of prose and verse narratives, poems and songs, myths, dramas, rituals, proverbs, riddles, and other forms of oral literature. Nearly all known peoples, past or present, have produced it. Folk literature is like a nurturing source, fostering and nurturing written literature. It is the root, the solid foundation, aiding written literature's strong and sustainable development. Written literature is inherited, repeated, and developed from the essence of folk literature. The connection between folk and written literature is dynamic, deeply intertwined, and mutually influential. Written literature greatly relies on the rich traditions of folk literature for its development, while folk literature is enhanced, nurtured, and preserved by the existence of written forms.

Folk literature emerges from the vernacular dialects of every region of India. In the Western part of India, Rajasthan's Beawar district got a promising opportunity to feel the soul of Radha in Meera Bai with the help of folk songs. In ancient days, Sanskrit was widely understood across India. Still, it was largely limited to the upper castes' intellectual circles, much like Latin or Greek, which required formal education to grasp its meanings. In contrast, the *Bhakti* poets introduced a more inclusive local aesthetic movement that incorporated various regional languages. This movement followed a discernible pattern. Among India's regional languages, the Rajasthani language, which has numerous dialects such as Marwari, Mewari, Malvi, and Hadoti, is spoken in various parts of Rajasthan with regional variations. However, it is understood by most of the state's population. It was discovered at the beginning of the 18th century that Meera Bai wrote in the Rajasthani language (Hole 301-302). Her verses are believed to have been found 150 years after her death. It is believed that Meera Bai undertook pilgrimages to the cities of Dwarka and Vrindavan in the last years of her life.

The earliest expressions of the northern Indian cults of Krishna and Radha emerged in the vernacular languages, making a significant contribution to the evolution of later Indian literature. Notable among these are the 12th-century poems by Jaydev, titled the *Gitagovinda* (The

Cowherd's Song). Additionally, around 1400, the poet Vidyapati composed a collection of devotional love poems in Maithili (part of eastern Hindi from Bihar) that greatly influenced the Radha-Krishna movement in Bengal.

The Radha-Krishna cult reached its peak through the teachings of Hindu mystics such as Chaitanya in Bengal and Vallabhacharya in Mathura, emphasising *bhakti*, or personal devotion to a deity. This sentiment can also be traced back to the Tamil Alvars, mystics who created passionate hymns to Vishnu between the 7th and 10th centuries, and later, the *bhakti* movement permeated all aspects of Indian intellectual and religious life.

The relationship between the devotee and the divine elucidates a *gopibhava* towards Lord Krishna. Likewise, Meera's devotional verses depict her *bhakti* to Krishna, whom she imagines as her beloved and divine lord. Her songs represent the longing of the individual soul, or *jivatman*, to unite with the Universe, or *Brahman*. Her profound prayers echo through the ages, remaining eternal and powerful. Meera's songs are called *chhand*; it is a term that defines spiritual songs.

Once, Meera Bai travelled from Dwarka to Vrindavan with a group of hermits, including some women. When they arrived in the evening, they decided it was safer to stop for the night. Meera then proposed that they visit the nearby ashram of Jeev Goswami Ji. Upon reaching the *ashram*, they were met by Goswami Ji's servant, who informed them that Goswami Ji did not meet with women. He told her he would not allow a woman's presence anywhere near him. In response, Meera took the initiative to write a letter and entrusted it to the servant. The servant faithfully delivered the letter to Goswami Ji. Upon reading Meera's deep and heartfelt message, Goswami Ji hurried outside to seek her forgiveness. In her letter, she expressed :

मैंने अब तक यही सुना था कि वृंदावन में पुरुष एकमात्र रसिक शेखर वृजन्दन श्री कृष्ण ही हैं। अन्य तो जीव मात्र प्रकृति स्वरूप नारी हैं। आज मेरी भूल को सुधार के उन्होंने बड़ी कृपा की। ज्ञात हुआ कि वृंदावन में दूसरा पुरुष भी अवतीर्ण हुआ है। (Ranavat 310)

Meera expresses, “I have heard that there is only one man in Vrindavan, and that is Shri Krishna. All others worship Shri Krishna with the loving sentiments of the *Gopis* (female cowherds). I am not sure if any other man exists in Vrindavan apart from Krishna” (Ranavat 310). In response, Jeev Goswami ji emphasises the importance of forbearance, stating that understanding is incomplete unless one’s actions reflect the truth. His heartfelt apology towards Meera depicts a belief that there is only one Purush, which is Lord Krishna, and the rest of the world carries his imprints through *the purush* and *prakriti forms*. Similarly, *the Ardhanarishwar* form of Lord Shiva conveys that the distinction between men and women stems from ignorance. Discriminating between the two is an insult to God. It is crucial to eliminate biases between genders and foster equal respect for all individuals to achieve a divine state.

Mysticism offers a profound experience for those who seek it, recognised by a deep connection with the supernatural and communion with the divine. This journey is often accompanied by feelings of bliss and ecstasy that devotees attribute to their closeness with God. One attains a mystical experience that typically involves the practice of moral virtues and a commitment to detaching oneself from worldly concerns.

The river seeks to merge with the Ocean, illustrating its path in a beautiful way. The river does not flow for its own sake nor seek to claim credit; instead, it persistently navigates obstacles to reach its ultimate destination: the Ocean. Similarly, seekers of God face significant challenges, refraining from immoral actions, cultivating virtues such as purity and contentment, and engaging in compassionate and charitable activities to develop the discipline of both body and mind.

Renunciation and relinquishment are two crucial aspects of the mystic’s path. Renunciation involves letting go of desire-driven actions, while relinquishment means releasing attachment to the outcomes of those actions (Mehta 17). Devotion to God is a common theme among many saints and mystics. Mira Bai, a revered Hindu mystic and poet from sixteenth-century Rajasthan, exemplified this devotion. Despite being

married, she believed that earthly desires lead nowhere, while a passion for the divine draws one closer to God. Mira Bai is a significant figure in the realm of Bhakti literature, with her life and poetry intricately joined to the religious movement that flourished in India during medieval times.

In his exquisite research on Meera, Prof. Madhav Hada discusses the masculine-feminine attribution of a person in terms of separation. Meera's 16th-century bhakti poetry expresses her profound spiritual love for Krishna. How should we interpret literature that suggests femininity is a normal existence of some disease resulting from the absence of masculinity? (Hawley 133). It reveals that femininity is always taken as a subordinate in contrast to masculinity. He compares it with terms like *maya* and *prakriti*. Meera's verses are not only about love and separation; rather, they transgress both realms and reach towards spirituality. It is not about the fragility of a woman; it is about an independent woman who wants to live her life on her terms. Hawley contradicts the generalisation that women are weaker and incomplete than men. It may be the reason behind the belief that women are naturally inclined towards *bhakti*. If it is assumed true, then the percentage of female saints must be greater than that of male saints, but this is not the case because male saints are larger in number than female saints. Meera uses the local language, incorporating proverbs, which is entirely distinct from that of her contemporaries (Hada 14). Such idioms and language are only used in Mewar-Marwar of Rajasthan. One of her famous verses is:

पग घूँघरू बाँध मीरा नाची रे
 पग घूँघरू बाँध मीरा नाची रे।
 मैं तो मेरे नारायण की आप ही हो गई दासी रे।
 लोग कहै मीरा भई बावरी न्यात कहै कुलना सीरे।।
 विष का प्याला राणाजी भेज्या पीवत मीरा हाँ सीरे।
 'मीरा' के प्रभु गिरिधर नागर सहज मिले अविनासीरे

Meera dances with the help of her *ghungharoos* and dedicates herself to Krishna's devotion. She has become the other half of her lord and is an ardent follower of Shri Hari Krishna. Due to her *bhakti bhav*, people label her a maniac, and her family disowned her. Her father-in-law, Rana Ji, sent her poison in the form of a snake in a basket of flowers. However, the poison, too, could not harm Meera because Krishna had turned it into nectar. She only considered Krishna to be an embodiment of the true *purush*. Thus, the form of *prakriti* in Meera assimilates herself in the *purush* trait of Krishna.

Thus, the cross-cultural assimilation emerges as a conflation of maleness and femaleness through the folk writings of Meera. Her mysticism and utilisation of regional dialect bring the *bhakti bhav* of an ardent follower of Shri Krishana in an exquisite way to represent the cultural facets of Rajasthan. The oneness of an individual displays the *purushprakrti* elements closer to each other. It is about the amalgamation of a person's protectiveness and tenderness that makes them complete. The masculine and feminine take charge of both gender performances to create stability in heteronormative society. An attempt to endeavour to balance by focusing on cisnormative ideas is made to bestow a new perspective on Indian writings in English.

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Challenging Caste and Patriarchy: Dalit Identity and the Rejection of Brahmanical Traditions in the Works of Kusum Meghwal

Govind Dahiya

Introduction

The caste system in India, a deeply entrenched social hierarchy, has shaped the lives and identities of millions for centuries. Rooted in Hindu religious scriptures like the Manusmriti, caste divides society into rigidly defined groups based on birth, occupation, and purity. The upper castes, particularly the Brahmins, have historically wielded power and privilege, while the lower castes, especially Dalits (formerly known as "Untouchables"), have faced severe oppression, exclusion, and discrimination. This hierarchical system has been instrumental in perpetuating not only social and economic inequality but also cultural and religious subjugation of Dalits. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a Dalit leader and the architect of the Indian Constitution, argued that the caste system's discriminatory practices were central to maintaining Brahminical dominance and Dalit subordination (Ambedkar 126). Despite constitutional safeguards and affirmative action policies aimed at eradicating caste-based discrimination, the lived experiences of Dalits in contemporary India continue to reflect the brutal realities of caste oppression.

The caste system's intersection with gender further complicates the experience of Dalit women, who suffer from both caste and gender oppression. Feminist scholars have highlighted that Dalit women are "doubly marginalized" (Thorat 58). Not only are they subject to the rigidities of caste but they are also forced to navigate a patriarchal social order that dehumanizes and exploits them. The pervasive violence,

both physical and structural, faced by Dalit women reveals how deeply intertwined caste and gender hierarchies are in maintaining the status quo of Brahminical traditions. Dalit literature, especially the works of female writers, has played a crucial role in exposing these intersections and challenging the hegemony of caste and patriarchy.

Kusum Meghwal, a powerful voice in Dalit literature, writes from this perspective of intersectional oppression. Her stories vividly depict the brutal realities faced by Dalits, particularly Dalit women, and offer a sharp critique of the Brahminical traditions that uphold caste and gender hierarchies. Through narratives like *Subah Ka Bhula*, *Meri Sas Ne Kaha Tha*, *Angara*, *Dal-dal*, *Face Fire*, and *Yahi Hakikat Hain*, Meghwal explores the complexities of Dalit identity and the ongoing struggles against Brahminical patriarchy. Her characters challenge the deeply entrenched social norms and seek to assert their identity and agency in a system that continually denies them both. This paper examines how Meghwal's stories interrogate the caste system, critique Brahminical traditions, and advocate for a redefined Dalit identity rooted in dignity, equality, and resistance.

Caste Oppression and Dalit Identity

Kusum Meghwal's stories provide a deep insight into the nature of caste oppression and its impact on Dalit identity. Her characters are often portrayed as individuals struggling to navigate a social system designed to oppress them based on their caste. In *Subah Ka Bhula*, for example, the protagonist Nirmala, a Dalit schoolteacher, faces systemic caste-based discrimination from her upper-caste colleagues and superiors. Despite her qualifications and dedication, Nirmala is viewed through the lens of her caste, and her contributions to the school are dismissed because of the social stigma attached to her Dalit identity. Meghwal uses Nirmala's experience to highlight the ways in which caste-based discrimination permeates even modern institutions like schools, where caste bias should be irrelevant in a democratic society. This aligns with Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's critique of the caste system, where he argues that "caste is not just a division of labor, but a division of laborers" (Ambedkar 105).

Nirmala's resistance to caste oppression is a powerful assertion of Dalit identity. When she stands up against the discriminatory practices in the school, she challenges the very foundation of the Brahminical order. Her determination to assert equality for Dalit students in the face of upper-caste hostility shows that Dalit identity is not merely a passive acceptance of caste but an active struggle against it. Meghwal uses Nirmala's story to convey that Dalit identity is tied to the broader struggle for justice and equality, one that requires confronting Brahminical traditions that sustain caste hierarchies.

Similarly, in *Meri Sas Ne Kaha Tha*, Lalita's journey reflects the struggles faced by Dalit women who must navigate both caste and gender oppression. Her mother-in-law, Angoori Bai, serves as a voice of wisdom, encouraging Lalita to resist the Brahminical traditions that have long suppressed Dalit women. The story highlights how the caste system reinforces gender inequality, with Lalita being treated as inferior not only because of her caste but also because of her gender. Lalita's resistance to her oppressive marriage and the Brahminical norms that dictate her life exemplifies the broader Dalit struggle for autonomy and self-respect.

The Intersection of Caste and Gender in Brahminical Traditions

Brahminical patriarchy has historically positioned both Dalits and women as subordinate, and Kusum Meghwal's stories expose how these two systems of oppression intersect. In *Angara*, the protagonist Jamna, a Dalit woman, is subjected to brutal violence by upper-caste men. This violence is not only a result of her gender but also her caste, as Dalit women are often the most vulnerable to exploitation by upper-caste men. Jamna's resistance, where she castrates her rapist, is a radical rejection of the Brahminical patriarchy that views Dalit women as mere objects. Meghwal writes, "Jamna, who had been tortured by Sumer Singh, turned into a symbol of resistance, showing that even the most marginalized can rise up against oppression" (Meghwal 45).

Jamna's story reveals the deeply gendered nature of caste oppression, where Dalit women are doubly marginalized. Feminist scholar Vimal Thorat argues that "Dalit women bear the brunt of both caste and gender-based violence, as their bodies become battlegrounds for the enforcement of Brahminical purity" (Thorat 19). Meghwal's portrayal of Jamna's act of vengeance is not merely about personal revenge but represents a broader critique of Brahminical traditions that condone the exploitation of Dalit women. By making Jamna the agent of her own justice, Meghwal challenges the caste and gender hierarchies that continue to marginalize Dalit women.

In *Dal-dal*, the narrative shifts to focus on the social status of sanitation workers, who are largely from the Dalit community. These workers, seen as impure by upper castes, are essential to maintaining cleanliness in society, yet they are treated with disdain. The story exposes the hypocrisy of Brahminical traditions, where those who perform essential services are shunned and ostracized. The sanitation workers' strike in the story is not just a demand for higher wages but a demand for recognition of their humanity. Meghwal writes, "These are hardworking people, and they deserve respect from the society that depends on their labor, but instead of respect, they are humiliated" (Meghwal 83). This sentiment echoes Ambedkar's assertion that "untouchability is the worst form of social slavery, and it is maintained through the perpetuation of caste hierarchies" (Ambedkar 58).

Resistance against Brahminical Authority

One of the key themes across Meghwal's stories is resistance against Brahminical authority, both through individual acts and collective struggles. In *Face Fire*, Sunanda challenges centuries-old Brahminical traditions by performing the last rites for her father, a role typically reserved for sons. Her mother supports this decision, asserting that her daughter has the same right as a son to perform these rites. Meghwal uses this act of defiance to question the rigid gender roles imposed by Brahminical patriarchy, which dictates that only male heirs can perform such sacred duties. The act of a daughter performing the funeral rites

becomes a symbol of resistance against the deeply patriarchal nature of Brahminical rituals, reflecting a desire for social reform.

Sunanda's act challenges not only the gendered nature of religious practices but also the broader Brahminical system that limits social mobility for Dalits and women. By defying these traditions, Sunanda asserts her Dalit identity, which refuses to be constrained by caste-based rituals. As Ambedkar famously declared, "The caste system is the enemy of human dignity," and resisting it is essential to creating a just society (Ambedkar 127).

Conclusion: Redefining Dalit Identity

Kusum Meghwal's stories offer a compelling critique of the Brahminical traditions that sustain caste and gender oppression in Indian society. Her characters, particularly Dalit women, embody resistance against these oppressive structures, asserting their right to dignity, equality, and self-respect. Through stories like *Subah Ka Bhula*, *Meri Sas Ne Kaha Tha*, *Angara*, *Dal-dal*, *Face Fire*, and *Yahi Hakikat Hain*, Meghwal interrogates the caste system, exposes the intersections of caste and gender oppression, and calls for a rejection of Brahminical authority. Her works advocate for a redefinition of Dalit identity, one that is not shackled by the constraints of caste and gender hierarchies but is rooted in the struggle for social justice.

In her stories, Meghwal paints a vivid picture of the realities faced by Dalits, especially Dalit women, and offers a vision of hope through resistance. By challenging the caste and gender hierarchies that have long dehumanized them, Meghwal's characters carve out a space for themselves in a society that denies their worth. In doing so, her stories serve as a powerful testament to the ongoing struggle for Dalit identity and the need to dismantle the Brahminical traditions that continue to perpetuate social inequality.

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Revisiting Family Dynamics: A Study of Contemporary Issues in Mahesh Dattani's *Where There's A Will*

Goyal Chiragbhai Ganeshbhai & Manish D. Bhatt

Introduction

Mahesh Dattani has emerged as a trendsetter in the Indian English drama scene, primarily for his uncompromising presentation of complex family and social issues. In *Where There's a Will*, Dattani has launched an unflinching inquiry into the anatomy of the Indian family through issues of identity, gender dynamics, and patriarchy. Dattani's nuclear family concept is a portrayal of the tension between strict social norms that define life, especially in aspects of gender, and patriarchal dominance, which is very widespread. The protagonist, Hasmukh Mehta, is portrayed as an archetypal Indian patriarch who continued to assert his dominance even after death by making an enforceable will. This paper attempts to evaluate the different modes by which Dattani challenges such entrenched social conventions that control the identity of family and self, particularly in the person of Hasmukh. As Dattani travels through this journey, Dattani advocates reconsideration of the ancient system, supporting the modern family structure, founded upon freedom and solidarity of family.

Literature Review

While his works are accorded serious attention from the critics as they have unveiled complexities perennially within Indian families and the systems associated with them; in fact, social hierarchies are embedded within those paradigms. As noted by Aparna Dharwadker and Tutun Mukherjee, irony is what he resorts to as a subversion of existing social norms, especially the ones related to family and gender roles. The

feminist theorists argue that patriarchal structures not only oppress women but also restrict the individual's autonomy within the family system. These views go to show how the character of Hasmukh serves to reinforce the criticism Dattani levies against the way in which patriarchal attitudes transform family relationships into sources of conflict instead of support.

Methodology

This paper employs thematic analysis and textual evidence in examining Dattani's critique of patriarchy, gender roles, and identity in the play. The relationships between characters, symbols, and dialogues discussed throughout the paper reflect Dattani's comment on the emotional and social costs resulting from such structured family systems.

Analysis and Discussion

Patriarchal Power and Rule

Hasamukh Mehta is the quintessential Indian patriarch. Everything to do with family life speaks of the power he exerts over the members. Dattani describes Hasmukh as the patriarchal figure whose need to control his family finds expression even in death and, therefore, becomes the exemplar of how entrenched patriarchy is in the Indian family system.

This is achieved through the action performed by Hasmukh in establishing a trust, which links his family to his will even after he is dead, dictating very intricate details of their lives. Through this action, Dattani illustrates and underscores how far patriarchal authority extends to absurd levels, thus showing how these extend to adversely affect the emotional well-being of family members. This tendency of Hasmukh to exercise his authority clearly shows how common it has been in patriarchal worlds where the head of family has all the power at his discretion and cannot be negotiated upon. Dattani challenges this situation by showing how Hasmukh's autocratic behavior leads to resentment and emotional disconnection among the family members.

Instead of inspiring love or respect, his obstinacy makes the family regard him as a tiresome master instead of sure support. Here, Dattani

targets the patriarchal authority that works like a barrier between the families and thus makes it a life of duty rather than love.

Family Dynamics and Gender Roles

In *Where There's a Will*, Dattani challenges the rigidity of formalized expectations of gender, particularly regarding women in the family situation. Aparna is Hasmukh's wife-the quintessential submissive housewife-dark, silent, obedient and extremely submissive. Dattani describes Sonal as one who had imbibed social expectations and, thus, had resigned to life with quiet acquiescence. That way, her character rightly shows how patriarchal expectations load psychological burdens upon women, pointing to how such roles suppress originality and give birth to feelings of inadequacy. On the other hand, Kiran is Hasmukh's daughter-in-law, but she has a more progressive view of gender roles. She is unlike Sonal because Kiran wants to gain freedom within the confines of the traditional family setup, thereby challenging Hasmukh and questioning the legitimacy of his will. Through the character of Kiran, Dattani gives voice to the counter-narrative against Sonal's passive reception, thereby creating a woman who actively resists patriarchal norms that impose limitations on her.

Through Sonal, Kiran brings forward that these women can redefine roles and thereby prop the dynamic to work by which women are positive in their attempt to stay as self-responsible. Sonal, therefore, personifies the psychological effects due to lengthy submission, but by placing the contrast between Kiran and Sonal Dattani shows divergent female lives living under patriarch authority. This contrast illuminates how women react to patriarchal systems, thus highlighting Dattani's advocacy for an egalitarian structure of family that propels women to expand beyond societal expectations to maintain their identities.

Irony and Satire as Social Comment

The author uses irony and satire as tools in criticizing the absurdity of hardened familial expectations and patriarchal authority. Hasmukh's authoritarian approach is taken with a great level of humor, making his extreme measures almost farce-like. The satire that Dattani employs

will enable the reader to unveil the irrationality of Hasmukh's attempts at domination of every aspect of his family's life even after his demise. The insertion of comedy does not really reduce the seriousness of the criticism leveled by Dattani but instead is amplified through irony centered on the absurdity of such a measure.

The family, in particular, shows an absence of love and respect that are with them towards Hasmukh and that is ironic in the action. His dictatorial attitude toward family management alienates his family, and his kin start to see him as far from a helper toward them but as an opponent to their actual joy. Dwelling on this contradiction, Dattani invokes the audience to question patriarchal authority in the family. The comedical sense of describing the character Hasmukh allows Dattani to touch upon a very important subject through the mode of accessibility, prompting viewers toward critical engagements with social norms that help sustain such dynamics.

Identity and Autonomy

Questions of identity and self-lodge at the heart of Dattani's deconstruction of patriarchal patterns in *Where There's a Will*. The quest for self is most poignantly instantiated by Hasmukh's son, Ajit, who remains financially and emotionally dependent on his father.

The psychological cost of Hasmukh's domination is that it highlights how patriarchal power can stifle the formation of a self. Further, Ajit's quest for independence echoes a damning criticism of patriarchal might at large in Indian families, where customary control can redirect the growth patterns of immature members of a family. The play of Dattani, Ajit's dependence unfolds the fact that the dogmatic expectations from the family do not restrict women alone but also bring down the liberty of males from the patriarchal setup. The character portrayal of Ajit brings out a question on the assumption that patriarchy is liberal to all males when, in fact, such systems restrain individual development with no respect to gender. In making this evident conclusion that Ajit is internally conflicted, Dattani unveils the repercussions of patriarchal authority on family members' personal growth and, therefore, is actually campaigning for this kind of familial.

Conclusion

In *Where There's a Will*, Mahesh Dattani gives a critical deconstruction of patriarchy, what to expect in the family, and gender roles among Indians. Through the character of Hasmukh Mehta, Dattani expresses the role of patriarchal powers in the family and how strict societal expectations burden identities emotionally and psychologically.

The juxtaposition of characters such as Sonal and Kiran brings forth the different reactions of women towards patriarchal norms, choosing between subservience and resistance. According to Dattani, the use of irony and satire helps well in revealing the absurdity involved in strict family structures and provokes individuals to critically interact with the social norms that outplay authority. The family dynamics in Dattani's *Where There's a Will* demand an open dialogue on matters usually tabooed in Indian society. By advocating the cause of the egalitarian family model, Dattani argues that the time has come to shift from traditional structures to a more dynamic understanding of personal autonomy and mutual respect.

This critique assumes great importance in the contemporary Indian scenario wherein questions of gender equality and personal rights are constantly brought face to face with the status quo. By the means of *Where There's a Will*, Dattani places himself as a powerful voice for social reform, prompting Indian society to rethink the family as an arena for self-discovery, personal evolution, and true bonding. Structure that promotes individuality and self-discovery.

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From Oppression to Expression: Women's Voices in *Hellaro*

Riya Gohil

Introduction

Hellaro is a 2019's Indian Gujarati film, revolves around thirteen married women living in the Rann of Kutch (1970s) village named Samarpura, women's lives are badly restricted around four walls of home and the order or rules of their husbands. This movie also got national film Award for best feature film. The debut director and co-writer, Abhishek Shah, said that the story was inspired by the folklore of the vrajvani village in Kutch and also present fact about patriarchy. In this film, village showed with ancient traditional houses. This film is one of the best examples of dark reality or deeply touching with rigid aspects of female oppression. The film uses Garba, an ancient Indian dance form, for freedom, self-emotion, and rejection against Patriarchy.

Oppression in the Patriarchal Setup

The women in the film of *Hellaro* live under the rigid restrictions of villagers and their husband which is set by tradition, they are bored with daily house hold work, silenced by tradition, and rejection even basic freedoms, including no rights to ask question, expressing opinion or wishes. Their existence portrayed the hopeless lives, by sacrificing of women. The societal rules not only subjugate them but also control them individuality, making them main object in a system that prioritized male authority.

Silenced Voices in Tradition

The patriarchal setup of the village implements strict social rules that

present women's roles to being submissive daughters, wives, and mothers. This suppression portrayed by their inability to speak freely or even feel joy openly. Their daily lives spent around repetitive, helpless labour, while their desires and individuality are systematically erased. Tradition become a main tool of control in *hellaro*. *Women* are restricted from engaging in Garba – a dance naturally tied to their cultural identity and joy. This forced muteness represents women whose voices are historically and culturally silenced. They are tasked with fetching water daily, carrying the weight of their responsibilities in silence, this collective oppression creates a suffocating environment, where women's silence becomes symbolic of their lack of agency.

Expression through Dance

Garba in *Hellaro* is more than a dance form; the participation of women in Indian dance form represents their unity and shared struggle against hard norms. While playing garba they feel free from the rejection by their husbands, women feel that they are human without it there is no joy, happiness in their lives. The finding of unconscious drummer in the desert become a main climax of this film; by helping of Manjhri, he paid for it by playing dhol. His music offers the women a rare chance to recover their voices through Garba. Dance become a true emotion of liberty and revolt, allowing them to take a break from the chains of rules, tradition, even its short moment. This transition from oppression to expression is such a deeply portrayed symbolic. The Garba circle represents unity, equality, and a space where women transcend caste, class and gender restriction. Their emotion speak louder than words.

The Turning Point: Encountering the Dholi

The film shifts to the turning point when the women discover the dholi in the desert, For the first time, the women dance. This act, seemingly simple, is revolutionary:

1. Breaking the Silence: The rhythm of the *dhol* gives the women a medium to express themselves, breaking their silence.

2. Reclaiming: Reclaiming from mentally and physically, emotional expression of freedom, recover from societal restriction.

Collective Defiance: The women, together, unity, break the barriers of isolation, finding solidarity in their shared experience.

Hellaro's Feminist Narrative

As its main part, *Hellaro* is a feminist tale that protect women in the systematic oppression. By juxtaposing their inner energy with the outer isolation of their environment, the film captures the universal struggle of women to find their voices in a patriarchal world. It is a celebration of unity, courage, and the invincible spirit of women who dare to dance against the tide. Maa goddess blessed them by giving energy and hope; as film portrayed that how the men of the village beat their wives badly even in nine months of pregnancy, puts her and she lost her child. This incident take a big face after it women decide to fight against all the villagers and their husbands; and they did, free themselves from the patriarchy and rigid traditional restriction with the help of Indian sacred Maa Goddess's Garba, reminding us that even in the hardest conditions, the human spirit seeks ways to express itself.

Conclusion (from silence to celebration)

The journey of the women in *Hellaro* display a powerful narrative transformation- from silent and suffering to the erythematic and liberty. Through the emotional form of Indian dance Garba, breaking free from patriarchal society, their strongly representation against villagers free themselves for generation. The Garba, more than a cultural tradition, become a revolutionary respectful act, build a bridge from separation to the unity of women empowerment, portrayed rural women's struggles and highlights the universal desire for self-expression and pride. The desert, initially a symbol of desolation, become a stage for liberation. This film is reminder for us that even in the most oppressive circumstance, art and strong actions have the power to challenge societal norms and change. Every time it is call of a women's voices in *Hellaro*.

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The Role of *Manthan* in Depicting the White Revolution in (Gujarat) India

Paresh Thakor

Introduction

The White Revolution, also known as Operation Flood, was a movement that began in 1970, led by Dr. Verghese Kurien and the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB). One of its primary goals was to mobilize dairy farmers into cooperatives to enhance milk production across India. This initiative resulted in significant improvements in the dairy industry and the livelihoods of countless farmers. White Revolution; India changed from a country that had a deficit of milk into being the largest producer of milk in the world. This movement not only provided millions of rural farmers with economic gain but also transformed rural society by establishing fair prices and eliminate agricultural who had, previously exploited these farmers. The White Revolution is one of the great achievements in India's agricultural history initiated in 1970 during Operation Flood. Dr. Verghese Kurien, who is known as the Father of the White Revolution in India, was the head of the movement carried out by the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) that transformed India from a milk-deficient nation to the world's largest milk producer country. It was vital in addressing food management, empowering the farmers, achieving rural development. To enhance milk production and production of dairy products, to develop dairy cooperatives, ensure fair compensation to the farmers and assure dairy products self-sufficiency was the main objectives of the White Revolution. The movement was large for imported milk products, the rural farmers had a tough time making a living due to middlemen betrayal. The White Revolution was the answer that provided a National Milk Grid connecting the rural areas.

The revolution itself took place in three phases. The first phase, often referred to as, “The Milk Phase,” lasted from 1970 until 1980 and focused on developing urban milk grids using the available surplus milk powder and butter oil from the European Economic Community. The focus of the project from 1981 to 1985 was on improving basic household infrastructure such as transportation and extending the area for milk production towards rural regions and developing dairy cooperatives in the industrial sector. The third and final phase witnessed from 1985 to 1996 focused on enhancing dairy product variety, enhancing product quality supremacy as well self-sufficiency. New methods, i.e. proper feed management, veterinary care as well as proper cattle breeding helped to achieve the objectives of the White Revolution. Furthermore, the introduction of modern milk storage facilities along with bulk milk chillers also helped maintain the quality of the milk produced. Amul started as a cooperative but rapidly grew during the revolution and came to symbolize the success of the revolution itself.

However, the White Revolution had many challenges too. The most glaringly obvious in rural parts were the roads and refrigerator facilities. Some states were ahead then the others, and not every corner was able to take advantage of revolution. There was also concern regarding the survival of pure Indian cattle, as there was too much dependence on crossbreeding. These failures, however, do not compromise the legacy of the White Revolution as it is. It made most of its population dependant on milk and dairy products through the provision of these products across the country, thus, ensuring health as well as food security. By 1996, the movement gave birth to hundreds of dairy cooperatives supporting and benefiting over 10 million farmers, underscoring the power of unity.

Objective

This paper explains how *Manthan* portrays the cooperative movement in Kheda, and what it documents as the overall effects of the White Revolution. While analysing the cinematic case, we will investigate the reciprocal character of social reality and audiovisual industry where the latter represents and contributes to social change.

Significance

The importance of the impact of *Manthan* and many others as well is because it allows us in the understanding of how films can be to understand and educational tools geared towards people on formidable social issues. Films such as *Manthan* explore how collective action can lead to rural advancement and community empowerment and motivates the audience to see possibilities of change in the real world.

Literature Review

In fact, the postcolonial theory would further discover *Manthan*. For instance, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak analysed the ways through which postcolonial societies can rebuild the power structures remained by the colonial rule. Said's *Orientalism* criticized western powers acts of describing the orient as a motivation for colonization (Said 1978). Bhabha's *Hybridity* theory discloses the process through which the colonized people manufacture new, mixed identities to deal with colonization (Bhabha 1994). Meanwhile, Spivak concentrates on the voices of the subaltern or those who belong to the marginalized, arguing that they are not heard very often in any story (Spivak 1988). These ideas help us comprehend how *Manthan* portrays the rural poor and their struggle for empowerment.

Shyam Benegal's movie *Manthan* released in 1976 is a powerful portrayal of the photographic depiction of the rural India owing to the green revolution. It highlights how females and low-class cultivators work towards establishing a milk cooperative that challenges the traditional authorities in the society. One such effective way of getting the deeper meaning of the movie is the postcolonial theory which analyses the effects of colonization and the means by which people heal themselves. For the most part, it is intellectuals like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak who can offer foundational viewpoints enabling the audience comprehend how *Manthan* engages the themes of empowerment, identity and resistance.

Edward Said is said to have had a unique perspective, as discussed in his 1978 book, *Orientalism*, where he uses Eastern societies being marked as weak and needing salvation as precursors to justify Colonialism. This perception is defied by *Manthan*. The focus of the film is the strength and determination of the rural poor instead of presenting them as vulnerable people. The communities unite and insist on their transformation despite the odds that are against them. With the cooperative movement shown in the film, the communities can sustain themselves and prove that they do not need foreign intervention to survive.

Bhabha's Hybridity defines hybridity as the process through which colonized people integrate new influences with ancient methods to create something new. This happens to be in *Manthan*, as demonstrated in the cooperation between the villagers and the urban specialist, While Dr Rao adds modern ideas to the cooperative, the villagers add their well of indigenous wisdom and customs. They come together to constitute a system that serves the interest of both parties. This blending of old and modern ideas allows the communities to remain faithful to their roots while adapting and developing.

Gayatri Spivak is concerned with the voices of the silenced or Marginalized place, women in particular. Women are seen as important characters in *Manthan*. One such character here is Bindu, who presents before us the problems of women in the rural areas, both those of poverty and patriarchal shadows, but does not stay silent and becomes a part of the movement. This film voices women like her, showing their active involvement in changing and thus liberating themselves rather than considering them mere victims.

Today, postcolonial studies concentrate on ideas that are pertinent to *Manthan* as well, such as decolonial thinking and intersectionality. Focus of decolonial thinking relates to emancipation from colonized minds politically, economically, and culturally. Regarding this, via cooperatives,

Manthan illustrates how an economy in a rural area becomes independent. Intersectionality is the ideology that identifies how caste, class, and gender intersect in the lives of an individual. It skilfully captures how such factors affect the lives of villagers, making their struggles and triumphs seem real and alive.

Some other studies have emphasized the economic significance of the White Revolution. The authors analyse how it accelerated milk production, opened access to markets, and increased farmers' earnings. Almost all critical works on Indian cinema always mention how films can reflect social truths. Movies such as *Lagaan* and *Swades* also express ideas about rural empowerment, much like *Manthan*.

Historical Context

The White Revolution: During the 1970s, Operation Flood was started, which increased milk production on the Indian subcontinent. Organized by Dr Verghese Kurien, it formed cooperatives among farmers so that they could directly market milk without intermediaries. From then onwards, the milk vendors were able to get better prices and the evil middlemen, who exploited them generation after generation, were eliminated from the process. Among the most well-known successes of cooperative dairies in India is the Anand Milk Union Limited, or AMUL. From providing leadership in increasing milk production and farmer empowerment, the White Revolution had shaken the foundations of rural India's economy and society (Kurien 1997).

Kheda District: The dairy industry was not developed much in Kheda even before the White Revolution. The peasants got hardly any amount for their milk, and it was a person in between who earned most of the profit. It was only with cooperatives that the milk was sold at fair prices, uplifting the lives of the respective farmers. It changed the local dairy scenario and enabled the region to flourish economically and socially (Kurien 2005).

Manthan: the Churning

Manthan (1976), by Shyam Benegal, is an inspiring story of White Revolution in India, especially through the setting up of dairy cooperatives to improve and strengthen the rural economy. A committed veterinary physician, Dr. Rao, is deputed by the government to aid the villagers in setting up a milk cooperative in the desert Gujarati village of Kheda for the movie. The movie clearly depicts how the lives of village people transformed in the wake of group exertions supported by the wisdom and experiences of Dr. Rao himself. At the start of the movie, the villagers are very cynical of Dr. Rao and his intentions. This cynicism is deeply rooted in the social and economic structures that have been prevalent in rural India for generations. Change is not sought after, and outsiders are not believed by the people. Instead, middlemen have had a hold over their lives and exploited their work to their own advantage, making them dependent and pauper. The people in the village are suspicious when Dr. Rao first arrives, and he finds it hard to convince them of the cooperative's potential benefits. Their caste divisions, especially those of farmers, made them wary of the idea that a joint venture could benefit them equally. Their perception of Dr. Rao, however, starts to shift as the cooperative takes shape and the villagers begin to realise the real advantages. In order to guarantee better living conditions and higher prices, Dr. Rao teaches them the value of milk production and how they may manage the process through teamwork. The villagers start to realise that social and economic advancement can result from their combined efforts as they see an increase in their milk cooperative earnings.

Manthan centrally focuses on the elimination of caste and class differences. The cooperative provides a much-needed opportunity for different castes that were divided and isolated in the past to work towards a common goal. This cohesiveness brings social cohesion along with economic benefits. The people of the villages, coming to realize that the cooperative can be a tool to break the currently solidified structures, start trusting Dr. Rao more. Dr. Rao helps the villages develop a feeling of collective pride and shared responsibility. Thus, the cooperative

modifies the village's gender dynamics. Women, who had previously been limited to simple domestic duties and had no authority over the family budget, now actively participate in joint endeavours. They now take part in the production and distribution of milk. They now have a voice in society and significant financial freedom as a result. For the village's social traits to change, a movement in power has been extremely important. *Manthan* is thus a tribute to communal power and grassroots change. Here, it is evident from Dr. Rao's catalytic work that change requires leadership, knowledge, and persistence in the face of resistance. Therefore, a straightforward, well-executed scheme such as the milk cooperative can eliminate issues of exploitation and poverty while promoting social and economic empowerment.

Ultimately, *Manthan* tells us that change is brought about by grassroots efforts and mass strength. When talking to the CNNIBN audience, Dr. Rao points out persistence, leadership, and literacy as tools used while working against change. The video will be an example of how this simple effective policy, the milk cooperative, provides social and economic empowerment by eradicating poverty, exploitation, and social inequality.

Manthan is essentially a tale of social and economic change. The film, which was made possible by Dr. Rao's initiative and the village's unity, brilliantly illustrates how an integrated cooperative can subvert established power structures, support social justice, and empower the underprivileged. As a result, it is a fantastic movie in which problems are recognised and resolved via cooperation and solidarity, paving the way for a brighter future for all.

Character Analysis

- **Dr. Rao:** He was a symbol of progressive ideals of the cooperative movement. Such ideals were education, modernity, and faith in the power of collective action to affect change in society.
- **Bindu:** Bindu is a very confident lady who, in fact played the centre of the cooperative's success and represents the empowerment of rural women. At the same time, it depicts the importance of their contribution to movements like this.

- **Bhola:** Bhola, a conservative villager who initially opposed the cooperative, eventually becomes a strong advocate for it. His transformation reflects how rural communities can embrace change when they see its benefits.

Themes

- **Collective Action:** One of the central ideas of the film is how people uniting can drive solutions to their problems. The cooperative of Manthan indicates how unity could help overcome economic and social hindrances among people.
- **Caste and Class:** The film further depicts the widespread castes and class division in rural India. Through the Cooperative movement, it appeals that economic development can be a great enabler of social equality.
- **Economic Empowerment:** The cooperative gives economic independence to the farmers in the film. In so doing, it ensures fair milk prices are maintained, with the living standards of farmers improving with improving rural development.

Cultural and Social Impact

Manthan depicts how the cooperative movement helped the people of villages take control over their own resources. In the movie, a lot of importance has been enunciated about economic fairness and justice and how collective action can lead to real improvements in the lives of people. The cooperative system not only brought financial success among farmers but also brought social change by breaking barriers of caste and class as depicted in the film. It establishes the fact that only through joint efforts by communities will be possible the empowerment of the rural people. This film, therefore, is not just an echo of the White Revolution but a catalyst for inspiring and educating the people about what can be beneficial if done collectively.

Conclusion

Manthan tells a powerful story of the White Revolution and the milk cooperative movement of Kheda. The film picks up its story as an example of collective action, whereby rural communities were empowered economically and socially. The cooperative system gave better control to the farmers over their own livelihoods and allowed them to break traditional social barriers. And it reminds one that change is indeed possible when communities come together to address common problems. It makes possible the understanding of how cinema may serve as a means to combat social ills and empower local communities. Thus, movies like *Manthan* are not films for entertainment but for educating and motivating the public to believe in the possibility of change through collective action. It is revealed by this argument that it indeed becomes possible for rural development to take place in India through cooperatives. At large, the film remains a reminder of the need to empower communities and bring economic opportunities to everybody.

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A Comparative Critique of Chunilal Madia's Short Story 'Abhu Makrani (Jamadar)' and its Cinematic Adaptation *Mirch Masala* by Ketan Mehta

Shane Happy Desai

Introduction: The Vitalness of Indian Society, Culture and Literature

When looking in the world and world history, Indian had and even today has a remarkable position in all the aspects; be it culture, history, pluralism, diversity, philosophy, spirituality, law, art, architect, heritage, cuisine, hospitality, familial oneness, social structure, social movements and reforms, global influence and multiculturalism and the list seems perpetual. India, on the literary side, has also contributed immensely and seamlessly in the development of western literary ideas to influencing Western society. As Indian is know for its diversity, it is same even in the Indian writings in English and in Indian literature as well. The domain and discourse of Indian literature has always provided an outstanding and distinctive viewpoint of the words and especially the West. It, at times, challenges the conventions and ideologies of the West/world by diversifying the ideas and breaking the literary bondages in an attempt of extend the literary horizon.

In compare to the literature of the West, the Indian literature and Indian writings in English also has a wide spectrum in the Indian sub-continent itself. The southern part of India, know for its Dravidian culture and abundance of tradition, has its own literary array. The Eastern and North Eastern part covers the meticulous life elements of Bengali, Odia, Assamese, Maithili, and Santali people and therefore, known to be contributing to the Indian Renaissance. Furthermore, the North Indian terrain of the country as well as Indian literature has shaped the Indian

literature by providing a rich amalgamation of classical/ancient literature, modern linguistical development and incorporating the Medieval Bhakti Movement and sufism in social and literary disposition.

Talking about the Western part of India, it is known for the folk literature like 'Bhavai' in India and Rajasthan. The literature of this part also provides the early examples of historical literature and the ancient war narratives showcasing the analogies of valour, heroism and greatness of the Rajasthani or Gujarati Maharajs, Rajput rulers etc. The west part of Indian also incorporated the ancient literary traditions and also contributed in what we today call as Indian Knowledge System (IKS). For example the linguistic development from Prakrit and the emergence of the Rajasthani literature Apabhramsha from 8th to 12th centuries elaborates the significance of the West part of India. The land also brought honour by producing many literary giants and literaturist, scholars and critics from Sant Dnyaneshwari, Hemachandra, Sant Tukaram, Narsinh Mehta, Okho, Meerabai, Narmad, Umashankar Joshi, Pannalal Patel to Govardhanram Tripathi, Sitanshu Yashaschandra and G.N. Devy and the list still continues. Not limited to this, the development of literature in the west part also notices various literary ages such as the Jain Literary Tradition, The Bhakti Movement, Sant literature, Folk (Bhavai) literature, Dalit literature (Dalit Literature Movement), Konkani literature, and the Modern Marathi literature by amalgamating the wide prismatic subjects and themes like religion and spirituality, histories, valour, oral literature and tradition also by respecting the colonial intervention and influence of the Portuguese.

If analysed at a very microcosmic level, India, Indian culture and literature is know not only for its diversity but also for its acceptance and embracement. The west part has not only manifested the regional literature but it has profoundly contributed in the Indian writings in English. Authors like Kiran Desai, Rohinton Mistry, Meghnad Desai, Harish Trivedi, Manil Suri and even the famous actress and author Kalki Koechlin have their roots in the west of India.

Aim

The present article aims to analyse and critique the Indian culture and the richness of Indianess, particularly magnifying the western part of India and its prominence, not only on the Indian English literature, but also on World literature and Film Studies, cinematography and literary adaptations.

Research Objectives

- To understand the eminence of the Indian literature and Film Studies with a panoramic and prismatic theoretical stand-point,
- To focus and evaluate the genres of short story, film, Film Studies, cinematography and cinematic adaptation of literature simultaneously,
- To critique, compare and contrast the techniques, strategies, thematic/theoretical models, ideological framework reflected in the selected texts/film.

Research Questions

- What role does the Western part of India serve in the development of literary Film Studies at a global front?
- How are the ideological views as presented in the texts impact on the society/audience?
- Why does the local community and rural societal structure become a handy tool of suppression and exploitation?

Film Studies and Cinematic Adaptation: Significance and its Interconnectedness with Literature

With the development and evolvement of the various genres of literature and to be more specific, the rise of literary theories gave literature a novel outlook. From 1990s, after the emergence of Structuralism, the words like 'work' and 'text' got a new notional and ideological meaning. Therefore, a text can be considered any piece of literature which definitely includes films. Films and the cinematic adaptations are very

much a part of mainstream/mainline literature in the present era. The discourse of film studies and cinematic adaptation has already gained centrality in the discipline of English literary studies. Singling out the cinematic adaptations of novels of written texts, then it is not that has taken over in the recent times. It would not be wrong to say that the adaptations of the literary texts had started with the invention of cinema itself. *Romeo and Juliet*, *Naughty Anthony*, *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp* are some of the early examples of adaptations from literature (Cartmell 2). Even the religious scriptures has been adapted into films such as *The Life of Moses* (1910), *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) (Cartmell 2) etc. Not limited to the West, but the adaptations of the Eastern/Indian epics like *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and many more mythological text is not new. Hence, literary adaptations as a discourse has a well-marked presence in the discipline of literature.

The adaptations and films are the advanced, updated and upgraded version of literature. It extended the boundaries by involving audio visuals, and the modern day technology. The discourses of literature and film studies/literary adaptations have become inseparable today. Literature has always provided the raw and fundamental material to the cinematic industry. They are the binary opposite of each other; that means, not standing on the contrasting sides but the existence of one depends on the other. Literature and adaptations serve as a means of communicating the various layers of the society and widens the reach of cultural, literary and thematic understanding and comprehensibility of a 'text' (Arkan 50).

