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*Dedicated
to
Gurudev*

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From the desk of the Editor:

As usual, a bit late, but well planned and up to contentment, I think so. This time, along with critical writings, I could gather a few creative pieces and one interview with a Sahitya Akademi Yuva 2025 winner.

In critical writing, papers from different fields, both contemporary and traditional, have been accommodated, whereas in creative writing, there are stories: both living and stirring. The ailing modernity encompasses appalling trauma, and here, it has been examined thoroughly. The riddle of existence, the pulsating culture, and the interrogations on the Garden of Eden as a diasporic entity have been dealt with meticulously. Kamla Das, the unconventional and the feministic deliberations are inescapable. Talking of human constitution without Kafka and Coelho would be incomplete, so they are there. There are four papers on Language, too. Besides, we have two papers on the indigenous segment of society which is, otherwise, termed as Scheduled Tribes: from the North East, and in general, known as Adivasi: their life style and contribution to the peace and prosperity of society, culture and the nation as a whole.

Taken together, these titbits form a composite whole, and is placed before you, for your kind incisive comments, for improvement and correction. I think you will appreciate my endeavour to be with you with the bit that I have, and I can.

Waiting for your positive and heartening nod, please.

Editor

VOICING THE TRAUMA OF CASTE: A READING OF THE POETRY OF MEENA KANDASAMY

Sudheer Chandra Hajela
Prof & Head, Dept of English
Shri J N M PG College
Lucknow, India

ABSTRACT

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Corresponding author:

Sudheer.hajela@gmail.com

Meena Kandasamy, one of the most outstanding young poets of India, has articulated the trauma of being an untouchable in the caste ridden society of India. Her poems excel in the dexterity of linguistic innovation to expose the cultural valorisation of casteism in the Hindu society and delve deep into the bruised psyche of the victims of the casteist cultural practices, and thus revitalise their spirits to resist and revolt against casteist attitudes. The present paper probes the Dalit sensibility of the young poet through her major poems and expose the resistance, opposition and revolt against the caste culture ingrained in Hindu society since ages. She articulates in an experimental language that is singular in the domain of Indian English Poetry. Her each poem breaks the traditional form of poetry and craves for iconoclasm that goes beyond limits of literature and highlights the revolutionary zeal of the poet to change the scenario.

Introduction

Literature is one of the most popular and forceful mediums to represent and articulate the cultural aspects of a particular society in a unique linguistic model. Meena Kandasami, one of the most outstanding women poets from south of India has won laurels in depicting the age-old evil of casteism in the Hindu society in her poems. Her collection of poems touch, brings into fore the trauma of being a member of a low caste or untouchable in an idiom of speech that breaks usual form and structure of the main stream English poetry in India. She attacks the age-old division of castes in Hindu society in which one is born low and subjugated to serve the upper caste people in the most inhuman way. Her poems expose the hypocrisy behind such discriminations under the garb of religion and culture and debunks the irrationality of such attitudes. An upper caste Brahmin can marry a lower caste woman and can still enjoy the respect in the society but a lower caste man or woman is bound to live a life of misery and dishonour owing to the stigma of being a lower caste. Her poems take a dig at such social and cultural practice and makes a call to resist, oppose and revolt against such social and cultural restrictions that pass off well in the name of religion and culture. Her poetry is a cry against the atrocities put forth towards the people of lower caste, it is not just a voice for the voice less millions who suffer simply being born in the families of the untouchables, it challenges the tenets of religion that betrays the natural laws of humanity and brotherhood and spreads hatred and indignation. Her poems like "Touch" "Advaita", "Becoming a Brahmin" "Dignity" etc not only raise a voice against casteism but read like a short treatise of social activism.

MEENA KANDASAMY : A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Meena Kandasamy, born in 1984, is a gifted Dalitpoet and novelist writing in English, besides being a translator and an activist. She was the editor of The Dalit, a bimonthly alternative English magazine of the Dalit Media Network, first published in 2001. Such a magazine had served as a platform to “record atrocities, condemn oppressive hierarchies and document the forgotten heritage of the Dalits” (Kandasamy 143). Kandasamy is a highly credited poet since her works have been published in “different reputed journals of the country and abroad such as The Little Magazine, Kavaya Bharati, Indian Literature, Poetry International Web, Muse India, Quarterly Literary Review, The New Indian Express etc.” (Mahto 12).

As a poet, Kandasamy has made a significant contribution to Indian English poetry. She employs diverse elements of resistance in her poetry, particularly her first volume Touch, published in 2006. With the help of her poetic creativity and sensibility, Kandasamy could wage a militant assault on the oppressive practices exercised against the untouchable Dalits. Her first anthology Touch is made up of eighty-four poems. It is amazing to find out that the number, eighty-four, is analogous to the year in which Kandasamy was born, 1984.

Kandasamy's Touch bears a brilliant one-page foreword by the prominent Indian poet, Kamala Das. In this foreword, Das admires Kandasamy's spirit of resistance towards the untouchability exercised against the marginalized and oppressed members of her lowest Hindu caste (the Dalits):

Dying and then resurrecting herself again and again in a country that refuses to forget the unkind myths of caste and perhaps of religion, Meena carries as her twin self, her shadow the dark cynicism of youth that must help her to survive.

“Happiness is a hollow world for fools to inhabit” cries Meena at a moment of revelation. Revelations come to her frequently and prophecies linger at her lips. Older by nearly half a century. (Kandasamy 7)

CASTE AND HINDU RELIGION

When we come to relate the concept of casteism to Hindu religion in India, we realize that like all other religions, it has emerged over the years according to suit specific needs, interests and urgencies of the people of certain class. When one tries to investigate the origin of it in India, one is bound to reflect India's history of 5000 years, marked by the „inclusions and „exclusions of various religions, sects, ethnic groups and communities, their mutual confrontations and mutual harmonious actions often engineered by power dynamics has the answer for India's rise and fall. In India, the spirit of Hindu religion can be traced back to the Vedic period when the call for

“SANGACHH DHVAM SAMVADA DHAVAM, SAM VO MANANSI
JAANTAAAM, DEVA BHAGAM YATHA PURVE, SANJANANA
UPASATE”S (Tripathi, 2010, 33)

(Let us all walk together, let us all speak together, and let us all work together, just as Gods did in the past by knowing the minds of all)

This spirit echoed and re-echoed in Vedic mantras such as this:

„SARVE BHAVANTU SUKHINA, SARVE SANTU NIRAMAYA, SARVE
BHADRANI PASHANTU, MAKASCHIT DUKH BHAG BHAVET

But the Rigveda Samhita PURUSH SUKTA, 12 informs:

“BRAHMANOASYA MUKHAMASEEDBAHU

RAJANYAKRITAURUTADASAYA YAD VAISHYA PADABHAYAM SHUDRO
AJAYAT”

(After the making of Purush, the Brahmins originated from the head, Kshatriyas from the arms, Vaishyas from the thigh and Shudras from the feet). (Tripathi, 2004, 216)

Thus, laying the foundation of the caste system that prioritizes birth of a man to his Karma of profession. This stigma of caste bifurcated Hindus into four categories and, on massive level, divided Hindus into “Swarnas” and “Aswararnas” entitling the former to exploit, disgrace and be inhuman to the „latter. “No appraisal of Multiculturalism can be complete if it does not take into account the caste phenomenon in Indian cultural scene, as it concerns the majority religion Hinduism, as the goal of Multiculturalism is to find „*proper terms of relationship between different cultural communities*”

Sharan Kumar Limbale s”*Hindu*” (2010), translated from Marathi by Arun Prabha Mukherjee is a literary novel that portrays the complexities of an age old caste system in the present political scenario of India and presents a brilliant critique of caste atrocities on one hand and the inner contradictions of the Dalit movement on the other. Sharan Kumar Limbale writes in “Straight from the heart”, introducing the Novel:-

“The fabric of Hindu society, interwoven with inequality and the disfigurement of the caste system – „Hindu has been written to perform a postmortem of these two. Our country cannot become beautiful until the stain of caste system is washed away from its face. To speak against caste system is to speak the language of national unity, of aesthetic beauty.” (XI – XII)

MEENA KANDASAMY AND OTHER DALIT VOICES

With the emergence of young Dalit woman writers like Bama in Tamil, Urmila Pawar in Marathi, Arundhati Roy with her novel *The God of Small Things* in English, Telugu poets Jupaka Subhadra, ChallapalliSwarruprani and M Gowri, and Hindi Dalit autobiographers Kawasila Baisantri’s *DohraAbhishap*, Kamal Tejas’s *Gawa Tathagat* and Sushila Takbhoure’s *Shikanje Ka Dard*, Dalit literature has registered a mammoth upsurge where the contribution of women writers is not less significant than those of male ones. In the following discussion, it is worthy of note how some of the young Dalit poets of India have retorted to Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?” and asserted vociferously that subalterns can speak for themselves. With such outstanding writers, writing about the wretched lives of the Dalits and subalterns, rushing forth in every decade after Independence with a gusto and commitment, it is very surprising that they are hardly admitted within the sphere of university syllabi, only very few universities in the country have prescribed their poetry, stories and autobiographies, there is still a glass ceiling to be smashed to accommodate such writers whose works represent the stark realities of more than the half population of the country. Is it sheer politics of the upper class educated people or sheer ignorance of the literature of the downtrodden, is a question to be pondered by the authorities in the university Departments. Writing in 21st century one rues over this situation and ponders over the possible reasons of this exclusion of Dalit writers and literature. Perhaps, it has to do with the complexity of the topic, certainly, but it also has to do with the continued, fraught debate on the definition of Dalit and on the issue of representation, accessibility and appropriation.

KANDASAMY AND HER POETRY

Whatever may be the reasons, there are numerous young Indian Dalit poets their poetry is brilliant in terms of form and content and invite a fair evaluation of their craft. One of such outstanding women writers in India, is Meena Kandasamy, a young Chennai based poet, fiction writer and translator. Her first book *Touch* came out from Peacock Books, Mumbai in 2006. It contains Foreword by renowned poetess Kamala Das, where she finds her ‘poetic vision’ appreciable. Kandasamy regards her poetic corpus as a process of coming to terms with her identity and consciousness, she declares her “woman ness, Tamilness and low/outcasteness”

are labels that she wears with pride. Her poetry reflects her awareness of what it means to be a woman in a caste ridden social environment of Tamil Nadu . For Kandasamy, writing is a means of creating a place in the world; the use of the personal voice and self-revelation are means of self-assertion in the Indian context where to be a woman and to be a Dalit woman is to be doubly marginalized and oppressed. Her poems revolt against the age-old caste hierarchies in Indian society. Her poem “ Becoming a Brahmin” takes a dig at how upper caste people undermine the dignity of a lower caste person-

“Algorithm for converting a Shudra into a Brahmin Begin.

Step1: Take a beautiful Sudra girl

Step2: Make her marry a Brahmin

Step3: Let her give birth to his female child.

Step4: Let this child marry a brahmin

Step5: Repeat steps 3-4 six times.

Step6: Display the end product .

It is a Brahmin.

End.

Algorithm advocated by Father of the Nation at Tirupur, Documented by Periyar on 20.09.1947

“Algorithm for converting a Pariah into a Brahmin Awaiting another Father of the Nation To produce this Algorithm. (Inconvenience caused due to inadvertent delay is sincerely regretted.”) (*Touch* 42)

The undercurrent irony in the poem and a sharp criticism of Father of the Nation, makes the poem poignant, it rips apart the hypocrisy of the upper caste thinking. She, like all other poets of personal conviction and confession, gives new form to her poems. They startle the reader not only by content but by innovation also in the cliched form of poetry. Her quest is not just the quest of a usual confessional poet, it has a universal appeal, it aims no spiritual objectives but a social engineering. She says:

“caste, yet again authored a tragedy

The disease wreaked, downtrodden” (“ Prayers”, First published in *Kritya*.)

She articulates the hate that untouchability engenders in the hearts of an untouchable in these words, how this feeling can but be experienced :

“You will have known almost Every knowledgeable thing about

The charms and the temptations That touch could hold.

But, you will never have known that touch-the taboo to your transcendence,

when crystallized in caste was a paraphernalia of
undeserving hate.” (“Touch” 36)

Meena Kandasamy emerges as a strong voice for the underprivileged and the downtrodden class in her poems, she boldly debunks the mythological characters like Dronacharya who first deprived Ekalavya from receiving education on the ground of his low caste and later demanded his thumb as *Guru dakshina*, in her poem “Ekalaivan”, she straightforwardly attacks the mentality of Dronacharya in this poem Naveen k Mehta has rightly commented here, “Kandasamy finds this situation quite pathetic and arouse the soul of Ekalaivan to come out something which can be lethal to break the age old circle of suppression and tries to offer consolation (60)”:

“ You can do a lot of things

With your left hand”.

and quickly retorts,

“Besides, fascist Dronacharyas warrant

Left handed treatment.” (42)

Meena Kandasamy does not find herself comfortable with the philosophy of Advaita that asserts that the individual is nothing other than the brahman(Ultimate soul),she asks God when this state will be really achieved and the untouchables be one with the higher caste Brahmin?

“Advaita: The Ultimate Question”

.....
“OneMoreFinalQuestion
CanMy
UntouchableAtman
AndYour
BrahmanAtman EverBe
One? ”(37)

The form of the poem itself answers the question, that so long as untouchability exists, an Untouchable can not be equal with a Brahman. For Meena Kandasamy, poetry is a weapon to expose the atrocities , insults ,humiliations, discriminations and injustices done to the whole class of lower caste people who lead lives in sub-human surroundings. Her poetry takes account of the Dalit exodus, rapes committed on young Dalit girls, and it sensitizes the downtrodden to wake up, acknowledge their dignity and change the scenario by a revolution

“We will learn How to fight
With the substantial spontaneity
With which we first learnt
How to love.
So
Now
Upon a future time
There will be a revolution. It will begin
When the oppressors will wince Every time
They hear our voices and their sparkly Silence
Will never be taken for a sacrament” (60).
And so she advises in her poem “Aggression”-
“ Most of the time:
Aggression is the best kind of trouble-shooting.”
She knows it very well that the things will not improve automatically, they will have to struggle for their due rights
Political parties will only use them for their vested interests. Only ideas can bring revolutions:
“Sometimes
The outward signals
Of inward struggles take colossal forms And the revolution happens because our Dreams explode.”(38).
Her message to the oppressed people is quite clear, it is not a political agenda but the question
of one’s identity and dignity as a human-being:
“But, don’t suppress
Our rightful share of dignity. If you ever learnt
That virtue Though inherited
Was nothing beyond The appearance
Of the foot-print Of a bird
On water...” (43)

Hers is poetry of anguish, a search for identity and a yearning for liberation from the stigma of being an untouchable, this is writ large on every page of her poems .In one of her Interviews, she says:

“My gender, language and casteless-ness were not anything that I had to be ashamed of... I wrote poetry very well aware of whom I was. But I was also sure of how I wanted to be seen. I wanted to be taken on my own terms... I wanted to be totally bare and intensely exposed to the world through my writings. I wanted it to be my rebellion against the world.”(Poetry International Web).