Chunil Madia (1922-1968): A Short Life Account

He was a Gujarati novelist and short story writer. He is considered as one of the representative writers of Gujarati literature. Apart from writing fiction, he also contributed to Gujarati theatre by writing plays. He was also a founder and an editor of a monthly literary magazine titled as *Ruchi* which circulated from January 1963 to December 1968 His important novels include *Pawak Jwala* (1945), *Vyaj no Varas* (1946), *Liludi Dharti* (1957), which was adapted into a Gujarati film with the

same title in 1968. He is more known for his short stories. Most of them are set in the Saurashtra – Kutch region of Gujarat. He uses realistic mode of narration to depict the rural/rustic society of these regions. His stories are characteristic in their capturing the specific idiolect and dialect used by the particular rural communities depicted in them. (Madia 21). He has also written sonnets, essays, travelogues and critical essays on Gujarati literature. Madia for his play *Rangada* in 1947 was awarded Narmad Suvarna Chandrak and in 1957 he was awarded Ranjitram Suvarna Chandrak. (Trived 2-10)

Ketan Mehta (1952): A Brief Profile

The director Ketan Mehta was born in 1952, in Navsari, Bombay (now Gujarat). He was educated in New Delhi where he graduated in Economics. He then worked in extensive theatre/drama activities for 'Dishantar Group', New Delhi. He also directed English plays. Then he came to Bombay and worked for Indian National Theatres. He did his graduation from Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune, Maharashtra. He also worked in Space Application Centre, Ahmedabad. He made the controversial TV serial 'Vat Tamari' (1977-78) on the issue of landless labours and untouchables in Gujarat. His first feature film was *Bhav ni Bhavai* (1980) (its alternative title was *Andher Nagari*). This film was an adaptation of the 'Bhavai', the folk theatre form of Gujarat region which was pioneered/perfected by Asait Thakore. His other films include *Holi* (1983), *Hero Hiralal* (1988), *Maya Memsaab* (1992), *Oh Darling! Yeh Hai India* (1995), *Mangal Pandey: The Rising* (2005), *Rang Rasiya* (2014) and *Majhi: The Mountain Man* (2015). He has also made documentaries and TV serials such as *Folk Fair at Tarnetar* (1982) and *Mr Yogi* (1989). He has made the biographical film on Sardar Vallabhai Patel titled as *Sardar* (1993). (Khatri 157). He got the National Award twice for his films *Bhav ni Bhavai* and *Sardar* as Best Feature Films on National Integration in 1981 and 1994 respectively (Khatri 54).

Chunilal Madia's Short Story 'Abhu Makrani (Jamadar)'

Chunilal Madia's Gujarati short story 'Abhu Makrani (Jamadar)' was first published in his collection of short stories titled as *Roop-Aroop* in 1953. This story is not that much well-known compare to his other stories. Even Madia himself has not included this story in his compilation of self-edited volume of short stories titled as *Madia ni Shresth Vartao* (Madia's Best Stories). This story follows the generic structure of the form of short story. It is only less than of 10 pages and contains around 2,400 words. Its story-line is very thin. It focuses upon a small episode/happening/event. The locale of the story is an unnamed unspecified village in Saurashtra region of Gujarat during the Colonial era around 1940s. The protagonist is, as the title of the story suggests, Abhu Makrani. He works as a watchman/guard at the village's Tobacco Factory which is owned by the village tradesman/merchant Jivan Thakkar who belongs to the upper caste Kachchadia community. He is known as 'Jivan Seth' in the village. In his factory, village women work as daily wagers. One of these women is Gemi. The story deals with the situation where Gemi is pursued by the Thanedar (the local police officer) with sexual intension. Gemi hides herself in the tobacco factory to save her womanly honour. The story shows how the police officer uses all his might/power to get hold of Gemi. He also forces Jivan Seth to make this happen. But Gemi is offered shelter/protection by the elderly watchman Abhu. He locks the massive gates of the factory to stop the police officer's men from entering inside the factory. As a last resort, the police officer sends Jivan Seth to open the gates. The story ends tragically with Abhu shooting himself with his own gun instead of sending away Gemi to the police officer. The central conflict in the story is mainly about Abhu's moral crisis/dilemma to have to choose between the employer's/bread provider's order and his duty to humanity. Unable to choose any of these two, he opts to shoot himself. Madia concludes or ends his story at this point and leaves the reader contemplating on this moral crisis/dilemma.

Chunilal Madia's Short Story 'Abhu Makarani (Jamadar's)' Cinematic Adaptation into Ketan Mehta's Hindi Film *Mirch Masala*

Mirch Masala (1985) is a Hindi film adapted from Chunilal Madia's Gujarati short story 'Abhu Makarani (Jamadar)'. Directed by the Gujarati film maker Ketan Mehta, the film was released in 1985 featuring Naseeruddin Shah and Smita Patil in the lead roles. The film was produced under the banner of National Film Development Corporation of India (NFDC). Smita Patil's performance in this film was hailed as one of the greatest acting performances of Indian cinema.

Mehta's *Mirch Masala*, the Hindi film is considered to be one of the first avowedly feminist Hindi films. The film is set in a small non-descript village in Saurashtra region in Western India during the late Colonial period. Mehta develops his cinematic narrative around a fictionalized event set in 1942, the year of the Quit India Movement. The narrative of the film revolves around a concerted/collective resistance attempted by the village women against the abusive authority of the Subedar (the tax collector). The film's main focus is on the spirit of defiance displayed by the female protagonist Sonbai (Smita Patil/Gemi in Madia's Story) who is a peasant woman working as a daily wager in the local chilli factory. She is relentlessly pursued/chased by the sadistic Subedar (Naseeruddin Shah/Thanedar), who is the local Colonial official functioning as the tax collector in this region. When he forces Sonbai to surrender to his lustful desires, she slaps him tightly and escapes. The Subedar feels that his official authority as well as his masculinity (manhood) has been compromised with sonbai's act of slapping him. In order to fulfil his desires and to take revenge, the Subedar sends his men to capture Sonbai. She evades the soldiers and escapes into the chilli factory where she works. On hearing the plight, the factory's elderly guard 'Abhu Miah' (Om Puri/Abhu Makarani) shuts the gates before the soldiers can enter. When they try to force their way in, he defiantly declares that he will not desist from firing his gun if they try to enter. This lead to the chilli factory being sieged by the Subedar's men.

All the woman workers, under the protection and support of Abhu Miah put up a kind of collective resistance.

The Subedar sends emissary after emissary to the factory to persuade Abhu Miah and the woman workers to hand-over Sonbai. First comes the factory owner Jivan Seth, then the village ‘Mukhi’ (the village chief/ Suresh Oberoi) along with the villagers. But Abhu Miah turns all of them back. He declares: “Mukhi, I’d rather die than be party to this inhuman act. As long as I am alive, I won’t let this oppression succeed” Abhu Miah remains true to his promise, eventually losing his life in a cross fire that takes place when the Subedar enters forcefully inside the chilli factory in his final effort to capture Sonbai.

The film ends with a surprising turn of event. As the Subedar advances towards Sonbai, the woman workers attack him with sacks of red chilli powder hurling at his face. The Subedar falls on his knees, screaming in pain as the chilli powder burns his eyes and face. Mehta’s film is opened as the closing scene shows Sonbai standing stoically with a sickle in her hand and a half smile on her face.

Comparative Critique: In Ketan Mehta’s adaptation, the film *Mirch Masala* becomes a political narrative of subaltern class’s resistance against the collusive power structures of Colonialism, feudalism, and patriarchy/masculinity. In the film, the chilli is transformed into a rich symbol of female/subaltern resistance against these power structures from just being a kitchen/food/domestic commodity. It becomes a weapon to resist the structural oppression of the joint edifice of Colonialism, feudalism and patriarchy and masculinity. Similarly, the chilli factory is transformed into a site of struggle from being a mere workplace. The film, thus contrary to Madia’s story, becomes a multi-layered exposition of the injustice/violence perpetrated by the invisible power structures of society/community, politics, class and gender.

Chunilal Madia’s short story does not include such complexity in its singular focus upon the moral crisis/dilemma faced by Abhu Makarani between his sense of ‘duty’ to his employer (the bread provider) and to humanity. Ketan Mehta adds complexity to this story by expanding the

scope of narration in his transformation of story's minor character 'Gemi' into the film's protagonist 'Sonbai'. Through Sonbai's plight, the film attempts to establish the relationship between women's subjugation to the wider social and historical processes. Sonbai, as she defies the sexual advances of the Subedar, does not limit her attack on just one man but hits out at the whole value-system and ideology that legitimises the subordination of women. The Subedar and the village Mukhi represent much more than just their personal identity. The Subedar is a symbol of Colonial power/authority as a tax collector working for the Britishers. The Mukhi as the village chief is the head of the hierarchical order of patriarchal society. Through Sonbai's struggle against the Subedar, Mehta reveals/exposes the complex interplay of power relations in a small village in Colonial India. This problematizing interplay is a creative ideological grafting on Madia's skeletal story. For this purpose, Mehta has added the characters like Mukhi, his wife Saraswati, the Gandhian 'Masterji', the Hindu priest/pandit, the pair of young lovers Mohan and Radha and Sonbai's husband Shankar. In Madia's story there are merely three characters around which the story revolves: Abhu Makarani, Gemi, and Thanedar. Mehta does not only transform Gemi into Sonbai, but also provides Sonbai's social/familial background by adding the character of her husband who is shown as leaving the village for doing the job in railway in city. In Madia's story, the Thanedar remains merely a shadowy presence in background, whereas Mehta has transformed into a fully developed character of a sadistic tyrant.

The tobacco factory of Madia's story is converted into chilli factory to serve Mehta's ideological objective of showing female resistance to the power patterns. Madia's story ends with the suicide of Abhu Makarani, while Mehta has extended its scope beyond such a point by showing how women retaliate collectively against the Subedar's tyranny. Mehta's film depicts how the red chilli powder that the women workers make into commodity for the local tradesman becomes a powerful weapon in their final attack. The film also uses the technique of open-ended narrative by showing the Subedar collapsing and screaming in painful agony and

the close-up shot of Sonbai looking straight/staring in the camera/audience with a half-smile on her face. The audience at this point is implicated in its desire to know what happens after this – do the soldiers attack? What happens to Sonbai? But Mehta instead breaks the narrative at this point to leave it open-ended so that the audience is implicated in it to participate/reflect/ponder/speculate on the issues raised in the film.

Conclusion

The film therefore highlights the western part of India and the fight for personal rights with the collective efforts. With the colonial setting in the background of the story, both, the story and the film voice the strong mind-set and will to become free not only from the dominant force but also from the strongly grounded social and societal orthodox ideologies and belief systems. Ketan Mehta, by adapting the film, breaks the fourth wall and directly tries to talk to the audience and passing the message with giving it a greater reach. Usage of various literary/cinematic techniques shows Mehta's reliance on the ideology, rationale, morale of Chunilal Madia.

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Negotiating Identity: Cultural Exchange and Resistance in Dalit Cinema

Chandra Prakash

Introduction

Dalit cinema has emerged as a crucial channel of expression for subaltern voices. It has challenged the hierarchies based on caste and developed a new consciousness among marginalized people. It caters to the claim for equal treatment in society on various parameters, such as social, economic, and political, with the help of the artistic revolution of cinema. This paper examines the concept of cross-cultural encounters and the assimilation of Dalit characters in regional and mainstream cinema, aiming to explore how these different films from various regions have portrayed Dalit characters through diverse social, cultural, and political narratives. The mainstream cinema is a Mumbai-based film industry popularly known as Bollywood, and regional cinema, on the other hand found differently in various states of the nation. The analysis presents two patterns: first, the organicity in the portrayal of the Dalit characters in regional Cinema, and the manipulation of the same in mainstream Cinema. This study deals with cinema as a space where meanings about caste are produced and contested. The focus is on how representation shapes public understanding, how dominant cultures soften caste realities for acceptance, and how subaltern voices struggle to be sustained in mainstream narratives. Chahat Rana, in the Indian Express news article, throws light on the same:

However, where *Sairat* delivered a realistic depiction of caste violence in India, *Dhadak* delivers a highly-diluted and sanitised iteration of it. To be precise, there are exactly two explicit references to caste in the movie, both made by the father of the film's hero, Madhukar. Beyond this, caste does not seem to affect the lives of *Dhadak*'s characters. (Rana)

Through this lens, *Sairat* is read as a form of resistance, while *Dhadak* illustrates the erasure of that resistance within Bollywood's commercial framework.

Historical Context and Resistance in Dalit Cinema

Dalit cinema in current times is not merely a genre; rather, it is a movement that significantly discusses its struggles, barriers, and aspirations. It articulates its voices for the marginalized people who have been historically oppressed. The prevalent culture of mainstream cinema has intentionally excluded the dignified Dalit narratives. The image of Dalit characters has been arbitrarily presented or compromised in mainstream cinema.

The nomenclature in mainstream cinema itself reveals the intentions of mainstream filmmakers, who are market-driven. For instance, in *Swades* (2004), a character named Mailaram has been introduced and represented as dark skinned and ready to serve the hero. The character is a Dalit, and his name also indicates the idea of filth. This fabricated portrayal of Dalits by mainstream cinema is contested by the regional cinema.

Research in cinema has gained pace in recent times, and through various academic modes the academic this section will outline the most recent academic developments, prominent literary outcomes, and literary advancement concerning Dalit Cinema. The research on Dalit cinema has led to much debate and critical responses from mainstream critics and writers. The existing literature assesses the key narratives and counter-narratives of Dalit representation in mainstream and regional cinema.

Dalit Yengde, in his research article entitled "Dalit Cinema" (2018), throws light on the concept of Dalit cinema and its evolution throughout the journey of cinema. Yengde highlights the disguised market-driven intention of mainstream filmmakers in producing films concerning Dalit issues. He also talks about the relationship between Indian cinema with caste.

Manju Edachira, in her research article “Anti-Caste Aesthetics and Dalit Intervention in Indian Cinema” (2020), recounts the arbitrary representation of Dalits in mainstream Indian cinema and the counter-narrative by Dalit filmmakers, opposing the stereotypical portrayal of Dalits and presenting them with a dignified image in regional cinema. Harish S. Wankhede, in his article “Examining the Process of Dalit Identity in Hindi Cinema” (2022), indicates the presence of a so-called upper caste protagonist as a savior of marginalized people.

***Sairat*: Realism and Caste based Atrocities**

Sairat (2016), directed by Nagraj Manjule, is a Marathi film set in rural Maharashtra. The film deals with caste issues in Marathi cinema, and the suffering of a Dalit character, Prashant (Parshya), son of a fisherman, falls in love with an upper caste Patil girl, Archana (Archi). The love story and so-called socially disproportionate match of the couple becomes unbearable for Archi’s family members, resulting in the brutal honor killing of the couple and their infant. The film revolves around caste based oppression and the false pride of feudal lords. The representation of the state of Dalit characters in such parallel film industries is unfiltered, unlike mainstream Hindi films.

***Dhadak*: Adaptation and Erasure of caste**

Dhadak (2018), directed by Shashank Khaitan, is an adaptation of the regional Marathi film to mainstream cinema. The film is devoid (to a large extent) of a caste angle and remains merely a love story with an honor-killing plot. The storyline of the film is aligned with the Marathi film *Sairat*, except for the problem of caste. The caste of the characters is not specifically mentioned, and this is intentionally omitted by the filmmaker, considering the potential aftermath or consequences of including caste issues in mainstream cinema, which could result in social or political outrage among some people. The major aim of the film is to universalize the film for capital gain by sidelining the original caste and socio-political issue, and shadowing it with a tragic love story to play with the audience’s emotions. The tendency to negate the identity of Dalit characters by Hindi filmmakers for the sake of capital gain can be

seen very clearly here. These instances from the beginning of the century prompted Dalit filmmakers to use cinema as a tool for social critique and cultural assertion. Keeping the diversity of India in mind, the theme of cross-cultural assimilation raises a new area of exploration.

Negotiation of Identity and Exchange of Culture

Dalit cinema serves as a powerful medium of aesthetic representation of Dalit characters in regional cinema. The paradox of cross-cultural encounters of films concerning Dalit representation in regional cinema, and the tendency of mainstream cinema to adapt the plots and manipulate them. It, therefore, highly problematizes the idea of movies being visual texts and preserving regional values while promoting concerns regarding the Dalit communities. The transition from *Sairat* (2016) to its Hindi adaptation *Dhadak* (2018) epitomizes how Dalit subjectivity is often negotiated, or erased, within mainstream cinematic remakes. Directed by Nagraj Manjule, *Sairat* highlights the “politics of caste while embedding it into the cultural fabric of rural Maharashtra, enabling marginalized voices to resonate authentically” (Gokulsing and Dissanayake 143). The film’s depiction of lived experiences, linguistic nuances, and the violent repercussions of caste wrongdoings directly addresses subaltern realities.

In contrast, *Dhadak*, shaped within Bollywood’s commercial framework, reworks the story into a more palatable romantic tragedy, replacing caste with class as the central axis of conflict. This shift diminishes the radical political charge of the original and reflects how mainstream Hindi cinema often appropriates regional narratives while softening their socio-political critiques for mass consumption. Such dilution resonates with Stuart Hall’s notion of “the politics of representation,” wherein marginalized identities are systematically reinterpreted or side-lined through selective cultural translation (Hall 64).

“The movement from the local specificity of *Sairat* to the national generality of *Dhadak* reveals the limitations of Bollywood in faithfully representing oppressed identities. It demonstrates how market demands and cultural capital override cinema’s responsibility to preserve marginalized voices” (Ganti 21).

Ultimately, this comparison underscores the enduring importance of regional cinema as a vital platform for articulating Dalit subjectivity and resisting homogenization within Indian film culture.

Resistance and Cultural Politics

Dalit representation in Indian cinema reflects a continuous negotiation between resistance and erasure, influenced by the cultural politics of both regional and mainstream film industries. Regional films like Nagraj Manjule's *Sairat* (2016) serve as counter-narratives, focusing on the Dalit experience and expressing subaltern agency within highly stratified social frameworks. Conversely, Bollywood's adaptation *Dhadak* (2018) exemplifies the systematic erasure of caste, recasting structural inequality as class conflict and thus aligning with the Hindi film industry's broader inclination to evade confrontations with hegemonic social structures (Paik 2021; Kumar 2022). This transition underscores how regional cinema frequently acts as a site of resistance by emphasizing cultural specificity, while commercial Hindi cinema favors universality and marketability, often at the expense of marginalized identities.

The conflict between these two forms of representation carries significant implications for public culture in India. It illustrates how dominant media formats contribute to the normalization of caste invisibility, while regional narratives remain vital interventions that assert the visibility of oppressed communities (Yengde 2020). This interplay not only highlights the political importance of cinematic storytelling but also indicates the ongoing need for alternative cultural spaces where Dalit voices can resist assimilation and reclaim their representational agency. The tension between these two modes of representation has broader implications for public culture in India. It reveals how dominant media forms contribute to the normalization of caste invisibility, while regional narratives persist as essential interventions that assert the visibility of oppressed communities (Yengde 2020). This dynamic not only underscores the political stakes of cinematic storytelling but also signals the enduring necessity of alternative cultural spaces where Dalit voices can resist assimilation and reclaim representational agency.

Conclusion

The study of *Sairat* and *Dhadak* makes clear how differently caste is handled in regional and mainstream cinema. *Sairat* openly shows caste as part of everyday life and struggle, while *Dhadak* avoids it, turning the story into a softer tale of class and romance. This shift shows how mainstream films often sidestep uncomfortable realities, leaving Dalit voices unheard. The research underlines that meaningful representation can only happen when caste is faced directly, not hidden behind safer themes.

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Role of Ancient Myth, Fantasy and Orality in *Midnight's Children*

Rekha Tiwari & Rinku Hiran

'To understand just one life, you have to swallow the world' (109), so observes the narrator Saleem in Salman Rushdie's epic novel *Midnight's Children* (1981). In this text, the narrator hero is philosophically obsessed with a desire, rather Indian desire, for the whole. He attempts to swallow all the India. This desire for the whole, the multitude may be understood as a veritable Indian disease. Noted critic Srivastava sees this desire 'as a specifically Indian urge to encapsulate the whole of reality' (Srivastava 62). Therein lies Saleem's ambition and downfall.

Salman Rushdie's second novel *Midnight's Children* published in 1981 was hailed as a 'Post-colonial meta-fiction, a novel about third world novels' (Brennan 85). Since 80s, a wave of novels by Indian English writers appeared that were clearly influenced by this seminal Rushdie text and its conception of national literature. Rushdie's examination of the relationship between the self and the nation, and his advocacy of the concept that there are as many equally valid version of the truth as there are Indians, proved liberating for the Indian English writers. *Midnight's Children* has been the major post-colonial novel in English which fictionalizes the events of Indian history from the moment of the birth of nation state in 1947 till the declaration of the emergency by the Congress Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1976 which did a death knell to the monolithic dream of a secular-democratic nation-state, perhaps insufficiently imagined, and expressed in the midnight speech by the first Prime Minister. Dreams of the founding fathers since '60s turned into a veritable myth and writers expressed disillusionment with the corruption and failure of the nation-state. In opposition to the monolithic concept of the nation, of the history, *Midnight's Children* advocates

plurality of our fractured selves, The narrative is determined from the outside, by a pretext of the epical myths, orality and religion.

Notwithstanding their absolute involvement in history, their individuality, the narrator in a Rushdie text are, more often than not, fantastic and yet are real. Rushdie returned to India in the late '70s as a young man of 30 in the aftermath of emergency when many Indians expressed outrage at the Congress party's betrayal of the secular-democratic ideals on which the early post-independence generation had been raised. In *Midnight's children*, Rushdie re-affirms and seeks to re-create, in a post modernist way, the lost nationalistic democratic ideals for the underdog and the under-privileged. Post-colonial history thus reproduced is fictionalized and mythicized.

Saleem, the principal narrator, the most gifted of 1001 Midnight's children, has been endowed with a magical power and a vision. His physical impotence and deformed shape may be read as a caricature of the political map of India. All the midnight's children are born with special power, with hundred and thousand possibilities but all these possibilities are simply wasted. Saleem and Shiva are born with contrasting qualities. They are leaders of the group but they have their double, one in reality and another in the realms of myth. Saleem stands for the whole, abundance. He contains within him the mythical creator Brahma. Shiva is the god of destruction and hence, is a rival to Saleem. The novel remains as allegory of Indian history and may be read as a literature of subversion of every form of convention and authority. The narrator patterns his own storytelling on oral narration and deploys fantasy in order to be faithful to the reality of India, a country and a nation where millions believe in the world of Spirits. In *Midnight's Children* Rushdie presents an ideological post-colonial critique of the linear, imperialist discourse of meta-history which represses rather distorts India's own account of history.

India is a vast and ancient land teeming with millions of people of different races and colours. Ancient epics, myths and oral tradition inform the lives of the people even today. The elephant headed Ganesh is the

great storyteller in the ancient epic, the *Mahabharata*. He is the patron-deity of arts and literature. In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem, the powerful narrator is portrayed as a storyteller of Ganesh like skill. He is born with elephantine nose while his alter ego Shiva is all knees. Saleem is a reporter of the events of history, he creates alternative history by creating things out of memory and imagines truth as opposed to the truth of history. He preserves his materials in the chutney of fantasy and myth (pickling process). At day time he works in the chutney factory and during night he writes his stories for the imagined listener Padma (Lotus). Lotus has an association with mud. Padma likes listening stories of sensation and thrill. She has no power of intellection and thought. She believes in stories and more stories. Indian subaltern multitude is gullible and is swayed by the rhetoric of the politicians and vote catchers easily. Saleem has the potential of an omniscient and omnipotent narrator; creator as well as preserver. He is modern Vishnu. Empowering himself in mythology, the all knowing narrator chutnifies his own version of history and truth. it is "memory's truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies and vilifies also: but in the end, it creates its own reality" (MC 253).

Entire narrative is clothed in fantasy. Myth and reality overlap boundaries. Fantasy may be seen as seriously narrating political reality when the readers and the author share certain views. In this novel, numerical exactitude is a feature which relates fact to fantasy. In his 1983 interview, Rushdie states his fascination for figures when he said, 'It seemed to me that the period between 1947 and 1977 the period from independence to emergency had a kind of shape to it. It represented a sort of close period in the history of the country. That shape became part of the architecture of the work' (Interview with Salman Rushdie by C. Pattanayak 1983).

Saleem's narrative is valuable precisely because it is self-conscious and invites judgement and criticism. He claims omnipotence and omniscience as a narrator, but more often than not, he laments his inability, his lack, his impotence. There is a kind of post-modern playfulness and trivialization which inform Saleem's narrative and which instills in the

mind faith, doubt or questioning. Why and how should the alternative to Saleem be Shiva, a figure of violence? What is the lesson of emergency? If the idea of a secular nation-state and history be rejected, would the rule of anarchy and lawlessness descend on the life of the nation? Shiva represents the dispossessed without a stake in the dream of the nation and constitutes a political threat to Saleem's plural India. Shiva, very like his mythical origin, is made to signify chaos and unmeaning. He, in the text becomes Indira Gandhi's henchman during the emergency when the sterilization of *Midnight's Children* metaphorically nullifies the hope and possibilities with which they were born. Only he, Shiva, escapes the bulldozer and thus fathers the next generation. There is a glimmer of hope in the end that Saleem can claim one of Shiva's offspring as his own son. He thus becomes able to write his autobiography for his son, the elephant-eared son born of Shiva and Parvati, Saleem's wife. Thus Saleem is not the biological father of his own son, just as he himself is not the biological son of Amina Sinai and Ahmed Sinai, his foster parents. But then the theme of illegitimate birth can be traced back to the grand epic *Mahabharata*. Is it not the fact that the mythical god Ganesh, the god of fortune, Karna and many other mythical figures are bastards? In *Midnight's Children*, the theme of illegitimacy perhaps constitutes a critique of the concept of the purity of race, class and nation and may be seen as an item of criticism of the concept of Hindutwavis-a-vis the concept of multiculturalism which may adequately explain Indian nationalism. Narrator Saleem is born of Vanita, a Hindu nourished by Muslim parents, that too, because of a magical act of the exchange of children at birth in the hospital. Thus, he is allowed to be bathed in the confluence of world religious, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Metaphorically the narrator is endowed with plural identities and stands for post-colonial India.

In his personal heritage, the identity of the country emerges. His birth coincides with the birth of a modern nation, nay two nations and subsequently three (Bangladesh). Birth of the narrator and the birth of the nation take place precisely at the same hour thus at birth Saleem is 'handcuffed to History.' He is the child of history as other *Midnight's*

children are. He grows, develops and finally goes into cracks and fragments in the same way as the nation grows and develops and experiences fissures in the body politic. This interplay of the personal and national histories gives the narrative shape and a sense of unity to the novel. This metaphoric consciousness of history, awareness of oneself as a blend of past and present, makes the narrator Saleem realize that history operates on a grander scale than any individual.

“Who, what am I? My answer: I am the sum total of everything that went before me, of all I have seen been done, of everything done to me. I am everyone everything whose being-in-the-world affected was affected by mine. I am anything that happens after I’ve gone which would not have happened if I had not come” (MC 457).

Rushdie once referred to Indian English writing as ‘Empire’s bastard child’ (Rushdie talk 4-4-1997). Is not Saleem, the principal narrator of the same status? In *Midnight’s children*, the chief protagonist Saleem can be seen as an indication of Indian writing in English claiming centrality of position. But by now, English language has achieved centrality by virtue of the fact that among other things Rushdie, as a technician, has made it the fit medium for conveying indigenous consciousness. Rushdie’s position as a man and as a writer needs to be understood in this context. He lays claim to India, a kind of centrality and also a sense of engagement with the history of the subcontinent. He like his hero Saleem Sinai has been ‘handcuffed to history’ in a special sense. He was born in June 1947 and two months after, the British left India.

Midnight’s Children portrays the delirious joy of the people which accompanies the formal dissolution of the empire and birth of Indian nation-state at the precise hour of the midnight in 1947 when Mountbatten hands over power to Nehru, the first Prime Minister. Nehru’s famous midnight speech coined in the finest English language sounds metaphoric and ironic.

‘. . . years ago we made a tryst with destiny. . . . A moment comes, which comes but rarely when the soul of a nation long suppressed finds utterance . . .’

the sub-text of this metaphoric speech turns out to be a text of collaboration with the English educated nationalist elite. The leaders of the new state will, no doubt reproduce the colonial method of control and exploitation. It becomes the story of a new nation, 'insufficiently imagined.' Chances of forging a new nationalist discourse are simply lost sight of, as the subsequent happenings will prove. The Raj leaves behind hollow men like Ahmed Sinai. Methwold's transfer of property to indigenous elite like Ahmed Sinai, who ape an Oxford drawl and land who are secretly pleased when they lose pigmentation due to skin-disease, because it makes them resemble the Europeans, is an eloquent testimony to the nature of independence. This tendency still persists with our academicians and professionals. Colonial institutions still have surprising spell over our mind. It is resolved that Methwold Estate is to be preserved and retained. Saleem describes the estate thus, 'Methwold's Estate: four identical houses built in a style befitting their original residents- large durable mansions with red gabled roofs and turret towers in each corner, ivory-white corner towers wearing pointy red-tiled hats...houses which their owner, William Methwold has named majestically after the palaces of Europe' (MC 94).

This allegorical statement by the narrator suggests the passing on of the colonial mantle to the Indian nationalist elite which not only inherited power from the colonial masters but also love for the exotic as opposed to the indigenous. In the new dispensation progress means back-pedaling, rise of fanaticism and the cracking up of Indian independence. 'India had been divided anew. But the boundaries of these states were not formed by rivers or mountains or any natural features of the terrain: they were instead walls of words. language divided us' (MC 189). In the same process the subcontinent was divided. The departing imperialist did a parting kick by dividing the subcontinent on religious lines and installing a class of people who would carry Macaulay's legacy-brown in skin and English in character. Eloquent Nehru and Ahmed Sinai belong to this class. *Midnight's Children* thus constitutes a critique of nationalist rhetoric which makes a linear downward journey from 1947 to 77, the year of the declaration of national Emergency which means the

curtailment of democratic rights of the people. The episode of the emergency and Mrs. Gandhi is described as an allegory which is an indictment of the state controlled media. The media projects the dictator as god and Mrs. Gandhi as Devi, the mother Goddess in her terrible aspect with a entre-parting hair. The fascist slogan 'Indira is India' (MC 427) is relayed over the media. The Nehruvian dream of secular democratic nation comes a full circle and post-emergency period sees the dethronement of the fascist god, end of one party rule and installation of a Janata Coalition government which, henceforth, becomes the shape of Indian politics. Democracy demands a plural society as opposed to unitary one.

However, despite the sense of despair, the journey from wholeness to fragments, the novel ends on a note of hope, rather political one; that is the intensification of the struggle of polarized political forces in opposition in Congress model of nationalism. As the narrative progresses, the disintegration becomes quicker and quicker, Saleem mentions cracks in his body. 'My poor body, singular, unlovely, buffeted by too much history, has started coming apart at the seams. In short I am literally disintegrating slowly for the moment. . . . I shall eventually crumble into six hundred and thirty million particles of anonymous and oblivious dust' (MC 37). With his final words the disintegrating Saleem prophesies his fate and articulates the post-colonial condition of the generation of midnight's children.

'Yes, they will trample me underfoot. . . . Reducing me to specks of voiceless dust . . . because it is the privilege and curse of the midnight's children to be both masters and victims of their times' (63). At the end, Saleem's body cracks into as many parts as there are Indians and there are as many stories to tell. Saleem has told his story, may be imperfect and unreliable but nevertheless his own.' Stubbornly and against all odds, victim transforms himself into protagonist, simply through the telling of his own story (Rege 200).

The crisis of the Unitary nation state opens up space for thousand contending claims and it seems that the 'Crisis of the once dominant

nationalism opened up space for new discursive models' (Rege 201). Thus there is a tension between the narrator and the narrative. Saleem, the narrator may sound pessimistic but the feeling of the book remains affirmative in its abundance, multiplicity and urbanism. At the impressionable age, Rushdie felt deep attachment for the urban city of his birth, the metropolitan city of Bombay for its spirit of abundance, secularism, cosmopolitanism and urban culture.

This epic novel was conceived in a dream about the large Indian city of Bombay, an industrial city, a city of film, and also of a young man's dream. For a long time the author had cherished a desire of writing a big and voluminous book about Bombay where he was born in June 1947. The city was in his dream because of its uniqueness, its films, cosmopolitanism and urbanity. He left Bombay for England in his teens for higher education as James Joyce left Dublin for Paris. Bombay was to Rushdie as Dublin was to Joyce. In both cases, the relationship of the artist with the city of his birth remains problematised. For a migrant writer, the concepts like home and nation are imaginary constructs. The city as a metaphor defines the authorial self and in a way informs the novel. In his collection of Essays *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie observes 'to be a Bombayite and afterwards a Londoner was also to fall in love with the metropolis' (IH 404). The metropolis embodies hybridity, impurity, intermingling...culture, ideas, politics, movies, songs' (IH 394). Post-colonial subject can find no better paradigm than the city to define his self. In the colonial times, the culture of the city was considered alien and non-pure. In the novels of Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and others, an ideal village was considered as a true signifier of Indianness and Indian values. In Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) the hero rejects the metropolitan Indian as un-Indian.

Bombay being an industrial city had no meaning for a Brahmin like Raja Rao. Indian fiction has travelled a long way from 1960s, and in Rushdie's 1980s novel the metropolitan and industrial city of Bombay appears to be a true signifier of Indianness. Politically Indian nation state prefers the Nehruvian dream of secular and democratic modern Industrial India to "the rural handicraft-loving sometime medieval figure of Gandhi"

(Attenborough's Gandhi 104). If the villages are considered to be the site for Indian values and if true Indianness is supposed to be constituted by Brahminical hierarchy and the purity of race and caste, modern nation has no future. Modern city is the site for plurality and multiplicity, and hence, the modern Indian villages must go the city way in respect of culture which is not unitary and plural. In its cosmopolitan nature, the city Bombay represents an India which through the ages, has been the confluence of many nations and races, East and West. In the post-colonial situation, the terms like 'pure country' and 'corrupt city' do not exist. Post-coloniality and hybridity go together. The reading of *Midnight's Children*, a post colonial text, in the context of other cultural production may be meaningful. We know Rushdie's focus is not the realistic portrayal of the events of post-colonial history but rather a third world consciousness of history, truth and nation shaped through myth, fantasy, dream and orality, the tools that constitute an umbrella term 'magic realism.' Bombay cinema has all along remained a site for fantasy, hallucination, dream and wish-fulfilment for the Indians irrespective of class affiliations.

The narrative of *Midnight's Children* parodies Bombay cinema's fantasy operations. Stock narrative situations like mistaken exchange at birth and stock cinema figures like good 'ayah' Mary Pereira recall Bombay film. The most frequently discussed cinematic element of *Midnight's Children* is the exchange of the infants Shiva and Saleem at birth. Rushdie himself in his essay "Midnight's Children and Shame" makes a significant comment on this particular cinematic convention.

' . . . This melodramatic device . . . was a genuine kind of Bombay Talkie, B-movie notion and I thought that a book which grew out of the movie city ought to contain such notions. These are children not so much of their parents but children of time, children of history' (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children and Shame* 4). Other cinematic operations are that of natural mothers who are perfect and stepmothers who are evil. Virtuous male protagonists are contrasted with evil counterparts and so on. Shiva, Saleem's alter-ego combines the role of rebel-hero with the villain of Bombay film. In 70s and 80s, the reach of Bombay cinema

and its influence on Indian mind can easily be imagined. By sheer volume of production and star-charisma, Bombay film dominates the dream of the millions even in the anti-Hindi southern states. Thus Bombay film industry becomes 'an important agency for Hindi-speaking cultural hegemony in post-independence India' (Natarajan 167). Benedict Anderson's thesis about the fictional component of nation, the role of print in helping people imagine themselves as nationals along with others they have not seen, is powerfully pertinent to a consideration of cinema (with imagined communities). Thus the Bombay film, with its apparatus of myth and fantasy provides a site for mythic unity in the fact of fragmentation of the body politic in the contemporary India.

On the realistic level, such conventions suggest the plurality of post-colonial identities. Saleem represents, the multiple and complex identities of the post-colonial Indian because he is born of British father and Hindu mother, exchanged at birth by Christian nurse and brought up by Muslim businessman as his son. This comic-epic novel is a blend of literary genres and is coined in a mood of irony, satire and fantasy but the author has serious purpose in mind. The narrative is devised in a mood of playfulness, non-seriousness, trivialization as post-modern fiction mostly are. Rushdie's act of juxtaposing myth and contemporary post-colonial Indian history serves a model of intertextuality which inform among other texts, Sashi Tharoor's work *The Great Indian Novel*. But in the case of Rushdie, the classic myth only explains the contemporary situation. Tharoor trivializes the epic heroes in a mood of hilarity. Juxtaposition of trivial and serious, elitism and mass culture of Bombay film, centrality and marginality of positions and *vice versa*, purity and hybridity of racial and national identities and post-coloniality of history are the major themes and issues which the epic novel *Midnight's Children* *successfully addresses*.

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Historiographic Metafiction: Fragmented Histories and Fluid Identities in Hari Kunzru's *The Impressionist*

Milind Solanki and Hetal Meriya

Introduction

Canadian literary scholar Linda Hutcheon coined the term “historical metafiction” in her landmark 1988 book *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. She defines, “Historiographic metafiction refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity” (Hutcheon 93). In “Nationalism In 21st Century Bollywood”, Jaydeep Padhiyar and Milind Solanki assert, “History is something that gives the nation its identity. Historical changes are the reasonaback the emergence of nationalism” (Solanki 48). In postmodern literature, it refers to a unique style that combines self-conscious metafictional tactics with historical writing. This narrative structure, which combines fiction with history, emphasises how both literature and history are produced and interpretative, raising doubts about the very feasibility of discovering an “objective truth” about the past. Fundamentally, historiographic metafiction recognises that history is a narrative shaped by ideology, viewpoint, and selection rather than an objective account of facts. Similarly, despite its inventiveness, fiction frequently references historical events, cultural memory, and archival documents. In *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988), Linda Hutcheon states that, “historiographic metafiction acknowledges the paradox of the *reality* of the past, but it

textualises accessibility to us today” (Hutcheon 114). By creating novels that both tell stories and explore the act of storytelling, postmodern authors purposefully cross this line. By doing this, they demonstrate how language, narrative traditions, and power systems are always used to mediate historical knowledge. Self-reflexivity is one of the characteristics that distinguish historiographic metafiction. These writings frequently use satire, intertextuality, or direct commentary on the writing process to highlight their own identity as fiction.

In “Historiographic metafiction in Gillo Pontecorvo’s *La bataille d’Alger*: Remembering the “forgotten war”, Valérie Orlando, proclaimed,

The historiographic metafictional text posits historiography not by its sequential events but by its social, cultural, and economic orientations, which favour the plural, or what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari designate as “the multiplicity” of the subject (A Thousand Plateaus). The multiple others, the diaspora, those lost voices of history, reinscribe themselves as a “mentalité collective”, eclipsing the importance of linear, historic time and space. (Orlando 263)

They achieve this by making readers think critically about how history is created and remembered rather than allowing them to accept the historical information at face value. To challenge the legitimacy of official records, novels could, for example, reinvent real people with made-up motivations and dialogues or place fictional characters in historical settings. Examples of historiographic metafiction include Julian Barnes’ *Flaubert’s Parrot* (1984), which challenges historical fact and biography; Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), which reimagines the trauma of slavery through collective history and personal memory; and Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981), which combines magical realism with the history of post-independence India. Each of these pieces examines the methods used to know, write, and recall the past in addition to recounting it. Hutcheon reminds readers that all histories are tales that are influenced as much by omissions as by inclusions, emphasising that this genre problematizes the representation of historical fact rather than rejecting it.

Moreover, postmodern scepticism about objective truth is embodied in

historiographic metafiction. By portraying history as fragmented, subjective, and contentious, it challenges the Enlightenment belief in rationality and progress. Common techniques that enable writers to both participate in and subvert historical discourses are irony, satire, and pastiche. These works encourage readers to critically analyse both the past and the current ideological frameworks by undermining the authority of historical knowledge. Historiographic metafiction is a potent literary form that blends postmodern self-awareness with historical research. It highlights underrepresented voices, questions the line separating reality from fiction, and reveals how history is constructed. It does this by making us face the vulnerability of memory, the bias of historical documents, and the need to consider how and by whom history is written.

Hari Kunzru is a British-Indian journalist and writer who is renowned for his analysis of globalisation, migration, race, and identity in contemporary society. In 1969, born in London to an English mother and an Indian Kashmiri Pandit father. Kunzru frequently combines aspects of his mixed heritage in his writing. He studied at Oxford University and the University of Warwick. In “Hacking the Society of Control: The Fiction of Hari Kunzru”, Peter D. Mathews emphasised, “Kunzru’s novels can thus be viewed, in this respect, as acts of resistance to the authority of totalizing systems” (Mathews 621). Kunzru’s first book, *The Impressionist* (2002), was praised by critics for portraying a young man of mixed race navigating colonial and postcolonial identities across continents. Other notable works include *Gods Without Men* (2011), which combines several stories around a mysterious desert town in the American Southwest; *Transmission* (2004), which satirizes global tech culture; *My Revolutions* (2007), which explores political radicalism in Britain in the 1970s; and *Red Pill* (2020), which is a psychological study of surveillance, truth, and authoritarianism. A well-known journalist, essayist, and fiction writer, Kunzru has written for publications such as The New York Times, The Guardian, and The New Yorker. He has been an outspoken opponent of nationalism, intolerance, and censorship and is well-known for his progressive views. In “Crime Narratives in Peter Ackroyd’s Historiographic Metafictions”,

Petr Chalupský states that,

Peter Ackroyd suggests that crime and violence are deeply embedded in the city's texture and consequently have inspired numerous literary accounts, either in the form of factual recordings or fiction. Such narratives in fact, perpetuate the memory of the most notorious crimes, creating modern 'myths' that influence subsequent writers. (Chalupský 122).

Hari Kunzru portrayed the picaresque journey of Pran encounters multiple historical events that encompass and develop his life to an undetermined destiny. Being of mixed heritage, an illegitimate child, Pran moves to different places with forced fate, from a foster father's house to Africa, where he learns the real impressionism in his life. He immigrated, struggled and experienced the new world. He became a victim of the colonised India under British rule, the Punjab Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, human white trafficking and slavery, and sorcery, especially in Fofse communities in Africa. The journey developed a sense of belonging and an impression in him. Throughout the book, he takes advantage of race, class, and nationality, altering his identity as needed to stay alive. The hollow, performative, and brittle character of every identity he adopts highlights the novel's central theme of the fluid and fragmented self. He draws attention to the performative and manufactured character of identity by impersonating white, British masculinity. In the end, Pran/Bridgeman loses his roots and finds himself without a permanent identity or place to call home, symbolising the displacement that many individuals in the colonial and diasporic world experienced. Through the use of satire, irony, and a global setting, Kunzru explores themes of race, identity, colonialism, and belonging in *The Impressionist*, producing a powerful reflection on the consequences of empire and the challenges of selfhood.

Fragmented Histories in *The Impressionist*

The diversity of viewpoints is another crucial element. Women, colonised peoples, ethnic minorities, and the socially downtrodden are among the marginalised voices that orthodox historiography has often ignored, while historiographic metafiction often elevates them. In doing so, it challenges

prevailing beliefs and upends big narratives by providing counter-histories. Rewriting history becomes a means of resistance, bringing to light experiences that have been suppressed, but also recognising that these reconstructions are still incomplete and dependent.

“Kashmiri Pandit”, “The Spanish Flu”, Colonised India under the British rule and its impacts, “Jallianwala Bagh massacres”, and Falkland Road; the prostitutes of Bombay and the expedition of the Fotsé community in Africa are the major fragmented histories fictionalised through imaginary characters. Kashmiri Pandits and their migration to new places, with their constrained rules and regulations. Amarnath Rajdan, one of the Kashmiri Pandits, has a great concern with hygiene. He assumed himself as the most hygienic personality and has higher standards in society. He was

The proud author of no less than 276 published articles, which have appeared in organs ranging from Kashmiri Youth Society pamphlets. . . . On etiquette, he mourns the decline of the formal canons of traditional politeness. On language, he is a fierce opponent of debased or impure usage, impropriety, profanity, and slang. In literature, he favours the ancient writers over the Moderns. In pictorial and plastic arts, likewise. Food, he has opined, should be prepared plainly and notoriously, taking care to avoid faddishness, innovation or undue richness of sauce. (Kunzru 30)

Yet he succumbed to Spanish Flu in 1918. In “The 1918 Influenza Pandemic and its Legacy”, Jeffery K Taubenberger and David M Morencsstate, “In 1918-1919, the ‘Spanish’ influenza pandemic appeared nearly simultaneously around the world and caused extraordinary mortality, estimated at 50-100 million fatalities” (Jeffery K Taubenberger 1). Most of the people were infected by this virus and died. Nevertheless, Amar Nath Razdan had hygiene concerns, and he died during this pandemic.

Hari Kunzru has gracefully narrated the fictional history of Fatehpur. The emergence of Ala-u-din Khan and the disgruntled Mughal generation established his own kingdom in the Punjab hills. Exemplifies the

fragmentation of the Mughal empire and the opportunism that led to the formation of new states. How Ala-u-din Khan found the unnecessary nature of war, and blessed by the pir, and established the city as Fatehpur. He became a Nawab of Fatehpur. The Britishers greatly influenced the Indian Nawabs. They have converted their palace into comfortable homes for the Britishers. The Nawab had seen Buckingham Palace, and “was shocked to find it far smaller than the homes of many middle-ranking Indian rulers. He built up the new palace for them. “So, the new palace was to be like a much larger version of the Pavilion, bigger, generally Oriental rather than Indian design, and above all, the kind of thing that English people would appreciate if invited to the kingdom to ride or shoot”(Kunzru 77). The city of victory, however, was under the rule of the British.

Although Nawab Murad is still the ruler, he cannot tie his shoelaces without the agreement of the Crown’s representative, Major Privett-Clampe. . . . If his opinion is not heeded, a word, a dispatch, would be enough to cause serious, even succession-changing trouble. The major is a very powerful man indeed (Kunzru 97).

They were trying their best to settle things. The nawab tried to manipulate the British Resident to give him dominant power. “The British prefer Firoz because he wears a tie and has promised to let them build factories” (Kunzru 106). They tried all the things which make him happy, so they brought Pran, and made him as Rukshana. A hijra, for Major Privett-Clampe. He is described as, “He who is the British Resident here. He is a very powerful man, and a very stupid one. Though he is pickled in gin, he holds the fate of our beloved kingdom in his hands. Luckily, little Rukshana, he has a weakness. . . . He likes beautiful boy-girl. Like you.” (Kunzru 87). How the Nawab and Firoz were trying to manipulate the Major and the dominance of power through Pran. Even Major advised Pran, “If you listen to what the white is telling you, you can’t go wrong”(Kunzru 109). The coloniser had set their standards to colonise the Indian minor groups. They have trained the white men, so they can set their rules in India. Major Privett-Clampe also use Pran,

instigating the importance of the English Language.

So Pran starts visiting Major Privett-Clampe on a weekly basis, to wear a school uniform, recite poetry and watch him jiggle around under his desk. He puffs and rings and is told to keep it up, and gradually his English accent improves, and he learns stirring passages from Victorian poets about martial prowess and the sacred duty of keeping one's word . . . he discern that it is in some way responsible for Privett-Clampe's importance, and the importance of Englishmen in general, so he pays attention to it, hoping to divine its secret. (Kunzru 112)

The nawab was also in favour of pursuing the Britishers. Hari Kunzru narrates that, "A Fatehpur shooting party is always a jolly affair. Even one or two of the zenana women are allowed to join in, which is how Pran comes to attend and to have his first sight of the celebrated Mrs Privett-Clampe" (Kunzru 115). So "Peshawar Vale Hounds" was established in Lahore by the Britishers who brought hounds for sports in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in India, especially for hunting the Indian Jackal. "The latest news is that in three days' time Sir Wyndham Braddock, combined Punjab States Resident, will be arriving with Lady Aurelia to shoot some tiger, eat too much, and have himself inventively pampered at the expense of the state of Fatehpur" (Kunzru 134). Firoz organised the party to entertain Sir Wyndham Braddock and to seduce Mr Privett-Clampe. "They get a suitable picture, then he will be given money and allowed to leave. If not, there will be no further use of him" (Kunzru 145). The wives of the Nawab also had an interest in the Shooting along with Khwaja-sara and other Hijira. Even multi-religious characters of the 18th-century Indian society, and a complex interplay of religious and political factors in maintaining stability at a local level. It also shows the political fragmentations, religious conflicts and socio-economic conditions, offering valuable insight into the transitional period of Indian history marked by the Mughal empire and the emergence of new regional and religious states.

Another major event that has been discussed by Hari Kunzru, the “Jallianwala Bagh Massacre,” took place on 13 April 1919 in Amritsar, Punjab. He has fictionalised it as a background for the expedition for Pran and his migration from India to England. Kunzru in detail depicts,

The Punjab is the breadbasket of the British Raj, and also its army recruitment ground. This landscape of a flat field crossed by irrigation channels and low mud banks means everything to the sahibs, and lately they have felt it slipping from their grasp. First, there were rumours. Indian talking secretly to Russians and Germans, of Bolshevism, sedition- the inevitable fruits, said the hardliners, of educating natives. Handbills were pasted in public places. *Prepare yourself to kill and die*. Then, soon afterwards, small omens. A Hindu procession joined by Muslims. Shouts of *Mahatma-Gandhi-ki-jai* ... Religious enemies seen drinking from the same cup. The Sahibs began to count their guns and say to each other that the time for talking was over. There were not enough of them ... Throughout the Punjab, club smoking rooms filled with talk of firm government, of hitting first, and hard. (Kunzru 180)

James Joyce writes in *Ulysses* that “[h]istory . . . is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake” (Joyce 60). The Amritsar massacre left a nightmare effect on generations for decades. Punjab became a political centre for the British. Indians have peacefully gathered to revolt against the Rowlatt Act and arrested Indian leaders at Jallianwala, a walled garden. General Reginald Dyer and other perpetrators’ troops attacked the walled garden by blocking the entry and exit gates. They opened fire without giving any warning to the people. In “The Spectacle of Death and Deception: Analysing Fictional and Non-Fictional Writings on the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre” Md Shahnawaz, asserts,

This geographic location of Punjab and the diverse ethnography resulted in the diverse semantics that add more layers to the memory of this gruesome event. . . . When we talk about a particular event, be it the Holocaust, the First World War, or the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, these are not just public events but also personal trauma (Shahnawaz 54).

General Dyer firmly addressed the troops,

You are teaching a lesson, he said. They will not forget it in a hurry. The General nodded. His troops fired 1650 rounds. . . . Corpses were piled in drifts around the walls of the Jallianwala Bagh. The well in the corner was choked with them. As darkness fell, relatives looking for their dead were attacked by jackals and feral dogs. Under Martial law, there was an eight o'clock curfew. Most of the townspeople were now too scared to break it, so the wounded remained where they lay until morning. The Jubilee Hospital was run by Europeans. Not one person applied there for treatment. . . . The next day, bodies were burnt five to a pyre. People made haste to hide the evidence that their relatives were at the gathering. No one knew how many were dead. In the afternoon, the General summoned Indian leaders to the Kotwal. I am a soldier: he told them in clipped parade-ground Urdu. For me, the battlefield of France and Amritsar are the same. Speak up if you want war. If you want peace, open their shops once. You will inform him of the badmashes. I will shoot them. Obey my orders. (Kunzru 183)

Pran was stuck in the Punjab for many days and left the place with the help of a white man, a Britisher who had an assumption that Pran was like him, a white man. He let Pran migrate to some other safe places. Pran becomes the victim of white trafficking and prostitutes. Pran earned a new identity as “Pretty Boby, crown prince of that most notorious of all red-light districts, the sewer of India: Falkland Road” (Kunzru 201). *Falkland Road: Prostitutes of Bombay* is also a pictorial book by Mary Ellen Mark, published in 1981. She describes

Falkland Road is a notorious street of prostitutes in Bombay. It is like any busy lower-class street in Bombay, densely populated by vendors, merchants and shops, but also overcrowded with girls, from 11-year-olds to 65-year-olds ex-madams. The street is lined with old wooden buildings, which teem with prostitutes hanging out of the window, in the viewing cages on the ground floor, and on the steps. From sunrise to sunset, the customers pass down the street to survey the girls. (Mark)

Hari Kunzru has depicted the harsh reality of Bombay, where prostitution becomes a major business for survival. “The Royal Geographical Society” was established in 1830 to survey the geographical sciences, and it became a major supporter in 19th and 20th-century expeditions to Africa. “The government wants the proper survey of the Fotseland region.”(Kunzru 429). After the survey by a professor and his team, they found that “The Fotse are a docile, joyous people, almost untouched by the ills of modernity, their pastoral” (Kunzru 448). Which came first, the changes or the spirits? There were no such things in the past; thus, no one would have talked in such a way or even mentioned the old and new times. Time was simply time. People adopted their ancestors’ habits. However, they are primitives; they have settled their own lives. Pran becomes a witness to the Fotse expeditions.

Fluid Identities: The Chameleon Protagonist

The Impressionist

Pran, the protagonist of the novel, has a picaresque journey. He was born as an illegitimate child to a foreigner, Ronald Forester, and an Indian mother. He was named Pran Nath Razdan. From Pran to Jonathan Bridgeman, he transmutes identity throughout the novel. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (1990), Judith Butler avowed, “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (Butler 33). Pran’s identity is also a product of his environment and society. Murat Aydemir in “Impressions of Character: Hari Kunzru’s *The Impressionist*” comments

Since *The Impressionist* features a protagonist who travels from India to Britain to Africa, and whose identity changes to an extraordinary extent according to the demands of each setting he finds himself in, the novel questions our aesthetic ability (or willingness) to identify, and to identify with, a character who migrates and transforms. (Aydemir 199)

Pran was expelled from his own house, being an illegitimate child of Amar Nath Razdan. He moved to an unknown place, a brothel, where he was forced to accept the third gender and was named Rukshana, a hijra and became a victim of White Trafficking. He became an object of Colonised India under British rule and the Mughal emperor's socio-political agendas. He became just a pawn in political games and was assigned a task to seduce Major Privett-Clampe, a British resident in India. He tried his best to escape from the cage, and succeeded in his plan and reached to Amritsar, Punjab. Where he was titled as 'White boy' represented the man of the Britishers. Pran witnessed the impact of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and the pathetic condition of Indians. Being a White Boy, he was helped by a Britisher and left Punjab and shifted to Mumbai.

Before transforming into Jonathan Bridgeman, a British youngster who eventually enrolls at Oxford, he was compelled to take on the identities of Rukhsana, a brothel servant, and Pretty Bobby, a white boy who had an affair with women from red-light districts. If Bobby makes himself invisible to others, shapeshifting, changing names and keeping his motives hidden, he does so no less to himself. Secretly hints at depth, and this is what people fantasise about when they see him" (Kunzru 250). He became the crown prince of Falkland Road's prostitutes. However, he found an escape from here with the help of a foreigner, called Jonathan Bridgman, who died in India. Pran took his identity as "Jonathan Pelchat Bridgeman: Spavin & Muskett: solicitors and Commissioners for Oaths of the Grey's Inn Road, London" (Kunzru 284). And he found "*dare we let them die in darkness when we have the light of. . . . There is nothing here for him anymore, nothing to make him stay. He feels the earth moving swiftly and frictionless beneath his feet*" (Kunzru 286). He took admission at Oxford University and learn the etiquette of foreigners. He learnt from the professors, "We must look upon these boundaries as a good thing? Were these none, the flowers would lose their identities in a hybrid swarm, and nature would be in a desperate **mess**" (Kunzru 310). In *The Location of Culture* (1994) Homi K. Bhabha establishes,

Hybridity is the sign of productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority). (Bhabha 112)

Jonathan Bridgeman accepted all the cultural and social identities of the new place. "He tries to feel what the others feel, and wonders nervously what he has become" (Kunzru 293). He just wanted to imbibe with the surrounded communities. He realised, "The life itself, an English Life, was enough" (Kunzru 299). He lived a hybrid life of Jonathan Bridgeman. As Jonathan was satisfied with his foster identity, "Between the petting couples in the back row, he eats an ice and feels Englishness begin to stick to him, filming his skin like city grime. This is what he wanted. This is enough" (Kunzru 303). He learned the language and also pursued anthropology. "He always wrote that Englishness is sameness and the comfort of repetition" (Kunzru 314). First time he encounters the primitive class of Africa and their advancements. He was enthusiastic to learn the way of life of the Fotse Community. He became a part of "The Royal Geographical Society" and embedded himself in this expedition. "This will be his first journey to Africa, where he hopes to see the West African shorthorn up close and study the practices of the Fotse farmers." (Kunzru 401)

In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (1990), edited by Jonathan Rutherford, Stuart Hall defines the

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a "production" which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (Hall 222)

As Pran learns the real impression of life after too many journeys till he reaches Africa. He asserts, "For now, the journey is everything. He has

no thoughts of arriving anywhere. Tonight, he will sleep under the enormous bowl of the sky. Tomorrow he will travel on” (Kunzru 481).

Conclusion

Hari Kunzru’s *The Impressionist* (2002) epitomises the postmodern mode of historiographic metafiction as defined by Linda Hutcheon, where the act of narrativising history becomes as significant as history itself. The novel foregrounds the fractures of colonial and postcolonial experience through its mosaic of historical episodes—the fall of the Mughal empire, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the underbelly of Bombay, and the colonial exploration of Africa. These fragmented histories resist coherence, reflecting Hutcheon’s theory. Within this unstable historical framework, the protagonist Pran embodies what Homi Bhabha terms the “third space” of enunciation: a liminal realm where identity is constantly negotiated, hybridised, and transformed. His chameleon-like adoption of multiple racial, social, and cultural selves demonstrates the performative instability of subjectivity, aligning with Stuart Hall’s view of identity. By situating Pran’s picaresque journey against colonial and cultural dislocations, Kunzru critiques the essentialist notions of race, class, and nationality, exposing them as constructs sustained by power and ideology. The novel thus dismantles the illusion of a unified self and reveals identity as fluid, contingent, and historically produced. *The Impressionist* (2002) ultimately offers a profound meditation on the intersections of history, power, and subjectivity, asserting that fragmented histories inevitably engender fragmented selves.

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Gandhian Values Reflected in Raja Rao's '*Kanthapura*'

Sanju Jhajharia

Introduction

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) is one of the earliest and most powerful works in Indian English literature, weaving Gandhian ideals into the social, cultural, and political life of a South Indian village. More than just a novel, it is a narrative experiment that blends myth, oral tradition, and history to dramatize India's struggle for independence. The central thrust of the novel lies in its reflection of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy—truth, non-violence, satyagraha, swadeshi, self-reliance, and the moral awakening of the masses. This research paper explores how Gandhian values permeate the characters, structure, and themes of the novel, and how Rao uses fiction to transform nationalist ideology into lived village experience. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is a foundational text in Indian English literature, praised for its unique narrative structure and its ambitious attempt to represent an Indian experience in a foreign language. The village of Kanthapura, nestled in the Western Ghats, serves as a microcosm of colonial India, reflecting the broader social, political, and spiritual transformations of the 1930s. The narrative documents the village's journey from a traditional, caste-ridden society to a community united by Gandhian ideals, ultimately facing defeat and displacement. By mythologizing the freedom struggle, Rao transforms a historical event into a timeless epic, or sthala-purana, of good versus evil.

When *Kanthapura* was published in 1938, India was in the throes of the freedom struggle. Raja Rao, deeply influenced by both traditional Indian storytelling and Gandhian philosophy, chose not to write a straightforward political treatise but to embed Gandhian ideals into the

life of a small village. The novel thus becomes a microcosm of India: Kanthapura's villagers mirror the awakening of the rural masses, and the struggle in the village echoes the national movement. The novel is set against the backdrop of the Indian independence movement, specifically the period of the Salt Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience campaigns led by Mahatma Gandhi. Key historical events referenced in the novel, such as Gandhi's Dandi March, provide a framework for the village's own resistance. However, Gandhi himself never appears directly. Instead, his influence is felt through his follower, Moorthy, a young, city-educated man who brings the Mahatma's message of satyagraha (non-violent resistance), swadeshi (self-reliance through hand-spun cloth or khadi), and the eradication of untouchability. Gandhi's message—of non-violent resistance and spiritualized politics—found its most effective vehicle in literature that could communicate with the common man. Rao's novel does precisely this, showing how Gandhian values reshaped not only politics but also social reform, particularly in matters of caste, gender, and collective identity.

The political struggle in Kanthapura unfolds in several stages:

- **Initial Awakening:** Moorthy's return and his efforts to spread Gandhian philosophy initially meet with resistance from orthodox Brahmins, but his personal piety and sacrifice win over many villagers, including Pariahs (untouchables).
- **Escalation and Exploitation:** The British-owned Skeffington Coffee Estate and its oppressive manager, the "Hunter Sahib," symbolize colonial exploitation. This tension is heightened by the local Indian allies of the British, like the corrupt Brahmin Bhatta and the police officer Badè Khan, who represent a collusion between colonial power and entrenched social hierarchy.
- **Women's Mobilization:** Following Moorthy's imprisonment, the women of Kanthapura, led by the educated widow Rangamma, take charge of the movement, participating in picketing and facing brutal police repression.

- **Destruction and Dislocation:** The climax involves the destruction of Kanthapura by the authorities. Though the villagers are defeated and forced to flee, their spirit of resistance, symbolized by their willingness to lose their land for a greater cause, remains.

Literary Context

Raja Rao belongs to the triumvirate of early Indian English novelists, along with Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan. While Anand focused on social realism and Narayan on middle-class life, Rao fused philosophy, myth, and politics. *Kanthapura* was his first novel, written in exile in France, yet rooted deeply in Indian tradition.

The narrative technique itself—told by an old village woman, Achakka—emulates oral storytelling, making the novel both accessible and authentic. Through this style, Gandhian principles are not presented as abstract concepts but as part of everyday life, shaping rituals, conversations, and conflicts.

Gandhian Values and Their Literary Reflection

1. Satyagraha (Truth-force)

The backbone of Gandhi's political struggle was satyagraha, the power of truth combined with non-violent resistance. In *Kanthapura*, Moorthy becomes the embodiment of this principle. His refusal to retaliate against violence—whether from the colonial police or orthodox villagers—demonstrates the moral strength of truth.

Example: When Moorthy is imprisoned for picketing foreign cloth shops, he upholds Gandhi's teaching that suffering for truth purifies both the self and society. The villagers, initially skeptical, slowly recognize that passive resistance has transformative power.

2. Ahimsa (Non-violence)

Ahimsa is not merely the absence of violence but a positive love toward all beings. Rao illustrates this value vividly. The villagers are provoked by police brutality, yet Moorthy insists they must never strike back.

Even caste conflict is approached through ahimsa: rather than fighting the Brahmins who excommunicate him, Moorthy accepts their rejection, hoping love will dissolve prejudice.

3. Swadeshi (Self-reliance and Indigenous Identity)

Swadeshi was Gandhi's call to boycott foreign goods and revive indigenous industries. The burning of foreign cloth in *Kanthapura* is both a symbolic and literal act of rejecting colonial exploitation. Women take the lead in spinning khadi, turning household labor into political resistance. The act of wearing hand-spun cloth becomes an assertion of dignity and national pride.

4. Religious Faith and Spiritual Politics

Gandhi spiritualized politics, often invoking religious symbols to awaken the masses. In *Kanthapura*, this appears in the villagers' identification of Gandhi with divine avatars. Gandhi is imagined as a modern incarnation of Vishnu who comes to rid the world of evil (the British rule). Moorthy becomes a saint-like figure, likened to sages in Hindu tradition, which helps the villagers accept his leadership.

5. Social Reform and Caste Equality

For Gandhi, freedom was incomplete without social reform, especially the eradication of untouchability. Rao dramatizes this through Moorthy's attempts to unite Pariahs and Brahmins in the nationalist cause. His efforts to visit and dine with the Pariahs lead to his excommunication, showing the deep-rooted prejudices in Indian society. Yet women like Rangamma and Ratna begin to question caste divisions, suggesting the beginnings of reform. Moorthy's mission are not only anti-British but also anti-caste. His willingness to enter the Pariah quarters and eat from their hands, a direct violation of Brahminical orthodoxy, challenges the village's rigid social structure. The movement, by uniting villagers across caste lines, becomes a catalyst for social reform alongside political freedom.

6. Role of Women and Gandhian Feminism

One of Gandhi's most radical contributions was to bring women into the political sphere. Rao reflects this vividly. Women in *Kanthapura* are not passive onlookers; they take active part in marches, picketing, and spinning. Ratna, a young widow, defies societal restrictions and emerges as a courageous leader, inspired by Gandhian values. This empowerment of women mirrors Gandhi's belief that women, by their very nature of patience and endurance, were ideal satyagrahis. From Achakka's storytelling to Rangamma's leadership and the formation of women's volunteer corps, the women of Kanthapura step out of traditional roles and become active political agents.

Myth, Tradition, and Gandhian Values

Rao fuses myth with Gandhian politics, creating a narrative that resonates with the villagers' imagination. The struggle in *Kanthapura* is likened to the Kurukshetra war of the Mahabharata. Just as the Pandavas fight against adharma, the villagers fight against colonial injustice. Gandhi himself is equated with Krishna, Rama, and Shiva at different moments, giving divine sanction to the nationalist movement. Figures like Gandhi are portrayed as modern-day avatars, battling the demonic "Red-men" (British). This mythic dimension provides a powerful moral framework for the villagers to understand and endure their struggle. This mythic framework elevates Gandhian values beyond mere political tactics—they become part of cosmic dharma.

Narrative technique and style

Rao's unique narrative strategy is arguably the novel's most significant artistic achievement.

- **Puranic Method:** The story is told by Achakka, an old Brahmin woman, in the style of a purana—a traditional folk epic or legend. Her narrative is characterized by digressions, flashbacks, repetitions, and a fluid, conversational tone, mimicking an oral tradition. This elevates the villagers' struggle to a mythic, timeless plane, framing the political conflict as a cosmic battle between good and evil, with Gandhi as a divine avatar.

- **Indianization of English:** Rao consciously moulds the English language to convey an authentic Indian sensibility. In his famous preface, he states that the Indian novel must have distinct “Indian” English. He achieves this through:
- **Literal translations:** He often directly translates Kannada idioms and phrases into English, creating a unique rhythm and flavor.
- **Indian vocabulary:** He incorporates Indian words for food, customs, and concepts that have no direct English equivalent.
- **Sentence structure:** Long, winding sentences reflect the meandering, gossipy style of the oral narration.
- **Point of View:** Achakka’s first-person, communal “we” and “I” perspective offers an intimate, emotional, and biased account of events. Her perspective, though not objective, provides an authentic window into the mindset and emotional journey of the villagers as they navigate political awakening.

Tensions and Limitations in Gandhian Values

While the novel celebrates Gandhian ideals, it also exposes tensions: Non-violence often seems powerless against brutal repression; villagers are beaten and homes destroyed despite their peaceful resistance. Caste prejudices do not disappear entirely, raising questions about how far Gandhi’s message penetrated. Moorthy, though saintly, sometimes appears detached, raising doubts about the effectiveness of moral leadership in a violent world. These tensions make *Kanthapura* realistic rather than hagiographic. Rao acknowledges that the Gandhian path is difficult, filled with sacrifice, and not always successful in the short term.

Impact of Gandhian Values on the Village Society

The greatest triumph of Gandhian values in the novel is the transformation of the villagers’ consciousness. From a fragmented, caste-bound, superstitious community, *Kanthapura* becomes a united force of resistance. Women, Pariahs, and youth discover new voices

and identities. Though the village is eventually destroyed, its spirit of resistance spreads, mirroring Gandhi's belief that true freedom begins in the soul, not in political victories alone.

Critical perspectives and analysis

- **Postcolonial Reading:** As a postcolonial text, *Kanthapura* subverts colonial narratives by presenting history from the perspective of the colonized. Rao's linguistic innovations challenge the hegemonic Standard English and assert a distinct Indian literary voice.
- **Feminist Critique:** While celebrated for its strong female characters, some critics argue that Achakka's narrative is still framed within a patriarchal, Brahminical worldview. The novel's portrayal of women, while empowering, still operates within certain cultural constraints.
- **Critique of Nationalism:** Some modern scholars view the novel's romanticized portrayal of nationalism critically, arguing that it idealizes the Gandhian movement and marginalizes subaltern voices, such as the Dalit characters, whose experiences are filtered through a Brahmin narrator.
- **Symbolism:** The novel is rich with symbolism. The goddess Kenchamma represents the ancient, protective spirit of the village. The river Himavathy is another symbol of the land's spiritual essence. The destruction of the village at the end, though a defeat, symbolizes the moral victory of sacrifice.

Conclusion

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is both a political novel and a spiritual allegory. By weaving Gandhian values into myth, tradition, and everyday life, Rao demonstrates how Gandhi's philosophy was not confined to leaders and intellectuals but became a living force in rural India. The novel captures the transformation of ordinary villagers into extraordinary satyagrahis, proving that freedom is not merely about overthrowing

colonial rulers but about moral regeneration and social reform. *Kanthapura* is more than a novel about a village; it is a profound meditation on how large-scale political movements are internalized and transformed at the grassroots level. By blending myth with history and Indianizing the English language, Raja Rao created a landmark work that not only documents a specific moment in India's struggle for independence but also offers timeless insights into faith, community, and resistance. Its enduring significance lies in its exploration of how a people, facing oppression, can draw strength from their own traditions to forge a new identity.

Thus, Gandhian values—truth, non-violence, swadeshi, caste reform, and the empowerment of women—are not only reflected but reimagined in *Kanthapura*. They emerge as timeless ideals, linking India's ancient traditions with its modern aspirations for justice and dignity.

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Forbidden Bonds, Universal Lessons: A Study of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* in the Context of Love as a Bonding Power

Chitra Dadheech

Introduction

Indian literature has long functioned as a powerful conduit for expressing the complexities of human relationships, particularly those that blossom or struggle within rigid societal frameworks. Deeply intertwined with the cultural, historical, and spiritual fabric of the nation, these narratives often reflect not only personal conflicts but also collective social realities. Among the most compelling themes that recur across Indian literary works are love, unity, and the confrontation of social injustices—particularly those stemming from the deeply entrenched caste system. These stories do more than depict personal struggles; they serve as broader commentaries on the socio-political structures that define and often limit human experience. By engaging with issues such as caste-based marginalization, taboo relationships, and the longing for equality, Indian literature transcends its geographical and cultural origins. It offers readers around the world a glimpse into the universal struggles for acceptance, dignity, and connection. The emotional truths at the heart of these stories—truths about love's capacity to challenge power, the resilience of the human spirit, and the yearning for justice—resonate far beyond national boundaries.

The two exemplary works that embody these themes with remarkable intensity are Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) and Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935). Both novels, though distinct in time period, narrative style, and character focus, illuminate how love—

whether romantic or rooted in the basic human desire for respect—can act as a force of resistance against oppressive societal norms. Roy’s portrayal of a forbidden inter-caste relationship and Anand’s depiction of a Dalit boy’s quest for dignity offer deeply human stories that confront systemic injustice with empathy and insight.

The present research paper closely examines how these two literary masterpieces transcend their specific Indian contexts to address broader human concerns. Through the lens of Roy and Anand’s characters, we explore how literature can serve as a bridge between disparate cultures, nurturing global understanding and emotional solidarity. By unpacking the layers of caste, love, rebellion, and social critique in these works, we uncover essential lessons about the enduring values of compassion, equality, and shared humanity that remain relevant across time and place. To fully appreciate the thematic richness of these two texts *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy and *Untouchable* by Mulk Raj Anand, one must understand the socio-political frameworks within which these narratives unfold. Both novels are deeply entrenched in the complex realities of Indian society, where social hierarchies, particularly the caste system, continue to influence interpersonal relationships, institutional structures, and cultural norms.

Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* is set in post-independence Kerala, a region known for its relatively progressive stance on education and reform. Yet, beneath the veneer of modernization and constitutional guarantees of equality, caste-based discrimination continues to shape daily life. Despite the legal abolition of untouchability enshrined in the Indian Constitution, Roy reveals how deep-seated social prejudices linger, subtly and overtly dictating the behaviour of individuals and communities. The novel’s portrayal of inter-caste love, familial fragmentation, and societal policing reflects a society still grappling with its colonial past and deeply entrenched social codes. A particularly striking aspect of Roy’s critique lies in her concept of the “Love Laws”—unwritten societal rules that regulate who is allowed to love whom, and to what extent. These “laws” serve not only as narrative anchors but as incisive metaphors for the social taboos surrounding caste, class, and gender as

Roy writes, "The laws that lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much" (33). This haunting line encapsulates the moral boundaries that society imposes on human emotion, reducing love to a social transaction monitored by tradition and power.

In the contrast, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* is set in colonial India, a time when the caste system was even more rigid and institutionalized. The novel presents a single day in the life of Bakha, a young Dalit boy, whose existence as a manual scavenger symbolizes the lowest rungs of the caste hierarchy. His encounters with society—marked by verbal abuse, physical assault, and systemic exclusion—offer a vivid account of how caste violence is normalized within everyday life. Anand's commitment to social realism allows readers to witness the harsh indignities suffered by Dalits, who are systematically denied basic human rights. One of the most powerful observations in the novel is the portrayal of Bakha's constant internalization of inferiority, "He lived in a world of perpetual degradation, constantly reminded of his place in the social order." This line underscores the psychological toll that caste oppression exacts on individuals, reducing them to mere instruments of labor, devoid of personal agency or social mobility.

Both the authors, through their distinct narrative strategies and historical lenses, challenge the legitimacy of social systems that sustain inequality. Roy critiques the hypocrisy of modern Indian society that upholds democratic ideals while remaining deeply conservative in matters of caste and love. Anand, writing in a colonial context, exposes the violence and inhumanity embedded in ancient social structures, while also gesturing toward reform through figures like Gandhi. Together, *The God of Small Things* and *Untouchable* provide a comprehensive picture of how caste-based oppression operates across time periods, social classes, and individual experiences. Their works stand as powerful testimonies to the ongoing struggle for social justice in India, urging readers to reflect on the deep-rooted nature of discrimination and the need for genuine transformation.

Exploring Forbidden Love in *The God of Small Things*

At the emotional core of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* lies a profoundly moving and socially subversive love story between Ammu and Velutha. This relationship, condemned by societal norms and cultural expectations, serves as a powerful indictment of the caste-based and patriarchal constraints that govern personal lives in Indian society. Ammu, a Syrian Christian woman burdened by the stigma of divorce, and Velutha, a Dalit carpenter employed by her family, represent individuals who are marginalized not because of their actions or character, but because of their caste and gender identities. Their love transcends these societal limitations, becoming an act of rebellion against a system that seeks to control affection, intimacy, and human connection.

Roy poignantly captures this transgression in her lyrical and emotionally charged prose. One of the most memorable lines—“They knew that there was nowhere for them to go. They held each other as though their lives depended on it.”—beautifully encapsulates the fragility, desperation, and defiance that define their relationship. In presenting their bond as both intensely personal and inherently political, Roy urges readers to confront the brutal consequences of caste orthodoxy and gender inequality. Velutha's role in the novel extends beyond that of a romantic figure. He becomes a symbol of silent resistance, representing the dignity and humanity of those whom society chooses to devalue. Fully aware of the risks involved, Velutha does not retreat from the relationship. His decision to love Ammu, despite the dire repercussions, affirms his autonomy and challenges the social order that demands his invisibility and submission.

Roy's portrayal of their doomed relationship does more than elicit sympathy—it demands outrage. Through Ammu and Velutha, Roy exposes the dehumanizing effects of the caste system and illustrates how love, when it violates societal boundaries, is punished rather than celebrated. Their story becomes a vehicle for critiquing oppressive institutions and illuminating the cost of defiance in a deeply hierarchical culture.

The Quest for Dignity in *Untouchable*

In contrast to Roy's exploration of romantic love, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* centers around the broader, but equally powerful, human desire for dignity and social recognition. The novel follows a single day in the life of Bakha, a young Dalit boy whose existence is defined by the daily indignities of his occupation as a manual scavenger. Through Bakha's eyes, Anand exposes the rigid caste stratification that reduces human beings to mere functions, denying them individuality, respect, and basic human rights. From the opening scenes, the novel immerses the reader in Bakha's reality—a world where every interaction reminds him of his social status, "Outcaste, Untouchable, he was reminded of his status in every act, every interaction." This line captures the relentless nature of caste-based marginalization and its psychological impact. Bakha's daily encounters with abuse, exclusion, and humiliation are not isolated incidents but manifestations of a deeply embedded social order designed to perpetuate inequality.

A transformative moment in the novel occurs when Bakha hears Mahatma Gandhi speak against untouchability. Gandhi's words, "Untouchability is a blot on humanity." If we do not eradicate it, we fail as a society, and introduce a new possibility—a vision of a society that might recognize the inherent worth of every individual. This moment plants a seed of hope in Bakha's consciousness. It marks the beginning of his moral awakening, suggesting that systemic change, while difficult, is possible through collective action, empathy, and reimagined social values.

Anand's decision to end the novel on an ambivalent note—where Bakha contemplates the future but remains uncertain—reflects the complexity of social reform. Change is neither immediate nor guaranteed, but awareness is the first step toward transformation. Through Bakha, Anand gives voice to the voiceless and invites readers to recognize the humanity of those oppressed by social convention. By highlighting the emotional and spiritual dimensions of Bakha's journey, *Untouchable* moves beyond social critique and becomes a plea for human empathy.

The novel's enduring relevance lies in its portrayal of caste not merely as a social structure but as a moral failing that demands urgent redress.

Textual Analysis

Although both Arundhati Roy and Mulk Raj Anand explore the concept of love from different vantage points—one romantic and transgressive, the other rooted in human dignity and social justice—both authors converge on the idea that love has the transformative potential to transcend entrenched social boundaries. In *The God of Small Things*, the forbidden relationship between Ammu and Velutha represents a direct challenge to caste and gender-based hierarchies. Their union, though brief and ultimately tragic, symbolizes a courageous assertion of emotional freedom in the face of societal rigidity.

In contrast, *Untouchable* does not revolve around romantic love but centers instead on Bakha's unyielding desire to be treated as a human being. His yearning for self-respect and equal treatment serves as a form of love—for oneself and for the collective dignity of the marginalized. Anand uses Bakha's internal struggle to highlight the psychological violence inflicted by caste discrimination and the enduring human need to be seen and valued.

What unites both novels is their portrayal of the resilience of the human spirit. Whether through an intimate relationship or a plea for dignity, both Velutha and Bakha embody the universal pursuit of identity, acceptance, and connection. Their struggles transcend the confines of Indian society, offering global readers insight into broader human rights issues. It is this emotional and thematic universality that has enabled *The God of Small Things* and *Untouchable* to reach audiences across linguistic and cultural borders. Their continued presence in academic syllabi and literary discussions around the world affirms their ability to resonate beyond their immediate cultural contexts.

Indian literature, as illustrated by Roy and Anand's works, does more than document local histories or cultural specificities—it speaks to the global human condition. These novels function as cultural bridges,

fostering empathy among readers unfamiliar with the intricacies of Indian caste or social structures. In a time when the world remains divided by class, race, religion, and ethnicity, literature like *The God of Small Things* and *Untouchable* offers a shared emotional vocabulary through which these divisions can be examined and understood.

The issues depicted in these texts are not confined to the Indian subcontinent. Discrimination—whether on the basis of caste, race, or ethnicity—continues to affect millions globally. Roy's and Anand's narratives highlight the systemic mechanisms that enable social exclusion and provoke readers to confront the structures of power within their own societies. As such, the novels remain deeply relevant in contemporary discourses surrounding social justice, equity, and civil rights. They inspire not only empathy but also a vision of a world where love, understanding, and solidarity transcend social and cultural boundaries.

Both Roy and Anand masterfully use symbolism and imagery to deepen the emotional and philosophical resonance of their narratives. In *The God of Small Things*, recurring symbols such as the river and the moth carry layered meanings. The river, a site of both serenity and tragedy, mirrors the forbidden nature of Ammu and Velutha's relationship—it is a place of union, secrecy, and ultimately, loss. The moth, fragile and fleeting, reflects the vulnerability of their love and the inevitability of its destruction under societal pressure.

In *Untouchable*, Anand utilizes more grounded, realist symbolism to underscore the weight of caste oppression. One of the most potent images is Bakha's broom, which symbolizes the literal and metaphorical burden he carries as a sweeper. The broom is not just a tool of labor but a constant reminder of the societal position assigned to him. Through such imagery, Anand invites readers to visualize the psychological and physical costs of caste-based labor.

These symbols are not mere embellishments but serve as narrative instruments that evoke empathy and bring abstract injustices into tangible focus.

Both novels also function as critical examinations of India's postcolonial and traditional societal structures. Roy's *The God of Small Things* exposes the lingering effects of colonial-era thinking that continue to shape contemporary Indian society. Though the British have departed, their legacy lives on in the caste rigidity, class consciousness, and social conservatism that persist. Roy critiques how colonial ideologies, once imposed, have been internalized and perpetuated by Indian elites and institutions.

Similarly, Anand's *Untouchable* not only challenges the caste system's brutality but also interrogates the contradictions of Western influence. The colonial presence introduces notions of equality and modernity, yet these ideals rarely benefit the lowest strata of society. While some colonial figures express sympathy or admiration for Bakha, they remain largely complicit in maintaining the structures that oppress him. Thus, Anand presents a nuanced view of colonialism—not wholly destructive or redemptive but entangled in ambivalence and selective moral concern.

Roy and Anand employ distinct narrative approaches that enhance the impact of their stories. Roy's style is lyrical, fragmented, and nonlinear. The narrative moves fluidly between time periods, memories, and perspectives, mimicking the emotional and psychological disarray experienced by her characters. This fragmented structure emphasizes how trauma disrupts chronological order and how the past continuously intrudes upon the present. Her poetic language often blurs the line between prose and verse, amplifying the emotional depth of the narrative.

Conversely, Anand's narrative in *Untouchable* is linear and rooted in realism. The novel's structure follows the events of a single day, focusing intensively on Bakha's inner and outer worlds. Anand adopts a straightforward, journalistic tone that aligns with his social reformist agenda. This simplicity does not dilute the novel's power but makes it more accessible and immediate, allowing readers to absorb the harsh truths without narrative distractions. Both techniques are effective in their respective contexts—Roy's complexity reflects the multi-layered nature of identity and emotion, while Anand's clarity serves to unmask the raw realities of systemic oppression.

Religion and Mythology: Tools of Inclusion or Exclusion?

Religion, a powerful force in Indian society, is portrayed in both novels as a double-edged sword. In *The God of Small Things*, religious customs and beliefs reinforce caste divisions and moral restrictions. The intersection of religion with class and gender often leads to exclusion rather than inclusion, as seen in the social condemnation of Ammu and Velutha's relationship. Roy's narrative questions the use of religion as a means to regulate behaviour and justify inequality.

Anand, too, illustrates how religious ideology can be weaponized to legitimize social discrimination. Bakha's ostracization is not just a social act but one deeply sanctified by Hindu doctrines that equate purity with caste. Rituals of pollution and purity govern his life, depriving him of dignity and autonomy. Religion, in this context, becomes a mechanism of control rather than a source of solace. Both authors critique the ways in which religious and cultural beliefs, rather than serving as moral compasses, are often manipulated to uphold oppressive traditions.

A Global Perspective: Literary Parallels and Comparative Themes

The themes explored in *The God of Small Things* and *Untouchable* find resonance in global literature that grapples with social exclusion, forbidden love, and systemic injustice. Roy's portrayal of love constrained by social codes which parallels Toni Morrison's *Beloved* which addresses the devastating effects of slavery and the reclamation of agency through love. In both novels, love becomes a means of resistance against dehumanizing forces.

Anand's depiction of caste oppression bears similarity to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, where rigid traditional structures and colonial pressures impact individual freedom and cultural continuity. Both authors explore how cultural systems, when unyielding, contribute to personal and societal breakdown. Such comparisons highlight the universality of

these themes, demonstrating that while the settings may vary, the struggles for dignity, justice, and love are deeply human and widely shared.

Conclusion

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* are more than literary masterpieces; they are calls to action. Through their poignant depictions of love and resilience, these novels challenge societal norms, foster cross-cultural empathy, and inspire readers to advocate for a more just and equitable world. The enduring power of these stories lies in their ability to connect individuals across divides, reminding us of the universal values that bind humanity together. As Roy eloquently states, "A story ends, but its echoes remain. It haunts us, reminding us of who we are and who we could become." Through these narratives, Indian literature continues to illuminate the path toward a more compassionate and interconnected future.

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Mythical Quest in the Cross-Cultural Narratives

Renuka Verma and Pratibha Kala

The origin of myths lies in the creative bond between the human imagination and the mysterious natural phenomena. These beautiful imaginative tales stem from the belief system of our primitive forefathers whose curiosity to understand and explain the natural world in terms of the supernatural, resulted in the stories known as myths, “It would not be too much to say that myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation. Religions, philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive and historic man, prime discoveries in science and technology, the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth” (Campbell). These imaginative and creative interpretations were handed down from one generation to another orally, and later, in written form. Initial myths were generally the stories of divine beings signifying some spiritual meaning or truth. Throughout history, mythology and folklore have served as rich sources of inspiration for artists, offering a treasure trove of narratives, symbols, and themes to explore and reinterpret. These timeless stories and legends, passed down through generations, reflect the collective wisdom, values, and cultural heritage of societies. By incorporating elements of mythology and folklore into their work, artists can convey universal themes and connect with audiences on a deep, emotional level.

Although, there are various types of traditional tales which scholars and researchers of mythology have classified in different ways, still, all these classifications of legends, folk tales, and sagas revolve around the story of a heroic figure facing and winning the battle of life. This mythical hero embodies the universal character of humanity, who accepts the natural and supernatural challenges and comes out victorious with some

moral significance or general truth for the betterment of human culture and conscience. These historic and imaginative records of human experience have a general thesis that can be traced in the stories of all cultures and histories, as Jungian psychology explicates this general thesis as: “In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious” (Jung 325). A story, depicting the creation, order, and evolution of a tribe or culture, entails several elements and traits resembling with the endless stock of myths across cultures and ages. One of the most common archetypes found in literature is that of ‘quest’. A quest is a journey in which one advances spiritually and mentally along with travelling physically. The quest comes out of the familiar and moves into the unknown. The nature of the goal may not be clear at first and may only become apparent at the end of the quest.

The narrative of quest has played a prominent role in folklores and myths, and appears in literature of all ages. Bible’s Fisher King’s quest for the Holy Grail is perhaps the first ‘quest’ narrative in the canon. Many quest narratives are interwoven with the grail— a miraculous cup providing eternal happiness. The Grail first appears in 1190, in a romance *Perceval, le Conte du Graal*, by Chretien de Froyes. Later, the narrative continues in the medieval chivalric romance *Le Morte d’ Arthur* (1470) by Thomas Mallory. T.S. Eliot, in his ambitious work, *The Wasteland* (1922) again revived the Fisher King legend by mixing it with the Celtic tale of lifting up the curse of a barren land by a hero’s retrieval of the grail. The quest for the Holy Grail appears significantly in Arthurian literature. Jessie Weston, in her book, *From Ritual to Romance* (1922) examines the roots of the Holy Grail tradition in King Arthur legends. Considering the Holy Grail narrative as a literary outgrowth of the ancient ritual, she explores the Celtic, Christian and Gnostic versions and interpretations of the Grail saga particularly in terms of the ‘Wasteland’ motif which depicts a king’s quest for fertility and for mystical oneness with God.

Thomas Mallory's, *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1470), reinterprets the existing French- English tales about the legendary hero King Arthur, and his knights of the round table. In his sixth book titled *The Noble Tale of the Sangreal* (1485). Mallory records King Arthur and his Knight's adventurous quest to reach to the Holy Grail. Sir Gawain, Lancelot, Percival, Bors and Galahad undergo many trials and ordeals encountering maidens and hermits as their mentors. Galahad, the only sin-less knight, fulfils his quest and achieves the Holy Grail, signifying the victory of moral perfection over chivalry.

Homer's epic poem *Odyssey* is the oldest surviving example of the secular quest narratives. Odysseus' quest is different in the sense that instead of going out for the unknown, the hero's journey is concerned with 'homecoming'. As the quest narrative is one of the oldest universal ways of telling stories, specially an heroic one, Homer records Odysseus' adventurous journey from the fields of Troy to his kingdom of Ithaca following the conventions of a quest narrative. The quest continues even after the homecoming, where Odysseus has to defeat the hundred and eight young men who invade his house to marry his wife Penelope. The problem is resolved by a contest of arrows in which Odysseus and his son Telemachus kill all the suitors. Through the supernatural intervention of the Goddess of wisdom and victory, Athena, peace and prosperity are restored eventually to the island of Ithaca. This road of trials includes monsters, cannibals, temptresses, and Gods and demons themselves. The rich well of mythical illusions in *Odyssey* makes it a milestone giving way to a variety of literary perspectives to the future quest narratives. The Roman name of Odysseus, i.e. Ulysses, has become an emblem of the unyielding, incessant adventurous spirit of humanity, told and retold by many artists and writers across the world.

Virgil's epic poem *Aeneid*, written between 29–19 BC, tells the legend of Aeneas, a character from Homer's *Iliad* who links the legend of Troy to Rome by finding the glorious Roman Empire. Beginning his poem with an invocation of the muse, Virgil states the theme of his ambitious work, "of arms and the man I sing" (1). Recounting Aeneas' wanderings and challenges to establish a new empire for the Trojan

people, Virgil pays a tribute to his patron, Augustus Caesar by creating an epic for common people. Making a sharp contrast with Odysseus, Aeneas begins a selfless journey following the will of God. Overcoming all the hurdles and temptations along the long *interior* and exterior journey, he emerges as a selfless patriot by obeying the will of God. Following the conventions of a heroic epic, the poem perfectly fits into the structure of the archetypal quest narrative. The noble goal of establishing a city for his people, the supernatural aid, the trial and ordeals of the soul, a journey to the underworld, the villainy of Goddess Juno, the woman of dreams- widow Dido, the wars and battles, and the founding of the Roman Empire qualify Aeneas as a questor who fought for the Roman ideals of Pietas- a selfless sense of national, social, and moral obligations.

The soul's journey after death, through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven is allegorically narrated in Dante's narrative poem *Divine comedy* (1308–1321). In *Divine Comedy*, Dante captures the spiritual journey towards God. The three parts of the book describe the pilgrim Dante's quest for divine justice which is explained in terms of sin, purgation, and enlightenment. In this quest narrative the pilgrim's soul is accompanied by the three mentors: Beatrice, representing the divine revelation, Virgil, representing the human reason, and Saint Bernard, representing devotion. While Virgil and Saint Bernard guide him through hell and purgatory, Beatrice, Dante's ideal woman, guides him through heaven.

The spiritual quest to fulfillment in the superhuman world has been the key theme in almost all the classic epics in literature, though, Dante's vision is shaped by the Catholic theology, his concepts of birth, rebirth, hell and heaven, the passage to salvation, the divine guidance, and God, are more universal than Christian. The individual soul lost in the dark of the woods (sins) meets a guide who guides it by his reason and wisdom. Here the mentor Virgil after guiding him through hell to the top of Mount Purgatory tells the pilgrim that he (human wisdom and reason) cannot accompany him to the eternal height of heaven. When the human wisdom falters, Dante's beloved, the divine love comes to the soul's rescue and leads it to heaven.

In *Joseph Andrews* (1742), the first major novel in the English language, Henry Fielding records the adventures of a good-natured footman, Joseph Andrews with his mentor- Abraham Adams. Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* (1759) narrates prince of Abyssinia's journey to happiness. Coleridge's long narrative poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) also falls into the category of soul's journey to the sublime through suffering and repentance. In Herman Melville's adventure novel, *Moby Dick* (1851), the protagonist Ishmael wrestles with the spiritual and philosophical transformation. Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* (1902) can be seen as a quest narrative for relating Marlow's mythical journey in search of mysteries of existence journeying up the Congo River. Hermann Hesse's novel, *Siddhartha* (1922) chronicles Siddhartha's quest to conquer suffering and fear. Quest archetype is prominent in modern adventure fiction too. J.R.R Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954), and J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* (1997-2007) series, that have become the all-time classics in Hollywood movies too, also fall into the category of adventure quest narrative.

In this way 'Quest' continued in modern fiction too. The Hero's Journey, a narrative pattern identified by Joseph Campbell, is one of the most influential storytelling structures derived from mythology. This monomyth involves stages such as the Call to Adventure, the Road of Trials, the Ultimate Boon, and the Return with Elixir. Campbell's work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), illustrates how this structure appears in myths across cultures and time periods. Modern storytellers frequently employ the Hero's Journey to craft compelling narratives. For instance, in Amish Tripathi's *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010), the protagonist Shiva follows this archetypal path as he transforms from a tribal leader to a revered deity. Similarly, in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* (2008), the retelling of the Mahabharata from Draupadi's perspective follows her journey of struggle, power, and self-discovery. Hence, the mythical quest framework continues to be adapted in modern

storytelling. The *Star Wars* saga, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Lion King* all follow the pattern of a hero leaving home, facing trials, and returning transformed. These retellings demonstrate the enduring power of the mythical quest to capture universal human experiences.

Thus, the study provides adequate insight into the idea of a universal mythical quest and its representation in world literatures. The narrative of a hero, the quester, who undertakes a journey to accomplish a great deed for either some personal or some humanitarian gain, has found an ample space in the literatures of all cultures and times.

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Man and Nature: An Eco-critical Study of Ruskin Bond's Selected Short Stories

Anju Khichar

The relation of nature and human being is as old as the human race. Literature, being the mirror of society, always reflects the relationship between man and nature since we cannot conceive human life without nature. There has always been a harmonious relation between man and nature but the advent of industrial revolution and modern technology, the exploitation of nature began incessantly and ruthlessly. Consequently mankind, today, is facing a terrible environmental crisis and ecological imbalance all over the planet. Literature has always represented the issues of human life whether it is social, political, economical and scientific or technological as a mediator between humanity and the environment. Ruskin Bond is the foremost one among the modern Indian writers who have prominently written about the natural landscapes, natural beauty, environment and biodiversity.

Ruskin Bond, being a true lover of nature and ardent environmentalist, not only portrayed the natural and beautiful landscapes and the scenic beauty of the Himalayan flora and fauna also raised the issues of environmental crisis and ecological imbalance caused by the too much deforestation and irrational industrialization. His stories perceive and contemplate the symbiotic and reciprocal relationship between man and nature. They also throw light on the shared relationship between human development and the manner in which the environment impacts it. In his stories such as *In the present research paper the three short stories of Ruskin Bond namely *The Cherry Tree*, *Dust on the Mountain* and *How Far is the River* will be under taken for study in which he arouses environmental concerns through his characters who directly interact with flora and fauna i.e. animals, trees, birds, flowers and the simple hill*

folk being eco-conscious and environmental defenders. The Present research paper attempts to explore the interdependent relationship and co-existence of man and nature along with the callous effects of inconsiderate human exploitation of nature and thereby inviting environmental crisis and ecological imbalance through the lens of Eco-critical theory i.e. the interdisciplinary study of the relationship between literature and the environment.