With her very few collections of poems, she stands as one of the most revolutionary voices among the women Dalit poets of modern India. Whereas most of the poets of the Subaltern have devised new ways of articulation in form and language, and their devices are quite varied, they all share a subversive attitude towards traditional myths which are marked by discriminations on the basis of caste and gender. One of such Dalit thinkers, critics and poets of note is Rajat Rani Meenu who originally writes in Hindi, raises the question of the exploitation of the Dalits in her stories and poems. Besides her many collections of Dalit stories and poems, her ‘Hindi Dalit Kavita of Ninth Decade’ was awarded by Dalit Sahitya Akademi, MP. One of her poems translated into English is titled, “ Why is it that Even a Leaf Does not Stir” wonders on the studied silence of the Elite on the rape of a Dalit girl:

“When we are raped
Even gang raped
Why is it that even a leaf does not stir? Yet when rape was yourlot
The foundations of Parliament itself did shake,
Women Parliamentarians screamed in protest
Roaring from its dream-slumber the commission for women.
Why do we hear today the demand
For death sentence to the rapists
When yesterday you/all of you were mute?
Was the Maulana Azad Medical College student’s rape
The first rape ever
If not, then why were you/all of you silent
When I was being raped, even gang-raped?
Yes, the answer is this:
That you are from the upper castes/the pure castes
While I, after all, am a mere Dalit.”
(*Journal of Literature & Aesthetics*, 2008, 46)

As it happens in Dalit discourse, the exploitation of the Dalits is often associated with Feminism. While all Dalits undergo the discrimination of being a member of a low caste, Dalit women suffer doubly, first as a victim of the rigid norms of the patriarchy and secondly as being a low caste member of the society. A Telugu Dalit poet ChallapalliSwaruparani puts this predicament of a Dalit woman in her poem, “Mankenappuvvu”:

“The hazard hisses about forever Sandwiched between the wall and a ditch,
When is it that I lived my own life?
The male-control at home slaps one cheek
While the caste-control in the street slaps the other.”
(*Journal of Literature & Aesthetics*, 2008,77)

Conclusion

Thus, Dalit women are excluded by the Feminism of the West that is more concerned about the discriminations of race and colour than caste. Dalits are the “Other” whose positions never change, they are not the subject of “Ambivalence” in the Post colonial discourse as

propounded by Homi Bhabha and other western post-colonial critics. They are the permanent ‘colonies’ crying for decolonization. Their agonies can be understood only by Dalit discourse and a poetics of the subaltern literature. A Bengali poet Marshal Hembram ‘s poem ,translated beautifully in English by Jaydeep Sarangi, himself a poet and translator of note, reads like this:

“All by a thunder
They say this land this pond
this farm house are not mine.
Red eyes pierce us to leave
all these
and to be without address. But, with these
There are stories numberless We fought to make
this untrodden territory of forest for a land to live in;
with happy family.
If you ask these from me
my land my pond
my farm house
What else can I do
But to take the bow and arrow.”
(“We shall take the Bow and Arrow”)

The last line of the poem highlights the point why do they resort to violence? Violence is not the remedy of discriminations and injustices done to the Dalits, but, perhaps, the last resort of the have-nots. Voices of the Dalits are the voices of the marginalized societies. In a healthy and sustainable society, such discriminations have no place. Like Byron, Blake, Shaw and Arthur Miller who spoke and wrote against the powerful structures of their times, their voices are to be heard, their poems, novels and autobiographies have to be studied critically like a *Sahridaya* and it is equally obligatory for genuinely politically conscious people and scholars of literature to ponder over it. As literature with its universal nature, represents all people with their failures and triumphs. It has only “inclusions” and no “exclusions.”

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Reimagining the Narrative of ‘Asur’: Myth, Marginalization, and Resistance in *Lords of the Global Village*

Umesh Chandra, Assistant Professor, Department of English and MEL, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, U.P., India.

Vipin Yadav, Research Scholar, Department of English and MEL, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, U.P., India.

Abstract

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Corresponding author:

umesh.udbhaw@gmail.com

The ‘Asur’ is traditionally portrayed as a demonised figure in Indian mythology possessing evils and vices, symbols of darkness and chaos. This traditional portrayal aligns ‘Asur’ with negative forces reinforcing the moral dichotomy between good and evil in mythology found in Vedas and Puranas. ‘Asur’ is often contrasted with the Devas who represent good, order, and righteousness. They are typically seen as being driven by pride, greed, and materialism, seeking to disrupt the cosmic balance. But the novel, *Lords of the Global Village*, puts these ‘Asur’ as central protagonists who have been exploited in a modern world by technological and economic domination. In this novel, the ‘Asur’ identity is employed to critique global capitalism and neo-colonialism. In today’s world, especially in narratives of *Lords of The Global Village*, the ‘Asur’ identity tends to be reinterpreted as a symbol of resistance instead of evil. They have been portrayed as a marginalised figure fighting against unjust systems and oppressive power. In this paper, the ‘Asur’ is revitalised in modern society as a symbol of rebellion against oppressive structures, both social and political. The paper is an attempt to showcase that the contemporary narrative of ‘Asur’ is trying to portray them as a victim of oppression seeking justice in the society rather than being inherently evil. It also explores the reviewing of the ‘Asur identity’ in contemporary narrative, focusing on its portrayal in the novel *Lords of the Global Village*.

Introduction

Retelling of stories and narratives is a powerful way to analyse and question the beliefs and social systems that have been in existence for a long time. Stories shape who we are, what we believe, and how ‘power’ works in society. By looking at stories closely, we can uncover hidden biases, challenge old ideas, and create new ways of thinking that help people and communities to grow in a fairer, more justified way. When examining the retelling of stories in contemporary times, it’s crucial to recognize what is considered “normal” or “abnormal” in society. Foucault also challenges the idea of a ‘fixed’ or ‘absolute’ truth. He says,

Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault, p. 13.)

It helps us to understand that truth is not universal but it is shaped by the social and political system of powerful people. This idea appears to show the stories can shape what

society sees as normal or acceptable. Such stories can either push certain groups, like the ‘Asur’ tribe, to the margins or to make their identity more accepted and recognized.

Argument

Historically, it has been the general conception that ‘Asur’ means “demon.” This idea is deeply rooted in the minds of most children nurtured in India which is shaped by mythology. One of the related myths is the tale of ‘Mahishasur’ who is traditionally seen as a “monster” defeated by the Goddess Durga after a nine-day battle. This way of telling stories creates a simple idea that ‘Asur’ are always the “bad guys” who go against social values and spiritual beliefs. ‘Bakasura’, also known as ‘Baka’ or ‘Kuaishwa’, is an ‘Asur’ whose reference one can find in the *Mahabharata*. He asks for a lot of food, and in return, he agrees not to attack the kingdom Ekachakrapura. But instead of eating the food, he also eats the people one by one who serve him food (*Mahabharata*, Vaka Vadha Parva, Ch. 23–29). Apart from this, there are several descriptions of ‘Asur’ in the religious text like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* which portray them opposite to God. These tales continue to show ‘Asur’ as demon who must be defeated by goodness. It reinforces the idea that some groups are superior to others. Roland Barthes’ theory of myth also says, “Myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal” (*Mythologies*. p.142). When applied to the ‘Asur’ tribe in India, this theory helps to uncover how the dominant narratives about them have been constructed and accepted.

Analysis

Lords of the Global Village, a novel by Ranendra, addresses the popular discourse in which the ‘Asur’ are called as ‘anti-social’ or ‘anti-state’ in contemporary times and identified as a threat to the society; such branding hides their genuine struggle for land, rights, and respect, and seems to portray them as criminals. Ramanika Gupta, an author and activist for tribal rights, also reflects on such types of narratives in her book *Adivasi Asmita Ka Sankat* that the Adivasi people are not violent by nature. They are angry because they have suffered for a long time. She says, “The tragedy of Adivasi society is that it has not yet fully gained the power of expression. When its ability to endure reaches its limit, its anger turns into action, and hands reach for arrows. Today, negligence and the Naxal movement have replaced those arrows with guns” (Gupta 24; Our trans.) She explains that when they can no longer bear the injustice, they are forced to fight back. Since they were ignored and treated unfairly by mainstream society, therefore, many of them used arrows to protect themselves.

The novel seems to reveal how these narratives and stereotypes are used to suppress their identity and justify their marginalisation. Rumjhum, a character from the ‘Asur’ community in the novel, challenges this unfair notion of the society. He says, “What was it that had changed a community into the ‘other’, made them ‘different’, an enemy? Was it simply because their lifestyle was different from ours that they had become objects of abuse and butchery?” (Ranendra, 44) This statement helps one to think about how power shapes such a kind of belief system whether it is right or wrong. Rumjhum questions the stakeholders of the socio-political system who are responsible to decide evil and good.

Initially Master Sahib, the narrator of this novel, who comes from the mainstream population, also had the same perception as per mainstream world. One can observe his comment on Rumjhum’s surname, “The second name of your people is really astonishing, Rumjhum Bhai”. Rumjhum replies with laughter elaborating the mainstream perception of

‘Asur’ people, “You’re right. The word “Asur” reminds you of two things. One is the stories of giants, demons and fiends heard during one’s childhood. What terrible descriptions! Ten to 12 feet tall. Protruding teeth. An assortment of weapons in their hands. Cannibals, devotees of Lord Shiva, brawny, yet able to be slaughtered” (17).

In colonial India, the stories told about indigenous groups like the ‘Asur’ tribe often ignored their real perspectives or painted them as wild and offensive people in a dark shade. Also, in myths, the ‘Asur’ tribe appears to be described as demons who are evil outsiders to be controlled by divine power. The novel, through the character of Rumjhum, challenges one to rethink these biased views. It critiques the historical marginalization of the ‘Asur’ community, both in mythological narratives and colonial anthropology.” He says, “The curtain scene of all the god-demon struggles is predestined! The other is the photographs of loincloth- wearing Asur men and bare-breasted women in the 1926, 1946 and 1966 anthropology books. Now you decide, Master Sahib, what we are” (18). They are called demons fighting against Gods in mythology, and in anthropology books, they are depicted in a disrespectful manner, as stereotypes instead of real people. Such types of narrative helped colonisers to justify their treatment for ‘Asur’ people. But Rumjhum, as an ‘Asur’, questions the legitimacy of the constructed narratives. Here Stuart Hall’s concept of “encoding and decoding” can be applied to see the reality. Dominant cultures, through myths and anthropological texts, have portrayed the ‘Asur’ community in a negative light. This is how the dominant culture has “encoded” them. However, anyone, like Rumjhum, can interpret these representations differently, challenging the negative stereotypes and offering a more accurate understanding of the ‘Asur’ community. This is how one can “decode” the dominant narratives.

A long time ago, in 1871, the British government in India made a harsh law called the ‘Criminal Tribes Act’. This law unfairly labelled some tribal communities as “criminals” by birth even if they had never done anything wrong. These tribes were forced to live in special settlements where they were always under surveillance, their movements were restricted, and they were treated badly. (Criminal Tribal Act 1871, pp. 1-8) The Britishers did this mainly because they did not understand or accept the traditional way of life these tribes followed. As a result, these communities suffered a lot. After independence, the law was finally removed in 1952, and these tribes were no longer called criminals. However, even today, many of them still face discrimination because of the unfair stigma that was given to them in the past. The ‘Asur’ tribe, for example, is still being misrepresented in the society. They are considered as extremist ethnic groups involved in violent protests which make their struggle for justice as a criminal activity. This view connects to the ideas of post-colonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who talks about subaltern identity in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” as the voices of people who have been ignored or silenced throughout history. The subaltern, like the tribal communities, is unable to speak freely and when they do, their voice is inevitably shaped and controlled by dominant narratives. It shows how this particular ‘Asur’ community is unable to challenge their demonised identity in mainstream discourse.

However, apart from these stories of mythology, the reality is that the ‘Asur’ is a tribal community in Jharkhand which the novel *Lords of the Global Village* depicts. ‘Asur’ people are a very small Austroasiatic ethnic group living primarily in Jharkhand, a state in India. ‘Asur’ are iron-smelters which gives them a special identity apart from what they have been traditionally considered. The modern ‘Asur’ tribe is divided into three sub-tribal divisions, namely Bir (Kol) Asur, Birjia Asur and Agaria Asur (18). But this re-telling of ‘Asur’ narrative in the novel demystifies the story of ‘Asur’ from popular narrative. The text breaks down these mythical presentations, stereotypes associated with the community and unravels the

politics of dominant power structure in creating such mythical, cultural stereotypes of the dominated, oppressed communities and groups.

The novel *Lords of the Global Village* re-interprets the ‘Asur’ identity by portraying them not as inherently evil, but as symbols of ethnic communities seeking for justice and resisting oppression. Instead of understanding their struggles, these mythical portrayals turn their efforts into a threat to the society, however, the novel tries to show how the true identity of ‘Asur’ tribe has been misunderstood and misrepresented. It can be seen in the words of Rumjhum in the novel, “When our ancestors took a vow to save the forests, they were called demons. When they resisted the burning of forests undertaken to expand agricultural fields, they were dubbed wicked fiends” (125). He tries to prove that they are not demons but they are the protectors of the land and nature. They stand against those who destroy it for the sake of profit. It is evident that he challenges the preconceived notions about ‘Asur’ and attempts to show their struggle as a fight against unfair systems which have been exploiting them for a long period of time.

By subverting the archetypes and setting the narrative in contemporary times the novelist not only intends to make readers aware of the events taking place beyond the mainstream cultural-political scenario. He also appears to highlight the struggles of marginalised communities; how their resistance is often misrepresented, and how the dominant group creates stories that justify their oppression and exploitation to serve their own interests. This strategy is seen when Balchan and some other ‘Asur’ people are shot dead in an encounter and this incident is covered by media as a minor story describing, “six Naxalites being shot dead in a police encounter at Patharpaat” (132). Ramanika Gupta also raises her voice against this hegemonic interpretation about Adivasi communities in her book *Adivasi Lekhan: Ek Ubharati Chetna*. She critiques such types of fabricated narratives which marginalise their identity and emphasises the need to rewrite their stories. She says, “By exposing your conspiracy and the distorted image you have created of us in myths, symbols, and literature, we will prove that we were protectors, not demons and generous beings, not monsters.” (Gupta 17; Our trans.) In contrast to traditional depictions, the novel seems to reinterpret these stories, and challenges the negative image of ‘Asur’ in order to understand their struggles. This retelling portrays the ‘Asur’ in a new light, not as villains, but as the people standing up against the unfair systems. Rumjhum raises his voice to protect the fundamental rights of being a citizen of India when the forest department serves a notice to 37 villages to vacate, including 22 Asur villages. He expresses his pain by asking,

“They’ll kill human beings to save the wolf?”

“Is it a real project or a plan to kill us?”

“Is there no end to our troubles?” (117)

It uses the ‘Asur’ identity to represent people who are oppressed and resisting global capitalism and neo-colonial exploitation. In the novel, Lalchand Da found out that his uncle had been killed one morning. The murder was not random, it happened because Bauxite miners wanted to take over his land for mining. His uncle had tried to stop them and protect his ancestral land, but the miners, driven by greed, ultimately murdered him. “It was not only this murder; this was not the first nor would it be the last assault on an Asur. It was not even the first killing for land. It was simply the latest happening in the overt, and often covert, strife that had been going on for thousands of years. The severed head baffled my perception of time and space” (43). This shows how hard life is for the ‘Asur’ people who fight to keep their land and rights for life. The novel presents them in a ‘New’ manner, not as villains but as people who are fighting for justice.

Such types of incidents challenge the old myths that make their identity evil. This fresh view makes us think about existing systems of power and how they still harm and oppress people. This perspective reflects the struggles of 'Asur' symbolising resistance, questioning the power structures that keep them oppressed. Through this reinterpretation, the novel reclaims the identity of 'Asur'. By telling the real story of the 'Asur' the novel offers a 'New' way to understand the narrative. Through the emotional letter, written by Rumjhum to the Prime Minister, asking for help to save the 'Asur' people from the process of being extinct, one can understand how dominant narratives construct the 'Asur' as criminals or outsiders. The helplessness is clearly seen when he says, "Sir, maybe you know that there are hardly eight to nine thousand Asurs left alive now. We are scared. We don't want to become extinct. The wolf sanctuary will save the rare wolves, sir, but it will wipe out our race. Truly speaking, we don't want to be faceless beings, sir. Rescue us, sir. You are our last ray of hope" (126). He describes how their forests have been taken away, their traditions lost, and their skill of making steel wiped out by the top player of the Global Village that is Vedang, a mining company. And when they try to protect their homes, forests, and way of life from big companies, they are wrongly called Naxalites or criminals. This is not just unfair; it is a new kind of colonialism. Powerful people keep taking their land in the name of progress without thinking about their struggles, pain, or basic rights.