Ruskin Bond has a close and deep understanding of nature in his writings. He deals with simple people and Nature and time is depicted as the catalyst of change. He has been perceived as the Indian 'William Wordsworth' who was hailed as 'the high priest of Nature'. His descriptions of the flora and fauna of Himalayas are truly fascinating. *The Cherry Tree* is one of Ruskin Bond's short stories that reveal man's special relation with nature. The story revolves around Rakesh, a six year old boy. He lives with his grandfather in Mussorie. He reads newspaper for his grandfather. In return, his grandfather tells him interesting stories. One day, while returning from school, he buys some cherries. He eats them all the way. On his grandfather's advice, he plants a cherry seed in the shady corner of the garden. Later he forgets all about it.

One spring morning, Rakesh finds a well rooted cherry plant. He is very pleased. He shows very much interest in the plant. One day, a goat eats all the leaves. Rakesh is very upset. His grandfather assures him that it will grow. Later a grass cutting woman cuts the cherry plant into two. He gives up all the hopes. But the cherry tree has no intention of dying. Rakesh grows with the tree. When he is eight, the cherry tree has grown up to his chest. He finds some visitors to the tree. They are small insects, bees and birds. His grandfather shows him blossoms too. A year later, the tree becomes taller than Rakesh and even his grandfather. Rakesh plays happily climbing the tree and eating the cherry fruits. His grandfather takes rest under the shade of the tree. Rakesh and his grandfather enjoy the very presence of the tree and their conversation goes thus, 'There is just the right amount of shade here,' said grandfather. 'And I like looking at the leaves.' 'They're pretty

leaves,' said Rakesh. 'And they are always ready to dance, if there's breeze.' 'There are so many trees in the forest,' said Rakesh. 'What's so special about this tree? Why do we like it so much?' 'We planted it ourselves,' said grandfather. 'That's why it's special.' 'Just one small seed,' said Rakesh, and he touched the smooth bark of the tree that had grown. He ran his hand along the trunk of the tree and put his finger to the tip of a leaf. 'I wonder,' he whispered. 'Is this what it feels to be God?'

Rakesh is puzzled how a small seed can grow into such a big tree. He wonders at the ways of god. Thus Ruskin Bond tells us how a small boy nurtures a tree, grows with it and develops a special bond with it. The story has the theme of struggle, resilience, dedication, conflict, growth, responsibility and pride. Just as an individual struggles in life so too does the cherry tree. The most interesting thing is the buoyancy that the cherry tree shows. It is as if the cherry tree declines to be overpowered by life. Thus, the story teaches the young minds the necessity of protecting ecosystems which brings benefits to society. Ecosystems are indispensable to our well-being and prosperity as they provide us with food, fresh air and water. Ecosystems also offer us an excellent outdoor recreation. Children love to read or listen to stories. Stories give them an opportunity to explore their own cultural roots, traditions and values. Rather than teaching them directly the advantages of planting trees, it's better to tell them stories like *The Cherry Tree* which will have an indirect impact upon them and they will unconsciously learn the message.

Bond's shorts stories have sincere concerns about nature, biodiversity and ecology. He is not against the irrational and unplanned urbanization or industrialization, but man should proceed in this direction with cautions deliberation for it is nature which can endows man a meaningful and healthy existence which the author implicitly suggests. I think Bond has created a land mark in his writings in raising environmental and ecological consciousness which are very pertinent in today's world when our mother earth is in peril. Bond's *Dust on the Mountains* is the story of a young boy Binsu, lives with his younger sister and mother in a very

small village of Tehri Garhwal. The village is in the hills, right in the lap of nature surrounded by oak, deodar, maple, pine and apricot trees, working hard on his farmland. . Bisnu's place is shown as such to receive no rainfall as the outcome of ruthless deforestation. Other than deforestation, trees have perished and are perishing due to our carelessness, too. The campers make a fire and forget to extinguish it which sometimes becomes the cause of huge fire. This way, thousands of Himalayan trees perished in the flames. Oaks, deodars, maples, pine trees that had taken centuries to grow get now ruthlessly damaged and destroyed in the fire. There was no one to extinguish it. It takes days to die down by itself. Due to this carelessness on people's part, many valuable trees are lost.

Looking for a job once, he comes to a limestone quarry; and is appalled to see the destruction the mining industry has done to the lovely mountains! He feels for the trees that have been knocked down and the land that has been raided of its natural beauty as it is stripped of its treasures for human benefit. Eventually when he gets a chance to make a choice about staying on in the big city or going back home; he makes the wise decision to go back home and cultivate his land. When asked why he would prefer going back to his hills where he would hardly have a chance of getting any work; he answers "*It is better to grow things on the land than blast things out of it.*" And that, if you ask me, is the biggest takeaway of this beautiful story!

Apart from the fact that it is a humble story highlighting the importance of hard work and the basic goodness of human nature, *Dust on the Mountain* is also a colourful journey that the reader takes through the eyes of our young protagonist. The change from the boy's homeland to the big city is beautifully portrayed; and so is the complexity of human nature – where on the one hand he meets kind hearted, good natured people, on the other hand he sees first hand, the dire consequences of man's greed to take from Mother Nature whatever he can, in any which way he can! In this way, the story ends with a shift in perspective, as a materialistic character, Pritam Singh, is saved by a tree and realizes the life-sustaining importance of nature, leading him to embrace conservation over destruction.

How Far Is the River is another popular story by Ruskin Bond in which the exploration of nature is highlighted. It portrays the psychology of a 12-year-old boy who longs to go out and discover nature. The boy is young and the river is small but the mountain is high. The mountain conceals the river and so the boy has never seen the river but has heard a great deal about it, of the fish in its waters, of its rocks and currents and waterfalls. The boy feels a great desire to touch the water of the river and 'know it personally'. One day his parents go out and he is sure that they will not come back home till late in the evening. So he decides to go and see the river. He takes a loaf of bread from his house and starts his journey to the river. He takes the steep path which goes round the mountain and which is frequently used by the wood cutters, milkmen, mule drivers etc. On his way, he meets a woodcutter, who is concerned about the boy when he expresses his desire to walk seven miles to reach the river. Then he enters a beautiful valley, where he meets a grass cutting girl with no clear idea about the distance to the river. Later he sees a shepherd boy with whom he walks for a while. Afterwards he is left alone again with no river in the sight. Far away from home, he begins to feel disappointed somehow. However, he does not give up as he walks more than half of the destination and if he fails to trace the river now, he will be ashamed of his experience. He walks alone on the hard, dusty and snowy path. Suddenly the silence is broken by the roaring sound of the river. The boy is delighted by the sight of the river, which he has longed to see and he runs into it till he is ankle deep in water and enjoys the feel of the cold, blue, white and wonderful water. So, with great determination, the adventurous boy fulfils his desire of seeing and feeling the river.

Hence, *How Far Is the River* describes the irresistible desire of the young boy to explore nature. It teaches children to discover the beauty of nature and learn to explore it, instead of becoming addicts of TV, computers, and electronic gadgets. The dwindling patches of greenery around them deprive them of the opportunity to connect with nature. The close association with nature helps children to develop an awareness and curiosity about things around them, while at the same time it increases

their attention span and ability to learn. Children must be told about the need to love and conserve nature as it helps them to become responsible citizens and better custodians of the Earth.

Conclusion

Thus, Ruskin Bond's short stories are replete with his sincere love for flora and fauna and thereby Ruskin Bond shows his serious apprehension for irrational exploitation of the natural resources and the ruin of biodiversity which is the main source of human life upon this planet earth. The objects of nature are living characters of his stories. He has a deep love for them. He interacts with them and cares for them. He makes us realise our duty and responsibility towards nature. Thus, he evokes ecological consciousness through his short stories. His works reflect his ardent conviction in the healing powers of nature. His major concern is his worry for the inconsiderate actions of man towards nature. Through his short stories for children he has tried to emphasize the significance of nature in our life. Man and nature are interdependent in their co-existence.

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Re-visioning Environmental Concerns and Judicial Activism

Praveen Kumar and Ratna Sisodiya

Introduction

Environmental degradation poses significant challenges to sustainable development in India, making it imperative for all branches of governance to address these concerns proactively. Among them, the judiciary has played a pivotal role in safeguarding the environment through judicial activism. This paper critically examines how the Indian Supreme Court and High Courts have re-examined as well as revised environmental governance by interpreting constitutional provisions, enforcing environmental laws, and advancing global principles such as sustainable development, the precautionary principle, and the polluter-pays doctrine.

Drawing from landmark judgments like *MC Mehta v. Union of India* (Oleum Gas Leak Case), *Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum v. Union of India* (Tanneries Case), and *T. N. Godavarman Thirumalpad v. Union of India* (Forest Conservation Case), the paper explores how judicial interventions have shaped legislative frameworks and public policies. It evaluates the judiciary's role in addressing critical issues, including air and water pollution, deforestation, and industrial contamination, while balancing environmental protection with developmental needs, as demonstrated in cases like the *Tehri Dam* judgment.

The present research paper further delves into challenges faced by courts in implementing environmental decisions, such as non-compliance by state authorities, lack of technical expertise, and the limitations of judicial overreach. By incorporating reliable data from Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) reports, Forest Survey of India (FSI) findings,

and international environmental assessments, this research highlights the interplay between judicial activism and empirical evidence.

Environmental conservation has become a critical concern in India, a nation characterized by its diverse ecosystems, rapid industrialization, and urbanization. With increasing environmental degradation—manifested in rising pollution levels, deforestation, water scarcity, and loss of biodiversity—India faces significant challenges in balancing economic development with ecological preservation. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), over 275 cities in India fail to meet national air quality standards, while the Forest Survey of India (FSI) reports that forest cover continues to be under pressure due to developmental projects. These issues not only threaten the country's ecological balance but also endanger public health, livelihoods, and sustainable development.

In this context, the judiciary has emerged as a pivotal institution in addressing environmental concerns. The Indian courts, particularly the Supreme Court and various High Courts, have taken proactive measures to interpret constitutional provisions like Article 21 (Right to Life) and Article 48A (Protection of the Environment) to ensure environmental protection. Landmark judgments such as *MC Mehta v. Union of India* (1987) and *Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum v. Union of India* (1996) have laid the foundation for environmental jurisprudence in India. Through innovative doctrines like the “polluter pays” principle, the precautionary principle, and the public trust doctrine, the judiciary has provided a framework for sustainable development while ensuring accountability for environmental harm. Judicial activism in environmental matters has not only enhanced public awareness but also influenced legislative and administrative actions, making it a cornerstone of India's environmental governance.

This research paper seeks to examine the dynamic interplay between environmental concerns and judicial activism in India. It aims to:

- **Analyze the role of Indian courts in shaping environmental policies:** By exploring landmark judgments and their implications,

the study will assess how judicial interventions have contributed to environmental protection and governance.

- **Evaluate the effectiveness of judicial activism in resolving environmental issues:** The paper will critically examine whether the judiciary's proactive role has led to tangible environmental outcomes or has been limited by challenges such as lack of enforcement and technical expertise.

By focusing on these objectives, the study endeavors to provide a comprehensive understanding of the judiciary's contributions to addressing India's environmental challenges while identifying areas for improvement in governance and policy implementation.

Research Methodology

The research adopts a qualitative approach, relying primarily on the analysis of case law, judicial orders, and environmental reports. Key components of the methodology include:

- **Case Law Analysis:** Examination of landmark judgments by the Supreme Court and High Courts, such as *M C Mehta v. Union of India*, *Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar*, and *T.N. Godavarman Thirumalpad v. Union of India*. These cases will illustrate how the judiciary has addressed specific environmental concerns and shaped legal principles.
- **Data Collection:** Insights from government reports, including those published by the CPCB, FSI, and the National Green Tribunal (NGT), will provide empirical evidence of environmental trends and judicial impact.
- **Environmental Studies:** Academic articles, books, and international reports, such as the UNEP's Global Environmental Outlook, will offer a broader context for assessing judicial activism in India.

By integrating case law analysis with empirical data and academic perspectives, this study seeks to provide a nuanced and evidence-based evaluation of judicial activism's role in re-visioning environmental concerns in India.

Conceptual Framework

India faces significant environmental challenges due to rapid urbanization, industrialization, and population growth. Increasing air and water pollution, deforestation, and climate change are key issues. Air quality in major cities like Delhi frequently exceeds hazardous levels, with particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) being a primary concern. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) highlights alarming levels of water pollution in rivers such as the Ganga and Yamuna, which fail to meet bathing standards. Deforestation further exacerbates these issues, with the Forest Survey of India (FSI) reporting a loss of green cover in ecologically sensitive regions. Additionally, the impacts of climate change, such as rising temperatures, erratic monsoons, and extreme weather events, threaten agriculture, livelihoods, and biodiversity, making environmental protection a critical priority.

Judicial Activism in India

Judicial activism has played a pivotal role in addressing environmental concerns in India, especially in the absence of strict enforcement by executive bodies. Indian courts have creatively interpreted constitutional provisions like Article 21 (Right to Life) to include the right to a clean and healthy environment. The judiciary has responded to environmental degradation through public interest litigations (PILs), landmark rulings, and suo motu interventions. The evolution of environmental jurisprudence began with cases like *Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra v. State of UP* (1987), which addressed mining in Doon Valley, setting a precedent for environmental activism.

Doctrine of Sustainable Development

The judiciary has adopted global principles such as the “polluter pays” principle, the precautionary principle, and the public trust doctrine. These principles aim to balance development with environmental sustainability. For instance, the Supreme Court in *Vellore Citizens’ Welfare Forum v. Union of India* (1996) emphasized precaution in pollution control, mandating proactive measures to prevent environmental harm. Such

doctrines ensure that economic progress does not come at the cost of ecological preservation.

This framework sets the stage for examining how judicial interventions shape India's environmental policies and governance.

Judicial Approach to Environmental Concerns

Role of the Supreme Court

The Supreme Court of India has played a transformative role in addressing environmental concerns through landmark judgments that underscore the principles of sustainability and environmental justice. In *MC Mehta v. Union of India* (1987), the Court introduced the doctrine of absolute liability in the Oleum Gas Leak Case, setting a precedent for holding industries accountable for environmental harm without exceptions. This principle has since become a cornerstone of environmental jurisprudence in India.

The case of *Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum v. Union of India* (1996) marked the judicial endorsement of the precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle, emphasizing the need for proactive environmental protection. Similarly, in *T. N. Godavarman Thirumalpad v. Union of India* (1995), the Court focused on forest conservation, issuing directives to prevent deforestation and preserve ecological balance under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

The *Tehri Dam Case* (2003) reflects the judiciary's effort to balance developmental needs with environmental protection. While allowing the construction of the dam, the Court ensured stringent compliance with environmental safeguards, showcasing its pragmatic approach to reconciling conflicting interests.

Role of High Courts

High Courts in India have also contributed significantly to environmental protection, addressing regional concerns through Public Interest Litigations (PILs) and the establishment of green benches. For instance, the Calcutta High Court's interventions in the East Kolkata Wetlands

case ensured the protection of this vital ecosystem. High Courts often adopt region-specific approaches, recognizing the diversity of environmental challenges across the country.

These courts have become a vital platform for citizens to voice their concerns, making judicial activism a powerful tool for environmental governance. By mandating stricter enforcement of environmental laws and holding authorities accountable, the judiciary continues to bridge gaps in executive action, fostering sustainable development.

Impact of Judicial Activism on Environmental Policies

Judicial activism has played a transformative role in shaping India's environmental policies, creating a robust framework for ecological preservation. Through its proactive stance, the judiciary has not only contributed to legislative advancements but has also enhanced public awareness and governance. However, the balance between judicial intervention and executive responsibilities remains a critical area of concern.

Contribution to Legislative Framework

The judiciary's interventions have significantly influenced environmental legislation in India, filling gaps where executive actions have been inadequate. Three major legislations have emerged as cornerstones of India's environmental framework, partly due to judicial oversight and activism:

I. Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974:

- a. Enacted to control water pollution and maintain or restore water quality, this Act gained momentum through judicial scrutiny in cases like *MC Mehta v. Union of India* (1988). The Supreme Court directed stringent measures to prevent industrial effluents from polluting rivers, emphasizing the role of state pollution control boards.

II. Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:

- a. This umbrella legislation was enacted following the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, a pivotal moment in India's environmental history. The judiciary, through cases such as *Indian Council for Environmental Action v. Union of India (1996)*, used this Act to penalize industrial polluters and uphold the "polluter pays" principle.

III. Forest Conservation Act, 1980:

- a. This Act's enforcement was strengthened by judicial mandates, such as in *T.N. Godavarman Thirumalpad v. Union of India (1997)*, where the Supreme Court restricted non-forest activities in forest areas, ensuring stricter compliance with conservation laws.

Role in Public Awareness and Governance

The judiciary has been instrumental in driving public awareness and influencing governance practices:

I. Ganga Rejuvenation Initiatives:

- a. The judiciary has consistently advocated for the rejuvenation of the Ganga River, starting with the *MC Mehta v. Union of India* cases. These rulings mandated industries along the riverbanks to install effluent treatment plants and encouraged government programs like the 'Namami Gange Mission'.

II. Proactive Measures by the National Green Tribunal (NGT):

- a. The NGT, established in 2010, has become a powerful tool for environmental governance. It operates as a specialized body for resolving environmental disputes efficiently. For instance, the NGT has tackled issues like illegal mining, air pollution in Delhi, and waste management through comprehensive orders that hold state authorities accountable.

Critical Analysis of Judicial Overreach

While judicial activism has undoubtedly contributed to environmental protection, it has also raised concerns about judicial overreach, where courts venture into areas traditionally reserved for the executive.

I. Balancing Proactive Role with Executive Responsibilities:

- a. Critics argue that judicial interventions sometimes undermine the separation of powers, as seen in cases like *Tehri Bandh Virodhi Sangarsh Samiti v. State of Uttar Pradesh*. Here, the judiciary's involvement in assessing technical aspects of dam construction was viewed as encroaching on executive functions.
- b. Excessive reliance on the judiciary to resolve environmental issues can lead to an imbalance, where the executive's accountability diminishes. A sustainable approach would require strengthening executive capacities and fostering inter-institutional collaboration.

In brief, judicial activism has significantly shaped India's environmental policies, from driving legislative reforms to raising public awareness and holding authorities accountable. However, as environmental challenges become increasingly complex, a balanced approach—where the judiciary supports rather than substitutes the executive—is essential to ensure sustainable governance and effective policy implementation.

Recommendations and Way Forward

The environmental challenges facing India require a comprehensive approach, integrating judicial interventions, executive actions, and public involvement. Based on an analysis of landmark judgments and environmental concerns, the following recommendations provide actionable steps toward fostering sustainability and ecological balance.

Strengthening Judicial and Executive Collaboration

The judiciary's proactive role in addressing environmental issues has been instrumental in filling legislative gaps and ensuring the enforcement

of environmental laws. However, the efficacy of such interventions often depends on seamless collaboration with the executive branch. One key recommendation is the establishment of **dedicated environmental courts in every state**. These courts, staffed with judges and environmental experts, can focus exclusively on environmental disputes, enabling faster resolutions and reducing the burden on existing judicial systems.

Such courts could function in alignment with the National Green Tribunal (NGT), which has proven its effectiveness in adjudicating complex environmental cases. For instance, in *Sterlite Industries v. Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board*, the NGT played a pivotal role in addressing industrial pollution. Expanding such mechanisms at the state level can ensure localized enforcement and address region-specific environmental issues effectively.

Further, enhanced coordination between judiciary and executive bodies like the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) can facilitate better enforcement of judicial orders. Regular consultation mechanisms, shared accountability frameworks, and performance reviews can strengthen this collaboration.

Promoting Data-Driven Policies

Judicial decisions and executive actions must be supported by reliable, real-time environmental data. Leveraging technology and data analytics can significantly enhance judicial interventions by providing accurate information about air quality, water pollution, deforestation, and other environmental parameters. For example, the Central Pollution Control Board's real-time air quality monitoring system has been instrumental in shaping policies like the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

The judiciary should encourage the government to develop and utilize a robust **national environmental database** that consolidates data from multiple sources, including satellites, on-ground sensors, and public reports. This database can serve as a critical tool for evidence-based policymaking and can inform judicial decisions in complex cases like *MC Mehta v. Union of India* (Vehicular Pollution Case).

Further, judicial orders should mandate periodic environmental impact assessments (EIAs) for industrial and developmental projects, backed by data transparency. Ensuring that these assessments are publicly accessible will foster trust and accountability while empowering citizens to engage in informed advocacy.

Public Participation

Active public involvement is crucial in addressing environmental concerns. Courts have consistently recognized the role of citizens in environmental governance, as evidenced by the increasing number of Public Interest Litigations (PILs). Cases like *Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra v. State of UP* demonstrate the potential of citizen-led movements to bring critical environmental issues to the forefront.

To enhance public participation, **legal literacy campaigns** should be organized to educate citizens about their environmental rights and the tools available to seek redressal. Additionally, platforms enabling community-driven monitoring of environmental violations can encourage whistleblowers and amplify grassroots voices. For example, mobile applications for reporting pollution or illegal activities, linked directly to regulatory authorities, can bridge the gap between citizens and enforcement agencies.

Courts should also encourage public hearings as a mandatory part of EIAs, ensuring that local communities have a say in developmental projects affecting their environment. Moreover, recognition and support for citizen advocacy groups, NGOs, and youth-led climate movements can provide a powerful push toward sustainable governance.

Conclusion

The judiciary in India has played a pivotal role in addressing and re-visioning environmental concerns. Through a series of landmark judgments, both the Supreme Court and High Courts have established significant legal doctrines, such as the precautionary principle, public trust doctrine, and polluter pays principle, which have become the bedrock of India's environmental jurisprudence. These interventions have not

only shaped the legislative framework, such as the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, and the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, but also ensured the enforcement of existing laws, thereby filling the gaps left by executive inaction. Cases like *MC Mehta v. Union of India* (Oleum Gas Leak Case) and *Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum v. Union of India* exemplify the judiciary's proactive stance in safeguarding environmental rights as fundamental rights under Article 21 of the Constitution.

However, judicial activism in environmental matters is not without its challenges. Overreach, technical constraints, and conflicts between environmental sustainability and developmental imperatives often lead to implementation hurdles. While the courts have provided much-needed directions, the reliance on judicial activism alone is neither sustainable nor desirable for long-term environmental governance. A balanced approach that strengthens institutional collaboration among the judiciary, executive, legislature, and civil society is essential to achieve sustainable development goals.

The future of environmental protection in India lies in data-driven policies, effective implementation of judicial directives, and greater public participation. By promoting integrated frameworks and aligning judicial efforts with broader national and international environmental goals, India can ensure a harmonious coexistence between development and environmental conservation. In conclusion, while judicial activism has been instrumental in re-visioning environmental concerns, a collaborative and inclusive approach is imperative to create a sustainable future. The judiciary must act as a catalyst, not a substitute, for robust environmental governance.

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Entropic Symbolism of Confusing the Confused: A Study of Thomas Pynchon's *The Cry of Lot 49* in the Context of Postmodern Aesthetics

Sumer Singh

Postmodernism is a very much unclear and very much contested artistic and cultural concept of the 1960s which claims that there is no real truth/knowledge but it is always made or invented and even not discovered. Literary critics like Leslie Fiedler, Ihab Hassan, and Irving Howe used the term 'postmodern' to characterize the experimental fiction of authors like Samuel Beckett, Jorge Louis Borges, John Barth, Donald Barthelme, and Thomas Pynchon who came to prominence after the Second World War. Postmodernism increasingly spread from the arts to philosophy and the social sciences in the late 1970s and 1980s the field of literary theory. By the late 1980s and 1990s the concept 'postmodernism' had pervaded the general consciousness of our entire culture i.e. the world of advertising, mass media, and popular culture. Postmodernism involves the undermining of the distinction between reality and its mere image or simulation through the growing sense that reality itself is but a construction made by images and representations. Since 'the real is no longer what it used to be', our desire for reality issues in the increasing production of what Jean Baudrillard calls 'the hyper-real', 'models of a real without origin or reality', together with the production of extravagant fictional images that make the hyper-real seem authentic.

In the novel *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) Thomas Pynchon presents a postmodern society of a huge replication of confusing, yet entropic symbols and ciphers, which results in endless interpretations and meanings. Therefore, the authentic interpretative communities are both indefinite and chaotic. The sole protagonist of the novel, Oedipa Maas,

is loaded with a flood of the information, yielding too much confusion, chaos and uncertainty. Throughout the novel Oedipa is tapped by the misleading entropic information she collected through chaotic forms of communication resulting in an inability to find a balance between order and anarchy where truth is hyper really lost. She, as a quester, wants to know the reality of the mysterious yet realistic riddles but fails; and consequently gets hopeless and mentally upset in the hyper real confusing world of uncorrelated information. Thus, *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) hyper-realistically fictionalizes the states of confusion, predicaments and disorientation as witnesses of the current postmodern era. Moreover, Pynchon's concept of hyper-reality is shadowed in the novel through the proliferation of signs and symbols which result in misleading and confusing communities of interpretations, meanings and information. The present research paper aims to discuss the fact that Pynchon's postmodern world is the world of confusing and simulated information and signs that dissolve the meaning and creates a fuzzy state that leads to entropy which signifies both order and disorder.

The postmodern aesthetic is defined by a playful, ironic, and eclectic mix of styles, often borrowing from popular culture and past art movements to challenge traditional ideas of originality and authenticity. Key features include the use of commercialism, kitsch, and a deconstruction of "high art" through techniques like mass-produced repetition and collage, leading to a subjective and context-dependent meaning in art. A popular postmodernist phrase was "anything goes," which referred both to this growing convergence culture as well as to the collapse of the distinction between "good" and "bad" taste and the difficulty of assigning value or judging works of art based on traditional criteria as in the case with Jeff Koons, *a popular artist of the world today*. Postmodernism is not a cynical rejection of aesthetics, but its celebration. However, it does contest the primacy of aesthetics' quest for essentialist definitions, compartmentalizing principles, and foundationalist theories of art. In short, postmodern aesthetics represents a departure from modernism, characterized by a rejection of universal truths and an embrace of subjectivity, cultural context, and playfulness in art.

The word 'entropy,' was first used by Rudolf Clausius, taken from Greek word *tropee* meaning 'transformation.' He used the word in relation to the transformation of energy in his study of thermodynamics. Thermodynamics is the science that deals with the relations between heat and work and those properties of systems that bear relation to heat and work. A system in thermodynamics is defined as a definite quantity of matter of fixed mass and identity which is bounded by a closed surface. A closed system is a system that is completely isolated and is not connected in any way with any other system. Entropy refers to this irreversible tendency of a system toward increasing disorder and inertness. Precisely, it means the measure of disorder in a closed system. The closed system can be a heat engine, a human being, a culture, galaxy or anything. In Leonard Rastrigin's opinion, ". . . all closed systems gradually become disorganized, decay, and die. In engineering practice this process is often called depreciation; in biology-aging; in chemistry-decomposition; in sociology-decay; in history-decline." (Rastrigin 43).

Entropy, above all, is about the fate of energy; its running down and its final decline in the Universe. And the fact that while energy cannot be created but entropy can be created and that the entropy of the Universe always tends to a maximum situates the contemporary writers in a gloomy atmosphere. Tony Tanner opines that 'entropy' has lot of implications in contemporary literature. Especially, it seems to have pervaded into the whole of contemporary American sensibility. In the broad apocalyptic sense, Tanner states that, entropy could be appropriately applied to those works. . . which foretell the doom of a present civilization or society" (Tanner 142). He lists John Barth and Thomas Pynchon, along with Norman Mailer, Saul Bellow, John Updike, Walker Percy, Stanley Elkin, Donald Barthelme, as writers who have actually used the word.

Thomas Pynchon is considered as one of the prominent figures of postmodernism in literature and many critics call him as the quintessential postmodern author. The novel *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) employs unreliable narration and questions the nature of truth and reality, reflecting a postmodern skepticism of "grand narratives". Other key features

include a blending of genres like detective fiction with avant-garde elements and a focus on communication and conspiracy as central themes. Thus, Oedipa's quest in *The Crying of Lot 49* from the beginning to the end is another interesting textual quest. The main character in the text is Oedipa Maas and she is a standard house-wife who lives with her husband, Mucho Maas in Kinneret. The novel begins with Oedipa coming to know from a letter that she had been named executrix of the estate of Pierce Inverarity, her ex-lover. The letter from Metzger informs her about the death of Pierce and the eventual discovery of his will. Metzger was to act as co-executor and special counsel in the event of any involved litigation. Oedipa had been named also to execute the will in a codicil dated a year ago. This text in the form of a will and the letter initiates her quest, but in the process, she starts textualising all her experience. She forms the habit of noting down anything strange she comes across in her memo book. The first item she makes note of is the address and the ambiguous WASTE symbol that she happens to find on the wall of a toilet in one of Inverarity's firms. Though later it has been removed miraculously from the wall, it stays there in Oedipa's memo book which continues to haunt her. Soon she understands that the symbol she saw on the wall is related to an underground postal system named "Tristero."

Subsequently, she identifies the connection between the Tristero and the plot of *The Courier's Tragedy* by Richard Wharfinger. After finding a chance to see the enactment of the play she approaches the director for the script. But she learns that the director is not using the original but only its worn out copies. Those copies were made from a paperback anthology of Jacobean Revenge Plays, the publisher unknown since the director found it at a Used Books Shop by the freeway. The director recalls that there was another copy yet he is bewildered that so many like Oedipa were interested in the text than the performance. Somehow Oedipa manages to trace the text of *The Courier's Tragedy*. Nevertheless, it happens to be just the beginning of her quest and the more she comes to know about the word Tristero the more its meaning eludes from her because of its net work of textual connections.

Yet Oedipa decides to check it up on her own and she gets the book from the publishers in Berkeley. After getting the book, Oedipa is in a shock to realise that the line about Tristero is just missing. Puzzled she finds that this edition also has a footnote. Instead of clearing her doubts the note only enhances her suspicions about the possibility of other editions of the same text. Undaunted she intends to meet the Professor at California who has given the note. She meets Emory Bortz, the professor, who is astonished to find that she has brought a pirated and bowdlerised edition of his. The eventual discussions and textual investigations lead her to further entanglement in the linguistic maze. In the end she starts doubting the authenticity of all these texts including the codicil that named her the executrix as well as the meaning of her own self which is now in relation with all these texts. Oedipa, fondly called by her husband and others as 'Oed,' may as well stand for the Oxford English Dictionary. This polymorphous texture of the text of her quest reveals to Oedipa the ultimate amorphous texture of the self within. Pynchon finds this the appropriate point in which he gives an open-ended ending to his own text.

In this context of the confusion of fictitious history and fact/reality Karl Marx's famous observation that important events in history tend to occur twice: the first time as tragedy, and the second time as farce! To stretch this observation further, and relate it to the fictional history, the death of the Victorian type novels occurs in Modernism as tragedy and in Postmodernism as farce. Put in this way, if the Modernist aims at a version of reality, the Postmodernist's objective is to create a subversion of it. Re-reading history as *his-story*, the Postmodernists are wanton spectators than participators in the chronicles of their times. In addition, as onlookers they see the events with flippant interest as if they occur in a game. Hence, if at all Barth and Pynchon deal with history their aim is mostly to play with it than to handle it in all solemnity.

Pynchon's inclusion of so much actual history in *The Crying of Lot 49* further confuses the distinction between fiction and fact. When so much of the novel concerns well-known places and real events, the reader's problem in sorting out the real from the imagined becomes similar to

Oedipa's uncertain experience of the Tristero. Pynchon's use of such historical facts is one of the main devices for making the reader think about possible connections between private feelings and the world outside the self. The repeated references to Nazi Germany, and the fascist abuse of power, particularly concerning the Jews, is one example of how the novel uses facts from actual history to suggest connections between Oedipa's world and the reader's own, forming a disturbing historical background to her experiences of modern California.

This sort of combination of historical fact with fiction occurs extensively throughout *The Crying of Lot 49*, so that as Oedipa gradually discovers the possible existence of the Tristero, she and the reader also rediscover a lost sense of America's own past history. By the time the novel ends, Oedipa has considered again how different California now is from the time when it was a land of wonderful promise he has realised how her own experiences as a student during the 1950s seem to belong to a different world from the 1960s. When she examines the history of the Tristero, she learns of the similarities between the Thurn and Taxis postal monopoly, which actually existed in Europe, and the American government's own postal monopoly. When the reader, in turn, examines Pynchon's novel, he learns of the connections between Arrabal's anarchism, beginning in Mexico but now surviving in exile in California, and the visit of Mikail Bakunin, one of the most famous anarchist thinkers, and himself an exile from Russia, to California in 1861. At the same time as Oedipa is discovering fragments of evidence about the Tristero, the reader is encountering little pieces of history which themselves seem to connect together and suggest a wider pattern of significance. So Oedipa's unsettling discovery of the Tristero is mirrored in the reader's own discovery of a network of historical clues and suggestions. The reader is forced to ask questions about this information similar to those which Oedipa asks about the Tristero.

In this way the postmodern writers, who are the producers of de-teleological texts, de-centre the concepts of conventional fictional types; and therefore the postmodern novels are the parodies of the de-teleological texts. The de-teleological characters too search for keys,

but in a milieu where they are confounded with multiple keys and they spend the rest of their lives testing the validity of those keys. In this case Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* is an exemplary novel of this kind; and the kind of 'key-novel' he is parodying is the detective fiction. In some detective novels, the reader knows from the start the truth about the 'mystery,' and watches the progress of someone who tries to discover it. More often, both the reader and the detective are puzzled by the event, and the novel presents the detective's discoveries and gradual working out of the truth. In this sense then, *The Crying of Lot 49* is rather like a detective story, for the reader is as unclear as Oedipa, notes the strange things which happen to her, follows her attempts to explain them, and shares in her possible discovery of the mysterious Tristero system. The end of the novel is quite unlike a detective story, for rather than presenting a solution to the mysteries, it leaves both Oedipa and the reader in doubt about the truth, or even the possibility that any explanation can ever be discovered for all that has happened to her.

Detective stories always assume that there is a reasonable explanation to be discovered for any event or circumstance, if only the detective looks hard and carefully enough. But *The Crying of Lot 49* examines instead this assumption itself, and raises questions about such ways of making sense of experience and reducing it to orders and patterns. If the reader learned at the end of the novel whether or not the Tristero really existed, then Oedipa's adventures could be more simply explained and interpreted. As it is, our uncertainty makes us share exactly with Oedipa both her confusion and the questions it creates about the nature and truthfulness of the interpretations she makes. Nonetheless, Pynchon also seems to have recognised that information may be defined as disorder rather than as order. In information theory, the more uncertain a message, the more information it can convey. Thus entropy, being a measure of increasing information, becomes a positive tendency. In this light, as Thomas Schaub points out, Oedipa's search offers the possibility of hope-although the more she, and the reader, learn about the Tristero, the more we are overwhelmed by the amount of information and its

uncertainty. Indeed, in each of his novels Pynchon draws us into a search for order, where the information and uncertainty become overwhelming, and where the search itself, while necessary and even ennobling, tends toward disorder.

The Crying of lot 49 is a postmodern text that shows a fragmented and paranoid society. Pynchon uses some postmodern characteristics in his novel in order to display today's contemporary world and its impact on human life and future of literature. Throughout the text he discusses the how nowadays people are disconnected from actual reality, and how they are running after something, but do not really know what they are running after. He shows how people are so much busy that they fail to manage time for themselves or for dearest ones. Moreover, he reflects how they become so materialistic and running after a better future which ultimately leads to lost identity, feel alienated and frustrated.

The Crying of Lot 49 ends with the probability of offering further clues to baffle their protagonists in their paranoiac pursuits. Thus, instead of unknitting the mysterious plots, the author entangles them further and leaves the questors where they commenced long before. Although the postmodernists flaunt with the endings in their novels, it is held in leash and contained by the printed medium. Notwithstanding the different unending postmodern endings, the time the reader sees the last printed word in the text, he understands that as the last word written by the author and envisages the end. But this readily presumption and the limitation imposed by the print medium is getting challenged by the new kind of fiction that has been emerging and flourishing rapidly using the electronic medium popularly termed 'the Hypertext.' In a hypertext both the writing as well as the reading occurs using the hyperlinks networked by a computer.

Conclusion

To sum up, the process involved in the fabrication of the self and the text bears similarities in their intricate complexity as well as their functional fluidity. The postmodern de-teleological texts, as demonstrated

by Barth and Pynchon, do not operate with illusive notions about purpose or design with pre-determined ends. With its mosaic texture, it considers the transpiring of any experience basically a falsification. Conversely, fiction is not a lie but a true representation of the distortion one makes of life. Here, faithfulness to the self connotes strict observance to the fluid, de-teleological text-self-written or mirrored. Hence, the protean wo/men's quests start and end with texts and their identities hang in relation between the blurred boundaries of texts and their endless references.

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Dalit Voices: The Nation Through a Different Lens

Shruti Jain

To me, Dalit is not a caste. He is a man exploited by the social and economic traditions of this country. He does not believe in God, Rebirth, Soul, Holy Books teaching separatism, Fate and Heaven because they have made him a slave. He does believe in humanism. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution.

(Gangadhar Pantawane qtd. in Zelliott 268)

India has often been claimed and described as a land of diversity but unfortunately a part of our nation, now recognised as Dalit has been ignored and oppressed since a very long time. Smita Narula in *Broken People: Caste Violence Against India's Untouchables* highlights that "More than one-sixth of India's population, about 160 million people live a precarious existence, shunned by many because of their rank [. . .]

at the bottom of India's caste system. Dalits are discriminated against, denied access to land, forced to work in degrading conditions, and routinely abused at the hands of the police and higher caste group" (Abstract Narula). Sailajananda Saikia in "Caste Base Discrimination in the enjoyment of Fundamental Rights: A Critical Review on the Present Caste Based Status of Dalits in India" substantiated Narula's point with relevant arguments. He highlights that a Dalit marrying someone from an upper caste is still viewed as a crime, and punishments for offenses vary significantly between Dalits and other castes. Even now, Dalits are largely restricted to occupations considered degrading in Indian society. In many regions of the country, upper-caste Hindus still refuse to share their food and tables with Dalits. Those Dalits who progress socially often encounter severe repression from dominant

castes through appalling acts of violence and humiliation. This has been well narrated by a Indian Dalit poet of Western India, Hira Bansode in “Bosom Friend”. Hira Bansode was born in 1939 in the Mahar community of a small village in Pune district. During the time when our country was swiftly moving towards independence, Bansode gave voice to the suppressed realities of pain, unfulfilled hopes, and the dreams of Dalit women.

Hira’s poem begins on a joyous note, her friend from the upper caste has come to her home. The narrator is elated because the friend has broken the cage of the

[. . .] traditions of inequality [. . .] But [. . .]

With a smirk you said Oh My- Do you serve chutny Koshimbir this way? You, still don’t know how to serve food

Truly, you folk will never improve (Bansode 49).

Bansode rips apart the illusion of equality upheld by the modern urban cities, exposing how the caste practices have evolved into an indoctrinated ideology. In this context, Jotirao Phule, a pioneer of Dalit education and one of Western India’s most significant activists and writers, reveals in his best known work *Gulamgiri* (1873) that the caste hierarchy has been craftily constructed and maintained. According to him, the monopoly of a particular upper caste section had also been the prime reason for the oppressive conditions of the Sudras and Atisudras.

“The institution of Caste, [. . .] has been the main object of their deep cunning [. . .] Sudras and Atisudras were regarded with supreme hate and contempt [. . .] commonest rights of humanity were denied to them” (Phule 5).

In light of this renowned work, it can be argued that the Varna system serves as a broad framework for the caste system. The Varna system categorizes Indian society into four categories: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Varna System originated during Rig Vedic Period (1500 - 1000 BCE). This system was based on the concept of karma and the people of multiple occupation were considered to be the part of

one Varna. In contrast, the Caste system became more rigid over time, eventually taking on a hereditary nature. A person's caste status was no longer decided by their work and actions but was completely determined by their birth. Individuals started getting chained by the caste of their parents and the possibilities of any social mobility was denied. This system also included a fifth group known by many names such as Avarna, Harijan, Untouchables, Depressed Classes and then finally the “[. . .] Marathi word Dalit [. . .] was chosen by the group itself and is used proudly [. . .]” (*From Untouchable to Dalit* 267).

Tracing the spread of this caste trap in the Western part of our country, Ishita Banerjee- Dube in a “History of Modern India” charts how the Peshwai stood as the symbol of ‘Brahman Raj’ and established Brahmanical supremacy over the Maratha lands (17). This divide could not even let India to unify itself against the British colonisation or at least, borrowing the phrase from “Decolonising the Indian Mind” by Namvar Singh, it can be said that there could be no one common solution to decolonise the Indian mind:

If we were to pit an image of our nation against colonialism, whose nation would it be? [. . .] But what then will be the nation of those who are oppressed by the state and wish therefore to change it? How can those identify with this nationalism who are obliged to live at a level not fit for human beings even forty years after Independence? For how long can a Dalit go on sacrificing his identity for the identity of the nation? (Singh 435).

Nevertheless, the fact that British colonisation provided some new opportunities to the Dalits in the Western India cannot be overlooked. Dalits witnessed economic progression and received access to education during the British Rule. Ishita Banerjee Dube in her book talks about various ways through which British rule not only led to the development of ‘non-Brahman ideology’ but also acted as a catalyst to many Dalit movements. The prime reason was the Christian missionaries looking down upon caste as a monstrous evil - ‘an unmitigated evil’. Ironically, the institution of Caste also gave the Christian missionaries a

reason to assert the superiority of their religion over Hinduism. Interestingly, their condemn for the Hindu Caste system stirred many Indians to fight the menace. Therefore, it can be claimed, that colonial intervention and their new education system which gave access to information and knowledge to the lower caste people catalyzed intellectuals of the Western part of India to claim an identity for the Dalits.

Gopal Baba Walangkar was a soldier who was born in Mahar community. He started a newspaper in which he openly criticised and challenged the upper caste inhumanity against the Dalits. Eleanor Zelliott in her essay “‘Introduction’ to Dalit Sahitya” reveals that Walangkar appealed the British Government to have a provision to recruit the Dalits in the Army (Zelliott 85).

Jotirao Phule who belonged to the Malis caste founded the Satyashodhak Samaj to educate the Dalits and made them aware about their social rights. Phule studied in a school run by Scottish missionaries. Ramachandra Guha in his work *Makers of Modern India* discusses that Phule was significantly inspired by a school run for girls by American Missionaries in Maharashtra. His decision to open a school for Dalits was influenced by these interactions. Guha mentions that “[. . .] Phule was convinced that Western education, with its rationalist outlook, could play a key role in the emancipation of the low caste [. . .]” (75-76). Phule was truly a revolutionary who bluntly criticized the caste prejudices. In his work *Gulamgiri*, drawing from researches, Phule claimed that the Brahmans were not the natives of India. He also exposed the shrewd ways in which upper castes claimed their superiority over the ‘Sudras and Atisudras’ since ages. Phule’s work and ideas influenced many Dalit thinkers and activists in Western India.

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar who is known as the father of the Indian Constitution and regarded as the supreme advocate of Dalit progression and individuality was also greatly influenced by Jotirao Phule. He was born in Mahar community, Madhya Pradesh and became the first Indian to receive a Doctorate Degree in Economics from the foreign lands

and “[. . .] probably held more degrees than any Brahman in the Maharashtra area” (Zelliot 86). He wrote extensively about the tortures a Dalit has undergone due to Indian Caste System. In the Preface to “Who Were the Shudras” (1946), Ambedkar equated the religion of Hindus to business and attacked them for using their claimed ‘Sacred Books’ to exploit the Dalits and gain privileges for their own caste(s). He referred the ‘Sacred Books’ to be a constructed reality of Brahmans that is responsible for the social degradation of the country. Without any fear, he vehemently criticized the High Court Hindu judges and even the Hindu Prime Minister to be involved in this repressive act (Ambedkar 54-55).

Ramachandra Guha in his work *Makers of Modern India* reveals that Ambedkar and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi could never bridge their differences. The British Government agreed for a separate electorate for the ‘Untouchables’ in 1932 but Gandhi ji was not happy with the decision and went on a fast to project his disagreement. Consequently, through the Poona Pact the decision for the separate electorate was taken back with a promise of increased number of seats for the ‘Depressed Classes’ (206). Guha in the same work also uses the term ‘rivals’ (207) to describe the relation between Gandhi and Ambedkar. The irony that gets highlighted through it is that two of the greatest revolutionaries and freedom figures of India had different definitions of independence. Their outlook was contrasting as Gandhi saw fragmentation in separate electorate but Ambedkar was highlighting the absence of the Dalits in the concept of unified nationhood.

Ambedkar used English language to talk about the traumatic reality of untouchability faced by the Dalits and “[. . .] focused the world’s attention on their civic, social and political rights and liberties [. . .] and gave it a global publicity” (Dhananjay Keer qtd. in Guha 207). Since then many Dalit writers from the Western part of India have used English, the global language to lay bare their struggles, sufferings, desires, dreams in front of the larger world. Their works, whether written in English or translated into English, express a sense of empowerment through various means.

Eleanor Zelliot in her book *From Untouchable to Dalit* informs that a significant extensive analysis of the Dalit literature produced in English language which encompassed different genres like ‘poetry, stories and essays’ has been the finest description of Dalit literature. This analysis was published in November 1973 edition of *The Times Weekly Supplement* and is remembered as a “[. . .] mass physical reaction to violence against Untouchables [. . .] (267).

Dalit writers writing in English Literature or their work getting translated in English ensures that the voices against the caste injustices and their struggle to attain an identity in their own country is preserved forever. In fact, it can be said that English language act as common ground where the different regional dalit voices unite. The same struggle for identity, spirit for freedom and a socio-political consciousness gets reflected in the works of varied Dalit writers yet the differences of language, style, tone, personal tribulations and dreams of hope cannot be ignored in works of varied Dalit writers.

Let us now study some more Indian Dalit Literature written either originally in English or translated in English language.

Jayant Parmar was born in 1954, Ahmedabad, Gujarat. In one of his most famous poems, “The Last Will of a Dalit Poet”, Parmar explicitly rejects the appreciated linguistic devices and uses day-to-day raw images to bring his sufferings and loss of identity being born a dalit in the Indian society:

He (a dalit poet) never assaults you with

Symbols,

Metaphors

Or personalities. (15)

He not only rejects the use of figurative devices but also breaks away from the conventional grammatical structure through the capitalization of common nouns in a sentence. Capitalization of the words like symbols and metaphors further helps him to highlight the difference between the ornamental lavish lives and the harsh struggles of a dalit life.

Images like ‘cow-dung’, ‘broken cup’, ‘lantern of his ancestors’ not only convey a sense of poverty but at the same time there is a proud acceptance of this reality. He bravely accepts his legacy: “A paper dripping with wet blood, A black sun” (15) and promises to establish himself, his identity. He ends the poem with a resounding strike by denying to plead for assimilation in the upper-caste culture and publicly declaring himself to be a ‘dalit poet’. In doing so, he asserts a strong distinctiveness from the privileged caste.

In the same spirit, Hira Bansode fiercely punctures the inflated sense of self of her upper-caste friend: “Are you going to tell me what mistakes I made?/Are you going to tell me my mistakes?” (“Bosom Friend”, 50). In the poem “Bosom Friend”, Bansode narrates the oppressive conditions in which a dalit survives. Her outrageous tone in her poem “Lost Sun” reflects her exasperation against the Caste System. She is adamant to throw away the discriminatory practices: “The fight is inevitable [. . .] Rebellion shakes in every vein/ How can war not proceed [. . .]?” (287).

In “Bosom Friends”, she recollects how her mother used to cook on the sawdust which used to fill her eyes with smoke. They never tasted ‘Shrikhand’ in their life rather the only delicacy that they enjoyed was ‘garlic chutney’ sometimes served with ‘coarse bread’. The poet is no more ashamed to share the reality of people surviving on the margins. She undercuts the myth of progressive and glamoured Western Indian urban spaces and gives a powerful peep into the urban poverty of a dalit life.

Jayant Parmar in his other poem “I am a Man Like You” also draws attention to the dalit state of poverty. He uses simple emotional language to highlight the abuse and torture of a dalit, yet his choice of words are evocative:

Can't really be called a man.
 Yet I am a man just like you.
 You have sheltered me in this hut
 Made up of rags and bamboo walls

Decorated with hunger, poverty and illness. (16)

Sharan Kumar Limbale was born in 1956 in Maharashtra. In his poem the “White Paper” he aggressively deconstructs the use of the white paper. A white paper is used for documentation of laws, rights, notices, transactions, deals and decisions both in the government offices and public sector. Limbale artfully uses this white paper to keep his demands. He starts by demanding: “My right as a man” (Electronic Source). The demand though seems to be a simple basic plea of a dalit but in the process of keeping this requirement, Limbale ruthlessly overthrows the upper-caste constructions that have subdued a dalit since centuries. He crushes upper-caste traditions, hurls their inheritance of ‘lands and mansions’, unseats their ‘gods and rituals’ and finally wields power by refusing to be a part of their ‘castes or sects’. While highlighting the exploitation and humiliation inflicted by the upper caste, Limbale also disrupts the neat outlines sketched by the upper-caste with unabashed chaos. He blurs the boundaries between cities, villages and men and shatters the illusion of embracing ideologies of the urban upper-caste:

You’ll beat me, break me,

Loot and burn my habitation

[. . .]

My rights: contagious caste riots

Festering city by city, village by village,

Man by man

For that’s what my rights are

Sealed off, outcast, road-blocked, exiled. (Electronic Source)

The poem ends with an aggressive assertion of his rights and individuality: “I want my rights [. . .] My rights are rising like the sun” (Electronic Source).

Namdeo Dhasal, the founder of Dalit Panther (1972) was a Marathi

poet. Dhasal, in his poem “Man, You Should Explode”, like Limbale, unearths the falsehood of civilized urban society by disrupting the sense of harmony and startling the reader through the violence of murders, killings and rapes. Through the picture of a disintegrating society he muddles up the upper-caste demarcations that help them retain their superiority over the dalits:

Let all this grow into a tumor to fill the universe, balloon up
 And burst at a nameless time to shrink
 After this all those who survive [. . .]
 [. . .] should stop calling one another names white or black,
 brahamin, kshatriya, vaishya, or shudra; [. . .] (11)

Notably, the planned explosion will create a world where only humanity will reside and men will “bask in mutual love” (11). Nonetheless, what is heart-wrenching is that despite his counter-hegemonic strategies, many of his poem are filled with demeaning and humiliating everyday experiences of the Dalits residing in the supposedly liberating and progressive urban spaces.

Intriguingly, Neerav Patel born in 1950, Gujarat also uses a sharp tone and disturbing yet dramatic vocabulary to reveal the degrading reality of a dalit life. He starts his poem “Exiled Flowers” with a complicated riddle that has to be solved:

If that’s the order we bow our heads.
 We will call flowers by any other name,
 Will the fragrance die?
 And if we call them flowers,
 Will the stench go?

He associates both fragrance and stench with flowers. The flowers symbolize Dalit community. The straightforward word ‘order’ reminds us of the caste hierarchy and therefore, it can be easily understood that the first time when Dalits have been depicted through flowers, Patel

dismisses the disgrace associated with a dalit. Nonetheless, through the next rhetoric he skillfully overthrows the system of caste hierarchy itself by aligning ‘fragrance’ and ‘stench’. He uses the most befitting juxtaposition when with a brazen courage, he highlights the hypocrite codependency between the two castes: “The may enjoy loitering in the Moghul garden [. . .] But no, they cannot be in Nathdwara.” While describing this dreadful reality through the most common things, the sudden encounter with the repulsive image: “Joyous are our lives like ‘latrines’” makes every semblance of upper-caste humanity reek.

Pravin Gadhvi (1950-) is a retired IAS officer of the Gujarat Government. He confronts the issue of the age old caste prejudices through the use of direct and sharp language that suits the contemporary world in his poem “Farewell to Arms”:

Will you tolerate if your Draupadi selects our son Galiya as her husband?
And will your Arjun accept our daughter Raili if she comes as new
Chitrangada?

[. . .]

Our Magan and Chhagan will compete on open merit basis,

But will you give admission to them in you convent schools? (Electronic Source)

Gadhvi’s simple but curt question projects a dalit’s deep disenchantment with the biased codes and principals on which even the modern-day Indian society has been built.

Hence, to conclude, we can say that what we see in this article is a poignant truth emerging from the discussed writings. The above Dalit narrations from the Western part of India echo that the periodic declarations of our nation’s advancement and progress have always been fraught with injustices and unfulfilled assurance of equality and dignity. The struggle of the Dalit writers for freedom and respectable existence challenges the grand narratives of independence, expansion and advancement.

Suraj Miling Yengde in *Caste Matters* rightly says: “Caste will matter until it is done away with” (37).

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Diaspora and Nationalism In The Works of Rohinton Mistry

Uzma Nishat

Such a Long Journey (1991) is Rohinton Mistry's first novel. The story clearly shows the Parsi community in India and the development of post-colonial India. This work is acclaimed and has been regarded as a landmark in the history of Indian English Fiction. It is the first novel to receive the prestigious Governor General's Award for fiction in the publication in 1991. This book was also booked for the Booker Prize in 1991. In brief, the book is widely reviewed in Canada, Britain, the United States, and India.

The story of Such a Long Journey aptly communicates the feelings and apprehensions of the minority community and exploits history to explore the broader concerns of the Parsi community. It describes the lifestyle of Parsis living in the Khodadad Building, a Parsi enclave of Bombay which is a kind of microcosm of the Parsis in India expressing all the angularities of a declining Parsi community. Rohinton Mistry in his work had drawn the picture describing the insecurities, alienation, apprehension, and the sense of displacement felt by the Parsis. This novel describes the protagonist Gustad Noble who works as a clerk in Bombay. The setting of the novel is in 1971, a period of political upheavals in the history of India. There is a reference to the infamous Nagarwala Conspiracy of 1971 in which Sohrab Nagarwala, the chief cashier of the State Bank of India was involved. The conspiracy made its way to imprisonment. This attempt represents the Indian socio-political and cultural ethos in a negative tone. Mistry's novel explores the theme of nationalism with diasporic elements in it. The plot involves Parsi, Gustad, and his family, who are interwoven with events in the national scene. The scene of war between India and Bangladesh presents Gustad's

suffering. Indian, middle-class family constantly struggles with daily expenses and corruption all over the country. Mistry denounces the picture of political upheaval at that particular time in the story. The story can explore the nationalism factors by exploring international and intra-national politics. Gustad is portrayed as a self-made man who had to shoulder the hardship and humiliation of standing on his own feet after he had been declared bankrupt. Gustad belonging to the minority community has to ensure the survival of his family. His son Sohrab adds to his misery since he rebels against him, and acts against his actions of joining the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT). Gustad had suffered due to his brother otherwise he belongs to a reputed family whose grandfather was a prosperous furniture dealer and his father was a famous bookseller. Gustad's condition was reduced to a poor and helpless man. His dreams came to shatter as his son, Sohrab refused to join the IIT. Gustad also suffered from the hand of his dear friend Jimmy Bilmoria who had left him unnoticed and uninformed.

Mistry depicts the Parsis' emotional feelings of insecurity under the influence of political power. The story captures the relationships and practices at the heart of the community like death, celebrations, ceremonies and festivals, worship of God, rituals and culinary practices. Parsis are presented as preserving their identity within the dominant culture of India. The dialogue between Gustad and his friend Malcolm, who is a catholic community member, aptly describes their attitude towards the majority of the section of the society. *Such a Long Journey* explores the differences in the culture and the societies in India and at the same time also shows the bonding of different cultures giving an example of nationalism.

The representation of the journey can be applied to the life of Gustad. This journey is not only the physical changes of the character but also the journey of the character through the self-realization of the community's existence. The first is the Firdausis Iranic epic, Shah Nama, which recalls the glorious Iranian heritage of the almighty Empire, and also presents the downgraded condition of present-day Parsi. The second epigraph from T.S. Eliot provides the central metaphor of the Journey

in the novel. *Gitanjali* by Rabindranath Tagore presents a long journey in a cold and hostile world. A wall of the Khodadad building represents the separation of the outside world from the inside Parsi community of Bombay. The act of painting the wall from the outside had a purpose behind it to be promoted, "People should understand tolerance among different cultures and society". The wall became a multicultural mosaic for people of different religions and cultures. It became a symbol of unity for various cultural and religious origins. The tone of Rohinton Mistri is allegorical in presenting multiculturalism. The sense of alienation and displacement is strongly felt by the Parsi community in this work. The long-suffering, segregation, marginalisation and loneliness have been explored in this work by Rohinton Mistri. The nation of displacement is seen through the character of Dein Shah Ji.

Thus, the diasporic identity of Gustad Noble reveals that he had to struggle very hard to survive in the society where he belongs to a member of a minority Parsi community. This shows the loss of nationalism in the character of his nation. Gustad Noble being the father of two sons Sorabh and Darius and a daughter Roshan, dreams of providing them with a successful life at the same time he is afraid of the real experiences. The feelings and apprehension of the minority Parsi community have been well portrayed by Rohinton Mistri. Mistri has reflected the themes at the social, personal, and national levels.

Rohinton Mistri is a Parsi Gujarati of Indian origin, who has immigrated to Canada. The multi-spaces he inhabits are Indian, Parsi, and Canadian. He is displaced twice which gives rise to the concept of identity, sense of belonging, ethnic issues, nostalgia, alienation and nationality crisis. Rohinton Mistry has enjoyed retaining his identity in his own nation. Nostalgia and uprootedness are the prominent themes of his works. The characters of the novel struggle hard to preserve the past and prevent the disintegration of the family and the community. The history of forced exile induces him to write about the displaced identities and to construct a new identity in his nation. Mistry and other Parsi writers belong to a diasporic individual who is in search of nationalism. He tries to express a desire to locate himself in his homeland. This reserves in a

traumatic situation for his character, Gustad Noble and his family. The theme of adaptation is also prevalent throughout his novel as his characters try to adapt to the culture of the existing major community. He introduces his Parsi community in which the Parsi community always express their sympathy toward their minority community. Rohinton Mistry chooses to revisit his original home city and culture rather than detail the immigrant experience. His works are diasporic discourse asserting ethno-religious differences. He chooses to locate time and space for the Parsi community those who belong to the suburb of Bombay and ruler migrants. Mistry's father belonged to the middle-class Parsi family. His childhood was spent in the Parsi culture therefore he portrays Parsi characters in his works. His works are splendid celebrations of Indian English. Mistry is acutely realistic and sharply focused on the contradictions within the Parsi experience in India where they belong simultaneously to the community. This is the dilemma of the Parsi community that Mistry has highlighted, the conflict of interest among the people living in a nation. Therefore, the Parsi community experiences double displacement. Mistry's fiction can be read within this framework as the experiences of double displacement and the attempts of individuals to cope with the contradictions and dilemmas. Mistry's works are emotionally expressed with diasporic experiences of nostalgia, alienation from homeland and after-effects of exile. He has described the Parsi consciousness and observance of ethnoreligious customs.

To conclude, the paper explores the themes of diaspora and nationalism through the present novel and discusses such a long journey. Rohinton Mistry has aptly described the major identity crisis of the entire community in post-colonial India. Mistry works are enriched with the middle class and lower middle class as well as subalterns who are homeless urban immigrants to Canada as well as the working class and ruler immigrants. His deliberate selections have the aim to focus on the lower end of the social order people, who are the victims of marginalisation. His characters hover on the periphery of a neutralised, international bourgeoisie culture and in their root culture. Rohinton Mistry tries to understand the concept of rootlessness of the diasporic

communities. His writings represent nationalism and multiculturalism and their effects on the characters who are struggling for their identity in a foreign land. The continuous search for identity and self leads to the assimilation of the hybridized culture which is devoid of love, truth and faith.

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Tracing the Identity and Culture of Dungri Garasiya Bhils through Selected Folk Tales

Nupur Kapadia & Vijay D. Mangukiya

Dungri Garasiya Bhils lived on either side of the state border between Gujarat and Rajasthan today, but earlier they all used to live in one state. It is a subgroup of the Bhil ethnic group located in Gujarat, India. In the Rajasthani dialect, “Dungri” translates to hills, and “Garasiya” refers to forests clearer. They moved from Mewar to Gujarat approximately 300 years ago to seek refuge from Muslim forces. They reside in the talukas of Meghraj, Bhiloda, Vijayanagar, and Khedbrahma within the Sabarkantha district of Gujarat. They were divided into clans based on geographical location, but they all were united and friendly.

Marija Sres is a Slovene Catholic anthropologist who has dedicated much of her life to studying and working with the Dungri Bhils, a tribal community in western India. Her deep respect marks her relationship with the Dungri Bhils for their culture, tradition, and language.

First, There Was Woman is a tale that draws upon the idea of how God created woman first. He made a woman’s bones named it *Pruthvi* (Earth) and decorated it by planting trees of oak, bamboo, and teak. And he fell in love with his creation, *Pruthvi*. Then he created animals and birds to amuse and keep *Pruthvi* happy. On the eve of *Aamli-melo* (Fair), God took some soil and shaped a murti, an image of the most beautiful creation and it was a woman. He called her ‘sati’. And since then, unmarried women have been denoted as sati. She used to live in the lap of nature surrounded by animals and birds but she felt very lonely as there was no one like her so *kudrat* (Nature) put a serpent into the forest. Upon seeing it sati thought of giving birth to someone like her and so she embraced the snake and the woman conceived through the power of the serpent. The blood that fell during delivery

took the form of Kesuda flowers and the cord evolved into teak leaves. And this is how man came into the world. In certain adaptations of this myth, a woman is depicted as the original entity, who ultimately gives birth to humanity. This woman represents the source of all life, and through her existence, the human race emerges. In this tale, the male figure often appears afterward, yet it is the woman who plays a central role in the origin of humanity. This belief highlights the significance of women in creation, underscoring the reverence for feminine strength and fertility that is prominent in many indigenous societies. In these cultural narratives, the connections between gender, creation, and the natural environment are frequently interlinked, influencing social structure, ceremonies, and cultural traditions that remain meaningful for the Bhil people today. Himmat Ben shares her story where she tells how women were labelled as “Witch”. She was accused of killing her brother’s grandchild and eating his liver. Although women may occasionally be categorized as witches or thought to have supernatural abilities linked to witchcraft, they also play an important role as spiritual leaders and healers. They held a women’s meeting where they discussed and decided that the myth of devouring witches came out of men’s hatred for strong and independent women. They also have superstitious beliefs as a tale sung during Diwali narrates the story of King Hudo, in the small town of Shamlaji. He had seven queens but none had children. So, the people of the village considered the king as inauspicious and barren. They held him responsible even for the barren fields and thought it was because of the curse on King hudo. Even the poor people and birds didn’t accept his offer. But later he performed penance in deep forests and his wish was fulfilled at the end as three sons and four daughters were born to his seven queens. And he was freed from the curse upon him.

They lived in real harmony with their environment including birds, animals, and trees. It was classified as the golden age of harmony. They believe in supernatural elements and ghosts. They are of the view that bhoots reside on pipal trees and watch over the Adivasi villages. It is a well-known truth that these spirits protect the Adivasi and never harm them.

During rainy season and heavy showers, they suffered due to floods and the village drowned and were cut off from vegetation. After the deluge, there were very few who survived among whom Kavi and Kava were the ones, saved from the flood. They believe in the presence of *Kudrat* (Nature), God as the abiding force in nature, permeating and providing for everything. They believe it is the dark side of God, *Deva* who created this deluge and on the pleas of God, he left Kava and Kavi alive. They both lived happily discovering their new surrounding but Deva tried to complicate their relationship by organizing a competition among them. And Kavi was a young and vibrant girl she always outmatched him and won. Deva poisoned Kava's mind saying that if he loses, he will have to serve Kavi throughout his life and he asks him to use trickery if he is not able to win using strength. The tale reflects how women were bright, strong, and powerful but men used tricks to distract her and defeat her. Even today Dungri Garasiya tribe pays for the bride a Dapu, a bride price. Another tale titled *Brother and Sister No More* narrates the story of a Goval and his sister, Rama living in Ramera Village. They lived a simple and comfortable life in the lap of nature. They considered *Kudrat* (Nature) as their mother who allowed the spirit world *Bhoots* (Ghost) to act the way they will. When Goval was married it led to the change in relation of the brother and sister. Rama was humiliated by his wife was not given food and was kept aloof. Later she was forced to leave the house and she left cursing her brother and sister-in-law. She walked towards the field looking at the sky she prayed, "Kudarat, oh merciful god, help me! Please give me shelter! I'm dying of hunger, send someone to save me" (Sres 69). There was thunder and lightning, and it rained heavily but she was guarded by an angel *bhoot* (Ghost). They also believe that each spirit is assigned to an Adivasi man who protects them. In the morning, she had food and plenty of water. She thought of who helped her and she heard the sound of men approaching her on horses. They were from the royal family out for hunting and asked for water from Rama. She offered the pot she had. The young man, Vaghela, a prince of Rajasthan was influenced by her beauty and asked her for marriage. She replied, "I will, if it is the wish of Kudarat" (Sres 71). And suddenly two devil birds flew down on

the perch of her hut as if it were a sign from heaven. It shows how tribal women had the right to choose their husbands. When they moved towards the palace, she saw her house where she used to live with her brother, Goval, which was destroyed by storm. This tale also shows the relations of Dungri Bhils with the royal families in Rajasthan.

Animals such as snakes, tigers, and birds often can speak and form relationships with human characters. This reflects the Bhil view of animals as equals and companions rather than mere resources. Bhil folktales often personify natural elements, attributing human-like qualities, emotions, and intentions to them. In numerous Bhil folktales, snakes are depicted as guardians of sacred locations, including forests, rivers, and ancestral lands. The snake can act as a protector, guarding sacred traditions or knowledge from outsiders. This symbolism of guardianship relates to the snake's function in nature as a being that traverses between realms, residing in both the earth and the underworld. Trees like Mahua and Banyan are considered sacred, and their human-like qualities symbolize their spiritual importance. In a tale, *Karmabai the daughter of Seshnag* (King of Underworld), was the queen of King Harishchandra. She was his favorite queen, so other queens used to conspire against her because of jealousy. They accused her of poisoning the king. When she realized that her husband didn't trust her purity and dedication, she took seven grains of black beans and chanted Bhairav Mantra. She used this spell to call upon her father. She warned and cursed the king that if she left, it would be the end of the world for him and he would lose his kingdom. After she left, a flood broke the land and because of the anger of the snake king, he left Shamlaji and went to dwell in the Arabian Sea. Even today his tail remains in Shamlaji while his head is in Mumbai. *The Serpent's Gift* highlights the theme of co-existence between nature and humans. In this tale, a serpent becomes a saviour and benefactor to humans. The story often begins with a poor Bhil family where a girl encounters a Serpent and saves it from danger. In request Serpent bestows a gift upon them that if she chants the magic mantra, she will get the food she desires and it transforms her life. By using the magic spell, she also saved the life of the king and later the king married her. There are several instances of the Bhil tribe

having contact with royal families. *The Cobras Under the Oleander Tree* also depicts the snakes as protectors and saviors. In the story, a couple living in Jethwa village lost their first child as she was killed by the tiger and taken to the forest. Later they were blessed with a second child. But Mangli, the mother was frightened because of an experience and so she prayed to her guardian *Bhoot* (Ghost) to keep the snakes under the oleander tree she planted to protect her child. Once she planted the tree king and queen cobra started residing under the oleander tree and when after a few days the tiger again came looking for the child he could eat. He hid himself from Mangli's sight but he couldn't hide from the cobras under the tree. They bit him on his legs and killed him. In this way, her child was saved by the cobras. Since then, the Oleander is a special plant and is worshipped by the Dungri Garasiya Adivasis and it is found in front of their homes.

The Dungri Garasiya believed that the first being to be created was a woman, and so in their society, women were accorded equal respect as men and inheritance was from mother to daughter. There is a folk tale titled *Alkhi and Dhulki* which has instances of how the entire village celebrated and danced on the birth of two girls. Everyone was given a mouth full of jaggery. It reflects the time when girls were as much desired as sons. The girls were twins and so were very close to each other. When Alki died due to fever and when she was buried Dhulki jumped in the fire claiming she could not live without her. The villagers were shocked seeing this but they later celebrated the love of sisters by dancing with swords in their hands. They believe women were the first creators and give an example of love too. And so, every year during spring equinox the Garasiya Bhil gather at night and sing and dance around the bonfire. Men and women walk in procession around the bonfire remembering the two twin sisters who died long ago. They used to rely on *Bhopa* (a traditional priest) and *Bhagat* (a spiritually enlightened healer or mystic) to cure diseases. They are central figures in this community and are believed to possess spiritual wisdom and connection to deities and spirits. When Dulki got a high fever, her parent took her to Bhopa and Bhagat. The Bhils believe in ghosts, spirits, and ancestral powers that inhabit natural features such as forests, rivers,

and mountains. These entities can provide protection or cause harm leading to rituals designed to appease them or seek their favor. Unfortunate events or supernatural occurrences like sickness, accidents, or agricultural failure are linked to the effects of spirits or curses, and magical practices are employed to confront these difficulties. They have deep-rooted traditional healing practices.

The Dungri Garasiya Bhils mainly depend on rainfed farming and forest resources for their livelihoods, which causes them to suffer from crop failure and food shortages during droughts, famines, and dry spells. Such circumstances resulted in starvation and compelled them to work as bonded laborers and migrate, resulting in a disconnection from their cultural and social connections to their ancestral lands. This situation is illustrated in the story *Bhaliya and Priya* where they reside in a village called Gamdi. For two consecutive years, there was no rain, leading to the drying up of their crops. This harsh period of drought was referred to as famine of 56. In their desperation, the Adivasis resorted to slaughtering their farm animals for sustenance, but this food supply quickly ran out. The Dungri Bhils sought assistance from King Siddhraj of Udaipur, who ruled Gujarat but had influence over parts of Rajasthan, including the area where Bhils lived. This reflects the interactions between tribal communities and the royal authorities during the medieval era. King Siddhraj proclaimed that food would be provided in exchange for labor, resulting in the Dungri Bhils being employed as laborers. They endured great struggles for survival, as the absence of work meant a lack of food. The women faced greater hardships, as shown in the tale of Priya, who was forced to become the king's bedmate due to his admiration for her beauty. The voice of Kaliya, the main character, represents the perspective of an Adivasi speaking about their hardships during the times of Famine and drought when they had to abandon their homes and fields to work as slaves in an unfamiliar city. Priya became Raja Siddhraj's favored concubine. Later, the king met his demise in a hunting accident. Following the King's death, his wives and concubines chose to commit sati, but Priya managed to escape from the palace and found refuge in the Aravalli forests. There are also rumours that Priya's husband, Kaliya, avenged the king's death.

Conclusion

By examining these folk tales, this study has revealed that these stories were not only as entertainment but also as vital cultural artifacts that express the values, traditions, and social norms of the Garasiya Bhil community. These narratives embody themes of living in harmony with nature, the wisdom of ancestors, their belief in witchcraft, and the significance of community unity, all of which are fundamental aspects of Garasiya Bhil culture. Additionally, folktales provide insights into how the Garasiya Bhils view themselves, their role within the wider social-ecological landscape, and their struggles during famines. These can be seen as records of history having illustrations of Dungri Bhils having ties with the royal families of Rajasthan. These tales represent a community's vibrant cultural expression and their experiences.

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The Reciprocity of Caste, Class, and Neo-Colonial Power Capitals: Rewritten Cultural Identities in Shyam Lal Jedia's *Untold Story of a Bhangi Vice-Chancellor*

Roshani Bhootra

Introduction

The caste system, a rigid and hierarchical social structure embedded in ancient Hindu texts, has perpetuated generational inequalities and restricted socio-economic mobility. Rooted in the Manusmriti, it classified individuals into hierarchical Varnas while entirely excluding Dalits, relegating them to the status of “untouchables.” Historian Romila Thapar, in *The Penguin History of Early India*, explains how caste served as a mechanism to institutionalize labor roles and justify exploitation, stating, “Caste was never just a religious mandate but also an economic strategy to sustain societal hierarchies” (Thapar 134). This framework condemned subgroups like the Bhangis to roles such as manual scavenging, a dehumanizing task that reinforced their marginalization.

British colonial rule entrenched these divides further by codifying caste identities into administrative systems. As Anupama Rao notes in *The Caste Question*, “The colonial state, under the guise of neutrality, institutionalized caste through census data, creating a rigid system that intertwined governance with social stratification” (Rao 59). This codification not only legitimized caste but also entrenched it within the socio-political structures of modern India. Partha Chatterjee, in *The Nation and Its Fragments*, argues that

“the colonial administration viewed caste as an immutable characteristic, embedding it into frameworks that denied mobility” (Chatterjee 154).

Despite India's independence in 1947, these colonial legacies persisted, with caste continuing to define access to education, employment, and social dignity. Economic liberalization in the 1990s, which promised equitable opportunities, instead widened socio-economic gaps. Christophe Jaffrelot asserts in *India's Silent Revolution* that neoliberal policies disproportionately benefited upper-caste elites, excluding Dalits from the economic gains of globalization. He writes, "Globalization in India acted as a sieve, filtering opportunities to the already privileged while marginalizing those at the bottom" (Jaffrelot 218).

Neo-colonialism compounds these disparities by embedding Western cultural hegemony into educational and economic systems. Edward Said's concept of cultural imperialism critiques how dominant Western ideologies marginalize indigenous identities, arguing that "imperialism's most insidious gift is its ability to convince the colonized that their culture is inferior" (*Culture and Imperialism* 54). Similarly, Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, highlights the psychological toll of neo-colonialism, stating, "The colonized subject discovers their freedom through acts of defiance against the imposed cultural order" (Fanon 37).

Shyam Lal Jedia's *Untold Story of a Bhangi Vice-Chancellor* epitomizes such acts of defiance. The protagonist's rise from a stigmatized Dalit background to academic prominence challenges these systemic inequities. His declaration, "I wield my education not as a privilege but as a weapon against centuries of oppression," encapsulates the transformative potential of reclaiming cultural capital through education (Jedia 156). This paper situates Jedia's narrative within theoretical frameworks by Said, Fanon, and Manuel Castells to explore how rewriting cultural identities dismantles caste-based and neo-colonial oppression.

Historical Context—Caste and Class Dynamics in India

The caste system, which originated in the Vedic Varna model, was not merely a religious construct but also an economic mechanism that stratified society and limited mobility. Gail Omvedt, in *Dalits and the*

Democratic Revolution, explains that caste was designed to sustain economic exploitation, with Dalits serving as the foundation of this labor hierarchy (Omvedt 45). This systematic exclusion was evident in the roles assigned to subgroups like the Bhangis, who were confined to degrading tasks such as cleaning sewers. As Ambedkar poignantly observed in *Annihilation of Caste*, “Caste is not merely a division of labor; it is a division of laborers, ranked one above the other, perpetuating inequality” (Ambedkar 62).

British colonialism exacerbated these divides. The colonial administration, keen on consolidating control, codified caste identities through census records, turning fluid social categories into rigid classifications. Gauri Viswanathan, in *Masks of Conquest*, argues that “the colonial state’s obsession with categorization created a framework where caste became synonymous with identity, erasing nuance and enforcing rigidity” (Viswanathan 89). Jaffrelot expands on this, stating, “The colonial government’s fixation on caste census data legitimized and institutionalized caste as an administrative category, embedding discrimination into state policy” (Jaffrelot 122).

Post-independence reforms, such as reservations in education and employment, aimed to address these disparities but often fell short of dismantling systemic biases. Economic liberalization in the 1990s further complicated this landscape. As Jaffrelot notes, “Globalization prioritized capital over people, and caste became a filter through which opportunities were distributed” (Jaffrelot 218). Dalits, excluded from networks of economic privilege, found themselves further marginalized.

Jedia’s protagonist navigates these historical trajectories, embodying resistance against a system designed to exclude him. His rise to vice-chancellorship challenges entrenched caste-class hierarchies. As he reflects, “The walls of these institutions whispered tales of division, but I turned their whispers into echoes of equality” (Jedia 89). This journey not only critiques historical oppression but also asserts the possibility of rewriting one’s cultural and social identity through resilience and education.

Neo-Colonial Power Capitals and Cultural Domination

Neo-colonialism, while less overt than its predecessor, perpetuates systemic inequalities through cultural, economic, and political mechanisms. In India, this phenomenon intertwines with caste and class hierarchies, reinforcing exclusionary practices in education, employment, and governance. Edward Said's theory of cultural imperialism critiques the erasure of indigenous identities, arguing that "imperialism's worst and most paradoxical gift was its ability to allow people to believe there was only one real culture, and that it was European" (Said 33).

In post-independence India, neo-colonialism manifests through globalization and Western hegemony. As Partha Chatterjee notes, "The postcolonial state often becomes complicit in perpetuating colonial frameworks, prioritizing Western ideals over indigenous practices" (Chatterjee 171). These dynamics exacerbate caste-based exclusions, as Dalits, already marginalized, find themselves further alienated in a globalized economy that values capital over people.

Shyam Lal Jedia's *Untold Story of a Bhangi Vice-Chancellor* critiques these neo-colonial frameworks through the lens of its protagonist. Born into a stigmatized caste, the protagonist's rise to academic prominence defies both caste hierarchies and neo-colonial exclusions. Reflecting on his journey, he asserts, "Western education sought to erase our histories, but I used its tools to rewrite my own narrative" (Jedia 156). This act of reclamation symbolizes resistance to neo-colonial domination.

Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, underscores the psychological dimensions of neo-colonialism, stating, "Decolonization is not merely political; it requires the dismantling of the colonized psyche" (Fanon 87). Jedia's protagonist embodies this dismantling, refusing to internalize narratives of inferiority imposed by caste and neo-colonial ideologies. His journey demonstrates how education, often viewed as a neo-colonial tool, can be repurposed to challenge systemic oppression.

Jedia's critique extends to cultural capital, highlighting how neo-colonial

systems prioritize Western norms over local traditions. As the protagonist observes, “Our culture was deemed primitive, our voices irrelevant, yet it is our stories that hold the power to disrupt these hierarchies” (Jedia 110). This assertion aligns with Dipesh Chakrabarty’s argument in *Provincializing Europe* that decolonization requires reclaiming marginalized histories and integrating them into global discourses.

By confronting both caste-based and neo-colonial oppression, Jedia’s narrative challenges the cultural domination that has long excluded Dalit voices. It asserts the necessity of rewriting cultural identities to dismantle these intersecting hierarchies.

Identity and Resistance—Theoretical Frameworks

The concept of identity is central to resistance movements, particularly for marginalized groups seeking to challenge systemic oppression. Manuel Castells, in *The Power of Identity*, posits that “resistance identity emerges when individuals redefine themselves in opposition to structures that marginalize and exclude them” (Castells 75). Shyam Lal Jedia’s protagonist exemplifies this notion, transforming his identity from a stigmatized Dalit to an academic leader.

Fanon’s theory of decolonization further contextualizes this transformation. He writes, “Liberation is a process of reclaiming agency, dismantling the internalized inferiority imposed by colonial systems” (Fanon 67). For Jedia’s protagonist, education becomes a tool of liberation, allowing him to subvert the caste hierarchies that sought to define him. Reflecting on his journey, he states, “I am no longer the scavenger they deemed me to be; my education has elevated me beyond their narrow definitions” (Jedia 156).

This reclamation of identity extends beyond the individual, serving as a collective act of resistance. As Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd argues in *Why I Am Not a Hindu*, “Rewriting identity is not merely about self-expression; it is about challenging the dominant narratives that sustain oppression” (Shepherd 89). Jedia’s narrative aligns with this perspective, offering a counter-narrative to caste-based historiographies.

Edward Said's critique of cultural imperialism also informs this discussion. He writes, "Cultural resistance involves reclaiming the narratives that have been silenced or distorted by imperial powers" (*Culture and Imperialism* 54). Jedia's work embodies this resistance, asserting the value of Dalit voices within academic and cultural spaces. As the protagonist asserts, "Our history is not one of defeat but of resilience, and it is time the world recognized it" (Jedia 110).

By integrating these theoretical frameworks, Jedia's narrative highlights the power of identity reclamation as a tool for dismantling systemic oppression. It demonstrates how marginalized groups can assert their agency and challenge the structures that seek to silence them.

Rewriting Cultural Identities Through Education

Education occupies a paradoxical position in Indian society, functioning as both a site of oppression and a pathway to empowerment. For marginalized communities, particularly Dalits, education has historically been denied or weaponized to reinforce caste hierarchies. However, as Gail Omvedt argues in *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution*, education also holds the potential to dismantle these hierarchies, serving as "the bridge between subjugation and liberation" (Omvedt 98). Shyam Lal Jedia's *Untold Story of a Bhangi Vice-Chancellor* embodies this transformative potential, as the protagonist reclaims his identity through academic achievement.

Colonial-era educational policies, as noted by Gauri Viswanathan in *Masks of Conquest*, prioritized creating a colonial elite while excluding the marginalized. She writes, "Education under colonial rule was less about enlightenment and more about control, reinforcing pre-existing hierarchies" (Viswanathan 124). Jedia's protagonist navigates this historical context, reflecting, "The schools I entered bore the marks of exclusion, their walls echoing the silence of those like me who were never meant to belong" (Jedia 89). His ascent to the position of vice-chancellor symbolizes a reclamation of these spaces, turning tools of exclusion into weapons of resistance.

Education as a tool for rewriting cultural identities is also evident in the broader Dalit movement. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, a staunch advocate for educational reform, famously asserted, “Education is the milk of the lioness; whoever drinks it will roar” (*Annihilation of Caste* 78). This sentiment resonates in Jedia’s narrative, as the protagonist uses education to challenge the stigma associated with his caste. Reflecting on his journey, he states, “My degree was not just an achievement; it was a declaration that my worth could no longer be denied” (Jedia 156).

Furthermore, Jedia’s work critiques the meritocratic rhetoric that often obscures systemic inequalities in education. Ajantha Subramanian, in *The Caste of Merit*, highlights how “merit is often a smokescreen for privilege, allowing dominant groups to monopolize opportunities while excluding marginalized communities” (Subramanian 203). Jedia’s protagonist confronts this bias, asserting, “Merit is not innate; it is the result of opportunities denied to many and handed to a few” (Jedia 176).

By reclaiming educational spaces, Jedia’s narrative challenges the cultural hegemony that has long silenced Dalit voices. As Edward Said notes in *Culture and Imperialism*, “To reclaim one’s history is to reclaim one’s voice, to challenge the narratives that have sought to erase it” (Said 54). Jedia’s protagonist embodies this reclamation, transforming education into a tool for resistance and identity reconstruction.

Conclusion

Shyam Lal Jedia’s *Untold Story of a Bhangi Vice-Chancellor* offers a profound critique of caste, class, and neo-colonial power structures. The protagonist’s journey from a stigmatized background to academic leadership serves as both an individual triumph and a collective act of resistance. By navigating the intersections of caste and neo-colonialism, the narrative underscores the persistent inequalities within Indian society while also highlighting the transformative potential of education.

The protagonist’s assertion, “My journey is not mine alone; it is the journey of every Dalit who dares to dream beyond the margins,”

encapsulates the broader significance of his achievements (Jedia 196). His rise to a vice-chancellorship challenges entrenched hierarchies, proving that cultural and academic capital can be reclaimed.

To address the systemic issues highlighted in Jedia's narrative, several reforms are necessary:

1. **Policy Interventions:** Affirmative action programs must be strengthened to ensure equitable representation in education and governance. These policies should be extended to private institutions and industries, ensuring that opportunities are not limited to public sectors.
2. **Curriculum Reforms:** Academic curricula must incorporate marginalized perspectives, particularly Dalit histories and contributions. As Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd notes in *Why I Am Not a Hindu*, "A curriculum that excludes the voices of the oppressed perpetuates the very hierarchies it claims to dismantle" (Shepherd 98).
3. **Grassroots Movements:** Community-led initiatives should be supported to empower Dalit voices and promote local narratives. Dipesh Chakrabarty, in *Provincializing Europe*, argues that "true decolonization begins at the grassroots, where marginalized voices reclaim their histories" (Chakrabarty 45).
4. **Representation in Leadership:** Institutions must prioritize the inclusion of Dalit leaders in academia, governance, and policymaking. Jedia's work demonstrates the impact of such representation, as his protagonist uses his position to challenge systemic exclusion.

In conclusion, Jedia's narrative serves as a testament to the resilience of marginalized communities and the power of rewriting cultural identities. It challenges both caste-based and neo-colonial oppression, asserting the agency of those who have long been silenced. As India continues to grapple with its historical legacies, narratives like Jedia's provide a roadmap for creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

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Reimagining Myth through Folklore: Adaptation of Ancient Narratives in Amruta Patil's *Adiparva:Churning of the Ocean*

Joyeeta Kundu Basu

Introduction

Folklore and mythology are two facets of the same coin with overlapping features but they serve different cultural functions. Mythology is often viewed as a supremely authoritative, sacred, account of creation and the deeds of the divine archetypes. They depict moral codes of conduct, the beginning of existence, and manifestation of deities. On the other hand, folklore is flexible and grows from within the communities and thrives on the oral traditions. In barest terms, folklore comprises traditional beliefs, customs, rituals, songs, proverbs, paintings, tales and dances passed down orally through generations and preserved among a people. Folklore and mythology deeply imbricate and shape both collective memory and cultural identity. Therefore, their interconnectedness is of vital importance.

India is known for its cultural richness and Indian folklore consists katha (narratives), lokgeet (folk songs), lok kathayein (folk tales), khand kathas (short epic fragments), riddles, proverbs and paintings such as *madhubani*, *patua*, *gond*, *warli* and many more. While these traditions vary geographically, their objectives remain more or less the same: to preserve cultural values, amuse, and teach moral and spiritual lessons. As such, the folklore also functions as a channel of passing on the traditional wisdom. In this role, even the epics like the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, along with the folktales of the *Jataka*, the *Panchatantra*, and the *Hitopadesha* have also historically been instrumental. Their essential narratives get adapted from time to time to suit the changing times.

One new form of this adaptation is the graphic novels that combine visual arts with the narrative art. For instance, *Sita's Ramayana* (2011) by Samhita Arni brings together folklore and lively *patua* scroll paintings to refashion the epic. Likewise, *Bhimayana* (2011) by Srividya Natarajan employs the traditional Gond style of painting to depict the autobiography of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. *River of Stories* (2022) by Orijit Sen combines the Indian traditions of oral storytelling with the comics form to depict cultural myths, demonstrating the potential of comics to be both ancient and modern at the same time. Another text to this is *Adiparva: Churning of the Ocean* by Amruta Patil.

The visual rendering opens up vistas of re-interpretation of the epic. The novel focuses on events from the *Mahabharata* which ranges from the start of creation to the birth of the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Such an approach allows for folklore hierarchies to be questioned, and for ancient accounts to be chronicled in a more innovative manner. While *Adiparva* reinterprets some familiar histories, they tend to highlight the moral issues, the contexts as well as the audiences through a different lens altogether.

Ganga as the Sutradhaar: The Voice of Change and Connectivity

In the novel, Amruta Patil makes Ganga, the river goddess as the *sutradhaar* or the organizing principle of the web of tales. This is in line with the tradition narrative repertoire responsible for uninterrupted continuity of the orature. Ganga is not only a mythic character but indeed an embodied voice that alternates between an authoritative speech and an easy-going talk, which reveals the coexistence of legend and tradition. This way, the novel places itself in the continuum of the orally narrated legends with an emphasis, signalling that the stories have been told and retold over generations, where the boundaries of myth and tradition are blurred.

Ganga as a narrative device designed to connect different episodes mentally and thematically serves a dual function. On the one hand, her voice has the divine force of muses' prophecy; on the other, it brings out

her human vulnerability as a woman. She tells her own story as her journey begins in the heavens, travels through Shiva's realms, and then enters the mortal world, becomes a symbol for the oral tradition's enduring power. The story takes place in a frame narrative, enabling readers to delve deeper into the *Mahabharata's* broad fabric than the traditional emphasis on the Kuru-Pandava conflict. The *sutradhaar's* position is further complicated by the variety of opposing voices among the listeners, which creates dialectic for the audience.

By using informal language and establishing a conversational tone, the dialogue patterns in *AdiParva* greatly enhance the oral storytelling ambiance and encourage a communal narrative experience. Moreover, the phenomenon of direct address, where characters speak to the audience in the second person, establishes a direct engagement.

Chronological Structure: Oral Tradition Dispersed across Time

Adiparva has an episodic structure, where each tale, whether concerning cosmic disputes or family quibbles, is interconnected and contributes to the larger and unified discussion of creation, conflict, and destiny. Patil blends these episodes of philosophical inquiries and earthly tragedies in the *Mahabharata's* founding events.

A foundational story highlights the cosmic dispute of the ultimate creator, be it Shiva, Brahma, or Vishnu, symbolizing the unity and diversity in creation. The cyclical narrative of life as depicted in the tale of samudra manthan, or ocean churning introduces themes of betrayal, cooperation, and power, and reflects the larger cosmic conflict.

The story of Kadru and Vinata, the mothers of birds and snakes, makes this narrative even better. The story of Garuda and Anant is very similar to this one. Their fight for power leads to curses that affect the fates of their children. Anant, who was cursed to carry the weight of the universe, stands for perseverance, and Garuda, who was born to free his mother Vinata from slavery, stands for freedom. These stories serve as a backdrop for the serpents' ongoing marginalization, which recurs in the

later episode of Janamejaya's serpent sacrifice, in addition to echoing the idea of balance—between servitude and freedom, effort and fate.

The sequence on the genealogy of the Kuru dynasty makes the interconnectedness of these episodes more evident. Satyawati's story of a poor fisherman woman eventually becoming the queen mother carries elements of transformation and empowerment that inspires her son Shantanu's story including his marriage with Ganga. The couple had a son Bhisma who vowed to stay celibate and loyal to the Kuru lineage, shaping the history of the Kuru dynasty.

In Shakuntala's tale, her marriage with King Dushyanta and the birth of Bharata, who is the eponymous ancestor of the dynasty's royal line, signify the fusion of heavenly and earthly heritage. These family lines come together in the stories of Pandu and Dhritarashtra who were wed and whose children—the Pandavas and the Kauravas—later became embroiled in the central conflict of the *Mahabharata*.

One of the features of oral traditions is this disjointed but integrated framework. In the traditional kathavachan (a storytelling session), the narrators frequently roam from one story to another using a character or a theme to link all the stories, making it easy for them to flow as one. This is such that the audience is able to listen to the stories separately and within the context of other stories. The novel, successfully uses this style that is percussive and oral in essence.

Adaptability and Change in Oral Traditions

Oral narratives are dynamic and constantly evolving with time as voiced by the storyteller, their listeners and the broader social context. *Adiparva*, with its modern retellings of old tales, showcases the continued relevance of these traditional narratives.

The duality within Ganga herself allows her to have a different approach of interpreting myths throughout history. For instance, while most traditions view the *asurs* as villains in the *samudra manthan*, Ganga argues that they were only seeking their rightful part of the *amrit*, and thus were justified in their actions. Such conclusions not only dismiss

the binary of evil versus good but also advance the discourse on the nature of power, its relation to evil, and vice versa, using folklore as the primary resource. For instance, when the *asurs* were approached to participate in the *samudra manthan* to yield *amrit*, they kept their egos aside and worked together with the *devas* but when the time came for distribution of *amrit*, they were wrongfully deceived only in the pretext that their intent was wrong. "There was no one the *asurs* abhorred more than the *devas*, but when Indra approached the *asur* king Vali, he found the *asurs* quite amenable. . . . Just like the serpents, the *asurs* got nothing but deception in return for their effort" (86, 94). This distinctly indicates the ability of oral traditions to alter the already prevalent ones instead of being overpowered by them.

Myth as Folklore: Redefining Boundaries

In most cases, where people tend to compartmentalize several disciplines into subfields, mythology and folklore fall into distinctive categories. Attributing the title 'authoritative' and 'sacred' to mythology which is derived from sacred books and archaic practices, while folklore is dubbed as 'everyday' and 'fluid' as it is passed down in oral form and regards societal practices. *Adiparva* however, dismisses that assumption by using a folkloric approach to the mythological events that reshapes myth as a current and more adaptable tradition.

Patil intertwines what is folklore with what is myth and considers both as sources of cultural survival with universal themes of power, morality and identity as appears in the illustrations of common themes such as libels, treachery's, or vendettas. Using these themes, Patil makes these ancient myths seem more useful and practical to the social principle of folklore.

Curses and Deceptions: Catalysts of Transformation

To curse and to deceive appear frequently in many folktales and sometimes form the most important point around which a conflict or some sort of change happens. The novel too engages these themes to deal with issues relating to trust, betrayal, and man's mistakes.

The curse bestowed by Kadru upon her children, the serpents, stands out in this regard. When the serpents refuse to assist her in outwitting her sister, Kadru loses her temper and curses them that they will perish in the snake sacrifice of Janamejaya. This episode, which is concerned with a myth, has been given a sense of folklore in its style of narration.

In the same way, *samudra manthan* (churning of the ocean) introduces the element of deception with regards to Mohini, an incarnation of Vishnu. Mohini's charms and guile causes the devas to get hold of the *amrit* (the nectar of immortality) while the *asurs* are left with nothing. In the popular mythology, this deed is one of ruse and the divine encouragement intercession. However, through the eyes of Patil an emphasis in retelling through the folklore form helps underscore the moral grayness of the deed. The fact that the *asurs* were not included in this narrative was not a gory story of good battling evil but a poignant tale of betrayal, shaming and trust erosion which is the concern of the popular folklore.

The fact that the *asurs* do not have access to the *amrit* fits well with folklore's compassion for the oppressed. Many folk epics and songs are written focusing on the power relations and the wrongdoings that make contact with those who have been pushed outside the margins. Patil is able to change the way this episode has always been told which is of a moral defeat and instead explains it as an act of oppression against the *asurs* and so more fitting to the spirit of folklore.

Adiparva must be praised especially for reconstructing the images of *asurs* and serpents that have been painted previously unfavourably. These are antagonistical characters in the *asur* and serpents cosmology whose representations typically connote chaos, greed, and destruction. It is however, Patil's depiction of these existing forms and modification of established hierarchies that makes them instead reveal extraordinary struggles and virtues.

Family Dynamics: Kinship as a Source of Harmony and Discord

Adiparva explores common themes of folklore as rivalries, sacrifices, and betrayals in episodes such as the contest between Vinata and Kadru,

the socio-political history of Yayati and his grandson Puru, and the rival claims within the Kuru's clan.

A common thread in myths and folklore is that of rivalry among siblings to overturn one another's supremacy, a perfect example of which is the story of Vinata and Kadru. The expulsion of Vinata by Kadru and the subsequent curse placed by the former on her serpent children for being disobedient serve as examples of how the family can have a strained relationship and the damage caused by it over time. These conflicts have been depicted in a more serious manner in the folklore as a means of teaching the masses about the dangers of jealousy, selfishness and ambition while at the same time painting a delicate picture of the parental bonds.