It shows how the 'Asur' tribe is pushed to the edges of society and faces problems like losing their land, traditions, and culture because of modern economic policies that favour big companies against local communities. To solve this issue, we must see the 'Asur' and other tribal communities as protectors of nature, not as barriers to development. They have lived in harmony with forests, rivers, and land for generations but modern policies and big companies often ignore their rights, forcing them to leave their homes. The first step is to respect their choices. No big project should start without their permission. If they have to move, they should be given proper homes, jobs, and opportunities in industries on their land. Letting them take care of forests will help stop illegal deforestation and protect nature. If they have enough land and water for farming, they won't need to leave for work. Farming is more than a job for them. It's their way of life and a deep connection to their land. Instead of pushing them aside, society should recognize their role in protecting their identity, culture and also environment. Fair laws and policies should respect their rights and allow them to live with dignity while preserving their traditions for future generations.

Conclusion

The 'Asur' community has long been misrepresented in ancient narratives where they are wrongly linked to evils and demons. Colonial narratives further marginalized them by labelling them primitive and ignoring their rich heritage. Their history of resistance against oppression has been neglected by making them vulnerable instead of resilient. These false portrayals have led to discrimination and exclusion. The influence of these portrayals extends beyond mythology. It shaped people's understanding in a way that reinforce the historical and cultural marginalization of the 'Asur' community. Rather than acknowledging their rich heritage, traditional knowledge, and valuable contributions, such narratives contribute to their continued exclusion from mainstream society. As a result, the 'Asur' people faced ongoing systemic discrimination and the gradual loss of their identity. To ensure justice, their contributions, traditional knowledge, and identity must be recognized in education, media, and history. Reinterpreting their story with honesty and respect will help restore their dignity and rightful place in society.

Thus, by reinterpreting the narrative about the 'Asur' community, the *Lords of the*

Global Village portrays the ‘Asur’ from a symbol of disorder to a symbol of victim who needs justice. This new way of telling the story changes how the ‘Asur’ has been perceived so far. This new perspective also shows how retelling of the story can challenge the existing discourse and helps one to understand the connection between traditional perception and reality in the contemporary society. It makes one aware about how powerful people influence the social values and belief system through stories. It ultimately questions systems of power that have kept the indigenous communities marginalized. It also highlights modern issues like the rights of indigenous people, protecting the culture and heritage, and the harmful effects of global capitalism on common people. This helps in promoting fairness and a more inclusive view of history and culture.

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Meaninglessness and Futility of Human Existence in Mahesh Dattani's *Brief Candle* and Satish Alekar's *The Grand Exit*

Md. Saquib Abrar

Assistant Professor

Department of English,

Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, U.P.

Asma Rafiq

Department of English,

Aligarh Muslim University

Aligarh, U.P.

Abstract

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Corresponding author:

saquibamu05@gmail.com

The World Wars brought a mass destruction in Western world and people started doubting the omnipotence, omnipresent and omniscient belief of supreme power. It is during this period that a sense of isolation, alienation, anguish, despair and lost identity assume a renewed significance and urgency as never before. This led to the birth of a doctrine called existentialism expanding the idea of the birth of absurdity in Western theatre. Against this backdrop, Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Harold Pinter, Edward Albee and other Western dramatists experimented towards theatrical writings. Though this theatre developed and flourished in the West, it also impacted the Eastern world. And writers like Mahesh Dattani, Badal Sircar, Mahesh Elkunchwar, Mohan Rakesh, Satish Alekar and others produced dramatic writings in the same fashion with their own uniqueness. This article is an attempt to explore the meaninglessness and futility of human existence in Dattani's *Brief Candle* and Alekar's *The Grand Exit* in general and the idea of death in particular through their distinct structure and style.

Introduction

Out, out, brief candle!
Life is but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (Shakespeare. *Macbeth* 120)

The above quote from William Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* aptly sets the tone of Mahesh Dattani's *Brief Candle* and Satish Alekar's *The Grand Exit*. Both these plays highlight meaninglessness and futility of human existence in the contemporary world in a very striking manner. Dattani's play *Brief Candle* (2009) revolves around cancer patients who are fighting death in a hospital. The play was performed for the first time at Mumbai by the Prime Time Theatre Company in 2010. Primarily concerned with the theme of death, the play is a 'dark comedy about love, life and death' based on the inmates of Jeevan Jyoti hospital. The inmates are rehearsing a play—written by another patient who died of an AIDS-related illness—for the hospital's founder's day. In due course, as with most creative work, the experience acquires a self-exploratory dimension and the inmates start identifying themselves with the characters they are portraying. (*Hindustan Times* 23 Oct. 2009).

The same issue of death has been dealt by Alekar in his play *The Grand Exit* from completely different perspective. Originally written in Marathi as *Mahanirvan*, the play was translated into English as *The Dread Departure* by Gauri Deshpande. Recently, Shanta Gokhale (a Marathi theatre critic) has translated it into English as *The Grand Exit*. The play was first staged in its full form in 1974. Earlier, Alekar had written a shorter version of it, at the request of Ram Patwardhan, editor of Diwali Special issue of the weekly magazine *Mouj*. Since the play could not be accommodated in the issue because of its length, it came back to Alekar. In 1974, the Theatre Academy wanted the playwright to write another play. Since he had *Mahanirvan* with him, he began revising it and found it turning into a larger play with two Acts. The story revolves Bhaurao, a simple middle aged man who is dead. His son (Nana) is out of station. The audience expects a grief stricken wife, a young son and some rituals on the tenth and thirteenth day and then regular life continues. But this does not happen in the play. Alekar has shown the unusual kind of reactions expressed by his wife, his son and other members of the family giving the narrative an absurd touch. Thus, the playwright has viewed death from an altogether different perspective and his awareness of death is presented in the events that unfold.

The Existential Attitude of Modern Life

With the help of various incidents revolving around death, Dattani and Alekar have tried to probe into the concerns of people, highlighting the feeling of anxiousness and uncertainty, i.e. the existential attitude of modern life among the individuals in the contemporary world. It must be noted that the disillusionment was the result of the socio political scenario of 1950s and 1960s that created a feeling of anxiety and unrest among the masses. During the post-War period, life in the Western hemisphere was traumatised, and so people took refuge in existentialism, that eventually led to the emergence of a wholesome philosophy. It prompted the writers to produce literature that reflected the central idea that we are living in a world that is disjointed, out of sync and that is why we are cut off from our roots. This gave rise to the disillusionment of human being. Against this backdrop, writers and philosophers like Albert Camus, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Paul Sartre and many more tried to present existential traits in their works. The primary aim was to define the central idea that life has lost its meaning. Thus, the feeling that life has lost its meaning has a long history, although it was not expressed in this same manner until the rise of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Theatre of the Absurd

The Theatre of the Absurd reflects the writings of an age of bleak despair, of extreme human suffering, of torture and destruction. It is believed that this unorganised movement having neither a banner nor a manifesto is the outcome of the doubts and fears of the World War II. The literature written during this period is an attempt to understand the age into which it was written. Writers like Jean Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) articulated the existentialist philosophy that is closely linked to the theatre of the Absurd. Sartre encompasses the dilemmas and aspirations of the individual in contemporary society in this essay. Moving further, in 1961, with the publication of *The Theatre of the Absurd* by Martin Esslin, this concept was codified and it gave parameters to judge this newly developed classification known as Theatre of the Absurd. He is known for coining this term in his book with the same title. Though theatre of the Absurd is a purely Western dramatic form, Indian dramatist tried to present the basic tenets of absurdity and human predicament in their plays. These issues find a living and vivid picture in the plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar, Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar and above all Satish Alekar. These writers in one way or the other tried to depict the dilemma of contemporary man surrounded in a hostile environment. These ideas have been reflected by Dattani in his *Brief Candle*. Thus, the play critiques existential void in different form and latitude.

Dattani's *Brief Candle* and Alekar's *The Grand Exit*

The opening scene of *Brief Candle* shows the face of Cancer, which symbolizes death. There are six characters in the play and it is Vikas, around whom the entire play moves. The characters are hospitalized as well as marginalized because they are victims of Cancer. As the play progresses, it is observed that these cancer patients try to hide their impairment and decide to move on with their disability. For instance, Amarinder says that "I wanted to live! With everything I had!" (23). This love for life is also evident in Alekar's *The Grand Exit* where Bhaurao is dead but continuously intervenes in life affairs of his family members. In the beginning, a dead man uses the form of the 'keertan' and begins a humorous narration. The protagonist is not keertan performer, but the instrument that accompanies keertans is on the stage from the start. Interestingly, Bhaurao informs his wife that he is dead in the play they are performing. When he spoke to Ramaa, he would become Bhaurao. Then become himself again while he listened to what the other actor was saying. This might sound complicated, but Bhaurao managed it with great ease through Alekar's creativity. Bhaurao is dead but takes the play forward. He says:

There's the bell, folks.
So take your seats.
We continue to tell, folks,
Of a man's demise. (47)

Towards the end, Bhaurao makes his last wish that evokes laughter. He wanted his son to return home before the municipal corporation turns off the water supply which is quite absurd. Also, the play ends with a happy note as the dead husband, Bhaurao and his wife Ramaa meet each other as new lovers. This happy ending reminds the readers of Esslin who opines that absurdist writers believe that life is absurd and that even death and after life is equally absurd. Importantly, man must accept the challenge. Though man's life and actions are pointless in this meaningless world, man must bear the absurdity with dignity. Once we accept the reality of our existence, this will give a sense of freedom and relief. And this is the reason, why in the last resort, the Theatre of the Absurd does not provoke tears of despair but the laughter of liberation. Thus, the will to live and love for life among the characters is present in both the plays. It has been witnessed that in the midst of tragedy, the playwright has tried to bring out some positive hope by creating excessive comic situations in the narrative. Here, it is important to mention that the playwright has employed black humour to deal with the grave issue of death. Dattani admits that this new play is "a dark comedy, set in times of global recession. It explores human avarice and hypocrisy and to what extent people may go to lead a lifestyle they can no longer afford" (Mukherjee 30). Amol (cancer patient who is financially weak) remarks about laughter being a means of escape: "Each one of us laughing and fighting when together but holding back some little secret... some fear, laughing louder so our secret will go unnoticed" (26). Alekar's play as well has black humour embedded in the text. Regarding this Alekar admits in an interview given to Shanta Gokhale: "People say the play is a black comedy. When I was writing it, I certainly wasn't saying to myself that I am writing a black or a white comedy" (92). However, after reading the narrative, it is observed that the black comedy results into distancing effect. Thus, it is evident that Brecht's influence on Alekar is present in the story. The alienation or distancing effect is a technique used in the theatre in order to keep the audiences from losing themselves into the narrative. Its main aim is to have a conscious critical response from the audience. It must be noted that it is Marx's concept of alienation that has influenced Brecht. Though Marx used the concept in the political overtone, Brecht used it in socio-political context, for social and political purpose. Like Brecht, in *The Grand Exit*, Alekar has given it a socio-cultural scenario.

Representation of Middle Class

The representation of middle class is the prime concern of both these playwrights.

Modern contemporary Indian dramatists were concerned in the depiction of middle class and lower strata of society. For instance, *Silence! The Court is in Session* very well presents the hypocrisy of middle class dwellers. With the help of characters and plot, Tendulkar exposes the real face of these people. Sircar's *Bhoma* is also about the pathetic condition of an average Indian peasant because of government's indifference. They are socially and economically exploited. His plays are set in contemporary India and mostly deal with the middle classes of Indian society. As far as Alekar is concerned, the mention of 'chawl' in *Mahanirvan* is important as most of the members are clerks and belong to the lower strata of society. An instance from the text (*The Grand Exit*) could be Nana who is out to play a game of 'aatyapata' which is an old traditional Marathi game of 'tag'. This also defines the mentality of the middle class where Nana is out to play a game that has no relevance. He is not out to play cricket, or football, or even 'kabaddi' for that matter, it would have acquired some weight. This again highlights the meaninglessness and purposelessness of existence among middle class dwellers. Dattani's plays project the harsh reality of urban middle-class families. In his plays, the characters are social victims and in constant search for identity and acceptance in society. He admits: "I am practising theatre in an extremely imperfect world where writing about the middle class is seen as unfashionable" (135). His concern is not related to deal with existential questions that are philosophical or abstract. The difference between Dattani and Alekar is that Alekar is seen criticizing the mentality of the middle class people whereas Dattani's focus is on projecting the real live situations and the vivid experiences related with middle class dwellers. Together, they are interested in reflecting the urban middle-class people who are striving to achieve their ambitions but due to lack of either luck or capacity they could not lead a meaningful life. Thus, this leads to nothingness and absurdity.

Tradition vs. Modernity

The absurd writers follow the symbolist tradition. The play being an absurd narrative is full of symbols of various kinds. The title *The Dread Departure/The Grand Exit* is itself symbolic and can be interpreted in many ways. It can be a departure of a soul from this world to another or departure from tradition to modernity. Different readers interpreted *Mahanirvan* in many ways. Regarding this Kumar Ketkar (journalist) gave a very different opinion. He said that it was the 'great departure' of the twentieth century. G.P. Deshpande aptly remarks: "It is not the mahanirvan, the great departure of just one individual. It is the great departure of an entire lifestyle. *Mahanirvan* performs the act of looking at this lifestyle, at the incompleteness in this lifestyle, at the unfulfilled desires in it, with open eyes...." (Sathe 867). Similarly, Dattani has rightly chosen the title "Brief Candle" that captures an incomplete and unfulfilled love story of Vikas and Deepika, besides the sad state of many cancer patients who are constantly fighting with death to survive. Using various symbols, the playwright has projected the existential dilemma in his play. As the plot moves further, it becomes clear that the freedom to make decisions leads the individuals to a state of absurdity. The individual is constantly in search of his identity. This enforces the idea that man is chained due to his own actions but he continues to hope for some meaning in life and struggles endlessly. At this point man feels alienated and isolated and the pain caused due to this extreme condition is experimental as well as existential. *Brief Candle* exemplifies this conflict among individuals. Moreover, to escape the existential tension, *Brief Candle* showcases a farcical comedy, that the residents are rehearsing to be played in the memory of the dead writer, Vikas. The play is set in Avedna Cancer Research Hospital and contains pathos and anxiety. While the action of inner play takes place in 'Hotel Staylonger' and deals with fun and comic elements. The inner play is written by Vikas and in this play, Deepika, the doctor who was once Vikas's sweetheart, Amar, the prostate cancer patient lamenting over the loss of his maleness, Shanti, the breast cancer patient and Amol who dies before the play, are all defined by their singular cases of

illness. The tension in the lives of the characters are treated with fun and humour. For example, when Amar is presented to be a desperate sex-maniac in Vikas's play, the playwright probably intends to relieve the immediacy of longing that has come to be somehow associated to Amar due to his illness. His character in Vikas's play seeks the help of receptionist Deepika to get into Shanti's room, he tells Deepika, "And once I am in her room, could you have some wine sent to the room, but don't take too long. But not if the 'Do Not Disturb' sign is turned on" (9). He is confident of his skill in satisfying a woman which speaks largely of his fear and insecurities after being afflicted with prostate cancer. Thus, the comic and serious thus intertwine dissolving the boundaries that separate them. Even a joke could result in a long philosophical soliloquy about the meaning of life and death.

Obviously Dattani has used the narrative technique of 'play within a play'. It is the only play in which he has used this technique – one minor plot (play) takes place during the course of the main play. The thematic concerns of both these plays are same and in this way they are interlinked to each other. It was Thomas Kyd, an Elizabethan playwright, who introduced and practiced this technique of 'play within a play' in his seminal play *The Spanish Tragedy* (1579). Subsequently, William Shakespeare used this technique in his several works like *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Taming of Shrew* and so on. Perhaps Dattani borrowed this idea of using the technique of 'play within a play' "Hotel Staylonger" from Elizabethan playwright for his play *Brief Candle*. This technique helps to lighten the tragic atmosphere of the hospital just as Shakespeare used this technique for comic relief containing fools, humour and sexually explicit dialogues.

However, in Indian literature, it was Bhavabhuti, (a classical Sanskrit dramatist) who had initially employed this device in his celebrated work *Uttar-Ramcharit*. Contemporary Indian dramatists like Tendulkar, Karnad and Alekar have also used this literary device in their works. Tendulkar's play *Silence! The Court is in Session*, Karnad's *Naga Mandala* and Alekar's *The Grand Exit* are best examples in this regard. There are numerous instances where Alekar has applied this technique in the play. An instance could be when the Neighbours were waiting for Nana and started playing the game to pass the time:

Neighbour: Then how about playing 'Last letter starts the ...'?

Nana: No.

Neighbour: Why not?

Nana: We played that in the first act.

Neighbour: How would you know? You enter the play after that!

Nana: I was watching off stage (71)

However, both the playwrights have followed the technique of 'play within a play' and have presented the thematic concern through slapstick roles performed by the characters.

Predicament of Women

Another remarkable aspect of Dattani's plays is the issue of gender discrimination and violation of the rights of women. For example, in *Tara*, Bharati's decision to give Chandan "the third leg" cripples Tara forever. Without consulting her husband, Bharati and her father in law decided Tara's fate. This highlights the fact that women in middle class families are treated as secondary beings and inferior. In *Brief Candle*, the characters of Deepika and Shanti are representative of this very fact. The plot introduces that Vikas and Deepika are involved in each other. Shockingly, as the plot moves further, it has been witnessed that Vikas is not only in relation with Deepika but has multiple illicit affairs. It is because of his relation with various women that he suffers from AIDS. The conversation below between Mahesh and Vikas defines the reality:

Vikas: You are a bachelor, right?

Mahesh: Yes.

Vikas: So am I. But you don't go around screwing like I did. You just sit in a corner. Like Little Jack Horny.

Mahesh: Yes! That's why I don't have AIDS! (18)

Pathetically, Deepika is familiar with all the wrongs of her husband but she is helpless and not in a position to stop Vikas from having affairs with other women. Surprisingly, after Vikas's death, Deepika misses him. She remarks: "I can live through his absence like I can live through the absence of any of the ones who don't make it" (27). The story of Deepika and Vikas reveals contemporary social reality that Indian society is gender biased. It privileges the male. Deepika in the play is expected to remain loyal to Vikas throughout. Towards the end of the play, despite Vikas's death, Deepika and Vikas reunite in spirit. The other female character, Shanti is not treated as a complete woman because her body is disfigured due to cancer. Dattani has highlighted two-facedness set by the contemporary world for women in society. Through his plays, Dattani dissects that power dynamics within a family are so structured that women face patriarchal oppression, subjugation and control within the framework of the family. This marginalization of women is also present in *The Grand Exit*. In the play *The Grand Exit*, Ramaa symbolizes a woman's predicament in a traditional joint family set-up, who is expected to maintain the dignity and honour of the family sacrificing her own happiness. She is the part of family but has no freedom to exercise her powers, just like a sparrow trapped in a cage. This reminds us of Louis Althusser who asserts that "Family is an ideological apparatus" which bind the woman to domesticity. In the play, the reader comes across the fact that till the husband is alive, Ramaa was not targeted by the other men of the society. But soon after Bhaurao's passes away, she becomes the object of attraction for the males. The neighbours were looking for an opportunity to enter into her house and express their sensual desire for her. One of the neighbours spoke in the following words:

Wake up! Wake up Ramaa! Wake up!
We're upright folk and neighbourly,
Who'll be eating their bread with honey . . .
Now better take care and close your door.
Close your door but let in the neighbour... (27)

These lines reflect the corrupt psyche of the male members of the society, who are looking for Ramaa to treat her solely as an object of sexual gratification. This proves that women are considered as a commodity or an object without regarding to their personality or dignity leading to suffer identity crisis, frustration and disillusionment causing their meaningless existence. The plot is designed in such a way that it shows the hollowness and meaninglessness of life and its activities. The communication that takes place between the characters reflects the vacuum and void in their life. The futility of human existence is further highlighted by the language used by the playwright.

Language as a Reflection of the Futility of Human Existence

In *The Grand Exit*, the playwright has projected the futility of human relationships through language that is often full of pauses and clichés. The deliberate elliptic dialogues present the disjointed and meaningless activities of the pseudo-modern man being tangled in materialistic competition and gains. It seems language is simply a means of "conventionalized," "stereotyped" and "meaningless" banter. These lines by Bhaurao exemplifies the fact: He says, "That is why you can still hear my voice. But this voice comes not from my body but from the whole universe of being and not-being" (21). In this regard Sathe writes, "Alekar's language results from a characteristic, careful choice of words that brings out the nuances, a mature intelligence, a philosophical understanding of meaninglessness" (877).

Though Dattani is an Indian playwright of the contemporary era, he has chosen to write in English considering that the translated version does not contain the real essence of the

original text. Dattani himself admits:

Like many urban people in India, you're in this situation where the language you speak at home is not the language of your environment.... And you use English to communicate, so you find that you're more and more comfortable expressing yourself in English (but...) I wanted to do more Indian plays (and that) became a challenge, because there weren't many good translations, but they didn't do anything for me. (Mee 14)

Dattani seems to be honest with his characters' action as well as their speech. *Seven Steps Round the Fire*, for example, is about hijras. The kind of milieu that they come from, they are not seen as English-speaking. Here, the playwright has taken the artistic license. This is seen in *Brief Candle* as well. Phrases like 'I am also somebody', 'anything goes of your father's if I die' are such expressions that are repeatedly used in the narrative which is not standard English. He deliberately desists from maintaining any 'standard' version of English. Most of the middle-class characters in his plays would normally speak in English, sometimes slipping into Gujarati or Hindi phrases and sometimes using syntax in English which is very peculiar to our rhythm in speech. While reading Alekar, we find many subtleties of the Brahmin Marathi used by him. He admits that "I cannot comment usefully on what's called my 'oblique prose style or humour.' You could put it down to Pune culture, where people never say anything straight" (Gokhale92). This is what makes his play quintessentially Alekari or Alekar-esque. Also, the music and songs in both the plays is the central part of the narrative. Alekar has used songs in the narrative to provide comic relief to the audiences. The following dialogue from *The Grand Exit* could explain this aspect:

Mother: I've put the pot upon the fire.

Nana: Where's the rice?

Mother: I'll cook in a trice.

Nana: Where's the rice?

Mother: I'm moulding it so nice. (50)

In Dattani's plays too, there are several instances where the music and songs form the fabric of the plot. For instance, in *Final Solutions*, Daksha/Hardika enjoys songs of Shamshad Begum, Noor Jahan etc. She aspires to become a singer like them but due to the family and societal pressures, her desires remain unfulfilled throughout. In *Brief Candle*, an instance could be the ending of the play where "Vikas starts to sing the song from Pyaasa. Amol, who is with him, starts to hum the song..." (49) Apart from this, there are several instances where Vikas plays the music on his guitar to move the narrative from tragedy to comedy. The conversation between Shanti and Amarinder justifies the argument:

Shanti: That look on your face.... You say you can understand me.... But... I see the same man did when I reached out. A man eaten by fear.

Amarinder: ... That is why I want to do this play. ... Whether I choose not to have the surgery and die. Or live without really living. I thought you would help me make my decision....

Vikas plays music. A waltz.

Fade to: (33)

The next scene begins with rehearsal where Amarinder is dancing. Fantastically, Dattani has used music on many occasions as pauses more than to highlight the dramatic or the emotional content of any scene. He feels when there is a pause, the actor is either listening to a particular piece and something to him/her internally like in *Tara* and in *Bravely Fought the Queen* where listening to the 'thumri' ends her on to this fantasy with Kanhiya, the cook. Thus, where there are pauses in the play, it is the music then that develops into something else.

Conclusion

The above analysis testifies the fact that Dattani and Alekar are among those personalities

who have never accepted the traditional set up. They have always aspired to find and project something which is new and challenging. Through contemporary situations, they have reflected the existential attitude of modern life. None of Dattani's plays are static within its time frame. They move between past and present even between life and death, with the ease with which a character enters and leaves the stage like Alekar. His plays speak across linguistic and cultural divides. Just as Anton Chekhov is a Russian writer, but his works speak universally, so is the case with Alekar and Dattani. Their works are deeply rooted in Indian mythology, traditions, dance and social problems— yet the themes have universal appeal. Dattani has been compared with Henrik Ibsen and Alekar with Samuel Beckett, but the theatre they create exemplifies the fact that they have opted to walk on the road 'less travelled by' and that certainly has made all the difference. Loss of human values which endangers the existence of human being has been projected very artistically and impressively by Alekar and Dattani in *The Grand Exit* and *Brief Candle* respectively. Undoubtedly, in recent years, Indian English drama found a new vigour by Dattani and Alekar.

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ESL/EFL Teaching for Sustainable Community Development

Uday Kumar Mishra

Former Professor and Head

University Department of English

T M Bhagalpur University, Bhagalpur, Bihar

Abstract

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ESL/EFL teaching is not only to develop linguistic skills in the learners but it also adds to the social capacity/capital or economic growth of the society through community development. When it comes to community development it needs something specific to be done with a defined social purpose where the role of English is to bring the peoples of different linguistic communities together to understand each other better and share their cultures using the knowledge of English for their development. Here English is not used to spread its culture encoded but to use it as a tool to intermix socially and culturally for community development. Now, English as a language is a carrier of global culture not British or European culture with an added aim for community development. Earlier, when English was the language of Britain reflecting the British culture or to some extent European culture, its role was to open the non-native countries to modernity through teaching EFL/ESL.

Corresponding author:

udaykmishra58@gmail.com

Introduction

Nowadays, English language teaching plays a vital role in community development by providing individuals with skills for communication, education, and economic opportunities. It empowers individuals to participate more fully in society, access information, and connect with others globally. Community involvement in English education, through partnerships and volunteer efforts, further enhances learning and strengthens the fabric of the community. *In the complex societies of which we are a part, it is possible that English language teaching and learning move beyond the four skills that have long characterized what it is we do in our classrooms* (Salas 2008). Community development is an area which has made a breakthrough in the area of English language teaching with a wider range of social and economic growth of society. It was never imagined in the past that teaching of English can make a tool for socio-economic development of society with language as a vehicle of cultural change or transmission in the wake of globalization and economic reforms. English teaching in the recent past has become a tool in generating employment as the language is widely required in a globalized world which demands people with the proficiency and ability to use English in multifold contexts. The cultural transmission through English language has been recently given a further boost with a mission in the form of projects undertaken by volunteers in different parts of the world. Countries like China and Peru are having such projects for community development along with teaching of English. The international volunteers who join such projects

teach English to local children, young adults and students mostly in villages or suburbs and they also do community development work like health and environmental education, farming activities, light construction work like renovation of school building, classrooms, playground, etc.. Such projects are to develop friendships and interaction with other volunteers coming from different countries and local students, teachers and villagers of different age groups. They also work towards cultural exchange finding opportunities to learn the local culture, history and way of life and in return let the local people know their own culture and history. Local children and students learn English to interact with the foreigners and fulfil their social aims. *More than teaching English, institutions and English language classrooms can strive—both implicitly and explicitly—to mirror the societies to which we aspire* (Salas 2008).

As such, the role of English in cultural transmission is not limited to linguistic dissemination of culture but with an open mission to use English for cultural exchanges among the countries and the peoples all over the world through English as a global language. There was a time when the spread of the British Empire was very much linked to the spread of English. It was to rule and enslave the minds of the ruled by spreading its culture. In India, it was to create “a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect” (Macaulay 1835 as in Bailley 1991: 138). Teaching English and Community Development, as the project is called, has clear mission to use English for a sustainable community development. This is how English has proved to be lingua franca of the world and its importance and application as a global language has been recognised.

Argument

Gone are the days when English has its imperialistic role to serve the purposes of the British Empire to rule and govern. Now English is no more the language of England to serve its petty purposes. English is democratised in its use both linguistically by allowing different varieties to grow and also in its application for social and educational purposes. The terms ‘cultural colonialism’ and ‘linguistic imperialism’ (Phillipson 1992) in relation to the spread of English have started losing their validity in the age of Globalization when English has become ‘a language of opportunity’ (Crystal 1997) and people all over the world have moved forward to accept it for their economic needs. In a globalized world *Modern technology, media and money power has become inseparable from English as an international language* (Krishnaswamy and Burde 1997:11). Since the act of communication facilitates understanding each other, it obviously implies that the compatibility lies in communicating with identical lingual race or the first tongue. But the integrated global economy demands inter-racial or inter-lingual communication where cultural competence in the target language or the language of communication between two communities is very much demanded; and the prospect of growth necessitates the pre-requisites of language integrity. *As employability and economic development are linked with the knowledge of English, no other social or cultural concerns come in way of accepting English as a tool for development* (Mishra 2013).

Language is a social practice and culture is all that we learn through language. Learning English as a second language is not limited only to getting the knowledge of grammar, phonology and lexical rules but learning culture of that linguistic community. In spite of gaining expertise in these fields learners fail to acquire that competence or the acumen which would have granted them the ability to use the language they are learning appropriately in a given social encounter.

Since the past, culture has implied to mean the amalgamation of the essence of social, artistic, and intellectual traditions. There may be cases where ESL/EFL teacher and student differ in their nationality and yet there is cultural homogeneity based on social values that guide them to community development.

Analysis

Languages are cognitive systems but also express ideas and transmit cultural values which include information on the social, cultural and historical contents that language carries. Culture is expressed and transmitted through magazines and newspapers, radio and television programs, movies and the internet. Using media as authentic materials in the classroom can expand learner's perspective and generate interesting discussion about the relationships between language and culture on a larger plane. English language teaching experts need to explore the strategies which sustain the cultural integrity of those who are threatened by the spread of English and soaks in the morbid feeling of cultural deprivations in the teachings. There is a dire necessity among the ELT professionals to fabricate the twines of language and culture like the two eyes, making clear single vision. The convergence of teacher's efforts on imposing or importing the given ELT methodologies must be replaced by their need to contextualize the ELT text according to the local socio-cultural context, thereby aiming at the attempts towards a dynamic teaching perspective that supports the integration of culture in language learning. Language is primarily a product of culture. It develops and grows with all the tenets of cultural traits reflected in the social and cultural life of the people of a particular linguistic community. So, in the learning of a language (SL/FL) the learner knowingly or unknowingly learns the culture encoded in the target language (TL).

An understanding of the language is impossible without constantly relating it to the culture in which it is operative. An utterance in a language is totally incomprehensible unless it is placed into its cultural setting and related to the circumstances in which it occurs. Language is essentially rooted in the reality of the culture, the life and culture of the people. It cannot be explained without a constant reference to these broader contexts of verbal utterances. An utterance becomes intelligible only when placed within the context of a situation. Languages are not only a particular set of speech norms of a particular community but also a part of a larger culture of the community that speaks them. It is used as a way of signaling identity with one cultural group and differences from others.

By recognizing the vital link between English language teaching and community development, educators and community leaders can work together to create a more vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous society. Some of the significant benefits of such a venture can bring a vital change in the society and peoples all over the world will progress as a community sharing similar thoughts and culture. The benefits of English language teaching for community development are economic empowerment, educational development, social inclusion, community engagement, cultural exchange, etc. which can be achieved through community development programmes. English proficiency opens doors to better jobs, increased income, and economic growth for individuals and communities. Access to quality English education allows individuals to pursue higher education, participate in research, and contribute to knowledge creation. Not only that, English proficiency promotes communication and

understanding across cultures, furthering social cohesion and reducing barriers to participation in society. Developed English skills enable community members to access information, participate in civic life, and contribute to local development initiatives. Moreover, English serves as a bridge for cultural exchange, allowing communities to share their traditions and learn from others. However, teaching English as a Second or Foreign language has always been a socio-cultural problem when it comes to interact with the people of different cultures than the British or European culture. In the words of Canagarajah, *Since everything that is taught already comes with values and ideologies that have implications for students' social and ethical lives, teaching is always problematic* (1999, 16).