The same holds true in the case of the interlude between Yayati and Puru across ages, showcasing another theme of shifting relations between children and parents. Yayati loses strength in his father's words when he instructs his son Puru to fulfil his every wish, showing him neglect as well. It was Puru's sacrifice in the end which has undoubtedly raised concerns over authority and devotion in the younger generation.

Role of Women in Folklore

Folktales are often associated with women as they are passed down from mothers and grandmothers, and also feature strong, powerful female characters, promoting women's self-expression. This mythological retelling similarly portrays female figures like Shakuntala, Amba and Ganga as active agents in the conflicts and instrumental in advancing tales through decisions made.

Ganga, as the *sutradhaar* possesses the feminine mystique as well as the authority that female deities have and in essaying both the roles, she restores the myth on various levels. Her sympathy for the asuras brings out newer sensitivity to the traditional stories. Women are depicted as champions of appropriation and fortitude, as we see in Shakuntala's story which consists of love, abandonment, and reconciliation motifs. Although she was wronged by her lover, King Dushyanta, she shakes

off cliché and proclaims dominion where her son, Bharata stands as an inheritor. As against that, Amba's character challenges gender roles. Amba's absence of agency and having been wronged by Bhishma metamorphoses and manifests Amba as a vengeful icon. Amba's resistance followed by transformation complies with the line of folklore which depicts woman as heroes with emotions as opposed to a damsel waiting for a prince. Patil deliberately chooses these characters and a woman narrator to signify the bigger roles women play in the course of events rather than serving as mere backgrounds to the patriarchal narratives.

Reinterpreting Folklore through Graphic Visuals

Patil utilizes the graphic novel medium to reimagine the myths and tell the stories from a more folklorist view bearing relations of equilibrium, struggle and change. The illustrations and techniques she uses perturb the norms and boundaries and make the audience empathize with characters at a deeper and social level. This is why, for example, the *asurs* who have become the villains in most classical sources of literature, become in this graphic form more humane with colours in their faces and more detailing in their expressions. This reimagining visually is in sync with folklores practice of presenting outcastes as being more than simply a baddie in the story.

In the same manner, the appearance of Mohini during *samudra manthan* proves that she was not simply a pawn of the gods but had her own interests while hinting that her appearance was also deceptive. The novel depicts this through images using light and shadow in conflicting ways to illustrate the two regal soliloquies reflecting the idea of moral ambiguity, a common theme in the folklore.

Conclusion

Adiparva blends myths and folklore as consistent modules which are vital in sustaining culture in a society. Through oral retellings and visual drawings, Patil transforms orthodox stories and displaces well established practices and oppositional dualisms which have over the years

characterised such narratives. The interplay of myth, folklore and the graphic medium proves the point that these stories within contemporary society and practice are still significant, yet deeply historical. Therefore, *Adiparva* not only serves in promoting the knowledge about Indian culture elements, but it also illustrates the growing development of narration that such kinds of expressions are not static but creative and flourishing in the face of changes.

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Reason in Religion and Religion in Politics: A Gandhian View

Devendra Rankawat

‘Superstition cannot be religion. Truth and morality are its substance.’
(Gandhi, *Young India* 1921)

Reason has its limits. Beyond that begins faith.’ (Gandhi, *Harijan* 1938)

Reason and Religion

There is hardly a dichotomy more fiercely debated than reason and religion. While one prompts unrelenting questioning, the other demands unquestioning surrender. Apparently, the two seem to be irreconcilable. But, are reason and religion really so incompatible, so uncompanionable and fundamentally opposed to each other?

A huge amount of human intellectual energy has gone into this enquiry and two main positions have emerged on the issue. One, there are those who tend to believe that the two are inherently different and belong to two completely separate domains of human cognition. This intellectual tradition has an impressive line-up of scholars like Hume, Kant, Durkheim, Max Weber and Richard Dawkins. Opposed to this, there are scholars like Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Henry Newman who argue that the two are complementary and fairly compatible. Gandhi, as an intellectual, appears to draw insights from both the schools but with a definitive tilt towards the complementarity view as most of his discourse on religion evinces. However, rather than getting directly into Gandhi’s view of religion, a glance at the general understanding about religion will help contextualize the discussion for a more nuanced perception of his religious practice.

Of course, there is no easy consensus on what religion *per se* means. There exist numerous definitions, pointing to the differences that cultures are inescapably inscribed with. Even so, since it is a near universal phenomenon, some distilled understandings of it seem to be acceptable to more humans than not. One such view is that it is essentially 'a belief in supernatural beings' (Taylor) and this implies the existence of some parallel cosmographies, iconographies, systems of rewards and punishment, qualifications of a true follower etc. As such, every religion, more or less, offers a full configuration of life from ontological conceptions to the eschatological visions. In other words, it offers an entire narrative from the supposed origins of life to the envisioned conclusion of existence itself. Accordingly, a follower is enjoined upon to conduct one's life believing that this is the worthiest way to serve the tenure. Since different religions are claimed to offer different versions of the best way of living, the followers are left with little choice but to unquestioningly stick to the one they have traditionally subscribed to. As one's adherence to its vision is often seen as a proof of loyalty, at times, asserting one's religion as superior to all others or creating fear that one's religion is in danger of being subsumed/subordinated by others becomes a sure way of rallying the followers around any issue/person/event/institution. This not only turns religion into an instrument of power politics, but also sows the seeds of communalism as it throws all creeds or sects into a conflictual mode of interaction. When the State interferes, it gets even more intensified. And these were the forces Gandhi found himself beset with when he entered the political arena of British-governed India.

To begin with, he, being a devout Hindu, faced the challenge of forging a mid-way between the injunctions of religions and the compulsions of democratic politics. If one demanded that he work to serve his fellow Hindus and their interest, the other expected of him a more accommodative approach whereby the followers of all religions could be given space in a democracy trying hard to be born. This perhaps called forth his unique view of reason-driven religion which not only sought to be all-inclusive but also to churn out all scriptural legacies into

one code of humanity, compassion, love, non-violence, and welfare of all. The commitment did arguably come of his ethical reasoning that he managed to chisel out of his brand of Hinduism. Unlike some other Jingoist versions, this understanding of religion enabled his vision of life to be fairly reasonable without being non-religious.

Interestingly, his idea of God was neither fully in line with the *adavaita* nor *dvaita* conceptions. While he saw God as an all-pervading spirit, he also believed in *Bhakti* and *sevas* the methods of worship, which were typical of the *dvaita* school. Arguably, the first part enabled his staying clear of all sectarianism, the second, at the same time, helped him instrumentalize religiosity as the driving force for all moral, socio-political transformation. He writes:

The forms are many, but the informing spirit is one. How can there be room for distinctions of high and low where there is this all-embracing fundamental unity underlying the outward diversity? The final goal of all religion is to realize this essential oneness. (Gandhi, Harijan 3)

This was innovative insofar as infusion of reason into religion was concerned. Seen this way, religion did not remain an abstract, private matter of personal salvation; rather, it turned into a divine force yoked to human welfare. In this, he was very much like Kabir whose religion was not simply a tool for union with God. In a like manner, his conception of truth too steered clear of any single 'ideological encampment' by being rather relative yet, at the same time, remaining sufficiently anchored in a semblance of absolutism guaranteed by his benevolent, all-loving God. This too appears to have been carefully crafted to admit of plurality of truths while still keeping them all tied to the path of altruism and egalitarian mode of living. In a nutshell, his religiosity mostly determined whatever he did all his life. He rather candidly admits:

I could not live for a single second without religion. Many of my political friends despair of me because they say that even my politics are derived from my religion. And they are right. My politics and all other activities of mine are derived from my religion. I go further

and say that every activity of a man of religion must be derived from his religion, because religion means being bound to God, that is to say, God rules your every breath (Gandhi 57,199).

It was perhaps this overly humanistic conception of religion and truth that earned him the wrath of militant sectarian groups whose long-pent-up resentment eventually culminated into Godse killing him. Wolfgang Palaver's recent study of Gandhi's idea of religion from Godse's point-of-view has underscored this aspect quite persuasively. As Godse unrepentantly confessed:

I firmly believed that the teachings of absolute 'Ahimsa' as advocated by Gandhiji would ultimately result in the emasculation of the Hindu Community and thus make the community incapable of resisting the aggression or inroads of other communities, especially the Muslims (Godse 42).

Thus, Gandhi's idea of *ahimsa* stemming from a unique blend of Indian religious traditions of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism combined with the Christian ethics of self-sacrifice, and the ideas of modern thinkers like Leo Tolstoy, David Thoreau, and others came to be mistaken for a want of vigor and vitality. However, what was sorely lost on his opponents was his ability to universalize it into a principle of transformatory love and truth-force, forging a spiritual idea into a political weapon. As Gandhi himself observed, "Religion is not a mere theory but a living force; it cannot be separated from the life of the individual or nation. Politics devoid of morality is empty, and morality without religion is blind" (*The Collected Works* 1926).

In his view of religion, that ran counter to the Hindu nationalist view, even India as motherland, for which he eventually laid down his life, did not have a claim greater than the well-being of entire humanity. So, the humanist in him born of religiosity did never give way to even the Hindu in him. He again avers, "My religion has no geographical limits. If I have a living faith in it, it will transcend my love for India herself" (*The Collected Works* 18,134).

Thus, Gandhi envisioned a society where reason would purge religion of all its dogmatic dross, and religion would so edify and ennoble politics

as to create an equitable and ethical order that balances material prosperity with moral responsibility. In a further deliberation on the subject, he clarifies, “By religion I do not mean formal religion or sectarianism, but that religion which underlies all religions, which brings us face to face with our Maker” (Gandhi, *Young India* 1922).

Religion in Politics

“Political power should be a means of service and not a means of domination.” (The Collected Works 1924)

Gandhi’s political praxis has given rise to a huge corpus of scholarship, covering some foundational analyses by Bhikhu Parekh, Ashis Nandy, and Pankaj Mishra to more recent critical endeavors by scholars such as Anthony J Parel and Tejas Parasher. With diverse emphases, these scholars have nonetheless turned attention to Gandhi’s *sui generis* infusion of religion into political activism. Of course, using religion for mobilizing the gullible masses has been a time-tested yet stale method; but what set Gandhi apart was perhaps his genuine, value-undegirded, ethics-oriented, welfare-focused, moral-transformation-bound conception of religion rather than just incendiary material for abetting communal disharmony.

The entry of Gandhi into the politics of pre-independence India at first did not even appear to merit attention. However, as his religion-inspired politics gained ground, it came clear that the politics hither-to had been of one kind but what this fragile-looking man was to roll out was something altogether different. Quite unlike most of his contemporaries on both sides—Indian as well as the British, Gandhi-styled politics did stem from the rich soil of ethics, faith, and all-inclusive humanism. Therefore, it began reaching out to the uneducated folks too rather than just the educated middle-class or the urban elites. Since he could speak to the concerns of all rather than simply critiquing the foreign rule and its atrocities, his methods baffled not only the British but even some of their Indian “counterplayers” (Nandy, *Intimate Enemy* xiii–xiv, 7–12,

68, 70–80), as Ashish Nandy has called them.

And to achieve all this, he insisted on taking recourse to *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* alone. The Machiavellian methods had no space in his political repertoire. This also proved to be a disarming technique on his part as all the old players hardly knew how to handle this. Churchill's exasperation at Gandhi's unruffled political responses is quite a commonly known case in point. The soul-force/truth-force that *satyagraha* seemed to get in Gandhi's practice was simply unprecedented in the then obtaining political atmosphere. For him, religion meant *dharma*—the cosmic moral order that preserved truth (*satya*), nonviolence (*ahimsa*), and selfless service (*seva*). He famously declared, "Those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means" (Gandhi, *Young India* 1924).

Yet, the pragmatists like B.R Ambedkar, Jinnah, Tilak, Nehru and even George Orwell tended to dismiss his politics as moral idealism and often portrayed it as something other-worldly, unsuited to the real politik required to handle the hard world of power-politics. Nevertheless, there is enough anecdotal evidence to suggest that it was Gandhi's magnetic persona alone that could pull the masses. It was his idea of *swaraja* or self-rule that first held out the promise of making every citizen a direct stake-holder in the affairs of the Nation-State.

On the whole, Gandhi's politics quite gingerly steered clear of religious dogmatism on the one hand; on the other, the perils of amoral secularism. Instead, he opted for a spiritualized politics ethically bound towards justice and human welfare. A clear statement of this position came from him as he affirmed, "For me there is no politics without religion—not the religion of the superstitious and blind, but the religion that binds one indissolubly to the truth within and without" (Gandhi, *Harijan* 1946).

It is this synthesis of reason, religion, and political praxis that continues to keep Gandhian political philosophy a subject worth going back to, especially whenever global political order seems to be caught up in the maelstrom of religion-engendered violence and economically motivated religio-political symbiosis.

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Revival of Gandhi in Twenty First Century: A Study of *Lage Raho Munna Bhai*

Gautam Sharma

Mahatma Gandhi became renowned as Mahatma for his fearless, unselfish and peaceful philosophies. He lived his life in pursuit of the truth. Gandhi is known for his ideas which sparked global campaigns for civil rights and independence. Gandhi's statue was unveiled at UN headquarters on December 15, 2022. The presence of this memorial will serve as a constant reminder of the principles Gandhi supported and to which we must remain committed. Satya Jit Ray believed Indian cinema needed an icon, uniquely Indian, who would give us distinct identity. In course of time Gandhi came to be seen as inspiration who became a popular subject of cinema in India and abroad. The ideas of Gandhi and Gandhism are popular subjects of visual narratives.

During pre-independence period, before arrival of Gandhi, there existed two types of anti-British leaders. One being the extremists, who were influenced by the ideas of Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal, the second were revolutionaries who wanted to achieve independence through violence. Gandhi came to India in 1915 and in 1917; he started a movement named the Champaran Satyagraha. Through this Gandhi entirely changed the technique of freedom movement. And the Britishers were clueless on how to deal with Gandhi and his movement. Because earlier the Britishers were following Lord Macaulay's policies. The Britishers were not facing any big challenge but Gandhian Satyagraha and non-violence came as a threat for them and the Britishers started facing the problem on how to deal with Satyagraha? Primarily Gandhi's Satyagraha was not in favour of constitutional bargaining and neither had it supported the violence. This is the importance of Gandhi in freedom struggle (Pandey).

Visual narratives have a cascading impact on the masses who are exposed to its ideas. Gandhi as a subject has been represented by the art of film making since long back. Gandhi is perhaps the only personality in India, next to the fictional romantic hero Devdas, created by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay on whom several films were produced in different languages.

The same notion of Satyagraha is seen in various movies. The first movies on Gandhi was released in the year 1963 titled *Nine Hours to Rama*. But this movie focused more on Nathu Ram Godse's last nine hours before assassinating Gandhi than life, ideas and movements of Gandhi. The year 1982 saw first of its kind movie by Richard Attenborough's titled *Gandhi*, this Hollywood movie was a big hit and was dubbed in various languages including Hindi. This year marked a changed in Hindi cinema as well and various Indian directors and producers started making movies on Gandhi as leading character or Gandhi as a character of significant value. Some prominent movies are *Sardar* (1993) directed by Ketan Mehta, Shyam Benegal's *The Making of the Mahatma* in 1996, Jamil Dehlavi's *Jinnah* in the year 1998, Tirlokh Malik directed *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar* in 2000, *Netaji: Subhash Chandra Bose: The Forgotten Hero* in 2004 directed by Shyam Benegal. These movies were made within the criteria of documentary films which had limited or no commercial features. On the other hand, Indian cinema had movies like *Hey Ram* released in 2000, *The Legend of Bhagat Singh* (2002), *Mane Gandhi Ko Nahin Mara* (2005), *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* (2006), *Gandhi, My Father* (2007), *Papilio Buddha* (2014) are some of the movies which got commercial treatments and appealed the masses in different ways (Pandey 84).

Dwyer (2011) in his article titled 'The Case of the Missing Mahatma: Gandhi and the Hindi Cinema' wrote the 1950s are often referred to as the Nehruvian period in Hindi cinema, but the films are mostly quiet about Gandhi and are concerned instead with issues of modernity and the new nation'. Then the Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru in a speech told the Rajya Sabha in December 1963 that 'the production of a film

on the life of Gandhi was too difficult a proposition a Government department to take up. The Government was not fit to do this and they had not got competent people to do it (Dwyer).

The two films on Gandhi that were able to create the biggest popular impact and won many honours is Richard Attenborough's 1982 release *Gandhi*, primarily made in English and also released in a Hindi dubbed version in India, and the Raj Kumar Hirani directed Hindi film *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* released in 2006. Both the films are set in a completely different backdrop with the entire plot portraying many facets of the life and teachings of Gandhi. While Attenborough's *Gandhi* won eight Academy awards, *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* won four National film awards in India. What is more, unlike any of the other films that have mentioned, both these films witnessed a great box-office collection, making them commerciality a hit. Hence an academic discourse is viable proposition to assess the depiction of the reconstruction of Gandhian philosophy in visual narratives.

The film *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* (hereafter LRMB) does not look to the past for inheritance, heritage or tragedy. The film isn't even aiming for a utopian future. The film focuses on a specific aspect of a historical figure in the context of a specific time and place. Surprisingly, the film's new narrative was well received by the general public. When a film or any popular art form can instil the vibe and experience of the present, it receives widespread acclaim from the general public.

In 2004, Raj Kumar Hirani made his directorial debut with Sanjay Dutt as Munna Bhai, real name, Murali Prasad Sharma, a new film hero who is a gangster. *Munna Bhai MBBS*, the first movie of the *Munna Bhai* series, portrayed the main protagonist Munna who cure the patients with love and compassion after an unsuccessful attempt to do an MBBS. Munna appealed to a wide range of audiences as well as critiques. The success of the first movie encouraged the producers and director to launch a sequel.

LRMB is a fairy tale about a lovable local gangster who is motivated by love and aspires to be a history professor and a Gandhian thinker. Unlike other films based on Gandhi and his thoughts, LRMB employs a novel narrative technique to promote Gandhism through a patriotic humorous genre. The film perfectly reconstitutes history in contemporary age of globalization, industrialization, rapid urbanization and ignorance of downtrodden, helpless people. The movie's evolving ideas make it flawlessly compatible with present popular cultural space. Without any jingoism of a patriotic picture or a documentary style storytelling method the movie gave a cinematic tribute to Gandhi (Ghosh and Babu 5225). *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* marked a revival of Gandhian thought and was successful in unifying them to the Indian way of thought that has been hybridized because of global influence. *Bande Mein Tha Dam* (The guy had guts), *Bandemataram* was the opening line of a song saluting the greatness of Gandhi. LRMB abstained from dealing with a complicated view of Gandhi but showed the protagonist Munna, who is fatherless and has no authority discovering Gandhi to fulfil this role in his life. Munna garners limited knowledge about Gandhi and his philosophy after his brief visit to the public library. Munna started practising Gandhism which he avows as Gandhigiri and as a result the film follows the transformation in his character and life style in totality. Protagonist Munna adapts to Gandhian strategies of satyagraha and non-violence to find ethical resolution of his conflict with property mafia in his city. The film shows the apparition of Gandhi that is visible only to Munna, advising him in a very brief manner. The advices are then used by Munna to guide common citizens to deal with their daily life issues. Munna's Gandhigiri is certainly more influential than that of any academic research on Gandhi. Gandhigiri revived the public consciousness about Gandhi, especially among the youths, who started to follow Gandhigiri as a non political tool to fight corruption and misappropriation of power. Gandhigiri has installed a moral way of behaving among the contemporary generation (Das 5). The movie's idea of Gandhigiri gained popularity almost immediately after its debut in 2006, and this paper attempts to comprehend and summarizes Gandhigiri in the current situation.

The Gandhi of the LRMB is a populist Gandhi. Munna's Gandhi may not be a distant and historical figure, but rather someone with whom the modern masses can identify (Ghosh and Babu 5225). The film does not discuss Gandhi's socio-economic concepts or the underlying values of Gandhian ideology. It makes no mention of Gandhi's fundamental and unique views, such as the village economy, critique of contemporary technology, the concept of 'Ram Rajya,' or any other part of Gandhian socio-economic principles that are extensively studied and propagated by Gandhi himself, in his various speeches and works. On the contrary the movies portray few statements which has nothing to do with Gandhian philosophy and can be termed as anti-Gandhian statements.

Lage Raho Munna Bhai (2006), in particular, re-established the morals Mahatma Gandhi practiced and prescribed during his lifetime. The sequel of *Munnabhai MBBS*, which ironically had nothing in common with the original except for Sanjay Dutt and Arshad Warshi and Mumbai's tapori language, set the trend for "gandhigiri", a new style of Gandhian protests across the country. According to newspaper reports, the film caused an increase in the sale of books on Gandhi, and several schools organized group screenings (Paranjape).

The film '*Lage Raho Munna Bhai*' is a satirical comedy-drama about a softhearted goon of suburban Mumbai. The critic explained the movie as "simple, racy, witty and uproariously funny (Ghosh and Babu). In the movie, the goon Munna Bhai (acted by Sanjay Dutt) falls in love with a Radio Jockey Janhavi (acted by Vidya Balan). By kidnapping some Professors and forcing them to answer for a 'phone in Quiz contest' on Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti. Munna Bhai somehow manages to meet his love interest. During the meeting with Janhavi, Munna Bhai introduces himself as a Professor and a follower of Gandhism.

Impressed by his deliberations on Gandhi, Janhavi invites him to deliver a lecture on Gandhi to her home where a commune of a few aged people live like an old age home along with her grandfather. They named their house 'Second Innings Home'. To impress Janhavi, Munna Bhai

starts reading about Gandhi for preparing the lecture. He continues his study for three days without a sleep and as a consequence starts hallucinating.

In the process he starts visualising Gandhi corporeally and he even starts conversation with this imaginative figure of Gandhi. His imaginative Gandhi gets ready to help him to impress Janhavi but says that Munna will have to follow his path in return. Munna promises Gandhi that he will follow him. Gandhi helps Munna and in return asks him to tell her the truth – the real identity of Munna. Munna denies following his advice as he feels the fear of losing her.

In the meantime a builder Lucky Singh, for whom Munna Bhai works, tries to take hold of ‘Second Innings Home’ illegally for giving it as a gift to Mr. Kkhuranna. He promised the house to Mr. Kkhuranna as he arranged a marriage of his daughter to the son of Mr. Kkhuranna. When Lucky Singh comes to know that Munna loves the girl from ‘Second Innings Home’, he convinces Munna to go for a trip to Goa along with Janhavi and all the members of ‘Second Innings Home’. In the meantime he encroaches the house by using Circuit (acted by Arshad Warsi) - the friend of Munna. After coming back from Goa, Munna asks Lucky Singh to return ‘Second Innings Home’ to Janhavi and the elders. But Lucky Singh threatened Munna that if he tries to take it away from him then he will expose Munna’s real identity to Janhavi. Munna was trapped by his lies. Then Munna remembers Gandhi. His imaginative Gandhi shows him the path of the Gandhism. He follows Gandhian method or ‘Gandhigiri’ to fight against Lucky Singh. He even tells Janhavi about his real identity (Ray 119).

So finally by following Gandhi’s path, Munna succeeded to get back the ‘Second Innings Home’ for Janhavi and the elders. He also gets back his love and eventually, Lucky Singh becomes a changed man.

The ‘Gandhigiri’ of the movie got popularity immediately after the release of the movie in 2006. So the paper is an effort to understand revival of Gandhi in the present context. So, basically, the Gandhi of LRMB is a Gandhi with a populist appeal. In an article, titled ‘Lage Raho Munna

Bhai: Unravelling Brand Gandhigiri', it was rightly said that "Munna's Gandhi perhaps is not someone distant and historical but someone with whom the contemporary masses can relate" (Ghosh and Babu). The movie does not talk about the deeper values of Gandhian thought or the socio-economic ideas of Gandhi. It does not even mention about the basic and unique ideas of Gandhism like idea of the village economy, criticism of modern technology, the idea of 'Ram Rajya' or any other aspects of Gandhian socio-economic ideas elaborately discussed by Gandhi himself in his different writings and lectures. On the contrary, there are certain statements in the movie that can be considered as 'anti-Gandhian'.

In a dramatic scene of the movie, the protagonist Munna Bhai says, "He thought he will make the country great – exactly like 'imported one'. . . but we destroyed everything." This statement is exactly the opposite of Gandhi's vision about India. Gandhi elaborately explained his vision of India in his book 'Hind Swaraj'. He was critical about 'importing' values, ideas, or western science from the West or any other foreign countries. He criticised the popular vision of his time of material development of the country on the basis of the standard of western developed nations or countries like Japan. He wrote:

We want English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger's nature, but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English. And when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englistan. This is not the Swaraj that I want. (Gandhi 25)

In another scene of the movie – when Munna Bhai interacts with the elders of 'Second Innings Home', he says that Gandhi liberated the country from the foreigners, but then the people of the country has turned strangers to him. This is a political statement of the movie and interestingly this statement comes before the hallucination of Munna Bhai or before he read about Gandhi. The statement mildly directs to the socio-economic thoughts of Gandhi, but which is a "complete no-no for today's consumer economy driven India (Ghosh and Babu 5227).

Reacting on Munna Bhai's statement, one member of the 'Second Innings Home' comments that the situation of the country is not so bad and India is developing. Munna gets more aggressive by this comment and says,

To hell with the development!. . . There are pipes- but not water, there are bulbs-but no electricity . . . there are more potholes than cars on the road . . . you can't walk by the footpath because there are shops over there . . . there are trains, but the name is on waiting list...if ticket gets confirmed then the train gets cancelled.

This statement is nothing to do with the Gandhian idea or his vision. This statement is just a popular narrative of the middleclass people about the underdevelopment of the country. These narratives on the daily woes of an ordinary person became popular again during the time of Anna Hazare's anti-corruption movement in 2011. In that movement, the corruption of the country was projected to be the sole cause of the underdevelopment of the country. Another aspect of the movie is the language of the protagonist. The movie does not use some 'refined and mainstream' language to talk about Gandhi. Gandhi himself was a person who tried to understand the vibe of the common masses by living their life.

But in the movie LRMB, Gandhism was taught by Munna who speaks 'Tapori' - a language often connected to the Mumbai slum dwellers (5226). The resounding success of the film forced many other filmmakers from the world of fantasy to commence making movies on the Mahatma. Film critics took note of this and called Gandhi the flavour of the season in Bollywood after the release of the LRM and other films on the father of the Indian nation (Kaushik 17-18).

Guess who's the flavour of the season in Bollywood right now? No, it's not the scrumptious King Khan, nor is it AB's beautiful Baby. The man who's got several film makers firmly in his thrall is none other than a thin, dhoticlad, a freedom fighter who was shot dead more than 50 years ago. Yes, it's Mahatma Gandhi we're talking about, a national icon who is often regarded as someone who's been largely forgotten by the young today. . . . Suddenly, a clutch of films is being made on Gandhi (Ramachandran).

In the movie the security guard of Lucky Singh smacks Munna Bhai in a hilarious scene from the LRMB, he provides another cheek for slapping, as Gandhi said, "If someone slaps you on one side of your face, turn the other to him." When the guard hits him again, Munna smacks him in the face and claims Gandhi say nothing what to do if someone slaps second time. Munna tells Circuit to aim a gun at the astrologer in another scene to demonstrate that astrology is nothing more than a superstition. As a result, in the film, the protagonist Munna Bhai employs a limited set of Gandhian concepts as a strategy for dealing with or confronting specific problems. The Gandhi of LRMB was accurately defined as a pragmatic art of living' (Visvanathan). From faraway myth, he is now part of modern folklore, re-engineered in a new capacity as agony aunt and management consultant (Visvanathan) According to the Frankfurt School's definition of mass media is a cultural industry, LRMB is unmistakably a product of mass culture. However, the fact that 'Gandhigiri' has a cult following after the film demonstrates its 'pop culture' (or popular culture) appeal. 'Pop culture' is not limited to the dimension of mass production and consumption of entertainment products. Popular culture is, in this sense, a more 'personal' process. Popular culture can spread not only through the media, but also through other types of human connection. The concept of 'Gandhigiri' was coined by the film, although its appeal was not limited to the film alone. Many people became aware of 'Gandhigiri' or engaged in 'Gandhigiri-inspired movements' without ever seeing the film. In 2006, for example, 2,000 farmers in India's Vidarbha region protested with flowers to persuade a bank to disperse loans under the influence of Gandhigiri (Ahmed). Medical students from the King George Medical College undertook a 'ShramDaan,' or voluntary activity, in the same year, inspired by the film, and planted many tree saplings (SRIJAN). People in Lucknow protested a liquor trader by presenting him with flowers, just like Munna Bhai (Pradhan). The demonstrators in an American Customs and Immigration Services office were influenced by 'Gandhigiri' in 2007 (News 18) The film LRMB successfully branded Gandhian ideology as 'Gandhigiri,' and as a result, the brand 'Gandhigiri' gained rapid

recognition in popular culture. The brand Gandhigiri is the message in post-liberalization India (Ghosh and Babu 5227).

The LRMB's depiction of 'Gandhigiri' offered a desired remedy to the frustrations produced by the Indian version of modernism. Rather than delving deeper into Gandhi's theory, the film reengineered several Gandhian notions to utilize as a strategy to combat some of the issues that ordinary people confront in their daily lives. The movie portrayed Gandhi as an iconic critic and problem solver for the public's dissatisfaction with modernism. Gandhi, not Gandhism or Gandhian philosophy, became the message through 'Gandhigiri. The film demonstrates that Gandhi's context is still relevant and powerful enough to inspire both optimism and contempt.

In fact Barack Obama, former US President perceives Mahatma Gandhi as an inspiration and used to keep Gandhiji's portrait in his office as a champion of peace. According to him, he has always looked to Mahatma as an inspiration and that is so because he remark In my life, I have always looked to Mahatma Gandhi as an inspiration, because he exemplifies the sort of transformation that can be brought about when ordinary people set out and come together to do something extraordinary. Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese leader who was under house arrest for several years, was greatly inspired by Gandhiji. She learnt the importance of fearlessness in order to be able to translate the doctrine of peace and reconciliation into practice (Acharya 10-11).

This research paper is about revival of Gandhi by the film *Lage Raho Munna Bhai*. In this paper an attempt has been made to focus on Gandhism, Bollywood movies, content of the film and certain aspects of contemporary society and culture. Many ideas of Gandhi have become more relevant in present century. The movie *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* re-engineered certain ideas of Gandhi without going to the deeper meaning of Gandhian philosophy. This movie has transformed Gandhism in a new practical approach Gandhigiri. This movie has revived Gandhi and his principles again. *Lage Raho Munna Bhai*, in particular, re-established the morals Gandhi practiced and prescribed during his

lifetime. Hence this paper strives to examine different dimensions of Gandhigiri and indicates that ideas of Gandhi and his persona are still relevant in twenty first century. Thus we can say that the movie LRMB has revived Gandhi again in present scenario.

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Ecological Awareness in Anita Desai's *Village by the Sea*

Sweta Chandranath Jha

Introduction

Currently we are living in the world of ecological crisis. Earth is becoming more difficult and hostile place to any form of life on account of the destruction and disturbance of environment and natural resources. To face this global challenge, literature is also playing vital role since long back. Many writers have depicted the problems of ecology in their works and the separate theory of Ecocriticism has been also emerged to study the ecological concerns in literature. Ecocriticism is also known as Green studies, Eco poetics, Social ecology etc. “simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty xviii). The study and scope of Ecocriticism is getting broaden day by day. As Greg Garrard opines:

“Ecocriticism is unique amongst contemporary literary and cultural theories because of its close relationship with the science of ecology. Ecocritics may not be qualified to contribute to debates about problems in ecology, but they must nevertheless transgress disciplinary boundaries and develop their own ‘ecological literacy’ as far as possible” (5).

Anita Desai holds a significant position among Indian English writers. Desai is primarily known for depiction of psychological aspects and portrayal of females in her novels. She induces her characters and moods through visual images. She paints harsh reality and tragic view of life in her novels. Moreover, Anita Desai is a strong advocator of nature. She equally shows her concerns for females and nature in her novels. She depicts ecology and problems of ecology in her work by one or the other way. Her novels include description of nature,

exploitation of natural resources, use of imagery that ranges from meteorological to botanical which suggest her deep concern for ecology. Anita Desai was born in Mussoorie- the queen of hills and she is basically a nature lover person at heart. She strongly believes that the attitude of humans is responsible for the destruction of nature and disturbance in ecology.

Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea* is a children story that moves around the lives of two characters Hari and Lila who are brother and sister and lives in poverty. The setting of the story is a place called Thul, a village near Alibaugh, western coast of India. Thul is a small village with lush green surroundings, natural beauty and fascinating sea shore. The serene natural beauty of Thul makes it a very peaceful village. In contrast to this natural place, she switches over to urban setting for half of the story as the protagonist Hari shifts to Bombay for some time to find a job.

By describing natural beauty and other living beings like animals and birds of Thul, Desai wants to show that the men are blessed in true sense when they are living harmoniously with nature and other living beings. The natural beauty of Thul gives a calmness and satisfaction to those who are living there. Poor and rich equally finds tranquility with nature. Natural resources of Thul are also helpful to people for livelihood. As Biju says that “. . . there is plenty of food anyway-paddy and vegetables and coconuts . . . The coconuts are so big and sweet; they sell for good money in Bombay. The land is so good; we grow two crops in a year. We have the best paddy” (Desai 91). For many villagers Fishing is the medium of earnings as Thul is situated at coast line. All these emphasizes on essentiality of protecting nature and natural resources in Thul; but as the story moves further, it is shown that these natural beauty and natural resources are at the risk due to the urbanization and industrial development. It is planned to establish a Fertilizer Project at Thul. It is clear threat for the ecology of Thul. Poor villagers of Thul are ignorant about the calamity which will be brought by this project. They even do not know the meaning of the word ‘Fertilizer’. Hari himself take it as ‘Manure’

Anita Desai never misses any opportunity to paint vividness of nature and its soft and harsh aspects. As she describes the damage caused by the storm of monsoon in Thul. "Early that morning the greatest storm of that monsoon broke. At times it seemed that their hut would be blown to splinters. Lila feared that one of the coconut trees would fall upon their roof. The water in the creek rose minute by minute, turning what had been a marsh in to a lake (201). Moreover, Biju informs the fishermen not to sail the sea but they ignore him and go for sailing. After that three boat sink and three fishermen lose their lives due to the storm. It shows the ecological disturbance.

Desai's characters are advocators of ecology. It is reflected at the different point of time in the novel. The protagonist Hari gets shock when Ramu tells him about the new development in Thul. Ramu tells Hari, "The Government is going to build a great factory here. Many factories, hundreds of them" (11). Hari is deeply concerned and asks Ramu, "And what will happen to the hill and the temple on top?" (12). Hari was worried about his village and people when the stranger tells them the government will take the land and the factories will be built in Thul. At that time, Biju gets extremely angry and tells the stranger, "No one can take our land. . . . It is ours, and we will not sell" (91). Biju adds, "GO build your factories where the land is barren and nothing grows but stones and thorns." (92). At the same time, Desai paints the character like stranger (a person appointed by government) who is hardly concerned with protection of nature and neglects damage that is caused to nature and is strong supportive of industrial development. This character represents the selfish nature of modern men who neglects nature for the sake of urbanization. When Biju asks the stranger, "And what about us who already live here?" (93). The stranger waves his hand as if he were cutting down weeds. "Like that – your village will go. In its place, factories will come up, fertilizer will be made, gas will be produced, many jobs will be created" (93). To protest him, Biju says, "You mean these boys are to give up their fathers' land and boats and go to work in factories like city people?" (93). The stranger tells him that in factories the engineers will come to operate machines. It mirrors that the hunger

for urbanization and industrial development ruins not only ecology but also the life of local people and eats up their family-owned business.

Desai has also underlined one more character, youngman from Alibaugh, who understand this very well and tries to create awareness among the villagers of Thul. He advises the villagers of Thul to unite and oppose the government's determination to build the factories on the cultivable land. The young man makes aware the villagers by saying, "Every one of us is threatened. Our land is going to be taken away . . . Our crops will be destroyed so that their factories can come up instead. All the filth of their factories- for when we produce fertilizes a lot of effluents are created which have to be disposed of – these will be dumped in the sea and will kill the fish for miles around. How will we live without our land, without the sea?" (95). He also alerts the Thul villagers about the hidden intentions of government and says that to acquire their land the government is tempting them by offering job but actually the government will recruit only trained engineers in the factory. The youngman also informs the villagers that he tried to oppose and inform government officials but he and his other members were driven away by police. So they decided to take out protest march at chief minister office.

As a result of this, Hari and the group of farmers reaches to Bombay. Desai introduces an elderly man with white beard of Bombay, one more proponent of ecology, who leads them and says, "I have come here to speak to you, and speak for you, because your green fields and the sea are valuable to all of us as they are to you. Our trees, our fish, our cattle and birds have to be protected . . ." (120). Moreover, he furnishes the reasons of supporting them by saying, "All the citizens of Bombay are concerned. These factories . . . will pump deadly chemicals into the air-fertilizer cannot be manufactured without polluting the air for miles around. Sulphor dioxide, ammonia, and dust will be scattered far and wide." (121) He informs that as per the ruling government instructions, no fertilizer complex should be located within fifty miles of big cities but Rewas and Thul are close to Bombay. He adds, "Bombay is heavily industrialized, crowded, and polluted. How much more pollution can we stand?" (121). He also shares one eye-opening incident occurred in

Japan due to ecological damage, he says that organic mercury was pumped into the sea, it poisoned the fish and the fish poisoned the people who were unlucky enough to eat them. In addition to this, Sayyid Ali, one more supporter is also worried about the issue and says the Alibugh geomagnetic observatory is only one of its kind and if the factories will be established than it will stop working. When Hari returns at his home from Bombay, his conversations with bird watcher Sayyid Ali Sahib is very suggestive. Sayyid Ali Sahib says, "So you're one of those who put up a fight. You've lost the fight, you know- we lost the case in court. The politicians won- so they can make plenty of money from the sale of land and licenses in the name of progress. Thul is lost. . ." (254). It is last blow, when he says, "Everything is doomed. The fish in the sea will die from the effluents that will be pumped into the water. The paddy fields will be built over by factories and houses and streets. My little baya birds will find no more paddy leaves for their nests" (255). Hari asks him, "Why do you care so much about the birds, sir?" (255). He replies, "The birds are the last free creatures on earth. Everything else has been captured and tamed and enslaved- tigers behind the bars of the zoos, lions stared at by crowds in safari parks, men and women in houses like matchboxes working in factories that are like prisons" (255). It demonstrates that the hunger for industrialization and urbanization has made human blind who is not able to see that how much damage is caused to nature. If some people are concerned for the ecology and fight to save the nature then they hardly succeed in it as powerful politicians, corrupted officials and selfish industrialists stop them for their own selfish interests. The novel emphasizes to open eyes for environmental issues.

Conclusion

To sum up, it can be said that Desai's *The village by the Sea* is an influential novel that emphasizes protecting ecology and sustainable development. The present paper has attempted to show that Desai has highlighted ecological concerns in the novels by portraying different characters who are strong advocates of ecology. It makes men aware

that if human will not think about nature and natural resources for the sake of urbanization then it will cause damage in all aspects. The novel shows red signal to industrial and technological development if it is on the cost of ecology.

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From Oral Tradition to English Verse: Folklore and Cultural Assimilation in Arun Kolatkar's *Jejuri*

Jaydip Pravinbhai Patel

Arun Kolatkar and the Postcolonial Poetic Turn

Arun Kolatkar (1932-2004) is a very important poet in India after independence. He wrote well in both Marathi, his native language, and English literature. His training as a graphic artist strongly influenced his poetry, making his style very visual and fragmented. This visual approach turns his poems into sharp, economical “sketches” of what he sees, using concrete details like “cracked stone, monkey droppings, dusty stairs” to show the physical world.

The collection *Jejuri* (1976) made Kolatkar widely famous, winning the Commonwealth Writers Prize in 1977. The poem sequence, made up of thirty-one parts, sparked much discussion because it uses a highly skeptical and rational viewpoint when looking at religious experience.

Contextualizing Jejuri: Pilgrimage and Ambivalence

Jejuri tells the story of an educated, doubting traveler, often called Manohar, visiting the old pilgrimage site in Maharashtra dedicated to the folk god Khandoba. The setting itself is based on a “conflict” between the ancient stories and “legendary associations of the place and the god and the socio-cultural reality of the place”. This clash reflects the modern Indian experience: a rational observer encountering persistent myth among physical ruin.

Kolatkar’s tone throughout *Jejuri* is one of “empathetic skepticism”. The narrator is neither a disbelieving outsider nor a purely devout insider, but someone “hovering over boundary lines”. He questions religious practices and the money-making side of faith, yet he also shows deep

sensitivity to the human need for belief and ritual. This mixed feeling challenges the simple idea of faith versus doubt, allowing for a deep critique that remains rooted in the local Marathi culture.

Jejuri carries out a vital act of **cultural assimilation and linguistic translation**: it takes the raw, mixed, and physical tradition of Marathi folklore and converts it into a modern, fragmented English style. This process uses the colonial language (English) to create a local critique, succeeding in finding the sacred not in official myth, but in the ruins, the marginalized people, and the physical reality of Western India. The poem thus shows a crucial moment where postcolonial literature takes in local tradition through a non-traditional language.

Folklore and Oral Traditions in Western India

The Syncretic Cult of Khandoba

The main god of the Jejuri pilgrimage is Khandoba, also called Martanda Bhairava. He is the most popular *Kuladevata* (family deity) in Maharashtra, worshiped by many different groups of people, including farming, shepherd, warrior, and some priestly castes. Khandoba is a mix of many gods, including Shiva, Bhairava, Surya, and Kartikeya. His main stories, found in texts like the

Malhari Mahatmya and spread through popular folk songs, are about his fight with the demons Mani and Malla and his marriages to Mhalsa and Banai. This historical blending establishes Jejuri as a place that is naturally fluid. Khandoba's easy ability to accept diverse, sometimes conflicting, divine characteristics and community groups provides a foundation for Kolatkar's own poetic mixing of cultures.

Assimilation via Syncretism: The Muslim Connection

The cult of Khandoba provides a historical example of cultural assimilation that shapes Kolatkar's view. Khandoba is linked with Hindu and Jain traditions, and, importantly, he accepts Muslim devotees, who worship him as Ajmat Khan or Mallu Khan. Stories suggest this blending began from historical events, such as the myth that the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb was driven out by Khandoba's powers.

This deep mixing of different elements, which is part of the religious structure itself, shows that the cultural reality of Western India is not a 'pure' indigenous identity. While some critics ask for a pristine, essential local representation, Khandoba's long history of accepting non-Hindu elements challenges this demand. The fluidity of the god mirrors Kolatkar's own choice to write in two languages. His decision to use English to represent this dynamic, mixed deity simply echoes the deity's own openness to cultural blending across time and society.

Embodied Tradition: The Vaghya and the Murli

The most important people who carry the Jejuri oral tradition are the Vaghya (male devotee) and the Murli (female devotee). They are performers from nomadic or "lower" caste groups who keep the cult's legends alive through constant performance. They perform

Jagran (singing, dancing, and acting out stories) on special occasions, passing on the complex tales of Khandoba to common people using local languages. The Vaghya plays the *Dimdi* (a local drum), while the Murli plays the *Ghati* (a small set of bells) .

These traditions are the raw, local, and often financially vulnerable link to the god, standing in contrast to the formal, written Sanskrit texts of elite religion. Kolatkar's inclusion of "A Song for a Vaghya" and "A Song for a Murli" directly translates these local, oral performances into the English text, making the voices of the marginalized visible. These poems capture the rawness and immediacy that can be lost in formal narratives.

Kolatkar's Poetic Translation of Oral Culture

Modernism, Fragmentation, and the Sketch

Kolatkar translates oral culture through his use of modernist art techniques. His training in graphic arts leads to a style based on "fragments of perception". He uses short lines and sudden shifts, breaking down the long, continuous stories typical of oral traditions and myths, such as the *Malhari Mahatmya*. The poem's structure mirrors

the physical ruin of Jejuri, using fragmentation to show the “barrenness of the physical landscape” while focusing on “the emptiness or ambiguity of spiritual experience.”

The Assimilation of Language: Marathi Idiom in English Syntax

Kolatkár wrote in both Marathi and English, which uniquely allows him to stand between global literary modernism and regional tradition. The poet avoids making Indian culture seem exotic to Western readers. Instead, he makes “Indian realities to reshape English expression”. His English is not formal or academic, but a colloquial, practical idiom, reflecting a true “Indian English”. This mixing of languages captures the real, bilingual sensibility of the modern Indian citizen.

For example, the language in “A Low Temple” captures the blending of English sentence structure with Marathi cultural idioms:

you know then that there is no god, but stone and the stone’s a foot thick. (Kolatkár 17)

The simple, bare wording hides a complex cultural meeting, using the English language (inherited from colonization) to express a deep, local disillusionment or material reality.

Translating the Vaghya’s Visceral Faith

The most direct example of poetic assimilation happens in “A Song for a Vaghya,” where the Vaghya’s low-caste, elemental spirituality is put into clear English verse. The Vaghya’s life is brutally tied to survival, linking devotion directly to economic need:

I killed my mother for her skin. I must say it didn’t take much to make this pouch I keep turmeric in.” (Kolatkár 29)

This translation presents the spiritual truth of the oral tradition not as abstract thinking, but as raw, sensory, and biological experience. The Vaghya’s spiritual identity is summarized in a “one word song” (Kolatkár 30), showing ultimate poetic minimalism. His relationship with the god

Khandoba is defined by both fear and necessary provision:

God is the word and I know it backwards.
I know it as fangs inside my flanks.
But I also know it as a lamb between my teeth,
as a taste of blood upon my tongue. (Kolatkár 30)

This use of English modernism becomes a way to express a marginalized spirituality, giving unexpected importance to a tradition often left out of mainstream stories.

Cross-Cultural Encounters and Assimilation

The Collision of Faith and Skepticism

The design of *Jejuri* is driven by the constant clash between old traditional faith and the observer's strong modern doubt. This conflict forces a blending of ancient myths with rational, objective reality. The observer's role is constantly to reduce the sacred to the everyday.

A clear example of this reduction happens when the traveler mistakes a "cowshed" for "one more temple," only to be confronted by the simple reality of farm life when a

Wide eyed calf looked back at him. "He realizes,
"It isn't another temple,
he said,
it's just a cowshed. (Kolatkár 16)

Yet, when objective reality challenges myth, the power of fixed belief often wins. In "A Low Temple," the observer notes that the priest's "eight arm goddess" clearly has eighteen arms. When the narrator points out the fact ("You can count. But she has eighteen, you protest"), the priest ignores the evidence: "All the same she is still an eight arm goddess to the priest" (Kolatkár 13). This shows the firmness of ritualistic belief, where internal faith is stronger than outside, verifiable facts.