The community can also play a vital role in English language education through several participating activities like partnerships, volunteerism, community integration, etc. towards a sustainable community development. *The process of community development is social capital/capacity building which leads to social capital which in turn leads to the outcome of community development* (Phillips 2009). Integrating community service into English language education can provide students with real-world applications of their language skills and deepen their understanding of local issues. Also, involving community members as tutors, mentors, and resource providers can enhance learning experiences and create a sense of ownership. Connecting with the community through events, collaborations, and parent involvement can create a more supportive and inclusive learning environment. It is desirable to open various community centres for the purpose of English language learning and linking the people of diverse cultures, ethnic and linguistic groups. Such community centers can make language learning accessible to a wider range of individuals by providing English classes and resources to the people. By engaging volunteers to tutor students, lead conversation groups, or organize cultural events they can enrich the learning experience. Students can work on community-based projects that address local needs, such as creating multilingual informational materials or conducting community needs assessments. Multimedia tools and popular technological aids can help in connecting people and creating awareness for social and economic development through knowledge and proficiency in English.

Conclusion

In the age of globalization English has become the global language or lingua franca of the world. The status of English is that of Global English, a product of economic reforms world wide. With this the role of English has also changed. But the basic function of language to inseminate culture remains the same. A gradual change is characteristic to almost every culture as cultures are subject to change. A culture loses some of its traits and gains new ones. The aspects of culture change or vary across societies. With the passage of time new technologies emerge, new modes of work come up, social thinking undergoes transitions and hence so does culture. Every culture changes with the course of time though the rate of change may vary. Studies have proved the fact that no culture can remain in isolation. There is hardly any social community that is completely isolated from the rest of the world. Every culture hence is influenced by cultures of the surrounding regions. Cultural values are prone to be affected by the values of communities in close vicinity. The cultures which emerge during the same periods of time often show certain similarities. Now we have pan-international culture

which English as the Global English inseminates through its use and learning taught in the form of ESL/ EFL all over the world.

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Cultural Reflection of the Past on Postmodern Indian Social Milieu: A Study of Koral Dasgupta's *Kunti*

R. K. Sharma, Associate Professor, University Dept. of English, Ranchi University, Ranchi

Varsha Singh, Research Scholar/JRF, Ranchi University, Ranchi

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Corresponding author:

harshaasingh0523@gmail.com

Koral Dasgupta's *Kunti* retells the *Mahabharata* in modern consciousness. In writing and recreating the epic, Dasgupta destroyed many myths to develop specific facts and incidents. The novel focuses on the characters' feelings, situations, and settings reconstructed via the current viewpoint. The book is part of the Sati Series, where Dasgupta takes the Panchkanyas and retells the story centred around each kanya. *Kunti* is the second of the five books of the series. The story starts with *Kunti*'s adoption by Kuntibhoja and ends with the birth of Arjuna, the greatest warrior of the Bharata clan. The work has all the ingredients of a postmodern novel. This article has restricted itself to the three central relations of *Kunti*, i.e. Sage Durvasa, Lord Surya and Lord Indra, where Sage Durvasa is the personification of knowledge, Lord Surya is the personification of truth, and Lord Indra is the personification of illusion. The personification of these three mighty divine characters into something tangible today makes this novel a postmodern work in the truest sense. In the course of the article, the author will touch upon various postmodern tools and techniques, i.e. intertextuality, metafiction, pastiche, and temporal distortion, to make the reader decipher the underlying meanings of multiple events that occurred throughout the novel and how the novel without completely distorting the historical events makes it very much modern to the 21st-century readers. This paper also aims to establish a relationship between knowledge, truth and illusion with humankind today to showcase how the system operates in the current scenario.

Introduction

Myths have been the subject of much research. The two great epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* have been the epitome of Indian life, society, and culture and have the fundamental elements of myth. Modern narratives demystify the past by removing all the fantastical elements from the epics, breaking their divine character, and giving them all human emotions. Unlike other forms of discourse, modern narratives are distinguished by their ability to transcend social and cultural differences. They tell stories that different people with different backgrounds may understand.

The *Mahabharata* has several stories that have been used to explain myths. Roland Barthes in *Mythologies* remarks, "Myth has the task of giving historical intention a natural justification and making contingency appear eternal" (142). *The Mahabharata* is not only considered a poem or story but also a wealth or treasure. As A. K. Ramanujan asserts, "No one ever reads the *Mahabharata* for the first time for the reader doesn't usually read it in Sanskrit but for its oral tradition" (161). According to the French dramatist Jean Claude Carriere, *The Mahabharata* is an immense poem which flows with the majesty of a great river and carries an inexhaustible richness. It defies all structural, thematic, historical or psychological analysis.

Throughout the book, we find layers of ramifications, sometimes contradictory, and these follow up one after the other – all of them being interwoven without losing the central theme. This very fluid nature of the book has resulted in thousands of retellings and millions of discourses. *The Mahabharata* itself was a *dharamyudh*.

Dasgupta's *Kunti* is a retelling of the *Mahabharata* in modern consciousness. In writing and recreating the epic, Dasgupta destroyed many myths to develop specific facts and incidents. The novel focuses on the characters' feelings, situations, and settings, reconstructed via the current viewpoint. The book is part of the *Sati Series*, where Dasgupta takes the panchkanyas and retells the story centred around each kanya. *Kunti* is the second of the five books of the series. The story starts with Kunti's adoption by Kuntibhoja and ends with the birth of Arjuna, the greatest warrior of the Bharata clan. The work has all the ingredients of a postmodern novel. Before delving deep into the specifications of the novel, let's first look at some of the significant characteristics of postmodernism and associated terms.

Dr. Mary Klages mentions that postmodernism, like modernism, follows most of these same ideas, rejecting boundaries between high and low forms of art, rejecting rigid genre distinctions, emphasising pastiche, parody, bricolage, irony, and playfulness. Postmodern art (and thought) favours reflexivity and self-consciousness, fragmentation and discontinuity (especially in narrative structures), ambiguity, simultaneity, and an emphasis on the de-structured, de-centred, dehumanised subject.

Any postmodern art always maintains a delicate balance between appropriation and the room for individual agency, making the work charming and differentiating it from others. The blending of theory and experience is typical of any post-modernist work and resists any homogeneous fixity. The other prominent features are – circular narration, self-reflexive narrator and dismantling of coherence.

The appropriation of the text from scriptures also conforms to the tendency of postmodernist writers to rely on intertextuality. Postmodernism always acknowledges previous literary works; intertextuality is how this dependence is projected. This intertextuality also comments on the living and working conditions of 21st-century society, creating an inclusive literature with the components of previous and contemporary literature.

Patricia Waugh, in *Metafiction*, remarks, “Metafiction is a term given to fictional writing that consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact to question the relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their construction methods, such writings examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction and explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text” (2).

Some of the most popular Indian English novels of the time fall into the “Historiographic metafiction” classification, the word coined by the theoretician Linda Hutcheon.

Hutcheon in *Poetics of Modernism* states that “historiographic metafiction disproves the methods of distinguishing between fiction and historical facts, which are natural or fall under the umbrella of common sense. This counters the idea that only history has a claim to reality, both by challenging the basis of that argument in historiography and stating that history and fiction are only human constructs that exist in structures and discourses” (93). Historiographic metafiction often poses concerns about positivist and fictional realist historiographic writing and makes concerted attempts to simplify and even problematise the recording process.

Patricia Waugh, in *Metafiction*, states that “Metafiction often uses experimental and unconventional techniques by rejecting traditional plots, subverting conventions to turn fact into a highly suspicious idea by exaggerating and revealing the foundations of their instability and by showing reflexivity that helps the reader to know the processes by whom he reads the world as texts” (5). Postmodernist metafictions have the characteristics of paradox, selfreflexivity, open-endedness, intertextuality, provisionality, subjectivity, discontinuity, indeterminacy, and irony.

The writer uses the technique of *pastiche* – a literary technique adopted by many postmodern authors, which involves combining, interposing or pasting elements of previous genres and styles of literature to create a new narrative voice or to comment upon the style of contemporary writers.

The Indian novelist today has consciously used myth to enhance the effect of a contemporary situation, a technique which he has emulated from the West but very effectively used and naturalised to the Indian soil. The epics provide a common background for a shared human experience, permeating the nation's collective unconscious. The retelling of the same story with improvised additions and deletions offers an air of romance and freshness to it. The author uses the digressive method of storytelling, as used in the great epics, very effectively and consciously uses mythical events and situations to enhance the effect of the contemporary scenario.

In this novel, the narrator has a direct role in the work she narrates. Since the narrator tells her family's story and relates it to historical events and backgrounds, it can be said to be a meta-fictional work. The text opposes objectivity, a practice which had been part of the traditional method of writing. The author has made a precise blend of fact and fiction. So, her work does not distinguish between fantasy and reality, history and legend.

Temporal distortion is a literary technique that uses a nonlinear timeline; the author may jump forward or backwards in time, or cultural and historical references may not fit. The author has used this device as the narrator goes from present to future and present to past via dream sequences and hallucinations. Also, the narrator relates her fascination to Ahalya from Ramayana and how she desperately wants to seek the real story of Ahalya hidden somewhere in the dark corners of the past, as the Brahminical version does not convince her.

Now let's look into three central relations of Kunti, i.e. Sage Durvasa, Lord Surya and Lord Indra, where Sage Durvasa is the personification of knowledge, Lord Surya is the personification of truth, and Lord Indra is the personification of illusion. These three central relations paved the way for the complete course of Mahabharata of Vyasa that we read today to find the answer to our most crucial dilemmas.

Kunti- Sage Durvasa

Kunti is a remarkable character in the Mahabharata. She is primarily known for her motherhood. In Vyasa's *Mahabharata*, the dynamics of Kunti and Sage Durvasa are that of the host and the revered guest whom she has to serve with utmost care, or else his wrath will befall her in the most unpleasant way possible. In her maidenhood, walking on eggshells, she served him with utmost hospitality and care, and her hospitality bore fruits in the form of a boon granted to her by the revered sage. He proclaimed, "Thou shall be able to summon (to thy side) whatever celestials thou likest. And, by their grace, shall thou also obtain children". In Koral Dasgupta's *Kunti*, the dynamics of sage Durvasa and Kunti is that of a guru- shishya- where they discuss astronomy, Vedic astrology, science and mathematics at length. Seeing Kunti's scientific temper and mathematical vigour, engaging in questioning and contradicting her knowledge, and finally being satisfied with her explanation, Durvasa bought the best out of her scholarly temperament. Durvasa was a guru in the true sense to Kunti as he gave direction to her knowledge by piquing her curiosity and vigour for mathematics.

Kunti says, "Before Durvasa, I bared all the source and depth of all the knowledge I had gathered, most of which had not been nurtured and hence were scattered like rugged, amorphous data. Astounded that my interest had led to such an infinite extent of reading and thinking, he helped me declutter my thoughts and channelised them into a youthful flow. It felt as if he had opened a dam to welcome the abundance of a vivacious river bubbling with excitement, towards the edge and leaving freckles on the rocks. As I contemplated, the terrestrial laws started making perfect sense of everything that was scientifically claimed and rejoiced by the learned.

‘Sage, I feel as though I have been promoted from a junior level of consciousness to an advanced one!’

Durvasa smiled blissfully as I urged him to guide me through more complicated calculations that could disrupt my comfort and challenge the patterns I had just learnt.

‘What is it you are searching for, woman? Where are you trying to reach?’ he asked affectionately.

I wish to go back to the past of our civilisation, to include in our future everything that may have been unwillingly left behind.’ I wondered whether the sage had guessed the spark that I had been chasing covertly.

‘No one is more powerful than Time, my child. Not the devas, neither the asuras, or the humans. Unless blessed by Time itself, whoever has attempted to play with it has been mercilessly fooled. Time slips away, rendering such efforts a colossal waste.’

‘I have no intention to confront Time, Rishi.’ I explained as humbly as I could, to not let my confidence be perceived as arrogance. ‘Aren’t there three vessels of time that sail us to the multiple dimensions of an active universe? First is wisdom, second is information and the last is memories. Wisdom is the cosmic science, information is cognitive science and memory is philosophical science. I am pursuing these vessels to document the evolution.’

The above conversation between Kunti and Sage Durvasha was not mentioned in Vyasa’s Mahabharata. The author here has filled a significant gap by providing this conversation. The author has not tried to distort the original version by completely subverting the narrative but instead has inserted meaningful information that readers would relate to across languages and cultures. The author has demystified the revered sage by humanising him as the most outstanding scholar of the Vedic times, and his fiery nature has been juxtaposed with a strict teacher who corrects his students when wrong and praises them when right. Dasgupta corrected the imbalance Vyasa created in the Durvasha personality without distorting the original version. She has kept the characterisation of Durvasha as authentic and original as possible and simultaneously humanised him.

The fiery sage Durvasha, painted by Ved Vyasa, who brought wrath to people by his curses, was humanised in Dasgupta’s *Kunti*. Kunti says, “Strangely, this wasn’t the Durvasha who would make unusual claims at unexpected times, raising a ruckus if his volatile commands were not heeded. I had seated before me, a healer. So healing it is, when a difficult equation is resolved! Watching Durvasha engage with me in an enthusiastic pursuit of discovery, I knew the best service you can offer to a human is intellectual observation. Till the time I focused on serving him food and water dutifully, he enjoyed the favour but wasn’t touched. It was only when intellectual presence was established did he notice my competence and start respecting me. The learned can only be pleased by the resource that merits their attention. Else, the frustration of being in the company of mediocracy inflicts unpredictable behavioural fluctuations. I had stopped feeling scared of Durvasha.”

The boon he proclaimed while taking leave from Kunti i.e. “Thou shall be able to summon (to thy side) whatever celestials thou likest. And, by their grace, shall thou also obtain children”, in Vyasa’s Mahabharata got inverted in Dasgupta’s *Kunti*. The farewell was emotional and sad both ways. It was explained in the text: “Soon it was time for the sage to leave. The farewell was unlike any other guest’s after a visit. It was a very sad parting. One usually meets such a teacher only once in a lifetime. As much as I had entered the inner circle of his consciousness, equally was he overwhelmed by my yearning to explore the hidden world lurking behind the folds of earthly distractions. That morning, when Durvasha was ready to make his departure from the palace, I fell on his feet, seeking his blessings; my voice choked while bidding farewell. He placed his kind palm on my head and looked me in the eye.”

The boon in Dasgupta’s *Kunti* was more of a lesson than a divine boon. Durvasha says, “Before I pass away from your life, royal lady, I will leave with you one last lesson. I have

acquired it with great research and tremendous diligence, after starving in the wild, risking being attacked by the fierce, making peace with the dark, only to come back with a mantra. It allows me to solicit the companionship of the divine instead of waiting for the earth to fill the internal void generated by my isolation with the ignorant.'

I looked at him with great excitement. 'Is that a boon, Rishi?' He laughed out loudly at the innocent question, shaking his head, the ribs of his body rising and falling. 'There is nothing called a boon in this world, Princess. Only knowledge and Karma. Knowledge is power. Karma decides what that knowledge does to you.' He paused and came closer. 'I will present before you a very complicated mathematical equation. You will have to crunch the numbers yourself. There would be more than one way to tame this python of a computation. The beginning will confuse you with its seven thousand heads, each more ferocious than the other. But as you manage to dive into the game, you will unlock your own progress and traverse towards the tail.'

Confused, I questioned: 'How would this mathematics battle my isolation, Rishi?' With his voice reduced to a whisper, eyes bulging from their dark sockets and the face sparkling like a crystal, Durvasha said, 'This mantra will establish your connection with heaven and empower you to call upon the Divine. Destiny will have to step back and watch till you have pronounced your objectives and initiated your options. Your decisions would change Brahma's charts and those that are born from you would change the course of history.'

Thrilled, I sat down with Durvasha once again to take possession of this mantra. He explained a little, as does any great teacher, and refrained from helping me sail through to its solution. So delighted I was to be introduced to the magical knowledge that I failed to receive the parting words of the sage.

'Remember this, you wonderful seeker of wisdom! Great knowledge brings great responsibility. As you increasingly establish your mastery at this equation, it will tempt you to take risks and test its strength. Unless you are careful about wielding your power, it may lead to severe destruction. You should know when to restrict your curiosity. You should know how to declare your wisdom. Never stop being the princess who would put her wealth to good use instead of flaunting her fortune.'

Hence, Dasgupta's work reasonably explained the boon of summoning gods and birthing their children, which seemed unrealistic and unbelievable to contemporary readers. Here, the sage presented Kunti with a mathematical equation that would unravel the cosmic world to her upon being solved. But there is always a catch with such mathematical equations and scientific experiments. They can go both ways, and once out there, it is almost impossible to reverse the findings, and that is what happened with Kunti when, in haste, she tried just to get done with the equation, she came out with a different finding which led her to the doors of Lord Surya, the truth while what she was seeking for her whole life was Indra, i.e. illusion. That's the power of knowledge; it will take one to the most uncomfortable journeys on truth no matter how one wants to return to the safe heavens of the illusion, where everything seems perfect, though transient, but perfect.

This takes us to Kunti's other relation, i.e. Surya the truth.

Kunti- Lord Surya

In Vyasa's *Mahabharata*, the curious Kunti summoned the god Arka (Sun), who appeared before her immediately. Kunti tried her best to convince the Sun god that she had only tested the potency of the mantra, but the Sun god did not agree to return without granting her a child. From this union was born a son known worldwide as Karna, laced with natural armour and earrings. Fearful of her social standing, Kunti disposed of the child by floating him in the river Ganga and kept her chastity intact to the world. The interaction between Kunti and Surya is very mechanical and mystic. She was scared of Surya's divine punishment and gave in when Surya became angry. Kunti invited Surya on earth out of childlike curiosity without considering

its repercussions if the boon worked.

In Dasgupta's book, Kunti was transported to the divine world of Surya when she committed a mistake while solving the equation in haste. She tried to reason with Surya but to no avail, as he could not undo her mistake. Her knowledge took her there. Surya said, "You have entered this space because you were meant to. You chose my palace long before you understood the meaning of making a choice. Your love for knowledge affiliates your being as one of the elite stakeholders within my federation. You are married to my ideals by virtue of your intelligence."

He further says, 'You have been a seeker of truth. I am that truth, presenting before you the world in its untarnished worth. And yet, while your intelligence appreciates accuracy, you have given yourself to the love for the illusion. Indra is a magnificent illusion. If this isn't a contradiction, what else is?'

Surya will be Kunti's constant companion until she deserts knowledge. Once she leaves her quest for knowledge, Surya will leave her. To seal the result that she deciphered out of the equation, she has no other chance but to be united with Surya. This union will bear Karna, Arjuna's sworn enemy. This episode of Kunti and Surya union is a union between knowledge and truth. Knowledge guided her towards truth, and unknowingly, she entered the abyss of truth; no matter how hard she tried, she could not forego that truth as she was constantly seeking knowledge, and knowledge and truth go hand in hand. To desert truth, one has to desert knowledge. Out of their union was born Karna, a truth she tried to hide all her life, but in the end, it came out in the ugliest form possible.

This leads us to the third and the last relation of Kunti, i.e. Indra, the illusion.

Kunti- Lord Indra

In Vyasa's *Mahabharata*, Pandu asked Kunti to call Indra using Durvasa's mantra and have a child with him. But in Dasgupta *Kunti*, the reader sees an inverted characterisation of Kunti, which Dasgupta developed to its core. Kunti was in love with Indra. The story of Ahalya nudged her towards the aura of Indra. Indra smote her to her core, and this love grew more with each passing day and found its fulfilment in the ultimate union of Kunti and Indra; the fruit bore out of this union was Arjuna, the greatest warrior of the Bharata clan. Whatever Kunti did since the beginning of her time was, in one way or another, a way to unite with Indra. In this book, Dasgupta personifies Indra as an illusion, and Kunti keeps running behind this illusion until she gets hold of it, though it is short-lived. Even after attaining knowledge by, Durvasa and coming face to face with truth, i.e. Surya, she still cannot let go of illusion, i.e. Indra, as Surya told her, 'Because truth and illusion cannot exist together. They are the two opposite sides of the spectrum. When Indra brings rains, Surya must be clouded. When Surya is in power, the clouds retreat.' It was one such time that truth left her conscience; illusion took over.

Before confessing her love for Indra to Pandu and telling him about the mantra that can invoke celestial beings and impregnate her, she kept asking Pandu which celestial being he wanted her to call upon until she heard the name of Indra. After many pleas from Pandu, she confessed her love for Indra. Sensing that her soul wanted to be united with Indra, Pandu asked her to call Indra using the mathematical code.

'No, woman,' he countered. 'I am the god of illusions because I don't really exist the way others do. Not because I am allowed to compromise on truth. I am the impulse of humans – raw and unpretentious. A rugged, unfiltered confession to the self. I am your internal desire. I am what you want me to be. I could be a charmer, a fighter, a loser or a loafer. I am your senses. I govern the indriyas.'

Somewhat shaken by those words, I took a few steps back. 'Aren't you Devraj Indra?' I asked sceptically, wondering what he was hinting at.

'Yes, I am. I have my own identity of having demolished demons and committed great

acts of bravery, though as a king, I have none. Devraj is the combined energy of the devas. I am the representative force of Surya and his son, Dharma; of Vayu and of Ashwin!' 'What does that mean?' I asked, surprised.

'Our union will bring you three children, Kunti. Son of Dharma, Vayu and Indra himself. Madri's twins with Ashwin Kumar will also be borne by you, because I can infuse the serum of Madri and Ashwin but can't place the foetus inside her body.'

The above conversation completely subverts the original epic where Madri, when given the mantra by Kunti, outsmarted her by calling twin gods, which infuriated Kunti, and she refused to give away the mantra next time when requested by Pandu. Here, Kunti bore the five sons of Indra.

When asked why he didn't come to her earlier, he said, 'It isn't, Kunti. You didn't feel me before because you wanted to possess, not experience Indra. I can't be possessed. Just like Ahalya didn't. Because the idea of Indra doesn't exist in reality.' He explained further, confusing me more. 'Each face has a thousand interpretations, all of which are true. When you come to Indra as a lover, you will see me at the pinnacle of my grace and strength. But there could also be someone who believes in the indulgence of materials. Amravati will not look the same for her.'

'Where is the Amravati I heard so much about? Where is Vishwakarma's magnificent creation of Indra's abode? I see no splendour!' My question fetched another divine laughter.

'You wouldn't, because that is not what you desired. In all these years, your perception of beauty has changed. Riches don't allure you any longer, richness does.'

'Who are you, Indra?' I asked, perplexed, unable to fit him within the known realms of my knowledge.

'I am who you want me to be, beautiful woman. I am the conscious. Allied with Vishnu at every stage, because when impulse fails, the inner intelligence takes over. Vishnu is the inner intelligence, the subconscious. Our child will likewise be aligned with the human incarnation of Vishnu, the nara to the narayana, seeking divine guidance from the Supreme Being, whenever trapped in complicated webs of indecision. You will bear Indra's son – a warrior. Your brother, Vasudev, will birth Krishna, Vishnu's avatar of compassion, tenderness and love, and a deft politician with unrivalled proficiency to interpret the rules of the universe. Together, they will be known as the keepers of Dharma on earth, just like Indra and Vishnu maintain the celestial balance in heaven.'

Indra revealed himself to her—the above section employed the temporal distortion technique where Indra reveals the future in front of Kunti. Also, there is a double juxtaposition of Indra and illusion and Indra and the unraveller of the future.

Today's world works on the same knowledge, truth, and illusion dynamics. Illusion is suspended between knowledge and truth. Those having immense knowledge also gravitate towards illusion, fully knowing its shortlivedness and trying to avoid truth, knowing well that it has the final verdict. Also, truth and illusion cannot coexist. One must go out of the picture for the other to come in. Knowledge remains ever-present, guiding people towards their way. It's always mind vs heart. Sometimes, the mind wins, and sometimes, the heart. But to sum up, truth and illusion will be forever there, and our knowledge, guided by either mind or heart, will take us to its destination. This is not to say that one can always go back and forth between truth and illusion with the knowledge one possesses.

Conclusion

This novel, thus, cannot be just said as a work of fiction, and the author, in his work, has attempted to face reality through fictional spectacles. This novel becomes the historiography to revisit the mythical past with scientific temper and fact. It is truly a postmodern work with layered meanings and heterogeneity. Apart from being critically studied as a postmodern work and the dynamics of knowledge truth and illusion, this work can be analysed by considering other literary discourses and themes.

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Diasporic Space as a Sick Garden of Eden: Evolution, Continuation and Culmination, with Special Reference to Indian Diasporic Writings

Gauri Shankar Jha
Former Professor, Head & Dean,
University Department of English
Ranchi university, Ranchi

Abstract

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Corresponding author:

profgsjha06@rediffmail.com

Diasporic spaces have been created voluntarily in its initial phase and it is invariably with an aim not only to strengthen the economic aspect, rather to acquire and realize the unfulfilled and untranslated dreams of the migrated mass: be it the field of education, business or anything which was not available in the motherland. Yet we are unable to accept the fact that man remains the same in all possible stances. So was opined by Horace regarding immigrant section of the society: "Men do not change their souls by merely crossing the sea". (Epistles of Horace, Epistle I, Book XI, 1. 27)

By and by, the dream land started dwindling, and there crept in nostalgia for the lost land of the earlier life, longingness for the missing taste of the root, anxiety to discover the exact pattern of belongingness, apprehensions for the identity, being shaped reshaped in the fresh milieu and, above all, the misgivings for one's home. All these components constitute the writings of Indian diaspora writers (most often, reflected in certain movies, too); these writers include the names of literary icons, such as, Salman Rushdie, V. S. Naipaul, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, Meena Alexander, to name a few. The present paper seeks to establish the fact that the diasporic space, which in its initial phase, resembled the Garden of Eden or a Utopian planet, finally crumbled/ culminated as a corner of multiple anxieties and solicitude, that of disparity and differences, breeding life of uneasy compromises and conflicts.

Introduction

Diaspora, today, has been a negotiable instrument, so there is no question of voluntary or involuntary; needless to term it as being ousted from the homeland or as a case of relocation or dislocation. The primary history confirms the fact that the first movement of the mass of population was under socio- cultural compulsions and abiding temptation of better economy. It is not confined to the Indian population but it happened with the population of almost all countries, within and without the contours of international boundary. In this paper we are confined to Indian diaspora, spread across the world, that is, Mauritius, East Africa, South Africa, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Fiji, Trinidad, Guyana, Jamaica, Surinam, the Middle East, the Western countries, like USA, UK, Canada, Australia, etc. Their first identity was that of labourers of different sorts. Later on, the affluent section of the Indian population preferred to move to the West in pursuit of better education. Obviously, the prominent reason for migration is twofold: one, for economic betterment, another for better education; in simple words, it was a quest for jobs and knowledge. According to one survey (by Narimsinha, et al) during the Bronze Age these population could be located in the Central Asia, in the mid-16th century Indian merchant Diaspora were present in Central Asia and Arabia; in the 17th and 18th century Hindu traders could be located in Moscow and St. Petersburg. After the end of the British

imperialism, the migration of Girmitiya indentured workers happened to the other British colonies under the Indian indenture system to Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Surinam, other parts of Caribbean Fiji, reunion, Seychelles, Malay peninsula (e.g. Malaysia & Singapore), East Africa (e.g. Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania & Uganda) and South Africa. However, it is one segment of evolution of human civilization across the world.

Undoubtedly, Indian migrants spread all over the world as workers in different fields as well as knowledge seekers visiting with an aim to equip themselves with better education. Yet, their settlement and continuity posed intricacies of various configuration. And, here comes the role of Indian diasporic writers to reflect upon their actual beings. The first question is “Who am I?”, followed by another question, “Am I Indian or something else?” In their solitude, this question tortures them. We have the history of migration in the Central Asia and Arabia in the mid-16th whereas Indian diasporic literature has marked its presence in the 19th century.

Arguments

While tracing the genesis of Indian Diasporic writing we find it as old as the tenets of diaspora. The first author where we stumble upon is Dean Mahomed (born in Patna, Bihar, India) who migrated to Ireland and then to England in 1784; and his book **The Travels of Dean Mohomed** (1794). The descendants of Indian indentured labourers (Girmit colonies) opted English as a language of their writing. Indian English writers of the first generation such as Raja Rao was an immigrant much before we achieved our Independence. So is the case of G. V. Desani who was born in Kenya and lived in England, India and USA; Kamala Markandeya lived in Britain after marriage. Such instances can be multiplied with the names like N. C. Chaudhary, Saman Rushdie, V. S. Naipaul, Anita Desai, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Jhumpa Lahiri, etc. Almost all of them dwell on the theme of geographical dislocation which bring about the question of identity, root, home, etc.

Surprisingly, there is no dearth of outburst in Hindi literature also, for instance, Totaram Samdhya's **DhutLenki Rutha** (1994), Brij V. Lal's **Chalo Jahaji**, Raymond Pillai's play '**Adhura Sapna**' (2001) Subramani's novel **DaukaPuraan**, Abhimanyu Anant's **Lal Pasina**' (1977) , Pat Poorvalingam's **Anand** (2004), etc. Perhaps Fiji was the first to reciprocate, as noticed by Totaram Samdhya in delineating the working condition of Fiji, and by Brij V. Lal in explaining the life style of the indentured. All these writings are historical account and social critique.

A major problem is that of apartheid that we find in Ahmed Essop's **The Emperor** (1984) and that of authoritarianism in **Haji and Other Stories** (1978). Ismith Khan, an Indo-Trinidadian writer, in his novel '**Jumbi Bird**' (1961) talks of the abhorrence of culture where as Sammuel Selvan captures the complicity of dialect and language in his novel **A BrighterSun** (1952).