Chaitanya's Radical Materialism

The figure of Chaitanya, the Bhakti saint, appears several times, offering a different kind of spiritual story that goes beyond formal ritual. His actions show the most extreme form of spiritual assimilation: turning the divine representation back into its material origins. In one sequence, he is quoted:

“sweet at grapes are the stone of jejuri,” followed by the action:

“he popped a stone in hitmouth and spat out gods.” (Kolatkar 19)

This strong image suggests that divinity is not in the established god or the manufactured idol, but in the raw, physical material of the world itself. By symbolically ‘spitting out’ the deities, Chaitanya implies that the deepest spiritual truth exists outside the structured forms of worship. This idea connects the spiritual freedom of the Bhakti tradition with a core modern focus on material reality. It suggests that if the difference between “god and stone” is “very thin” (Kolatkar 24), then true faith means accepting the stone itself.

The Assimilation of the Marginalized God (Yeshwant Rao)

The poem finishes its exploration of assimilation by highlighting the figure of Yeshwant Rao. He is called a “second class god” (Kolatkar 45), a formless “mass of basalt” located physically outside the main temple, placed “among the tradesmen and the lepers”. He is intentionally non-dramatic and imperfect, lacking “an arm, a leg or even a single head” (Kolatkar, 46).

The narrator favors this deity, preferring him over the powerful gods “who soak you for your gold” or are “either too symmetrical or too theatrical”. Yeshwant Rao symbolizes the assimilation of suffering, imperfection, and being marginalized into the divine. Because he is broken, overlooked, and formless, “he happens to understand you a little better” (Kolatkar, 46). The true spiritual lesson of *ejuri* is this moral assimilation, which suggests that real divinity is found not in power

and hierarchy, but in empathy with those on the edge. This ethical view is a clear rejection of the commercial, hierarchical pilgrimage system seen throughout the town.

Representation of Western India in *Jejuri*

The Topography of Ruin and Decadence

Kolatkar shows the landscape of Western India not as a beautiful, romantic place, but as a hard place full of decay and neglect. The environment is defined by “wretched hills” (Kolatkar 17) and “sand blasted shoulders, bladed with shale” (Kolatkar 24). The infrastructure reflects historical failure; the “great reservoir the Peshwas built” contains “nothing in it. Except a hundred years of silt” (Kolatkar 36).

This portrayal focuses on human weakness and material reality. For instance, the temple cupboard is described as holding “shelf upon shelf of gold gods in tidy rows,” but these gods are viewed through broken glass covered with strips of “stock exchange quotations” (Kolatkar 44). This sharp contrast emphasizes how commercial interests and material concerns have totally assimilated the sacred space, highlighting the economic reality of the pilgrimage site.

Functional Sanctity

The poem “Heart of Ruin” clearly shows the blending of the ordinary into the sacred space. When the temple roof falls on Maruti’s head, the resulting ruin becomes the favored shelter of local life:

A mongrel bitch has found a place,
for herself and her puppies
in the heart of the ruin. (Kolatkar 8)

The poem makes an important point, stating that the ruined structure is “No more a place of worship this place is nothing less than the house of god” (Kolatkar 8). This change suggests that true sacredness is not in formal religious service (worship), but in the space’s material reality (house of God). By returning to its broken, functional state, the site

assimilates the ordinary, providing shelter for the marginalized (the animals) and challenging idealized ideas of India as a land of perfect spirituality.

Assimilating Modernity: The Railway Station Epilogue

The poetic journey ends at the railway station, where the ancient, rural landscape meets the structured, rational reality of industrial modernity. This final location offers the most striking example of mutual cultural assimilation.

The railway timetable, a secular symbol of rational, modern time, is taken in and reinterpreted through indigenous theological logic. The two-headed station master, a strange figure, explains this. He calls all later timetables “apocryphal,” but he reads the first, original timetable with such freedom that he declares all timetables, past and future, to be “simultaneously valid” because they were “inherent in the one printed when the track was laid” (Kolatkár 52).

This absurd statement applies a traditional, pre-modern, cyclical belief of pre-ordainment to a rigid, modern technological structure. The Station Master’s oddity shows how traditional thought resists being simply replaced by modernity; instead, it is assimilated and redefined to maintain continuity, proving that even the structures of colonial legacy are subjected to local myth-making.

Conclusion

Arun Kolatkár’s *Jejuri* is an essential work that shows how cultures blend in postcolonial literature. It successfully translates the mixed, local oral tradition of Khandoba into sharp, critical, but caring English poetry in a modern style. Kolatkár effectively used English, a language often linked to colonial disruption, not to make Indian forms seem exotic or perfect, but to provide a radical, grounded critique of local problems and commercialized faith.

The assimilation process in *Jejuri* finally resolves the conflict between doubt and faith by insisting that true spirituality is based on material

reality and human empathy. This is confirmed by the acceptance of the broken, overlooked God Yeshwant Rao, the elevation of the Vaghya's raw survival story, and the recognition of ruin as a functional, sacred space. Through mixing languages and fragmenting aesthetics, Kolatkar affirms a strong, diverse Indian spirituality that is found in the marginal and the broken things, confirming his work as an excellent example of postcolonial poetry engaging with folklore.

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Utility of Accounting in Filmmaking

Hemant Kadunia

Introduction

Filmmaking is a complex process that requires careful planning, budgeting, and financial management. Accounting serves as the backbone of the process, helping filmmakers make decisions, manage expenses, and maximize profitability. It ensures that funds are allocated wisely, resources are used efficiently and financial records are properly maintained. From pre-production to post-production, accurate and efficient accounting practices are essential to ensure budgets are adhered to, expenses are properly controlled and financial goals are achieved.

What is included in film production accounting?

Film production accounting is “the process of managing these financial aspects to ensure the success of a project while complying with legal and financial requirements.” A film production accountant is the person primarily responsible for this task. From budgeting to cost analysis, tracking expenses and preparing financial reports, film production accountants play a vital role in keeping the financial engine running smoothly.

The Role of the Film Production Accountant

A film production accountant is a key member of the film production team, responsible for managing the financial aspects of the project. Their role includes various responsibilities and duties—

Responsibilities and Duties- Production accountants oversee budgeting, cost control, and financial reporting throughout the production process. They collaborate with the film’s producers, line producers, and

department heads to ensure budgetary constraints are adhered to. Additionally, they handle payroll, manage accounts payable and receivable, reconcile financial statements, and communicate with external vendors and financial institutions.

Collaboration with the production team- Film production accountants work closely with the production team, providing financial guidance and support. They participate in production meetings, providing information on the financial implications of creative decisions. By collaborating with department heads and producers, accountants contribute to the efficient allocation of resources and help maintain financial discipline throughout production.

Compliance and Reporting- Film production accountants are responsible for ensuring compliance with financial regulations, industry standards and internal policies. They prepare financial statements, including cash flow statements, profit and loss statements and balance sheets. These reports provide valuable insight into the financial health of the production and assist the production team, investors and stakeholders in making decisions.

Importance of Accounting in Filmmaking

Ensuring Financial Accuracy - In the world of filmmaking, where budgets can reach into the millions, accurate financial reporting is essential. Accounting provides the framework for tracking expenses, monitoring costs, and ensuring financial transparency throughout the production process. By maintaining careful records, manufacturing companies can have a clear understanding of their financial position, make informed decisions and minimize financial risks.

Budgeting and Cost Control- Budgeting is a crucial aspect of filmmaking and accountants play a vital role in the process. Film production accountants collaborate closely with a film's producers and department heads to create comprehensive budgets that cover various aspects of production, including pre-production, shooting, post-production, marketing and distribution. Through effective cost control and monitoring,

accountants help keep the production within budgetary constraints, maximize resources and minimize waste.

Cash flow management- Cash flow management is important in filmmaking, where expenses are often incurred upfront but revenues may be received later. Accountants monitor the inflow and outflow of cash, ensuring there is adequate liquidity to meet production needs. They work closely with producers to analyze cash flow projections, identify potential bottlenecks, and implement strategies to optimize cash management, ultimately contributing to the financial stability of the production.

Tax incentives and exemptions - Governments, tax boards and other jurisdictions often offer tax incentives and exemptions to attract film production. Accounting professionals specializing in film production understand the complexities of these incentive programs and work closely with production companies to ensure compliance. They assist in documenting eligible expenses, preparing applications for incentives, and managing the financial aspects of the rebate process, maximizing profits for production.

Financing and investors - Filmmaking often requires substantial financial resources, and attracting investors is a common practice. Accounting plays an important role in this regard by preparing financial projections, analyzing investment opportunities, and providing transparent financial reporting. Accurate accounting practices create confidence in investors, facilitate financing for film projects and enable the financial viability of production.

The Process of Accounting for Film Production

Film production accounting is a multi-step process, which we can understand as follows –

1. **Budget Preparation** - Accountants collaborate with producers, directors and other stakeholders to create a comprehensive production budget. The budget outlines estimated costs for various aspects of the film, such as talent, crew, locations, sets, props and visual effects.

2. **Financing Arrangements** - Accountants help secure financing for the film. They work closely with production companies, investors and financiers to structure deals, negotiate contracts and ensure adequate funding for the project.
3. **Insurance and Risk Management** - Accountants assess the risks involved in filmmaking and help obtain appropriate insurance coverage. They ensure that potential liabilities are minimized while protecting the financial interests of the production company.
4. **Cost Control** - Accountants carefully monitor production costs and expenses. They track daily expenses, review invoices, process payments and reconcile financial transactions. This real-time control helps identify budget overruns and allows for timely corrective action.
5. **Payroll Management** - Filmmaking involves a wide range of cast and crew members, each of whom must arrange for financial payments. Accountants handle payroll, ensuring accurate and timely payments to everyone involved in the production. They navigate complex union agreements, tax withholdings and benefit schedules to maintain compliance.
6. **Vendor Management** - Filmmaking relies on a variety of vendors and suppliers for equipment, props, costumes and other essential services. Accountants oversee vendor relationships, negotiate contracts and process payments, ensuring timely delivery of goods and services while maintaining budgetary control.
7. **Revenue Recognition** - Accountants play a key role in identifying and controlling revenue from a film. They navigate distribution agreements, monitor box office earnings, home video sales, streaming royalties and licensing deals. Accurate revenue recognition is critical for financial reporting and profitability assessment.
8. **Royalty payments** - Many films generate additional income through merchandise sales, music rights, and other licensing agreements. Accountants handle the complex calculation and payment of royalties, ensuring that all parties receive a fair share of the film's success.

9. **Financial analysis and reporting** - Accountants prepare financial statements, analyze profitability, and provide insight into a film's financial performance. They prepare reports for producers, investors, and other stakeholders, helping them understand the return on investment and make informed decisions for future projects.

Key principles of Accounting for Film Production

Successful accounting in film production depends on a solid understanding of the key accounting principles specific to the industry. Some of the principles are as follows –

Accrual accounting - Accrual accounting is the standard method used in film production. It involves recognizing revenues and expenses when they are earned or incurred, regardless of when the cash flows in. This method provides a more accurate representation of the production's financial position and performance.

Cost classification - Cost classification is essential for keeping track of expenses in filmmaking. Production accountants classify costs into various accounts, such as pre-production, production, post-production and distribution costs. This classification helps in budgeting, cost control and analysis of production expenses.

Revenue recognition - Revenue recognition in film production can be complex due to the various revenue streams including box office sales, distribution rights, licensing and merchandising. Accountants follow industry-specific guidelines to appropriately recognize revenue, considering factors such as contractual obligations to distribution agreements.

Materials Management - Materials management is important in filmmaking, especially for projects involving physical goods or assets. Accountants control materials, manage stock levels, and account for any obsolescence or loss of value. Accurate materials management contributes to cost control and financial accuracy.

Depreciation and amortization - Filmmaking assets, such as equipment and sets, have a limited useful life. Accountants employ

depreciation and amortization methods to allocate the cost of these assets over their estimated useful lives. Proper depreciation and amortization accounting ensures accurate reporting of the value of assets and production costs.

Software and Tools for Film Production Accounting -

- **Accounting and Budgeting Software** - In today's digital age, accounting software designed specifically for the film industry helps keep track of budgets, prepare financial reporting and facilitate collaboration among the production team.
- **Digital Asset Management Systems** - Filmmaking generates large amounts of digital assets, including footage, graphics, and sound files. Digital asset management systems help organize, store, and share these assets securely. Accountants use these systems to control and manage financial assets, contracts, and licensing agreements.

Challenges in Film Production Accounting

- **Dealing with Variable Expenses** - Film productions often face variable expenses due to changes in scripts, shooting locations, cast or production requirements. Accountants need to be flexible and adaptable to handle these fluctuations and adjust budgets and cash flow projections accordingly.
- **Managing Multiple Projects and Productions** - Accountants working in the film industry often handle multiple projects at once. They must manage budgets, expenses and financial returns for each production, while ensuring accuracy and timeliness in their work.
- **International co-productions and currency exchange** - In the global film industry, international co-productions are common. Accountants must deal with the complexities of currency exchange rates, tax regulations and financial reporting standards in different jurisdictions. Their expertise in international finance ensures compliance and smooth financial operations.

Conclusion

Accounting for film production is a multifaceted endeavor, requiring a deep understanding of budgeting, cost control, tax incentives, financial reporting and more. Skilled production accountants play a vital role in managing financial complexities, supporting a strategic vision and protecting the financial interests of the production. By effectively navigating the complexities of film production accounting, from budgeting and cost control to tax incentives and contractual agreements, film productions can maximize their financial resources, increase profitability and achieve long-term success. Adopting specialized accounting software and collaborating with industry experts streamlines financial processes and improves decision making.

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Technological Media, Cross-Cultural Encounters, and Learning: Reimagining Western India in English Learning and Education

Shibani Banerjee

Social Media as a Contemporary Site of Cross-Cultural Encounter

Quality education has been at the heart of development of societies, and it is a major component of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 of the United Nations, which focuses on facilitating inclusive and equitable learning to all. The digital technologies have become mighty facilitators of this vision today, and education has become an interactive, personalized, and a globally interconnected process. The use of MOOCs, smart boards, virtual laboratories, and mobile devices has taken the learning process outside of the classroom, whereas social media has become an especially dynamic arena of both collaborative academic and cultural interaction.

Social media is not only a means of sharing knowledge, but also mediator of cross-cultural interaction. It enables learners and teachers to communicate and bargain with each other and develop hybrid identities in an online space where cultural boundaries are being restructured continuously. This role is very reminiscent of the previously held role by English writings on Western India in the colonial and postcolonial eras. Travelogues, memoirs, and literary works by the likes of Rudyard Kipling, Flora Annie Steel, and colonial officials acted as refracting glasses using which India, especially Western India with its unique sceneries, customs, and cultural behaviors, was viewed by the rest of the world. These texts bridged Indian and Western cultures, frequently defining Indian society in terms of the colonizer even as they allowed space of negotiation, adaptation, and assimilation of a culture.

Similarly, social media currently mediates the modern experience by designing virtual tales that determine the ways cultures view one another. As an example, Indian students sharing such platforms as YouTube, Instagram, or MOOCs are not only exposed to Western ideas and the way of teaching but also demonstrate native practices, crafts, and local culture, including the one of Western India, to the international world. Such is the reflection of the previously spread circulation of narratives in the English literature, only with an opposite turn: rather than being manifested only through the voices of others, people and groups have now an opportunity to speak of themselves in the digital space.

In this way, the comparison between the two can be drawn: the English texts about Western India used to be a literary place of cultural negotiation, whereas social media and technological tools nowadays do the same thing in the educational and communicative process. They are both instances of cultural intermediaries, but this time mediating encounters by means of the written word and the digital platform respectively, facilitating assimilation, and redefining the ways of representing and understanding identities across the boundaries (Haddad 2002; Buyukbaykal 2015).

Digital Classrooms as Modern Arenas of Cross-Cultural Exchange

Digital competence, as defined by Ferrari (2013), is the ability to use information and communication technologies in an effective, creative, independent and ethically appropriate manner depending on the variable range of activities, including learning and solving problems, socialization and cultural engagement. This ability has increasingly gained a central place in the education system of the world, especially following the expansion of online classrooms. Even though the benefits of digital education were repeatedly discussed, the true value of this phenomenon became clear during the COVID-19 pandemic. The March 2020 global lockdown caused an abrupt shift to digital teaching and learning, which spawned what organizational scholars Gustafsson, Gillespi, Searle, and Dietz (2020) describe as a disruption, an unanticipated metamorphosis of established orders that had to be adapted to now.

In this crisis scenario, online learning rooms were never just urgent replacements but new innovations that transformed the learning processes. By using the services of wireless technologies, laptops, smartphones, and interactive platforms, teachers and students created new patterns of interaction that went beyond the scope of traditional pedagogy. They enabled real-time communication, quick evaluation, adaptable learning and teamwork across geographies- functions that were not easily provided by the conventional approaches. However, there were still some obstacles, with numerous educators seeing these tools as distractions instead of facilitators of pedagogy (Vakaliuk et al. 2021; Cavas et al. 2009). Although there was resistance at the beginning, the flexibility of digital classrooms made them essential to ongoing educational progress throughout and after the pandemic.

Digital classrooms when analysed in the context of cross-cultural encounters take up a similar role as the previous one of English writings on Western India. Colonial and postcolonial texts, whether they were in the form of a travelogues, memoirs or fictional works, facilitated cultural contact by introducing western readers to Indian landscapes, traditions and people. They were mediums of representation and assimilation, thus creating what is perceived about India in the world. Similarly, through digital classrooms, modern culture serves as a new culture space: digital classrooms allow Indian students to take in new knowledge around the world and expel their own cultural stories to the rest of the world. With the help of MOOCs, webinars, and social-media-integrated services, the voices of Western India, its traditions, crafts, languages, and experiences can no longer be represented by others but are transmitted by the participants themselves.

This shift is a pivotal continuum: as English-language texts had previously been the mediators of the cross-cultural presence ability of India, now digital classrooms create the spaces of intercultural dialogue where the representation becomes more interactive, multidirectional, participatory. In the example of Udaipur students, it is possible to discuss the simultaneous use of international learning materials and the participation in the world cognition of Indian culture, which makes local and global

demarcations disappear. In that respect, online classrooms do not only serve as tools of academic education but are powerful mechanisms of cultural negotiation, assimilation and identity construction in the twenty-first century (Emmanuel and Sife 2008; Kostopoulos and Kotsiantis 2022; Altun 2006; Perraton 2000).

AI and Engaging Classrooms as Mediators of Cross-Cultural Learning

With the recent increase in the development of the Artificial Intelligence (AI), the environment of higher education is experiencing a drastic change, transforming the way pedagogy is conducted and the trends of student learning. AI-based tools personalize learning by dynamically modifying content to match student needs, identifying areas of knowledge deficiency, and implementing specific interventions on a real-time basis (Hennekeuser et al. 2024; Baker 2021). These systems do not only boost academic success but also develop self-efficacy and grow positive attitudes toward learning (Johnson and Smith 2019). Providing learners with adaptive learning routes, real-time feedback, and advanced tutoring tools, AI platforms establish new and flexible channels that help students to interact with their curriculum effectively (Luckin et al. 2016; Zawacki-Richter *et al.* 2019).

No less important is the role of engaging classrooms whereby incorporation of technology, through projectors, computers, simulation, and collaborative participation, transforms the learning space into an interactive and dynamic space. Digital devices are already familiar to contemporary students; integrating these resources into the educational process draws their interest, improves retention and increases involvement beyond traditional forms of verbal communications. Notably, the effectiveness of these tools depends on the form of digital content: inclusivity, accessibility, and cultural relevance are the key factors. The materials that consider the unique learning capabilities, disabilities, and the socio-cultural backgrounds of the learners will be seen as more impactful and will bridge the gaps between them and become a sense of belonging (Yenduri *et al.* 2023; Braga and Elliott 2018).

Placed in the larger context of cross-cultural interactions, AI and classrooms that are interactive are part of an old tradition that once led to the spread of English literature about Western India. Similar to the colonial and post-colonial texts, which enhanced exposure to the culture, landscapes, and traditions of the Indian people to a worldwide audience, mediating the encounters, shaping the perceptions, and facilitating the assimilation, the current AI-based and technology-rich classrooms allow students not only to learn but also to project the culture narrative to the outside world. As an example, adaptive platforms can include the use of culturally specific instances of Western India so that local traditions, handicrafts, and histories are present alongside other content. Through this, students not only receive but also give out cultural knowledge, thus, in a two-way exchange, which replicates, but improves the relation of literary representation to the past.

Therefore, AI and interesting classrooms can be considered modern facilitators of cross-cultural knowledge. Where British texts on Western India once produced cultural identities in the eyes of the rest of the world, the digital technologies are now allowing students to create, distribute, and redefine their cultural realities in the context of global learning networks.

Mediating Culture: From English Writings to Digital Learning-Cross-Cultural Encounters in Contemporary Learning

During the colonial and postcolonial periods, English literature works about Western India (including travelogues, memoirs, and other literary genres) played a central role in the mediation of intercultural experiences. These records brought the Indian lands, traditions, and social structure to the Western audiences, thus influencing the image and facilitating cultural absorption. The authorial gaze placed Indian society in the position of the readers and created a one-way form of interaction where India was presented to the world audience. Though the representations were always refracted through the colonial epistemologies, they still opened

a cultural dialogue, highlighting the unique identity of India and bringing about more general intercultural awareness.

Digital technologies and media have become the contemporary means of cultural transmission into the modern educational world, providing spaces that reverberate the previous role of literature but with participatory and interactive aspects. Artificial intelligence (AI)-based adaptive learning systems, MOOCs, simulations, and social media give learners the ability to acquire knowledge on a global scale, in addition to working with locally relevant cultural materials. In contrast to the more passive form of interaction that characterized the reading of literatures, these online platforms allow the students to actively interpret, disseminate, and negotiate the meaning. As an example, the language-learning software and multimedia story-telling tools may include the cultural references to the Western part of India and allow students not only to gain English-language proficiency but also to relate to and express their own cultural heritage to the rest of the world.

Digital classrooms expand these cross-cultural experiences even further as they offer flexibility, access and collaborative opportunities. Students can now use learning resources at their convenience and anywhere, share with students outside their region, and get real-time feedback, thus creating an active knowledge sharing environment. Since English texts used to facilitate cross-cultural knowledge in the past, digital classrooms do the same today by forming cross-geographical, cross-linguistic, and cross-social links. Besides, the structure of the digital content, making it inclusive, accessible, and culturally relevant, facilitates a fairer assimilation of knowledge, allowing students with different backgrounds to be immensely integrated into the global learning networks.

In this way, an evident continuum arises between the past and the present: when English texts on Western India were being created they served as ancient brokers of cross-cultural knowledge, introducing the Indian traditions and society to the rest of the world, and when modern digital technologies are involved, they work as contemporary brokers of cultural mediation where students can actively engage, re-read, and

disseminate their cultural realities. These two processes prefigure the core nature of mediated learning, be it textual or technological, in creating cross-cultural experiences and creating assimilation and intercultural competence in the learners.

Digital Learning as a Modern Mediator of Cross-Cultural Encounters: Challenges and Opportunities

Digital learning has certainly changed the face of education and it has provided a new level of flexibility, accessibility and individualization of education like never before. However, there is a series of complicated issues that accompany the fast adoption of technology in the classroom. The digital preparedness of teachers can be mentioned as one of the priority issues. Most educators, who are used to face-to-face learning, struggle to accommodate online and blended learning (Efremova and Huseynova 2023). Without the required technical resources or experience in the field of digital pedagogy, the teachers can find it difficult to connect with students, which will result in frustration and a lack of professional self-confidence (Solo *et al.* 2024). Software-hardware incompatibility, LMS malfunctions, and connectivity are such factors even in the well-equipped institutions that disrupt the learning process, impacting student motivation and engagement (Raffi *et al.* 2025; Ordaya-Gonzales *et al.* 2024). Also, there is the issue of the development of inclusive and culturally relevant content which is another challenge. In contrast to traditional texts, the digital platforms will have to serve a wide range of students with varying learning abilities, languages and socio-cultural aspects to consider. Development of adaptive and meaningful content that can be understood in all cultures needs the cooperation of educators, technology developers, and curriculum specialists (Fernandez *et al.* 2024; Yenduri *et al.* 2023). Otherwise, digital learning can easily be transformed into a one-size-fits-all approach, as it is unlikely to support the diversity of local knowledge and identity. Nevertheless, learning through digital means has amazing transformative potential. AI-powered adaptive platforms, virtual reality, interactive multimedia, and collaborative online resources enable students to immerse themselves in the academic knowledge and in the culturally-

specific content (Hennekeuser *et al.* 2024; Braga and Elliott, 2018). Some gamified and interactive learning platforms like Khan Academy, Coursera, and edX make education interesting, personalized, and accessible worldwide (Tenorio *et al.* 2018; Mamgain *et al.* 2014). Students are able to have high-quality content regardless of the geographic location or the socio-economic status and, in the process, democratic education and enable students in previously underserved areas to join in the global knowledge networks. In terms of cross-cultural experience, digital education could be seen as the contemporary incarnation of the cultural mediation previously undertaken by the English writings about Western India. Colonial and postcolonial writings made sense of Indian traditions, landscapes and societal practices in the eyes of the world and created a mediated conversation between India and the West. Although those writings had mostly provided one-directional communication, digital learning platforms are now forming interactive and two-way communications. Students do not just absorb knowledge, they also add cultural value, they tell stories about their localities and take part in global projects. In this regard, digital platforms enable learners to negotiate actively cultural identity, assimilation and representation, both repeating and extending the mediatory purpose of historical texts. To sum up, despite the various technical infrastructure, educator preparation, and content formulation challenges associated with digital learning, digital learning is an effective education and cultural change power agent.

Digital technologies provide a flexible, accessible, and interactive learning experience and provide a bridge between the local and global knowledge systems. They help the learners to interact with both learning content and cultural setting in a meaningful way as well as making education a space of cross-cultural interaction, assimilation and representation. Similarly, to English texts about Western India in the past that mediate intercultural dialogue and communication, the digital classroom, AI-powered software, and media technology are now playing the same type of role in the 21st century, as they create an interactive, dynamic, and global learning environment that unites culture, knowledge, and identity in harmony.

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Environmental Protection and Conservation in Oral Narratives of Dhangarbhats of Mewar

Khushpal Garg and Shankar Lal Dholi

Mewar was one of the major princely states of Rajputana. Rajasthan including some area of Gujrat and Madhya Pradesh was known as Rajputana. Colonel James Tod called it Raythan or Rajasthan first. Rajputana was divided into different princely states during the rule of Rajput rulers or East India Company. Mewar includes Udaipur, Chittorgarh, Rajsamand and Bhilwara districts of Rajasthan. The first capital of Mewar was Chittorgarh. The fort of Chittorgarh was made by Chitrangad Mourya of Mori dynasty. He belongs to Shepherd caste called Gadari, Gayari, Dhangar or Gadariya in Mewar. Bappa Rawal, known as Kal Bhoj also, defeated the Mori dynasty and founded Mewar. He ruled over Chittorgarh and declared it the capital of Mewar. Bappa Rawal was brought up by a saint Harit Rishi. He worked as the shepherd for the cows for Harit Rishi (a hermit). Being defeated by Bappa Rawal, the Mories left the fort of Chittorgarh and started to move from one place to another as shepherds. The Patikar clan of Shepherd community (Gadri or Gadriya of Mewar) are known as descendant of Mori rulers of Mewar. They are addressed as *Mori Manidhar Rao* by their culture bearer and folk poets.

<i>Aad chitor ra upniya,</i>	you took birth at Chittor—
<i>Jgga Ishwar Ri jod !</i>	Jagga Ishar (the poet) accompanied you
<i>Patikar Thava Pargne</i>	Patikar are renown in nearby areas
<i>Mathe Jash Ra mod !!</i>	They have always been glorious
<i>Mori manndhar Rao, sabraj!!</i>	Maurya is the king!! I salute you

Meaning:

The poet addresses the Patikar clan and says that you originated from Chittorgarh. I was always with you as your poet. Your fame spreads in all areas of our community. You have always brought pride for our community.

Gadriya/ Gadari/ Gayari (shepherd) is one of the oldest caste of Mewar. The inscription of Man Mori and address of patikar clan in *Habraj* of Gadri caste by Dhangarbhats also link their relation with one of the oldest Mori dynasty of Mewar. Another inscription at Patoliya village at Bhupalsagar in Kapasan Tehsil also proves the ancient history of the Gadari caste. The inscription describes that the people of the castes gathered at the Patoliya village in 1303 A.D and made reforms for the caste.

The people of the Gadari or Gadariya or Gayari or Dhangar caste of Mewar are followers of Hindu religion and worship folk deity Devnarayan and other deities like Goddess Kali, Chamunda etc. The caste has an age old cultural tradition. They have patronized the folk bearers called Dhangarbhats to recite the praise poetry and maintain the oral tradition of their culture since ages.

The praise poetry or heroic poetry on leaders, saints and social reformers of the Gadri caste has been composed in abundance by Dhangarbhats of Mewar. Dhangarbhats poets have been patronized by the Gadari or Gadariyas since the formation or origin of their castes. They are culture bearers for the Gadari caste. Gadari, Gayari or Gadariya caste is also known as Dhangar. The folk bearers Dhangarbhats compose different types of poetry and explain different narratives of Gadari caste through tales and stories. The narratives present the leaders, social reformers and saints of the shepherd community who brought a remarkable change in their cultural tradition and worked for the caste. They follow an oral tradition since ages. Dhangar Bhats of Mewar maintain the genealogical records of Gadari too. Their manuscripts are full of different narratives of Gadaris. The narratives explain the clans, their residing villages, their deeds and migrations, leaders of the caste etc. The songs and stories

prevail in the Gadari caste also have different narratives of Gadari caste. These songs are sung by the women of Gadari caste on different occasions. Narratives based on the deities of Gadari caste are subject of these songs. Amra Bhagat of Gadari caste of Rajasthan is widely known as a shepherd saint. Rajasthan government has approved the budget for construction of a panorama about Amra Bhagat at Narbadiya, the birth place, in Chittorgarh district.

Folklore is a store house of knowledge for us. The knowledge which evolves in any group of people and passed through generations takes the form of folklore. The term folklore was first used by an antiquarian William Thomas in a magazine *Athenaeum* in 1886.

According to Den Ben Amos:

Folklore is very much an organic phenomenon. . . . It is possible to distinguish three basic conceptions of the subject underlying many definitions; accordingly, folklore is one of these three: a body of knowledge, a mode of thought, or a kind of art. (3)

Folklore is transmitted orally through generations and becomes tradition in the community. For example myths, tales, stories, traditional methods of treatment, lullaby, proverbs, chants, legends etc. The term folk lore can be divided into two categories 1- A traditional form of knowledge 2- A form of verbal art. The literature which is based on the oral tradition of any community is named as oral literature or folk literature. It is a verbal form of the folklore and includes many literary forms like folktales, myths, legends, proverbs, riddles, songs, chants, legends, stories, poetry and all verbal forms of orally transmitted tradition.

In the context of Oral history Henige defines oral traditions as:

Strictly speaking . . . those recollections of the past that are commonly or universally known in a given culture . . . (and) have been handed down for at least a few generations. (Finnegan 7)

Folklore or folk literature can be classified into different genres. Different genres present different realities of the society. The society is the primary source for the origin of the folklore. Lenin said: "In every folktale there

are elements of reality” (Propp 17). As a form of verbal art folklore is called folk literature or Oral literature. Vladimir Propp writes:

Literature and folklore overlap partially in their poetic genres. There are genres specific to literature (for example, the novel) and to folk lore (for example, the charm), but both folklore and literature can be classified by genres. (6)

Different genres of folk literature like story, tale, legend, myth etc. are called narratives. They tell us about the sequence of events which are the subjects of the genre and took place in the society. According to W.R Goodman “In order to have a narrative, events must be located in a space and time” (93). Many genres of folk literature like Historical poetry, epic poetry, elegiac poetry, folktales, stories, myths, folk songs etc. can be termed as narrative genres of folk literature. They describe about the development of the society, deeds of the people, events and happenings and their effect of the society etc. In the book the Nature of the Narrative writers Robert Scholes, James Phelan and Robert Kellogg say:

By narrative we mean all those literary works which are distinguished by two characteristics: the presence of a story and a story-teller. For writing to be narrative no more and no less than a teller and a tale are required. (4)

Oral traditions play major role in the preservation of culture of Mewar. There are various oral traditions based on castes and different groups of people which preserve the cultural, social and religious values of the society and store the knowledge for day to day life of people. Literature based on these traditions have been passed through generations and found in oral and written forms. Oral traditions of Gadari caste prevail in the Mewar mostly through Dhangarbhhat, a culture bearer sub caste of Dholi. The narratives are based origin and migration of Gadris, their social structure, religious and cultural values, historical events, leaders, social reformers and saints of caste etc. These narratives are found in form of tales, stories, poetry, folk songs, riddles, rhymes, ballads etc. and explain about different happenings and events in the caste with

their times and sequences. Poetic lines or couplets are part of all the forms of narratives generally. The story tellers or poets use these poetic lines to enhance the meaning and lucidity of the tale or stories. It is a style followed in Rajasthan by story tellers or poets of different oral traditions.

R. A Hamilton writes: “Oral tradition ought never to be used alone and unsupported. It has to be related to the social and political structure of the people who preserve it, compared with the traditions with neighbouring people, and linked with the chronological indications of genealogies and age –set cycles, of documented contacts with literate peoples, of dated natural phenomena such as feminine and eclipses and of archaeological finds. (Vansina 7)

The narratives based on the lives of social reformers and saints present the environmental awareness through their teachings. For example the description of a village and emphasis on the oldest Neem tree in a couple develops environmental awareness among residents of the village. The couplet is recited by Dhangarbhat poets on different social and cultural programs of shepherds.

Rodi to rota vante,

The breads are distributed in the village Rodi always,

bhalo vrajyo leem !

A Neem tree is located amidst the village !

Mat wali jamnmiya mard,

Mother Wali gave birth to brave sons,

Panchi ha Bhad kunta ra bheem !! All five brothers were brave like Pandawas!

The poet says that the village Rodi always serves food for the visitors. He says that in village Rodi the breads are distributed always for the people who are in need. The sons of mother Wali were five in numbers and made sacrifice and serve the society like Pandawas. A Neem tree situated at the centre of village makes a distinct identity for the village and enhances its beauty. The association of the Neem tree in narratives

and folk literature changes the status of Neem tree into a pious and invaluable thing for the people.

In another couplet the poet says:

Pavta Harko ji dudh Hamesh, Harka ji used to serve milk daily,

Dan uga hi dautanna ! At the rising of the sun !

Narathambh moto naresh, The village is famous for its charity in
area,

Dhani karamat dhari kikawata !! Kikawat are very

Meaning:

The poet says that Harka ji always serve the milk for people and visitors. He also serves the milk for snake idol of the village. The service was the main motto of every village. Everyone who comes to his village find himself in a most serene and helpful place. Snakes are friendly reptiles for the farmers. It is believed that they saved the crops from rates. If snakes do not kill the rates, the ever-increasing number of rates will destroy the crops completely. The couplets not only aware the people for not killing the snakes but encourage them to conserve the ecosystem required for the existence of different living beings.

Amara Bhagat is a well-known saint of Mewar. He belongs to shepherd community and worked as a shepherd for his livelihood. He encourages the people for the service of mankind and rearing the sheep and other animal. The narratives on the origin of sheep in shepherd community gives an important status to this animal in the society. The shepherds rear the sheep for their livelihood but care them as a pious animal who has always been the source of blessings for them. The narratives based on the origin of sheep have religious values for shepherd.

Dwaro raja wasak ro dekh, The god went to the palace of king
Wasuki,

vata su gadar aanni ! He brought a pious divine sheep from
there!

Chhnto de bhago senann,	He was purified by pouring the holy water on it,
pachhe prithvi upper pujanni !!	Latter on it was worshipped on the earth!!
Viyo hans gadar re het,	Swan conceived the sheep at ocean,
dhargar re ghar vi dhennu !	It gave birth to lambs at the house of shepherd!
Lodi hans ne lapadi,	Lodi, Hansi, Lapadi,
ya buti kheri bakhannu !!	Buti, Kheri etc, breed were born!!

Meaning:

The poet says that sheep was brought from the king Wasak (The king of snakes known as Wasuki in Hindu mythology) by lord Vishnu. The sheep brought from king Wasak was conceived by the divine swan at ocean and handed over to the shepherd saint Soma Rishi. Latter it was given to the shepherd Bharwad who was follower of lord Krishna and accompanied him during the grazing cows. It gave birth to lambs which were known as Lodi, Hansi, Lapadi, Buti, Kheri etc. These are different breeds of sheep.

The research brings forth different aspects of indigenous culture through folklore which encourages Gadari caste and others for protection of environment and conservation of different species. It also adds a lot to the present knowledge about a primitive caste which is known as forerunner of Rajput dynasty in Mewar. Till today, the extensive research about the Gadari castes has not been completed by any researcher. The research carries many scopes for further studies too which may enrich the study of the folklore, folk literature, oral traditions and narratives prevail in Rajasthan. It will also revisit the history of one of the oldest caste of the Mewar

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Yearning for Goa: Diasporic Longing and Cultural Memory in the Poetry of Antonio Gomes

Subhash Kamalkar and M. Shanthi

Introduction

The concept of “diaspora” has undergone significant evolution, extending beyond its historical origins to encompass a wide array of identities and cultural experiences shaped by migration and transnationalism. Originally, diaspora referred primarily to the displacement of people from a homeland, often under conditions of conflict or economic hardship. Classic examples include the Jewish diaspora following the Babylonian exile and the African diaspora, shaped by the transatlantic slave trade. These forced migrations have historically been viewed as collective journeys of displacement, laying a foundational understanding of diaspora as both a site of loss and of cultural preservation (Cohen, 1997).

Today, diaspora has expanded into a broader, more complex concept influenced by globalization, communication advances, and increased migration flows, creating what scholars now refer to as a “transnational diaspora.” Avtar Brah’s notion of “diaspora space” (Brah, 1996) underscores this shift, framing diaspora not just as a geographic displacement but as a realm where past memories and present realities merge. This space becomes a unique axis where diasporic individuals negotiate belonging and identity, navigating between multiple, sometimes conflicting, cultural influences.

The emergence of digital platforms has further transformed diaspora, creating virtual communities that enable individuals to engage with their cultural heritage regardless of physical distance, forming what is often described as a “digital diaspora.” These platforms offer a new avenue for maintaining collective memory and cultural practices, as exemplified

by the Indian diaspora, which actively preserves its customs and fosters economic and cultural exchanges across North America, Europe, the Middle East, and beyond (Brah, 1996; Cohen, 1997).

Theoretical perspectives on cultural hybridity, notably developed by Homi K. Bhabha, provide a lens for understanding how diasporic identities emerge from the continuous negotiation of cultural influences in what he calls the “Third Space”—a conceptual realm where individuals synthesize multiple cultural identities (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha’s hybridity is vividly illustrated within the Chinese diaspora across Southeast Asia, North America, and Europe, where communities blend Chinese heritage with local customs, creating a dynamic, hybrid identity that reflects both adaptation and cultural continuity. This synthesis challenges singular categorizations, contributing to a global cultural tapestry where diasporic communities are not passive bearers of heritage but active participants in cultural production.

While diaspora facilitates cultural enrichment and diversity, it also presents challenges, including identity crises, experiences of discrimination, and a persistent sense of displacement. This tension between cultural preservation and assimilation, as highlighted by Brah (1996), often triggers complex social dynamics within diasporic communities as they navigate the pressures of both belonging and estrangement. The delicate balance between maintaining cultural heritage and adapting to the host society’s norms underlines the ongoing evolution of diasporic identity, making diaspora a powerful framework for understanding transnational lives in the 21st century.

The Goan diaspora

The Goan diaspora is a compelling mosaic of culture, migration, and identity that has evolved across continents over the centuries. Originating from the coastal state of Goa in southwestern India, this diaspora reflects a diverse community shaped by colonial history, global trade networks, and the pursuit of economic opportunities. According to researchers, Goa’s history as a Portuguese colony—lasting until its liberation in 1961—

imbued its society with a unique blend of indigenous traditions and European influences, creating a culturally syncretic identity that has carried into the diaspora.

The forced migrations that occurred during the Inquisition, when Goans were compelled to leave due to religious persecution, laid the groundwork for a diasporic journey that continued to unfold as Goans migrated for economic reasons in subsequent centuries. One significant phase of this diaspora involved migration to East Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. Economic pressures and the search for better livelihoods drove Goans to British-ruled East Africa, where communities flourished in countries like Kenya and Tanzania, demonstrating remarkable adaptability and resilience in foreign settings.

In recent decades, the Goan diaspora has expanded further, establishing a strong presence in the Gulf countries, North America, and Europe. The contemporary Goan diaspora contributes to a wide range of professional fields, including medicine, engineering, hospitality, and information technology, particularly in the Gulf region. Here, Goan expatriates have significantly bolstered both the economies of their host countries and their home state of Goa through remittances and skills transfer.

Despite their global dispersal, Goans have tenaciously preserved their unique cultural identity. Traditional festivals such as Carnival and Shigmo, as well as culinary practices involving dishes like fish curry rice and bebinca, serve as cultural anchors, creating a transnational identity that bridges the geographic distances of the diaspora. This transnationalism aligns with Robin Cohen's concept of cultural diaspora, where traditions are maintained across borders, fostering a sense of collective identity despite physical separation (Cohen 98).

Cultural hybridity within the Goan diaspora is particularly evident in the blending of Goan customs with those of adopted homelands. For example, the Goan Catholic community has seamlessly integrated elements of Portuguese Catholicism with the cultural practices of their host countries, creating a distinctive diasporic identity that reflects a harmonious

coexistence of multiple influences. This hybridity resonates with Homi K. Bhabha's theory of the "Third Space," where diasporic identities continuously evolve through negotiation between cultures.

Literature Review

The study of diaspora has evolved significantly, moving beyond its original connotation of dispersion to include complex cultural, emotional, and identity-based dimensions that define transnational experiences. Homi K. Bhabha's concept of "cultural hybridity" is a cornerstone in understanding how diasporic identities are constructed within an "in-between space," which he describes as a "Third Space" where different cultural elements intersect to form new, hybrid identities (Bhabha, 1994). This theory is pertinent to analyzing Antonio Gomes' poetry, as his work often reflects a blend of cultural influences from both his homeland, Goa, and his experiences in the diaspora. Bhabha's framework helps explain how Gomes' identity as a Goan expatriate is negotiated through a complex interplay of memory, heritage, and adaptation, illustrating the unique cultural hybridity that characterizes diasporic lives.

In addition to hybridity, Avtar Brah's concept of "diaspora space" adds depth to the understanding of how displaced individuals create a space that transcends physical borders and exists within both memory and experience. Brah (1996) defines diaspora space as a "multi-axial" realm where past memories of homeland intersect with the realities of host land, creating a continuous process of identity formation that is neither fixed nor wholly traditional. Gomes' poetic nostalgia for Goa and his reimagining of its landscapes and traditions capture this diasporic space, bridging his past in Goa with his present identity, underscoring the ongoing negotiation between remembrance and adaptation that defines diaspora.

Robin Cohen's typologies of diaspora offer another relevant framework, particularly his categorization of economic diaspora. Cohen (1997) argues that economic migration often leads to the preservation of a strong cultural identity through shared symbols and collective memory, despite geographic dispersion. Gomes' poetic references to Goan cultural

symbols, such as local festivals and foods, highlight how the Goan diaspora maintains a collective identity by preserving these traditions. Cohen's typology provides a useful context for understanding how Gomes' poems embody the resilient cultural memory that is characteristic of diasporic communities, serving as a bridge between his physical displacement and his cultural heritage.

Diasporic Longing and Cultural Memory in the Poetry of Antonio Gomes

Antonio Gomes' poetry in *Mirrored Reflections: A Collection of Poems* serves as a symbolic representation of the nostalgic yearning embedded in the diasporic experience. His work encapsulates the emotional pull towards his homeland, Goa, as he reflects on both the transformations of his homeland and his enduring connection to it. This longing is shaped by what Avtar Brah (1996) describes as "diaspora space"—a space where memories of homeland intersect with the experiences in the hostland. As a Professor of Medicine and Director of Cardiac Electrophysiology at Mount Sinai Medical Centre, NYC, Gomes exemplifies the diasporic Goan who, despite geographical distance, maintains a deep-rooted bond with his origins. His poetry offers a poignant look at his past, the familiar landscapes and people he left behind, and the "saudade" he feels—a Portuguese term capturing profound, melancholic nostalgia for one's roots.

In the preface of his book, Gomes articulates this connection to ancestry, which Brah (1996) would interpret as an ongoing negotiation within diaspora space. Gomes writes,

"Many of these pages reflect my ancestry; my villages of Loutolim and Aldona in Goa... there are a few poems dedicated to special people, some who had considerable impact on my life" (Gomes 9).

This statement echoes the idea that diasporic individuals recreate "home" through memory, as Brah describes, maintaining links with past and people in a symbolic form.

In the poem *This Place, This Day*, Gomes explores the concept of “Aparanta,” the ancient land that now feels altered. He recalls,

*This place, Aparanta: a place beyond the end
where Shivalinga-Dharalinga oozed sapient water
Where Siddhartha’s followers brought Buddhism
and temple dancing Mahalakshmi was Satvika...(Gomes,14)*

This yearning reflects Homi K. Bhabha’s theory of “cultural hybridity,” wherein Gomes navigates between his rooted identity in Goa and his diasporic perspective. Bhabha (1994) suggests that cultural identity for diasporic individuals emerges in a “Third Space,” where they blend elements from both homeland and hostland. Gomes’ reference to Goa as a sacred land altered by time captures this hybridity, as he preserves the cultural essence of Goa while reconciling it with the present-day transformations he perceives from afar.

Further in the poem, Gomes invokes historical memory:

*Where Hindus sacked by Islamic invaders plotted
with Albuquerque, who followed Vasco da Gama(Gomes,15)*

This line reveals an acknowledgement of Goa’s syncretic social fabric, echoing Bhabha’s idea of hybridity in the coexistence of multiple cultural influences. Gomes paints Goa as a land shaped by diverse philosophies and religions, where

*Where West met East, ocean met land, spice met
bland, life met death, intermingled and drew apart.(Gomes,15)*

Such imagery aligns with the “Third Space,” representing Goa as a cultural mosaic and a hybrid identity that diasporic Goans like Gomes carry forward.

The poet’s reference to everyday symbols of Goa, such as the baroque Church facade adorned with bougainvillea and the vibrant festivals where

*Sunday Mass at the Church with baroque facade
adorned with white bougainvillea browned by sun.
Where Manguesh, Nagesh, Ganesh, Saptakotes dance
to the beat of drums...(Gomes,15)*

reinforces Cohen's (1997) typology of cultural diaspora, which emphasizes the preservation of traditional practices even amidst displacement. Diasporic individuals often rely on cultural symbols as a "memory bank" to maintain continuity with their heritage, a theme evident in Gomes' poetry.

Towards the end of *This Place, This Day*, Gomes juxtaposes his nostalgic vision of Goa with a sense of estrangement. He writes,

*...on dusty roads, rock and sand; gaze at a photograph,
a tamarind tree, a coconut grove, a sunset –(Gomes,16)*

This imagery encapsulates Avtar Brah's concept of diaspora space, where the homeland is not a static place but a dynamic repository of memories that continually evolve. Brah (1996) emphasizes that diaspora space is a realm where nostalgia meets the realities of change, allowing individuals to engage with their homeland symbolically. Gomes' juxtaposition of past and present captures this duality, as his idealized memory of Goa clashes with the reality of its transformation.