Analysis

Identity crisis tops all other complicacies which troubles this alien population and this is directly related to cultural identity and cultural assimilation. Consequent upon this formulation, the Indian diasporic writing abounds in cultural conflict and the resultant chaos. In the formation of identity, biological or psychological factors are of least importance. What matters most are that of languages, religious practices, human behaviour and the pattern of human relationships, life style and food habit, traditional beliefs and rituals, knowledge and ignorance, practices and perceptions, taboos and prejudices. Evidently, the process of identity formation is a complex process and once an individual acquires his/her identity, even the slightest disturbance or attempt of alteration proves to be fatal or under the threat of peril. It was felt by the Indian community living in exile and they wanted to have an abiding solution, a sound identity not a perturbed one. The question of identity, on the other hand, raises the

question of 'home', 'root' and 'belongingness'. In the 'Forward' of Uma Prmeswaran's **Writing the Diaspora**, Jasbir Jain writes, "Homelands, cultural myths, histories, both personal and national, linguistic echoes, memories and nostalgia are gradually transformed into gentle reminders of the need to belong". (p. vii)

Uma Parmeswaran's work, **Trishanku The Ganga on Assissinbore and Another Way of Looking at our Yesterdays** tries to define the status of belonging but not assimilation. Jasbir Jain is of the view that these writings are 'honest attempt to face the crucial question of identity and raises many issues, such as: "How does one adopt? How does one grow?" Shyam M Asnani in his essay titled, **Identity Crisis in Indian Immigrants: A Study of Three Novels** opines:

"Culturally and even linguistically estranged as the individual feels about himself, the whole question of his social, emotional, ethnic or cultural identity assumes mythic proportion and this becomes an unattainable ideal." (p. 73)

Indian diasporic writers themselves are caught between two cultures, and have to face this strange situation. Jasbir Jain, in her essay, **Geographical Dislocation and Poetics of Exile**, admits:

"Writers who have moved away from one culture to another are caught between two cultures and one very often engaged either in a process of self-discovery through resort to history of memory or in a process of self-preservation through an act of transformation. Expatriate writers have also been engaged in a permanent act of uprootedness and dislocation through travel and travelogues, like Naipaul." (p.101)

Frankly speaking, it is the problem of the writer himself that is reflected in the characters of his writings. The best example of such a writer is the Nobel Laureate V. S. Naipaul. Willie Chandran, the protagonist of 'Half a Life' is haunted by the predicament and paradoxes of one's life during the course of migration, in the process of decolonization. Jasbir Jain is of the view that V. S. Naipaul is a classic example of the permanent nomad whose identity appear to be vested in a condition of homelessness. (115). So is Willie Chandra of **Half a Life**, most probably, an autobiographical novel. Anu Celly in his essay, 'Living with the Trauma of Cultural Displacement in Naipaul's **Half a Life**', admits:

" 'Half a Life' is a narrative of Dislocation and self-recovery that attempts to make explorative excavation in colonial history and addresses the self within each of us and the sense of displacement that we cannot escape in today's world, while presenting a chronicle of individual life, that of Willie Chandran, who bears an uncanny resemblance with the writer—
—spawning the phenomenon of cultural colonization ——with another brilliance
— The story of Chandran's life is irrevocably intertwined with the facts of migration, cultural adjustment and critical appraisal of the relationship between self and society, that is so integral to Naipaul's life." (223)

Willie Chandran has to face the trauma of cultural collusion and self-confrontation which finally lead him to nihilistic forbearance. He is aware of his being as a challenge to social stratification of pre-Independence days, a threat to the dictates of cultural hegemony. He moves with the legacy of colonialism that perpetuates his sense of alienation, coming out of physical isolation of the generation of migrant mass. The root of his parentage irks him and so he wants to reshape his identity as a writer. He has a clear understanding that, as a writer, he would be able to record the contemporary Europe: the racial prejudice, the economic disparity and cultural turbulence, as Hammer records:

"The sad fact about prejudices, between classes, castes or indeed races is that they are an accretion of observation, and cannot be destroyed by simple contradictions— To create classless society you do not deny class differences. You ceaselessly wage class war." (Hammer, 37)

Actually speaking, **Half a Life** inscribes a fragmented self, situated in the troubled history of ethnic hatred and discrimination, exile and dispossession, homelessness and

frustration. Naipaul admits in his speech to the Nobel Committee, the Swedish Committee in Stockholm on 7th Dec. 2001: "Everything of value about me is in my books———I will say, I am the sum of my books."

It is all about 'half made societies and half made nations'. Willie's birth is a typical postcolonial impression of hybridity, temporality and displacement. Willie's departure to England is a search for identity/ self/ solace in the name of Higher education and like Naipaul wanders the street of London as inexperienced and immigrant to settle at freelancing job with BBC. It is a search for self:

"The story changed as Willie grew up. Things were added and by the time Willie left India to go to England this was the story that he had heard." (1)

London was, entirely a new world: unacquainted, illusionary, unprohibited, preventive, provoking, mysterious and yet full of possibilities, Willie feels:

"———he was free to present himself as he wished. He could, as it were, write his own resolutions. The possibilities were dizzying. He could, within reason, remake himself and his past, and his ancestry." (62)

Here, he discovers that he has "to relearn everything that he knew"; it is a sort of borrowed identity. Willie's need of reconstruction of identity, is out of the idea of social and cultural differences, hovering between acceptance and rejection, revealing the possibility of shifting life and multiculturalism. As explained by Bruce King, Naipaul,

"———feels humiliated by the weakness and while praising it and exploitation of colonized; he blames European imperialism for the problems it left its former colonies while praising it for bringing peace and modern thought to areas of the world that remained medieval and debilitated by continual local wars, there is a moral honesty in his work, a refusal to sentimentalize England on the former colonies." (2)

Willie is allowed to suffer and realize the fate of a displaced like Naipaul, his failures and futile endeavours. Interestingly, Naipaul defends his protagonist Willie, his identity and integrity, amidst all the cultural collisions, moral fragmentation, individual anxieties, rational intellectuality and compulsive homelessness, as Willie tells Ana:

"When I asked you in London I was frightened. I had nowhere to go. They were going to through me out of the college at the end of the term and I didn't know what I could do to keep afloat ———— But now the best part of my life has gone, and I have done nothing." (127-28)

Willie is unanchored like Naipaul and voices the sense of loss, inauthenticity, confusion and a sense of rejection, at the same time, it is also an assertion of one's dignity. He is reborn in England as a writer based on the perception of the circumstances; in 'A Way in the World', he admits that he carries the memories of thousand of beings and yet he cannot understand everything very minutely and become stranger to himself. In Naipaul's work the plight of immigrants of imperial colonies and displacement of migrating people recur, as Pranjape points out:

"Since Diaspora writing emanates from identity formation leading to further and more sophisticated articulation of identity, or manifest in community, nationhood, and also larger global context, it is important to remember and perceive Diaspora space as at all times explanatory, fluid and dynamic so that intersections within histories, past and future, do not congeal into rigid boundary laden states." (Pranjape, 2001, 159)

Naipaul is an expatriate: uprooted, fragmented and twisted, and his state of permanent exile finds place in his work as manifestation of 'self', and as Homi Bhabha tells us, 'Hybridization, migration and globalization'. **Half a Life** raises the issue of identity of both the writer and the protagonist. Naipaul figures at various junctures, quoted and misquoted by most of us. He is typical postcolonial voice, talking the marginal and displaced, dealing extensively with shifting identities, roots, homes and changing realities of those displaced. His own identity was under question throughout the globe because of his anxiety for something

that was addressed to all the ‘peripheral people’, who were suppressed both as humanitarian and fascist, cosmopolitan and pessimist.

The Enigma of Arrival and **A Way in the World** carry the same theme of migration of people from India to Caribbean Islands, a story of multilingual and multicultural identity, and of the crisis of belongingness. The question of belongingness is a prime question today that tortures all of us, like O’Neill’s Yank, and so are the characters of Naipaul, living in a fabricated hallucination and an illusionary world, detached from the real world but conscious of it. All the characters, Percy, Cato, Marcus, Roger, Ana, Graca, Sarojini, Julio, Carla, Ricardo, Alvaro and Willie seek to reaffirm themselves, living fragmented life. Socio-cultural disparity underlines the need of disorientation. The loss of identity and need to reconstruct it, recurs in the case of the marginalized, the homeless and the expatriate. Life proceeds without destination, without mission and as Willie tells his sister Sarojini,

“I have been hiding from myself. I have risked nothing. And now the best part of my life is over.” (130)

Out of his early perception of History and sharp imagination he paints a landscape of European colonization and forms his personal ethics. In ‘**A Way in the World**’, he says:

“In my mind’s eye I created an imaginary landscape for the aboriginal people living on what was to become my own ground with ideas I couldn’t enter ideas of time, distance, the past, the natural world, human existence. (213)

Naipaul as Bhabha says, starts from ‘separation from origin and essence’ (120) and his myth is that of a displaced person, one who doesn’t ‘have a side, doesn’t have a country, doesn’t have a community, one (who) is an entirely an individual’ (16)

Another major problem is that of a ‘home’. In **A Bend in the River** Salim never sees his apartment as a ‘home’; in ‘**A House for Mr Biswas**’, Mr. Biswas links the ownership of a house to manhood; in **Half a Life** Willie wanders here and there in search of ‘home’; in ‘The Enigma of Arrival’ the narrator protagonist moves on to determine and seeks shelter in a rented cottage, and likewise. The protagonist of **The Enigma of Arrival** tells much of dispossession and remarks:

“I had come upon them at their peak, that the order created by sixteen gardeners would have been too much, would have made for strain and anxiety — we remade the world for ourselves, every generation does that — but that perfection — that absence of restlessness and creative abrasion, that view of his back windows of a complete, untouched, untroubled world — had turned to morbidity.” (p.195-318)

Naipaul tries to redefine the traditional terms of ‘humanity’ as Elairne Campbell points out:

“Naipaul brings examination and reexamination of today’s facile usage of the terms ‘slave’ and ‘free’ and he refuses to permit persecution to be muffled and washed away — His cause may not be popular, but a gadfly to the third world, Naipaul serves an invaluable function.” (402)

For Naipaul’s Mr. Biswas, ‘house’ is a symbol; it stands for independence and identity, shelter and permanence, togetherness and bliss. Homelessness is a social compulsion, economic manifestation and individual aberration; that is why Garlin comments:

“Empty of religion, which he frequently derides and of true creativity, Biswas is not simply a prisoner of Tulsi’s or any other particular factor in his society. Rather he is the prisoner of his own passage on earth. His story is largely an odyssey of restless questing, where the stifling locals are metaphors or analogous for his social status.” (192)

As in Conard’s **Heart of Darkness**, Naipaul intends to capture the epiphanies of life and analyses the complexities of the experience of a common man, out to defy his limitations and failures. Here, he resembles Marlowe’s ‘Dr. Faustus’. Sense of loss and rejection, darkness and gloom, uncertainty and confusion, dilemma and inauthenticity, chaos and crisis – go into

the making of his characters: ‘unnecessary and unaccommodated’. The opening sentence of ‘A Bend in the River’ is pertinent in this regard: “ The world is what it is, men who are nothing have no place in it.” Trinidad , for Naipaul, represents the same dejected lot, deprived of everything. Even in his non fiction , ‘The Middle Passage’ he is conscious of this fact,

“I know Trinidad to be unimportant, uncreative, cynical —— power was recognized but dignity was allowed to no one —— we lived in a society which denied its heroes —— the threat of failure, the need to escape: this was the prompting society I knew.” (p. 43-45)

In Naipaul’s work the ‘tension between the isolated individual and potentially engulfing, imperfect community’ (Lanran,46) persists. Naipaul feels that the West Indian live in a ‘purely local form’ has been debased, In an interview with ‘The Literary Supplement’ he said that he is ‘to deliver the truth, to deliver a form of reality based on what I have observed, seen, experienced.’ Uma Parmeswaran in her article titled ‘Writing the Diaspora’ says:

“There are four phases of emigrant settlements that are true both at the individual and collective level; the first is nostalgia for the homeland left behind mingled with fear in a strange land. The second is a phase in which one is so busy adjusting to the new environment that there is little creative output. The third phase is when immigrants start taking part in the shaping of diaspora existence by involving themselves in ethno-cultural issues. The fourth is when they have ‘arrived’ and start participating in the larger world of politics and national issues——” (ALTR, Vol.1, No,2, 65-67)

Regarding Naipaul, Bruce King remarks:

“Former colonial, who has become a homeless cosmopolitan” (2). In his **A Flag on the Island** his character Frank says:

“Now as we moved into the harbor, I could feel the jungle press in again. I was jumpy, irritated, unsatisfied and suddenly incomplete. Still, I made an effort.” (124)

Precisely, in almost all works of V. S. Naipaul we can find a distinct flavour of the anxiety of immigrants’ life, for identity, for home, for root, for belongingness, etc. Another diasporic writer of substance who needs to be mentioned in this concern is Jhumpa Lahiri, who came into prominence with her Pulitzer Prize book **Interpreter of Maladies** (1999), followed by books like, **The Namesake** (2003), **Unaccustomed Earth** (2008), **The Lowland** (2013), **Whereabouts: A Novel** (2021), etc. The Pulitzer Prize winner book ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ thrives on the theme of Indians settled abroad, facing the cultural conflict of enormous extent, visible in their approach and attitude, life style and patterns of belief, decency and discipline. The West allures one in quantum of opportunity of employment, mainly. In the process, one has to undergo several tenets of experience, that of alienation, homelessness, unbelongingness and unnecessary subjugation. This world is a complex one, that of Indian immigrants in the United States and, obviously, it is a torn world, straddled between two cultures, peopled with representatives of different quarters. The story titled ‘*Interpreter of Maladies*’ is the story of Das family which is settled abroad and suffer from the sense of exile, alienation, unbelongingness and disillusionment. Mr. and Mrs. Das enjoy the Indian dishes (jhalmuri, pakora, etc.), at the same time they stick to the water bottle, bottled mango juice, sandwich, etc. to avoid infections of any kind. Truly speaking, the Das family, all born in America have India as their homeland, but the element of hesitation and withdrawal is palpable in their conversation and behaviour. It is only with the help of books and guides that they can perceive the essence of their homeland. The extramarital relationship of Mrs. Das with Mr. Kapari, the guide, is for some undefined and unexplained happiness. For Mrs. Sen from the story entitled ‘*Mrs. Sen*’: ‘*Everything is in India*’. She cannot cope with the life style, customs and practices of the strange land. Her Indian traditional way of life is at stake. American culture does not suit her as she fails to compromise; the resultant cultural alienation, finally,

leads him to death. It is a clear evidence of disorientation associated with immigration, struggle for identity and dignity, and, above all, unacceptable cultural ethos traumatized to one's end. In the story, 'When Mrs. Prizada Came to Dine', Lilia, in her heart of hearts, posses India as their 'home' and, yet, she has to reconcile with her present habitant. Similar message comes out of her last story 'The Third and Final Continent' which fails to maintain cultural orientation.

Her debut novel **The Namesake**, also dwells on the theme of lives of immigrants where the family of Ashoke and Ashima come from India to settle in the United States, yet their awareness of the tradition is safe and sound. Their son Gogol (later on, Nikhil) is divided between the demands of the strange land of America and that of India, the land of his parents. So is the case with Sonia. Lahiri's presentation of the details of Indian – American life entails the typical cultural conflict with a strong urge to maintain their cultural identity. Gogol marries an Indian girl and Sonia marries a white man; it is Lahiri's attempt for cultural assimilation; yet the conflict is noticeable at all levels. Ashima dislikes to leave her homeland and yet she adopts the Western culture fully when she is in America. She feels:

"Being a foreigner is a sort of lifelong pregnancy – a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sort. Like pregnancy, being a foreigner, Ashima believed in something that elicits the same curiosity from strangers, the same combination of pity and respect." (50)

It is the allegiance that matters. The children appear to be helpless in maintaining balance between the expectations of their parents and the compulsions of the alien land.

Evidently, the result is the split personality or say divided identity – all these lead to the complicity of alienation. This challenge of exile is a common component of the life of the immigrant mass. In an interview with Arun Aguiar, Jhumpa Lahiri admits:

"I think that for immigrants, the challenge of exile, the loneliness, the constant sense of alienation, and the knowledge of and longing for a lost world, are most explicit and distressing than for their children. On the other hand, the problem for the children of immigrants – those with strong ties to their country of origin – is that they feel neither one thing nor the other. This has been my experience, in any case." ([jhumpainterview.htm](#))

So is the world of her another major work 'Unaccustomed Earth'. The opening story 'Unaccustomed Earth' explores the mental strain of both the first and second generation of immigrants, who are adhered to their roots, their cultural past. In her second story 'Half Heaven', the introduction of Pranab Chakraborty brings tremendous change in the Bengali family. Lahiri exposes the binaries of Indian / Western women and the best instance is that of Ruma in the first story and Usha in the second story. Lahiri's characters fight for their identity, as they feel straddled between two cultures. In an interview with Arun Aguiar, Jhumpa Lahiri admits:

"The question of identity is always a difficult one, but especially so for those who are actually displaced, as immigrants are, or those who grow up in two worlds simultaneously, as in the case for their children. The older I get, the more I am aware that I have somehow inherited a sense of exile from my parents, even though in many ways I am so much more American than they are. In fact, it is still very hard to think of myself as an American." ([jhumpainterview.htm](#))

In the story 'Only Goodness', the issue of maladjustment surfaces and afflicts the children of the family. Both Sudha and Rahul are misled; similar is the fate of other immigrant children. The perception of 'home' is enigmatic as they are physically, culturally and psychologically alienated. In the stories 'Nobody's Business' and a 'A Choice of Accommodation' Lahiri brings together a married couple where both the husband and wife belong to different cultural background and so the predicament of such a marriage or love remains unsuccessful; this is a case of tragic isolation. Lahiri's final answer lies in the epigraph, from a **The Custom House** (Nathaniel Hawthorne):

“Human nature will not flourish, any more than a potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn-out soil. My children have had other birthplaces, and, so far as their fortunes may be within my control, shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth.”