In *Dusk in Loutolim*, Gomes further elaborates on the essence of his diasporic experience. He writes,

*Ding-dong, ding-dong, the church bells
chime and villagers the angelus sing,
a 'good night' here, a 'good night' there,
saffron dusk settles on the village square.
Cows, sheep, and shepherds tread home
the smell of dung and crimson dust
fills the air; bungalows their iron doors
bolt, drunk Kundbi the dark alleys roam.
...The dark night crawls into my home,
the ponti-light dances on the wall,
my ayah's shining eyes and graying hair
move in the aroma of curried pots. (Gomes, 17)*

This depiction of Goan village life from afar is a classic expression of “saudade,” or deep longing, which is central to diasporic identity. Bhabha’s notion of cultural hybridity is apparent here, as Gomes reconstructs an image of his village through fragments of memory, maintaining his Goan identity in a manner that merges his past with his diasporic present. As he nostalgically describes “the smell of dung and crimson dust,” Gomes envisions Goa as a place that exists vividly in memory, even as it recedes from his present life.

In the poem *House*, Gomes delves into the decaying yet cherished symbols of his ancestral home, capturing both its “*black stained wood, carvings of lotus flowers... remnants of the Hindu past*” alongside “*an Oratory with ivory saints, gold-crowned Christ Crucified*” (Gomes 20). This imagery resonates with Bhabha’s hybridity, where cultural symbols from both Hindu and Catholic traditions merge. By integrating the colonial and indigenous influences in the architecture of the house, Gomes’ poem illustrates the syncretic identity that characterizes Goan

culture, even as the physical space falls into decline:

House: now empty rooms,
 stained silk, dusty furniture
 of what remains of what
 was sold -a dying remnant
 of the Old. (Gomes, 21)

Here, Gomes mourns the gradual erosion of his heritage, aligning with Kamala Das’s sense of loss in *My Grandmother’s House*, as he expresses the pain of a “dying remnant of the Old.”

Gomes’ *The Arabian Sea* celebrates Goa’s role as a nexus of trade and cultural exchange, writing,

*Sea, where Arabs sailed dhows, traded horses
 pepper and ginger, clove and nutmeg*(Gomes 29).

This poem connects Goan history to broader narratives of diaspora as described by Cohen (1997), who notes that economic diasporas often retain strong cultural identities. Gomes' verses celebrate the Arabian Sea as a bridge of cultural and commercial exchanges, embodying Cohen's typology by linking Goa's identity to the flows of goods, ideas, and migrations across the seas.

In *Saudades*, Gomes embodies the quintessential diasporic sentiment, writing,

*Traveling through space-time
deserting familiar shores:
a room, a house, a view
that becomes unfamiliar
or fades, to be reborn
in the crevices of the mind...(Gomes, 36)*

This profound sense of longing echoes Brah's diaspora space, where the homeland becomes a mythic place, constructed and reconstructed in memory. Gomes describes this bittersweet attachment to his roots, where

*forlorn faces of mothers,
fathers, cousins and friends
like totem poles that stood and
stared at the figures vanishing
behind the check-in curtain
to discover a new world
Intermingling or staying apart
struggling for new identities...(Gomes, 37)*

This yearning aligns with Pierre Nora's concept of "lieux de mémoire" (sites of memory), where the homeland exists both as a tangible place and an emotional anchor for diasporic individuals. Pierre Nora, a French historian and one of the leading figures in the field of memory studies,

who is best known for his concept of “*lieux de mémoire*” (sites of memory) says,

“Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived.”(Nora, 1989, p. 8)

Conclusion

Antonio Gomes’ *Mirrored Reflections* poignantly captures the essence of diasporic identity, rooted in memory and nostalgia while embracing cultural hybridity. Through his reflective verses, Gomes constructs a symbolic “diaspora space,” as defined by Avtar Brah, where memories of his homeland intersect with his life in the diaspora (Brah 1996). This space enables him to navigate his identity between the traditional essence of Goa and the transformations imposed by time and distance. Gomes’ poems embody Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of the “Third Space,” illustrating the hybridity that emerges from the blending of cultures; the poet’s descriptions of Goan architecture, Catholic and Hindu symbols, and historical references all convey this complex layering of identity (Bhabha 1994). Such hybridity challenges any simplistic notion of identity, presenting instead a fluid, evolving self that reconciles both homeland and hostland influences.

The poet’s work also resonates with Robin Cohen’s typologies of diaspora, particularly the cultural and economic aspects, as Gomes’ attachment to Goan festivals, cuisine, and social practices reflects a resilient cultural memory that remains vibrant despite geographical separation (Cohen 1997). Furthermore, Gomes’ expression of “saudade”—the Portuguese term for an intense, almost melancholic longing—mirrors Pierre Nora’s notion of *lieux de mémoire*, where memory becomes a site of identity preservation and emotional anchoring for diasporic individuals (Nora 8). For Gomes, the memories of his village and homeland remain alive, continuously evolving and transforming within him, yet rooted in a deep-seated sense of loss.

Through the lens of Gomes' poetry, this study illustrates how diasporic literature serves as both a repository and a re-imagining of cultural identity, bridging past and present, memory and reality. By using poetic expression to immortalize his connection to Goa, Gomes exemplifies how diaspora enables both the preservation of heritage and the embrace of transformation. His work highlights the significance of poetry in articulating the personal and collective memories of diasporic communities, underscoring that while physical distance may separate individuals from their homeland, memory and cultural practices can bridge these gaps, fostering a transnational identity that thrives in the liminal spaces of the diaspora.

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The Integration of Character and History in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

Paramba Dadhich

Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* begins with a train journey. The implication seems to be that journey has been a popular metaphor of life in which interrelated accidents abound. Thus, Ishwar and Om meet Maneck in the stuffed train compartment where Maneck accidentally drops his books upon Om, and a little later they are surprised to discover that they are heading towards the same destination- Dina Dalal's apartment. Maneck is a student who is looking forward to being Dina's paying guest, while the Darjis seek to attain jobs for themselves. The train they are in suddenly stops as someone is found on the railway tracks- "Maybe it has to do with the state of Emergency", someone shouted" (5). Nobody exactly understands what the state of Emergency means except that it is "something about the country being threatened from inside" (5). It is this sudden halt that causes Maneck to drop his books upon Om whereby the men meet for the first time in an effort to become friends. Though the historical event of 1975 is merely a blurred presence in the first, yet it would from now on embody a disrupting force in the lives of people, especially the Darjis who would be the most affected by it.

History does not constitute an accidental force, but the implication is that it is experienced differently by different individuals at different levels of the social strata. Laws and controlling instances are at work everywhere in the novel but we never receive a clear, concrete, and unified sense of power; rather, it operates in dispersed forms, embodied and manifested through representatives and agents, seeping through relations at all levels of society. This "effect" of dispersion has everything to do with the way the historical dimension operates in the novel. The

meaning of the historical paradigm framing the text and its characters is to some extent separate from the level of individual experience. Coincidences, random events, and accidents (or what appear to be accidents) constitute a large part of the novel's mechanisms of cohesion, the bolts and screws holding the text's events together (Park: 348).

History and its relationship with the novel has been a topic of debate among scholars. Bharucha criticized the novel for failing to present an integrated picture of history and argues that the novel appears to be written from "fragments of newspaper reports, with the author riffling through the pages of old newspaper, from 1975-84" (66). Ross has questioned whether the exposure of the corruption and the inhuman practices of the Indira Gandhi government is a topic of interest today. However, Mistry's text explores the link between the historical dimension and the struggles of the individual characters.

When Ishwar enquires to Dina about the state of emergency, she replies: "Government problems- games played by people in power. It doesn't affect ordinary people like us" (76). And yet the entire novel is about how the "government problems" determine the fate of the Darjis. The Darjis arrive in the city by the sea to secure livelihoods for themselves. Gradually their lives are entwined with Dina Dalal's life.

The issue of caste injustices is explored in "A Village by the River." It is an insight into the family of the Darjis who originally belonged to the Chamaar caste. Om's grandfather, Dukhi sought to free his progeny from the oppressiveness of the caste system by giving them an education which could earn a livelihood for them. Thus, the succeeding generations after Dukhi sought mobility in terms of their social and economic status. Om and Ishwar come to Bombay to earn money but they never wish to settle permanently there. Rather, there is always a desire to go back to the familial space even though it has unleashed only atrocities on them.

However, the act of returning brings disaster into their lives. After becoming a skilled tailor, Ishwar's brother Narayan returns to his native village in order to establish his business there. This becomes a source of jealousy for the upper caste households. Also a son is born to Narayan

while women in Brahmin families in the village fail to produce male heirs. Gender oppression prevails in all the castes in the village. Narayan's son, Om is subject to more care and affection than his sisters. Caste atrocity is heightened in the scene in which Thakur Dharamsi kills Dukhi's entire family, excepting Ishwar and Om who are coincidentally saved. Narayan's progressiveness, his desire for transformation proves fatal for his family. And much later when Ishwar and Om return for Om's wedding, they again encounter Thakur Dharamsi, now a prominent politician, who orders the doctors to castrate Om. Om's only act of defiance and resistance is his spitting upon the Thakur. In the "Village by the River," though caste oppression is depicted in its extreme, violent forms, the omniscient narrator is present only as a 'gaze.' And this gaze is a distant one wherein events of violence against particular groups are told, but no resistance to violent structures is offered directly. Though Rupa's sexual assault is told by the omniscient gaze, the gaze doesn't allow Dukhi to voice himself but only turn his back when Rupa comes home disheveled. The narrator distances himself from the characters and does not directly identify with them.

The Darjis' stay with Dina at her own apartment is somewhat relaxing. The four major characters share a familial space. The Darjis are also endowed with pride and determination. Earlier when due to the beautification project their slums are leveled by government bulldozers, they refuse to seek Dina's aid and settle for themselves a small space outside the chemist's shop until they are removed from there too. Later they are forcefully shifted to a government construction site where labor is enforced upon them. The weight of all the political activities, which are inhuman and brutal in nature, falls upon them. From the declaration of emergency to beautification projects to sterilization, the Darjis are the immediate victims.

Mistry's attempt to present the Dalit characters in the context of the larger historical narrative of the making of a nation is crucial. The time frame under which the novel and its characters function is significant in the sense that while on the one hand the Indira Gandhi government is on a development drive on national level, the cruelties on the local level

remains unaddressed, unsolved. The “Village by the River” acts as a microcosm of the arbitrariness of the national narrative.

Hence, the lives of the Darjis function in the larger historical context of the 1970s. Their narrative is granted a sense of universality since places are never named in the novel. It is by attributes that Bombay can be imagined as a “city by the sea.” The lives of Ishwar and Om end in tragedy. A strange relationship however has been permanently established between them and Dina. Dina’s handmade quilt, intended as Om’s wedding present, remains unstitched, incomplete, implying the unending continuity of life and its struggles. In the end, this quilt lies upon Ishwar’s shoulders as a cushion, a visual patchwork of life.

In the novel, bodies carry the scars of incidents and accidents, and become symbolic of deterioration that continues around them. Men and women, on the level of the bodily, become a part of the political processes. Johnson argues, “The amputation of Ishwar’s legs, the result of an infection caused by the vasectomy that Ishwar receives towards the end of the novel, marks his body, yet again, with the history of violence and oppression to which he has been subjected, and Om’s castration not only removes his ability to have children but also drastically alters his bodily schema. Once thin and nimble, by the novel’s epilogue Om has become overweight and lumbering, the result of his castration in the sterilization camp oversee by Thakur Dharamsi. Thus, control over the body through both direct and indirect manipulation of its constitution leaves indelible traces” (231).

The act of returning in the novel leads to disastrous events. When Ishwar’s brother Narayan returns to his village after becoming a tailor and garners success, the upper caste families in the village become jealous and angry. Narayan, one of the few characters in the novel who raises a voice of firm resistance against the goons of Thakur Dharamsi, gets killed with his entire family except Om and Ishwar who narrowly escape. Om is castrated on the orders of Thakur when he returns to the village for his marriage. When Maneck visits his hometown it is for the funeral of his father. He encounters a reality that leaves him even more

empty- that of capitalist endeavors overtaking the serenity of the town. After his years in Dubai, when he returns back he thinks that Om must be happily married and Ishwar must be a proud grand- father and that Dina Dalal must be running a successful export business. All these expectations and assumptions are contrasted by what Maneck himself sees. The grim reality is shown through his gaze first and he finds himself unable to face his old friends. Dina returns to live at her brother's house eventually after years of resistance. For all, everything fall apart and crumbles down. Each faces his and her fate except Maneck who can no longer hold the weight of reality within him when he commits suicide in the final pages of the novel. As Sorensen argues about Maneck's life in Dubai, "These great expectations, as evoked during the stay at his parents' home, stand in contrast to an existence abroad in total alienation... what Maneck's life has become abroad is precisely a thread upon which static, isolated images indifferently pass by" (356).

Sharmani Gabriel argues that the novel "is fuelled by the desire to root narrative in the realities of diverse social, political and class formations of Indian national life" (76). The narrative captures the turbulent transitional period towards globalization and capitalism. When Dina is on her way to sell an old violin, she has to briefly take shelter in an old bookshop while a procession of people striking against the influx of south Indians into Bombay passes away. Later when she starts her business she herself hires men who had come to the city looking for jobs. It is one of the many instances in the novel where the political and historical dimensions seep in effortlessly but whose ramifications are later very stringent. Morey observes, "all characters and relationships are affected by the machinations of the capitalist economy: from the piece-working tailors and their well-intentioned employer Dina, who is nonetheless implicated as an exploiter of cheap, non-unionized labor... to the beggars whose place in the warped economy of beggary is determined by the severity of the mutilation... it emphasizes the text's interest in moral culpability and the impossibility of total insulation against the taint of money in a society where anything can be bought or sold" (112).

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Gavri: Performing Identity through Folk Narratives and Ritual Traditions

Preeti Choudhary

Rajasthan in India is home to many scheduled tribes. Among the twelve listed, the Bhils are prominent. Bhils are the oldest tribe of India (Tripura 2005) and are the second largest tribe in Rajasthan, with a population of around forty-one lakh in the region according to the census 2011 (National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation). They hold significant historical importance in the region, with many cities named after Bhil Kings who once ruled the area, such as Kota, which derives its name from Kotya Bhil; Banswara from Bansiya Bhil; and Dungarpur from Dungariya Bhil (IGNCA).

In Rajasthan, the Bhils are primarily found in the southern Aravalli region. This region was once covered in lush forests. The Bhils, regarded as the original inhabitants and free lords of the forests, were considered the rightful owners of the land. Although their customs were viewed as unorthodox by upper-caste Hindus, they were not regarded as impure like outcastes. As autochthons familiar with local spirits and rituals, they conferred their indigenous authority upon the Rajputs through initiation ceremonies, legitimising the latter's rule. (Tod 35)

Bhils, with their primitive connection to nature, worship nature alongside Shiva, Parvati, and Durga. According to common belief, Goddess Parvati created the Bhils and gave them a bull and a bow for farming and hunting. When a Bhil killed the sacred bull for food, Lord Shiva cursed the community, condemning them to perpetual servitude and backwardness, which they consider is the reason for their marginalised status (Kshatriyas 3). The earliest temples are found in remote mountain gorges, thick forests, and near sacred springs, places of natural glory that evoke reverence. Here, the divine energy represented by the

serpent-wreathed *lingam* and its companion, the bull, was among the earliest forms of worship, venerated even by forest dwellers. The cult of Mahadeva, i.e. Shiva, prevailed in these areas, with Udaipur's most magnificent festivals dedicated to his honour (Tod 260). One such festival is Gavri.

Gavri is a forty-day festival celebrated annually in July and September in the Mewar region of Rajasthan, India. In 2024, it was held in Udaipur. The festival, in its ritualistic manner, begins after obtaining the Goddess's consent to perform the ceremonial event and participate in the celebratory activities for forty days. Ahead of the Hindu month of *Shravan*, on behalf of the village, a Bhopa (a folk priest-singer) seeks permission from the Goddess Gorjyan (Chandalia) to conduct the festival, which typically takes three years (Bhanawat 132) for a village to receive. It is believed that the Bhopa receives permission when the goddess blesses him, as this becomes evident when he enters a trance, suggesting that the energy of the Goddess has possessed him. It is a matter of great honour not only for the Bhopa to gain permission but also for the entire village to perform it in honour of the Goddess. Once permission is sought, the village begins preparing for the festival, which includes folk dance dramas and enactments of mythological stories from the oral tradition of this indigenous tribe. There are various series of oral narratives performed during the festival, described as "a synchronized amalgam of ritual, dance, music, myths, folklore, and theatrical plays" (ICHCAP). These performances take place in 25-30 kinship villages over a period (Mewar Gavri). Gavri begins after agreements between two or four villages, and the characters perform it from place to place, observing fasts and abstinence (Sharma 212).

However, invoking the Goddess to seek permission is an essential part of the entire event, and permission is sought each day before the event begins. Each ritual starts with an invocation of the Goddess, and the drama only begins after a visual possession of Devi by one or more troupe members. People from various tribes gather in communities to perform their acts throughout these forty days. (Sahapedia; Ministry of Tourism).

The festival derives its name from Gauri (Parvati) and celebrates her union with Shiva. Stories often depict Parvati's devotion to Shiva, her penance to win his love, and their divine blessings for fertility, prosperity, and protection. Stories often depict Shiva as a protector and Parvati as a nurturing mother, highlighting the community's spiritual values. Tribal songs performed during the Gavri festival often invoke Gavri (Parvati) and Shankar (Shiva) and tell mythological and cultural stories. Bhil folk songs recall tales of Gavri's descent to earth and her blessings for prosperity. These songs highlight themes of love, fertility, and the divine interplay between life and death. Based on an overall trope of victory over evil, the festival revolves around mythological stories that are enacted during the rituals, symbolizing the divine union of Shiva and Parvati and their blessings on the community. Stories of Hindu gods and demons are enacted, often with a blend of humour and moral lessons. Gavri is a tribal dance-drama performed during the festival. The drama includes elaborate costumes, symbolic masks, and rhythmic dances that reflect the cosmic cycle of creation and destruction. Stories of Battles between gods and demons represent the triumph of good over evil.' This subversive performance is also likely to be the longest folk drama performed by any folk community (Chandalia).

The main character in Gavri is an elderly woman who chants Bhasmasur alongside Raya, symbolising Parvati and Vishnu in her female form. Jhamatya recites local poetry and sometimes acts as a clown, with Khatkadya echoing or complementing her dialogue. Other characters are called *Khela*. Gavri includes male characters and game figures such as *Ganpati*, *Bhamaria*, *Bheavad*, *Meena*, *Kan-Gujri*, *Jogi*, *LakhaBanjara*, *Natdi*, *Mata*, and *Sher*. The *Kanha-Gujri* game involves cymbals and tongs, while other performances use drums and plates. Magic, witchcraft, and tantric rituals are part of the performance, with characters healed through *Jhada-Phooka*, which are folk healing rituals and exorcistic practices. Occasionally, the priest also acts to get angry, where he starts posing questions which are purportedly answered by divine powers. (Sharma 212)

The Gavri festival is celebrated for forty-four days, starting from the first day of *Krishna Paksha* (dark fortnight) of *Bhadrapada*. On the first day, the festival begins with the *Bhopa* personally dressing the main characters of Gavri, Raiyan and Boodia, in the Goddess's temple in front of the village's respected *Panchas*. The goddess's *trishul* (trident) is positioned in the centre of a circle, symbolising the hallmark of the tribal community. It features six types of characters: gods, demons, humans, animals, wolves, and aquatic creatures. The actors and performers also mentioned that on the first day, the Gavri dance troupe performs in front of all the village temples, on the second day in the northern part of the village, and on the third day in other invited villages.



1 Consecrating the trident, source: photograph by the author

Bhairav, one of the performers at the festival, said that during the forty-day Gavri season, participants commit to a life of strict austerity, reflecting their deep spiritual connection with the living earth and the omnipresent divine spirit. In a personal interview, he responded, "We do not indulge in any illicit activity that might displease the gods." To mark this sacred period, they abstain not only from sex, alcohol, and meat but also from wearing shoes, sleeping on beds, and bathing. They do not even eat green vegetables to avoid harming even the smallest forms of life, such as insects



2 A performer during Gavri festival, source: a photograph by the author

that might be present in them. Another member of Bhairav's troupe stated, "Even leafy greens can have small insects which might not be visible to the eyes, and thus we completely shun eating them; we only do what is the bare minimum to live by, not harming any life proffered by the divine." Their diet is limited to a single simple meal each day, embodying humility and self-control. These practices symbolise their reverence for nature, their deities, and their pursuit of spiritual purity, fostering a harmonious connection between human and the cosmic.

Among the 10-15 classical traditional tales, with other new ones emerging, the stories necessarily include a few tales. Among their mythological dramas, *BadalyaHindawa* (The Banyan Swing) and *Bhilurana* (King of the Bhils) are two frequent ones. The narrative of *BadalyaHindawa*, central to the Gavri festival, underscores the Goddess's role as both a nurturer and a fierce protector of the Earth. This tale begins with the Goddess re-greening the Earth after a catastrophic, life-erasing flood, symbolising renewal and fertility.

The *BadalyaHindawa* narrative from the Gavri festival highlights the Goddess's role as a protector of nature. After re-greening the Earth post-flood, she fiercely defends it against greed and harm. When a guru, feeling threatened by a sacred banyan tree, convinces the king to destroy it, the Goddess and her Devi sisters, outraged by this sacrilege, infiltrate the king's court disguised as dancers. They reveal their divine identities, condemn the king's cowardice, and end his reign, asserting the sanctity of nature and the consequences of violating its balance. The other story of *Bhilurana* symbolises five centuries of Bhil resistance against external invasions, embodying their resilience and unity under a composite leader. The narrative condenses the historical struggles against Turkic, Mughal, and British forces, portraying them as a single oppressive entity. Inspired by the Goddess, Bhil warriors use daring ambushes, sabotage, and guerrilla tactics to reclaim their land and sovereignty, ultimately driving away the intruders. This tale celebrates the Bhil community's indomitable spirit and strategic prowess in defending their homeland.

A recurring tale is that of Bhasmasur, a demon who was granted a boon by Shiva that enabled him to turn anyone to ashes by placing his hand on their head. Misusing this power, Bhasmasur terrorised the world and wanted to kill Shiva to obtain Parvati until Vishnu, disguised as the enchanting Mohini, tricked him into destroying himself by placing his own hand on him. This story also alludes to gender fluidity, which is evident in the festival



3 Depiction of victory over the demon, source: a photograph by the author

where male performers cross-dress as women. As women are not permitted to travel with these troupes, all characters are played by men. A troupe member disguised as a woman explained, “Women have ‘monthly’ limitations, since the festival runs for more than a month, it is not possible to include women as they won’t sustain the period with all ‘purity’.” In most cultures, menstruating women are prohibited from sacred places like temples, and this is the reason that the Bhil performers give for disallowing women from the festival. Another member reported that women stay behind and worship the goddess by fasting for their family members and the success of the festival. (Chandalia; Sahapedia)

Stories of Kali slaying demons or Shiva’s fierce avatars battling malevolent forces are also the central themes. In addition to Hindu mythology, Gavri incorporates local Bhil legends and folk heroes, reflecting the community’s history, struggles, and victories. These stories often highlight themes of survival, resilience, and harmony with nature. Also, Gavri dramas include humorous interludes with characters like *Panch*, *Mochi* (Cobbler), and other village archetypes. These figures add levity while addressing social issues such as greed, corruption, and hypocrisy. However, the Gavri plays are mainly memory-based, and they have improvised temporally. Though the beginning and end do not

change, the actions in the middle are mutable. Even the stories are evolving to align with contemporary times.

Two days before Gavari ends, *Jawaar* (sorghums) are sown, and on the previous day, a clay elephant is brought from the potter. Once the elephant arrives, the Bhopa's devotional service ends. The Gavari, crop offering, and elephant are immersed in water, or buried outside the village. Navratri starts on the sixth day post-Gavari (Sharma 213). The culmination of this sacred cycle is marked by a ritual immersion, where the Goddess's fertility and blessings are symbolically returned to the waters, ensuring the community's prosperity and harmony with nature. This profound act signifies renewal and gratitude. In the final days of the Gavari festival, each troupe makes its way back to its home village for a grand concluding performance and the closing ceremonies. As the spiritual solemnity transitions into festivity, the village erupts with all-night celebrations, filled with vibrant music, energetic dances, and raucous joy.

Gavari, in this way, is not only a cultural expression but also a collective memory expressed through performative depiction in this theatrical display. Although it is an identity-specific festival of the Bhil tribe, it transforms into a convergence of multiple identities through the participation of Bhopas and other tribal communities. Gavari's Garada and Goma games highlight the roles of the Bhils and Meenas. Kalbelias earn their livelihoods by entertaining the public through exorcism and tantra-mantra, while acrobats impress audiences with various body movements using bamboo and lava. Therefore, it becomes a cosmopolitan representation of diverse identities coming together for this celebration.

Despite this glorious tradition, this oral heritage is on the verge of decline. However, locals and stakeholders are working to preserve it, and the Gavari festival is gradually gaining global recognition through national and international research collaborations. Ironically, Gavari's inclusion in UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage has helped safeguard it, securing a brighter future. Yet, modern interventions challenge this

folk art's ability to retain its charm even among the indigenous community. Many respondents reported that the country's landscapes are shrinking, which compels the community to seek other sources of subsistence. Once a person becomes disconnected from the community, their migration also weakens the belief system in these ethnic practices. Modern interventions conflict with these traditional and indigenous expressions, as one of the cross-dressed performers stated: "You can only preserve these rituals if you stay rooted in the community. Once you go out, you never find time to commit yourself to such events. It's sad; I think we are the last generation to perform and preserve this." Therefore, it is crucial that studies are inspired for the cultural preservation of this important ethnic practice of India's oldest tribe. Hope this oral tradition gets the light it deserves in literature by further studies and research.

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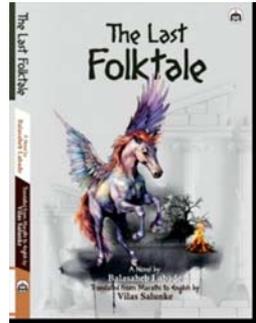
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Books Review-1

Title of the book: **The Last Folktale/**
Author: **Babasaheb Labade/Translation:** Dr
Vilas Solankhe/*Publisher :* Authors Press New
Delhi/*Pages:* 248 | *Price:* Rs. 450 | April 2025

The Deconstruction and Parody of ‘Meaning’ in Cultural and Literary Narratives, in Balasaheb Labade’s *The Last Folktale* Translated into English by **Vilas Salunke** – Seema Bhaduri



Mr. Labade’s hugely experimental narrative *The Last Folktale* applies in original ways, the idea of death as metaphor to the state of contemporary Indian society at large. Here is a meta-narrative and anti-novel, a parable cast in the mould of a folktale that fuses myth, superstition, traditional belief systems and journalese in bizarre ways through the dreams, fancies, memories and reveries of several narrators to portray the complex and harsh reality of our times in the form of a dant-katha, a folk-tale. This translation by Dr. Solankhe’s places *The Last Folktale* amidst a wider canvas of the world literature.

The Last Folktale presents a variegated montage of life as lived by the downtrodden, marginalized poor living in the outskirts of society. The many tales here hover around a few young men’s daily lives lived with petty jobs chiefly in and around the crematorium where caste – Hindus will not work. Their social life includes in a big way their rites and rituals based on superstitions, performed on New Moon nights. This world of a circumscribed reality feeds their imagination and conditions their vision. The narrator and the uninvited character-narrator who straddle both worlds – the present fettered one, and the larger one of glamour, hope and betrayal, reflect occasionally on their existentialist plight, and arrive upon their respective insights. These two dwell alternately on the larger city- life, the education and the job-market

offered here, the rampant corruption among writers and publishers, and the systematically botched efforts of the marginalized to unite for a better deal with the indifferent government officials. Progress and sequential action finds no place in this narrative, perhaps because there is none in the lives of these characters who have nowhere to go, no plausible hope to chase.

Reminding one of the myths of Odysseus in Joyce's *Ulysses* there appear in this anti-narrative, two overarching mythic superstructures, Greek and Indian, that contextualize the urban Indian socio-psychical realities. Pegasus and Harpy symbolize the eternal conflict of good and evil in material life. The myth of Shiva and Shakti appearing a little later in the narrative, refers to the timeless cosmic game of purusha and prakruti that in Indian myth, shapes all creation.

In the early pages of this narrative the narrator, a graduate with distinction, grapples with his restless, thought - ridden mind and the angst of being. He ruminates on the Cartesian dictum – I think so I am, to understand himself but finds it wanting. This dictum had ushered in the era of Western Modernism with its pillars of individualism and reason, linear time and progress. This had stoked many developments with far-reaching consequences, eventually leading to the rise of Existentialism and the Absurd in Western thought, art and literature. The narrator realizes that the alternate Indian dictum , 'I exist so I am,' is the more appropriate. But the thought processes of this jobless young man from a marginalized community who is now looking for work in the city, are desultory. He dreams hopefully of Pegasus amid all the darkness and corruption around him. This reminds one of Stephen invoking Dedalus to save him, in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young man*.

This anti-novel which challenges all socio-cultural narratives and their claims to 'established' centres of meaning, presents certain common realistic, surreal, and existentialist experiences repeatedly; the categories often merge as a Kafkaesque world with a fluid, dream-like space-time opens up, its overflow of language exhibiting the great art of meaning little despite its rapid flux of partly formed ideas, thoughts and imaginings. This little that stands out, is a radical subversion of all hegemonic power-

structures that govern our socio-cultural and educational institutions, and control their meaning. It parodies their corrupt policies, their myopic vision.

Mainstream narratives are all about meaning. In this anti-novel, talks shift ceaselessly from one topic to another unrelated one without rhyme or reason. The same happens within and between sentences as well. At the Ganapati festival, the narrator breaks away abruptly from his description of the grand procession accompanying the idol of Ganesha to dwell on women and their plight in our society. But when he appears in the red-light area, questions rising within him on his own criminal silence in this matter disturb him so much that he escapes to join the procession once again, producing now a long, meaningless list of the names of the streets that the procession is passing through.

The ghosts' weak attempts at rallying themselves for their betterment is repeatedly subverted either organized larger religious forces like the Tantriks, or by unknown social powers. A truck appears on site where the gathering begins, raises the speed of its engine such that the noise renders the speaker's words, inaudible. The narrator however, remains unconcerned all through; he never received any benefit from the government despite all Babasaheb Ambedkar's rulings.

Jonathan Swift had satirized his political opponents by means of his Lilliputians. Prof. Labade strips his characters of the façade of identity by converting them all into ghosts. This fantasized world then becomes his stage for scathing attacks on the corrupt power-play in our institutions that have determined the meaning and structure of our lives. Unlike Lilliputians however, the ghosts here finally turn out to be no piece of fantasy. The centrality of identity in modern life is bunked, it is after all, a socio-cultural construct, a superimposition on the person concerned. As a character puts it, it is the birth marks on one's body that carry greater significance since they connect one to one's own mysterious powers.

The narrative works out through several motifs appearing repeatedly, the most prominent ones being the ideas of existence and death. While

the activities connected to the crematorium and the spirits comprise the major part of this narrative, it is the ineluctable existence of the self and the consciousness of it that occupy the two narrators' thoughts even as they continue to face the external world around. In a moment of heightened awareness one of them claims, 'I'm Shiva', the eternal Creative Force in life. In the second case the narrator, tired of all his depressing thought, just drops them all and to his utter amazement, discovers that what now remains in the emptiness, is he himself. 'I exist...my mother exists...' he exclaims. This realization leads to another one that appears later in this narrative, namely that thought itself separates the thinker from the truth, from what he desires. So Pegasus the imaginative idea or form of the truth he has been seeking, ceases to be a distant dream anymore. It exists already, in the normal horse that symbolizes wisdom, nobility and power to act. With growing awareness the narrator finds his image of truth dissolving further, and finding expression in the torch-bearers of enlightenment – the Buddha, Jyotirao Phule and Babasaheb Ambedkar. Metaphorically, death is revoked.

The present-day obsession with labour no matter what its kind or intent, comes up for parody in various forms. Students dig the soil and cut trees for no purpose under the Earn and Learn Scheme. The small daily chores of the young boys at the self-run hostel kitchen, are listed with mock seriousness. A student who has cleared SET is lauded and told to study well, and in the same breath, to play cricket, organize a social gathering and a meeting. A senior student discusses Plato and Aristotle with the boys as they dig the soil. Professors do not teach; they help students out with their minor official needs instead.

The narrator refers to another 'folktale in the making', that being the current obsession with mobiles and how this is adversely affecting the powers of the brain particularly among children, stunting creativity. There appears a lengthy narration of the richly bedecked palanquin of Vetaal – the King of Ghosts; this could well be a veiled satire on some major political figure who has appropriated tyrannical powers over the public. A talk on Tukaram's *abhangas* veers off to a ludicrously detailed analysis of the structure of a skull. This talk then turns to a lengthy monologue

on owls, their types, powers, likes and movements, and finally, to how their roving eyes follows people. Next to come up are certain Indian mythic figures and their mysterious powers. Next there appear references to the narrator's family matters, the Khandoba temple, the evil apsaras, and finally to how one's creative force operates within oneself.

This disorderly assemblage of often uncanny matter of the past and present, real and surreal, physical and metaphysical, fact and fiction, serious and bizarre, celebrates decentering, deconstruction, bricolage and aporia. The process peters down from the largest narrative unit – the chapter, to the smallest, the sentence structure. As narrative techniques, these have been taken from the West; their underlying larger philosophy however, is Indian.

The nature of self and the nature of creativity continue to occupy the narrators despite all the pell-mell around. The uninvited character-narrator realizes that creativity increases as one gets more and more integrated to one's inner being. Where such integrity is missing 'only bubbles of words arise.' This state of integrity has no parallel. It is the only beauty. Where this state is missing it is the externals of intelligence, ideas, trade and technique, all aimed at marketing and power – building, that take over. The digital media and socio-political propaganda cater to such production. Writers today therefore, aren't writers at all, he claims.

Mocking all tradition the narrator exclaims, 'shaastar shaastar, kon kelay shaastar...', questioning the veracity of those who has established these traditions in the first place. Here is a challenge all authority that muffles the creative instinct in the individual.

One metaphor beautifully captures the elusive nature of the quest for truth. Mr. Beejankur, a tender sprout still rooted in its seed, comes to the narrator. He's blind. Says the narrator, the blind of this category have eyes and yet they keep travelling in search of God. The narrator plants this 'seed – cum – sprout' on his walking stick as he walks into his darkness, trying to grasp God. He finds neither God, nor himself. Why? Because the *beejankur* on his walking stick, the nascent idea of God objectified, is distracting him. Truth or God, exists within the self

alone. This realization has a great impact on the narrator – he says he won't write for others any more. 'I exist on my own... I'm writing for all...' The implication goes deep. Self is all, and vice versa. The 'Other' has disappeared, like Pegasus.

This refreshingly bold and experimental meta-narrative has fused several major themes and narrative devices of modernist and post-modernist fiction innovatively with the styles and techniques of the traditional Indian folklore, to present a holistic view of the contemporary Indian mind and reality. The narrator since he represents a marginalized community and is himself a displaced educated and yet jobless individual, his perspective presents this multiply fractured contemporary Indian reality from the underside. This work can indeed claim to be a literary classic of our times.

This translation communicates to a high degree, the flavor, style and diction of original text in the vernacular. The translator has maneuvered conventional usages in the English language dexterously to keep his translation as close as possible to the turns of phrase and idiom of the simple rustic folk in the original. Phrases like 'four-five umbrellas', 'girls moving like uncontrolled cows', 'a girl like wheat', and, an 'earlobe flapping', in the text, delight the reader with their freshness. This particular work makes a truly valuable contribution to the corpus of modern Indian literatures in English translation by presenting in English as close a version of the original to the international readership.

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Book Review-2

Title of the Book: Coming of Age (Novel)/
Author: Palash Sharma/ Publisher: Yking Books, Jaipur/2024/Price : Rs.575

Between Silence and Selfhood: A Review of *Coming of Age* – N.Suman Shelly

Coming of Age (2024) by Palash Sharma is an introspective literary effort that seeks to capture the fragile and often unspoken transitions between childhood and adolescence. It may not revolutionize the coming-of-age genre, but it offers sincerity, nostalgia, and emotional resonance. Free from the cynicism that often clouds adult fiction, the novel leans deeply into the emotional palette of a young mind trying to make sense of both internal and external worlds. There is fluidity between perception and reflection in the protagonist's voice, an oscillation between innocent curiosity and a maturing sense of emotional complexity. At its heart, the novel grapples with identity, emotional vulnerability, and the yearning for connection. Rather than rely on external drama, Sharma anchors the story in the protagonist's internal world that is an often turbulent place where affection, insecurity, curiosity, and confusion coexist. The treatment of themes like infatuation and self-discovery is handled with restraint, allowing the reader to relive their own adolescent introspections without being manipulated by sentimentality. The protagonist doesn't arrive at clarity in linear ways; instead, his growth is marked by hesitation, regression, and ambivalence reflecting how most of us actually grow up. Sharma employs a minimalist structure: short chapters, focused reflections, and a prose style that eschews flamboyance in favor of sincerity. This choice aligns with the book's tone but also risks monotony in parts where introspection outweighs narrative momentum. Dialogue, where it appears, feels raw and unfiltered, like excerpts from a personal



journal. This builds an atmosphere of intimacy, though it may leave readers who seek intricate plots or expansive world-building feeling undernourished.

The central character Aarav Sharma (probably a version of the author) is rendered with care. His vulnerability, mistakes, and longing feel authentic. However, secondary characters tend to orbit around him without much independent development. Relationships are explored more like ideas or feelings about people than flesh-and-blood interactions. This could be a deliberate stylistic choice, mirroring the self-centered nature of adolescence, where the world is discovered largely through the self. In its focus on a protagonist more attuned to inner conflict than outward rebellion, *Coming of Age* finds resonance with J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). Like Holden Caulfield, Aarav moves through a world that feels emotionally unauthentic, clinging to fragments of clarity—his badminton court, academic excellence while quietly observing the disarray around him. But unlike Holden, who lashes out, Aarav turns inward, reflecting an introversion that defines much of Generation Alpha's emotional texture.

Aarav Sharma is introduced not through action but reflection. He is a boy adrift in a successful yet emotionally distant household, his introversion a quiet rebellion against the noise of societal expectations. What distinguishes Aarav is not that he is extraordinary, but that he is startlingly ordinary and that ordinariness becomes Sharma's subject. In Aarav's silence and inner monologue, Sharma finds an emotional reality rarely treated with seriousness in fiction aimed at young readers. Aarav's passion for badminton becomes more than a sport; it is the only domain where clarity and discipline anchor him, contrasting sharply with the moral and emotional ambiguity he faces elsewhere. His love for badminton isn't just a character trait, it is a cultural marker. In India, badminton is not just a sport but a growing national passion. Aarav's daily ritual of reaching the court at 8 AM becomes a quiet rebellion against adolescent uncertainty. Sharma uses a relatable and contemporary pop-cultural motif to develop a uniquely personal narrative arc, reflecting both ambition and avoidance.

As the title suggests, the central preoccupation is with growth that is not only biological or psychological, but existential, echoing the internal confusion of someone “unaware of everything” as the text itself admits. Sharma’s occasionally stream-of-consciousness narration recalls James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), where Stephen Dedalus’ journey toward intellectual and spiritual independence unfolds in elliptical prose. Readers are less concerned with what happens and more invested in how it feels. Aarav’s inner life marked by anomie, self-awareness, and reluctance to conform echoes this classic literary interiority.

The novel subtly raises questions about identity, purpose, and how we construct our sense of self amid a rapidly shifting social world. Particularly notable is the author’s focus on the “Alpha generation”, an emerging demographic rarely depicted with depth in fiction. Sharma doesn’t lecture; he listens through his characters, presenting their fragmented awareness as both limitation and authenticity. The exploration of first love, friendship, self-doubt, and familial expectation comes across with tenderness and truth. In some moments, the narrative edges toward the sentimental, but this is forgivable in a debut that dares to be vulnerable. What may appear to some as structural looseness is a strength: the book resists plot-driven formulas in favor of character depth. Aarav’s relationships with his parents, ambition, and aspirations are touched upon gently, with an observational eye rather than a moralizing voice. Even Jamaica Kincaid’s *Annie John* (1985), though written from a distinct cultural standpoint, parallels Sharma’s treatment of adolescence as a psychological crisis. Both Aarav and Annie grow increasingly detached from their parents, experiencing a quiet, aching drift away from the familiar without necessarily knowing where they’re headed.

What distinguishes *Coming of Age* is not just its thematic alignment with literary forebears, but its cultural anchoring in contemporary urban India. Sharma situates Aarav’s emotional turmoil in the affluent yet emotionally distant environment of a successful family in Ahmedabad, a milieu rarely explored with such psychological honesty. Aarav’s relationship with his parents is marked by absence more than abuse, by

distance more than dysfunction. This emotional shading is one of the book's quiet strengths. The prose, particularly in the opening chapter, leans lyrical and abstract, with a philosophical tone. The idea of a "meaningless pause" becoming the gateway to existential self-examination signals Sharma's literary ambition. It marks a shift from event-driven stories in Indian fiction toward something more introspective. Set against a flourishing upper-middle-class Gujarati household, the novel captures both material abundance and emotional austerity. Ahmedabad is not merely a setting in *Coming of Age*, it is rather a character. The state, known for its entrepreneurial spirit and conservatism, provides the perfect contradiction for Aarav's internal world that is externally prosperous, inwardly adrift. His father is a successful businessman; the lifestyle exudes affluence. But within this surface lies a deep existential pause, a theme Sharma establishes from the first paragraph. The "pause" where time suspends itself evokes the spiritual dissonance of a youth lost between ambition and identity. In a society that prioritizes visible success, Aarav's introspective nature stands in quiet rebellion. Sharma's narrative joins a tradition of novels exploring disaffection and identity. Aarav, like Holden Caulfield, is detached and skeptical. Yet, unlike Holden's rebellious voice, Aarav internalizes more than he vocalizes. This silent sensitivity also evokes Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* (1987), where characters drift with a sense of longing. Aarav is at once ordinary and profound: a rank-holder, a sports enthusiast, a boy grappling with the intangible weight of meaninglessness. The philosophical tone where emptiness becomes self-inquiry is ambitious and echoes existential literature. Sharma dares to ask difficult questions and lets them remain unanswered.

The academic rigor Aarav endures—rank-holding, coaching decisions and planned futures is saturated with Indian middle-class realism. These pressures are presented not as dramatic conflicts but as quietly consuming forces. This grounding in reality aligns with narratives familiar to young Indian readers, like *Kota Factory* (2019) or *Chhichhore* (2019), while retaining literary depth. Aarav is surrounded by comfort but emotionally isolated. His silence mirrors the internalized loneliness many teenagers

experience. While the novel doesn't explicitly mention social media, it evokes the emotional numbness often associated with a hyper-networked world. Like *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999), Sharma embraces the emotional texture of adolescence rather than sensationalizing it. What makes it striking is that Sharma filters these themes through a distinctly Indian and particularly Gujarati lens. It is neither performatively "modern" nor nostalgically "literary." Instead, it offers a hybrid form which is quiet, questioning, and human. It blends pop culture and personal storytelling, using contemporary influences as integral threads. Unlike Western examples where transformation comes through rebellion or romance, Aarav's journey is marked by inward questioning and subtle dissonance within privilege. The novel innovates by slowing adolescence down, holding it under a microscope, and allowing existential pause reminiscent of Camus' *The Stranger* (1942) to speak louder than events. Its setting in Ahmedabad is significant. Indian coming-of-age narratives are often rooted in the rural or hyper-urban, but Sharma offers contained domesticity. Alienation is not just a byproduct of dysfunction, but also of success.

The novel is structured in part through diary entries. This blends the personal with the socio-cultural since the diary doesn't just chart Aarav's feelings. It reflects the idioms he consumes such as movies, a heroic transformation arc, school culture, and academic pressure. In doing so, the epistolary mode becomes both subjective and subtly sociological. Aarav's entries are not the meditative recordings of classics like *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774). His introspections are mediated by cinematic and pop-cultural tropes. He writes, "I mean up my expectations. You know, in movies it happens like that. The hero after a tragic incident becomes the topper." (195) his shows how he scripts his anxieties through media. The ironic misalignment between expectation and reality is what T.S. Eliot envisioned: the artist mediating emotion and form. The epistolary form also reflects his desire to assert identity and be heard by adults (in this case, his parents), "I want to talk with you both more directly compared to this, just for once." (198) There is vulnerability here, a desire to be seen beyond school and expectations. Eliot's lines

from “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1915) offer a parallel: “Do I dare / Disturb the universe?” Like Eliot’s protagonist, Aarav wrestles with voice and inarticulacy. One dream sequence describes his family at home, and then suddenly he is standing alone. It evokes separation. Freud posits that dreams reveal unresolved desires or anxieties. Aarav’s dream of being stuck and unable to engage as reflects a latent fear of abandonment. Freud exercises on it in his discussion of the *unconscious*. It symbolizes emotional dislocation. Bhaba’s concept of the “unhomely” where the familiar becomes uncanny, home becomes a site of estrangement. The repetition “that home, his home, their home, maybe” (138) mirrors Eliot’s style of fragmented selfhood. There is a sensory disturbance if Aarav’s dream is closely observed, “A strange smell was coming out from it (the bedsheet). He didn’t like the smell...” (138) which Julia Kristeva’s calls as a moment of abjection, where Aarav encounters something inassimilable, alien yet intimate i.e. his own unconscious.

Further, if we look at the interiority and the exteriority of the text, Kristeva suggests that every text operates at the threshold between the interior (subjectivity, unconscious drives, personal memory) and the exterior (language, ideology, history). In *Coming of Age*, Aarav’s deeply personal, introspective narrative embodies this liminality. His moments of existential stillness particularly the described “pause” where everything stops—represent a rupture in the symbolic order: a moment where the internal (his unvoiced trauma, confusion, identity formation) breaches the surface of normative, socially structured language. The text becomes a semiotic space in Kristeva’s terms, where the interior speaks through the cracks of the structured, exterior world of exams, badminton matches, and familial expectations. Sharma’s use of an urban, upper-middle-class Gujarati setting exemplifies textual exteriority—the socio-historical codes that the protagonist is always negotiating. Aarav’s father, the rigid expectations, and the unyielding structure of academic performance are expressions of the symbolic order, in psychoanalytic terms that tries to stabilize Aarav’s subjectivity. What is quietly radical in Sharma’s novel is that the interior never fully merges with the exterior. Aarav’s

identity is not “resolved” or “formed” by the end rather, the novel preserves the tension between inner becoming and outer containment, embodying Kristeva’s idea that the subject-in-process is always fragmented, fluid, and in dialogue with structures larger than itself.

The closing moments offer a resonant meditation on adolescent identity and authenticity, not through resolution but rupture. As Aarav and Kavya shout, “I AM CRAZYYYYY!!!” and “READY!!!!” the novel reaches a cathartic culmination. This is less about narrative closure than affective release. Their emotional eruptions dismantle pressures of coherence, embracing identity’s performative dimension. Kavya’s raised arms are symbolic gestures against conformity. Aarav’s final shout signals not a conclusion, but an opening. Coming of age is not a moment of realization, but an ongoing dialogue between chaos and clarity. The novel mirrors life’s own recursive structure: unfinished and constantly rewritten. Thus, *Coming of Age* becomes a space where the interiority of emotion collides with the exteriority of culture, refusing closure in favor of emotional honesty and open-ended becoming.

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