Conclusion

Whatever is explained here, is evident in the second part of the book, titled **Hema and Kausik** which is further divided into three parts: **Once a Lifetime, Years End** and **‘Going Ashore**. Here is a case of meeting in love and subsequent separation, and the reason is nothing but cultural confrontation.

V. Naipaul, Jhumpa Lahiri, and all others hover around the same immigrant perception, that of, nostalgia, home, identity, belongingness and conflict at several levels: cultural, social, psychological and religious. As a consequence, the diasporic space which was supposed to be the Garden of Eden appears to be sick and the dream land shattered.

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The Process of Word Formation in English

Vishnu Charan Mahto
Associate Professor & Former Head
University Department of English
Ranchi University, Ranchi
Professor in-charge
R.L.S.Y. College, Ranchi

Abstract

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Corresponding author:

vishnucmahto@gmail.com

This article examines the process of word formation in English, exploring the various types of word formation processes, morphological processes, and semantic processes that contribute to the growth of the English vocabulary. The article provides an overview of the different mechanisms of word formation, including derivation, compounding, blending, conversion, clipping, acronyms, and onomatopoeia. This article foregrounds the importance of the word as the building block of a language. It then positions that a learner can only start the process by maintaining a language through a proper grasp by its lexical items. An exposure to the processes involved in the formation of words is a right step in language pedagogy. This paper provides a crucial insight into word formation process in the language. It submits that the adequate knowledge of this process will not only assist the learners in their educational engagements, but also aid in enriching their vocabulary and assist them to use words more creatively.

Introduction

The English language is characterized by its vast and dynamic vocabulary, which has evolved over centuries through various processes of word formation. Word formation is a crucial mechanism that allows speakers to create new words and express new ideas, concepts, and objects. This article aims to provide an overview of the different types of word formation processes in English, exploring their characteristics, examples, and implications for language development. English, a Germanic language, has a vast vocabulary that has evolved over centuries. One of the key mechanisms that have contributed to this growth is word formation, which involves creating new words from existing ones. This process is crucial for language development, as it allows speakers to express new ideas, concepts, and objects.

There are several types of word formation processes in English, including:

1. **Derivation:** This involves adding prefixes or suffixes to existing words to create new ones. For example, adding the suffix “-ful” to “hope” creates the word “hopeful”.

2. **Compounding:** This involves combining two or more words to create a new one. For example, combining “book” and “shelf” creates the word “bookshelf”.

3. **Blending:** This involves combining parts of two or more words to create a new one. For example, combining “smoke” and “fog” creates the word “smog”.

4. **Conversion:** This involves changing the part of speech of a word without changing its form. For example, the word “run” can be used as a verb or a noun.

5. **Clipping:** This involves shortening a word to create a new one. For example, shortening “telephone” creates the word “phone”.

6. **Acronyms:** This involves creating a new word from the initial letters of a phrase or name. For example, “NASA” is an acronym for “National Aeronautics and Space

Administration”.

7. **Onomatopoeia:** This involves creating words that imitate the sounds they describe. For example, “buzz” and “meow” are onomatopoeic words.

Word formation in English also involves morphological processes, which include:

1. **Affixation:** This involves adding prefixes or suffixes to existing words to create new ones.

2. **Inflection:** This involves changing the form of a word to indicate grammatical function, such as adding “-s” to a noun to indicate plural.

3. **Derivationalmorphology:** This involves using affixes to create new words with different grammatical functions, such as adding “-ly” to an adjective to create an adverb.

Word formation in English also involves semantic processes, which include:

1. **Metaphor:** This involves creating new words by extending the meaning of existing ones through metaphorical connections.

2. **Metonymy:** This involves creating new words by substituting one word for another that is closely associated with it.

3. **Hyponymy:** This involves creating new words by narrowing the meaning of existing ones.

Main Thrust

In addition to borrowing words from various foreign languages, the English language has all along been adding to its word store by the making of new words out of its own resources. “New words can easily be created in English and are being created almost every day and a large part of the English vocabulary consists of words and terms which the English have formed for themselves out of old and familiar material.” (Sinha 66) Three different methods have been followed in the making of these new words. They are COMPOSITION, DERIVATION and ROOT-CREATION. Composition, as the name implies, means the joining together of two words already existing in the language to form a new one. By Derivation is meant making of new words out of existing ones by the addition of either prefixes or suffixes or by two other processes known as ‘Back formation’ and ‘Shortening’. Root-Creation is the third method of forming new words and it implies the creation of a word, either imitative or some noise or movement or because of some instinctive feeling of express. There are however, a few other, relatively minor processes as well, which have nevertheless contributed to the enrichment of the English word-store in the past, and which are still restored to by English users wishing to express themselves concisely, accurately and creatively.

We can divide these minor processes into two broad types - COINING and MEANING CHANGE. The difference between the two types somewhat like the difference between Derivation and Conversion: In Derivation we add affixes to an existing word to create a new word. Whereas in Conversion we just change the category of the word. Similarly, in COINING new words are invented or existing words are used in a new or unusual way for the first time, while in MEANING CHANGE, we change the use of a word by extending or narrowing its meaning. But both processes result in the creation of new Lexical words. In the COINING PROCESSES we have BACK-FORMATION; REDUPLICATION; BLENDING; CLIPPING and AGRONYM FORMATION

(1) BACK-FORMATION

“Backformations are the method of forming new words by subtracting something from forming old ones. According to Jespersen, they owe their origin to one part of a word being mistaken for some derivative suffix (or, more rarely prefix). The adverbs *sideling*, *groveling*, *darkling* were formed by adding the suffix *-ling* which occurs in many other adverbs,

now mostly obsolete, such as *backling*(backward), *heading*(headfast). But in such sentences as *he walks sidelng*, *he lies grovelng*, *I listen darkling*etc., the suffix *-ling* looked exactly like the ending *-ing* with the happy result that the verbs *to sidle*, *to grovel*, *to darkle* were formed from the adverbs by the subtraction of *-ing*.

But the ending which is often subtracted is *-y*. The noun *greed*, the verbs *laze*, *cose* and *jeopardare* derived respectively from *greedy*, *lazy*, *cosy* and *jeopardy* by the subtraction of *-y*.” (Sinha 73)

(ii) REDUPLICATION

REDUPLICATION means repetition, part or whole of a root to indicate some meaning like plurality, distribution, repetition, increase of size, added intensity, continuance etc. As a process of word-formation it is to be found in various degrees at almost all language. Hindi, for example makes use of it extensively to express intensity, for example – ‘tej-tejchalo’ (walk fast-fast is ‘faster’), ‘dhire-dhire Khao’ (eat slowly slowly i.e. eat a slower pace), ‘chalte-chalte’ (while walking), etc.

(iii) BLENDS

BLENDS are words coined by combining elements from two other words. We have all come across such words in advertisements, since adventurers and copy-writers are rather fond of this device for new brands names and their descriptions. Thus, a new two-wheeler is called Fantabulous which blends elements from the two words fantastic and fabulous. Till the 20th century, however, blends were used mostly for fun as puns or terms of mockery. It was only towards the middle of the 20th century there blends started to be coined consciously to produce serious and permanent additions to the vocabulary. And already English has a large store of them.

These Blends can be classified into three types.

- (a) **Phonaesthetic blends:** flimmer, shumbling, squeete, squiri etc.
- (b) **Compound blends:** acrobatics, brunch, Oxbridge, smog etc.
- (c) **Group forming blends:** Cavalcade, motorcade, execute electrocute etc.

(iv) CLIPPING

CLIPPING refers to the shortening of a long word by dropping some part of it. The dropped part may be the initial part, in which case it is called “fore-clipping” or it may be the last part when it is called “back-clipping”. Sometimes only the middle part of the word is retained. The important thing about clipping is that it does not affect the meaning of the word or the word in any way, the short and long versions of the word mean exactly the same thing. This however, does not mean that we are free to use the clipped word wherever the full word is used; the two kinds of words are mostly used in different styles. The clipped words are mostly used in informal writing, e.g. when writing letters to friends, announcements to an ingroup, etc. They are generally not used in formal writing, e.g. business letters, academic papers, petitions and representations, etc. This restriction to the informal style, however, does not apply to those clippings which have existed for so long that as a word in its own right, no one remembers the original words. As a result, a clipped word has been accepted into the language in its own right, without any feeling that something has been left out. Some examples of clippings are cab (from Cabriolet), fad (from fadaise), miss (from mistress), vamp (from vampire), pants (from pantaloons), and so on. The restriction applies, however, to most of the clippings, such as ‘exam’ for ‘examination’, ‘doc’ for ‘doctor’, ‘ad’ for ‘advertisement’, etc. are confined to informal lingo of usage, and in some cases to a particular group of users - the academic or the medical fraternity. But clippings do not seem to follow any definite rules.

“Very frequently a word formed by shortening develops a meaning of its own, which is not shared by the original word. *Cabriolet* and its shorten form *cab* do not denote the same kind of vehicle at all... *Gent*, the abbreviation of *gentleman* underwent, in course of time the degeneration in meaning, and came to be applied to vain pretenders to gentility.” (**Sinha 74-75**)

Three types of clipping are discussed below:

(a) **Fore-clipping** - In this type, an element from the front part of the word be dropped and the end it retained. Some common examples of this type include - (aero) plane, (cara) van, (earth) quake, (Omni) bus, (tele) phone, (uni) versity/ varsity etc.

(b) **Back-clipping** - This is the more common type of clipping. In this type, the elements dropped are taken from the end the word, e.g. ad Evertisement), bike (bicycle), cable (gram), chimps (anzee) exam (ination) ges (olive), [as (oratory), math (ematics), memo (randum) etc.

(c) **Medial clipping** - In this kind of clipping, only the middle part of the word is retained. It is rather infrequent except with names. The common examples are (in) flu (enza), fridge (from refrigerator). With names it is more common, e.g. Lex (Alexander), etc.

(V) ACRONYMS

The name ‘Acronym’ was originally given to abbreviations formed from the first letters of a series of words (usually the name of an organization or a technical product), e.g. A.I.R. (All India Radio), B.B.C. (British Broad Casting Service), RADAR (Radio Detection and Ranging), NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), etc. The acronym has now come to be confined to such abbreviations -turned- words, while the ‘abbreviations’ themselves are now generally labelled ‘alphabetisms’ or ‘initialisms’ to distinguish them from abbreviations of other kinds.

Conclusion

Word formation is a vital mechanism that contributes to the growth and evolution of the English language. Understanding the various types of word formation processes can provide valuable insights into the structure and development of the language. By examining the different mechanisms of word formation, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the complexity and creativity of the English language. Word formation is a crucial process in the English language, allowing speakers to create new words and express new ideas. Understanding the various types of word formation processes, morphological processes, and semantic processes can provide valuable insights into the structure and evolution of the English language. Word formation has been discussed with consideration for the different procedures involved in the formation of the English words. Essentially, it is shown that the vocabulary of English expands through the different processes examined to justify the creative potentials of the English language. Apart from mastering these words formation with their examples, learners can generate their own examples and use them creatively.

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Pessimistic Reality in the Works of Franz Kafka: A Select Study

Anwesha Karmakar
Assistant Professor
Department of English
Arsha College, Arsha, (W.B.)

Abstract

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Corresponding author:

anweshak@gmail.com

The present research paper entitled “Pessimistic Reality in the Works of Franz Kafka: A Select Study”, attempts to critically examine the expression of dejection, helplessness and fall of expectation in select short stories by Kafka. The vicious representation of various social institutions and the impossibility to escape it becomes the core aspect of Kafka’s writing. The study attempts to portray a brief discussion on absurdity as introduced by Kafka and how his protagonists go through it. Whether they succumb, accept without resistance or come out victorious is the matter of examination here. The paper aims to emphasize Kafka’s intention behind the depiction of such a gloomy and nihilistic approach to life. The study also wants to draw the readers’ attention towards the total absence of freedom and choice in Kafka’s world. It is a true depiction of a Godless universe where humanity, morality and ethics has lost its meaning. The portrayal of such a pessimistic reality and its different aspect is the matter of discussion here.

Introduction

One of the most influential fiction writers of the twentieth century Europe was Franz Kafka whose name alone has become a literary style called Kafkaesque. He wrote about human nightmares, a state of paralysis. Kafka tells stories of failure. He is often called a prophet of doom. He wrote about problems without offering any solutions. But if one reads Kafka thoroughly, they would get to know a different story.

Franz Kafka was born in 1882 in Prague into a German speaking Jewish family. Prague was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire at that time. But towards the end of Kafka’s life the empire collapsed in 1918 and the nation of Czechoslovakia was born. Further it was split into two countries as Czech and Slovakia in 1993. So, he is generally considered as Czech author despite writing in German.

Kafka’s middle-class background allowed him to get a good education and a university law degree. He later worked at an insurance company. He found his job a huge hindrance to his writing as he had to stay at office for long hours. Despite that he managed to write in his free time, mainly in the evening or at night. In fact it was his writing, a moment of freedom, that allowed him to cope with his stressful job and life. He kept a diary throughout this period. He worked for fifteen years and finally retired with a pension at the age of thirty-five. But unfortunately, his health deteriorated and he died two years later in 1924 after he contracted tuberculosis. Despite having quite a short life, he left a good amount of work behind. He wrote three novels and a great many short stories. Though he published very few of his writings during his lifetime. He left his writings with his friend Max Brod and told him to burn them, but Brod went against Kafka and published them after his death. Even his attempt to burn his

stories failed. Kafka was twice engaged with a woman and on both occasions, it was called off due to his ill health. His limitless sex drive forced him to visit prostitutes. He was pessimistic about his relationships. Even in the intense moment of romantic expression, he cannot think but a doomed end. His pessimism came true and he never got married. In all his novels, there is only one example of his main character fathering a child. All his other protagonists have no children. This theme of fatherhood is very important in his writing. Kafka had a very tough relationship with his own father and it is not a secret that he didn't like his father. In *A Letter to His Father* in 1919, Kafka wrote, "my writing was all about you" (Williams 556). In all his writings the main characters fight an illogical, oppressive authoritative figure, so we can assume that Kafka's writing was his way of expressing his distaste for the way his father had treated him. Kafka remained a timid person, and incredibly critical of his writing. He was also not religious in his outlook.

The term Kafkaesque in English is used to describe a style of writing that is dark, gloomy, stifling and often about a powerless individual oppressed by a powerful authoritative figure. Almost a nightmarish feeling of paralysis that is common in all his stories. He named all his characters or most of them with the letter "k" as their names.

Kafka was influenced by existentialist philosophers like Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer. Those influences are seen in his writings. For example, Nietzsche famously proclaimed that "God is dead" (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 125). In the absence of God the whole idea about truth is questioned. It created a huge shift among masses because religion and God were no longer the existential anchor. Now one has to find meaning somewhere else. And in Kafka we find that loss of meaning. In such a Godless universe Nietzsche would define humans not as human being but as human becoming. Being for him is too passive because our circumstances and situations shape us in our life. So, our nature of being is not very defined rather our life is contingent. This very example is seen in many of Kafka's stories. Like in *Metamorphosis* Gregor Samsa's life and his relationships completely changed after his transformation into a vermin. *The Metamorphosis* reads: "On the wall directly opposite hung a photograph of Gregor from his army days, in a lieutenant's uniform, his hands on his sword, a carefree smile on his lips, demanding respect for his earning and his rank" (Williams 457). Comparing this photograph hanging on the wall to the bug Gregor has turned into, invokes a deep sense of absurdity of human life. It reflects another Nietzschean concept of time. The plight of men's life lies into the whole concept of time. Human time does not turn in a circle, it turns ahead in a straight line. That is why men cannot be happy. To elaborate, our situation doesn't remain same throughout our life, as a result our esteem, relationships and position also changes. Nietzsche is very famous for giving the concept of "Übermensch" (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 336) or overman or superman. Nietzsche believed in the dynamic of change and growth. Being a human is a precariously dangerous place to be, so there is every incentive to overcome this situation. For Nietzsche, great things don't come out of serenity or peace, which religion tend to promote, but out of chaos and conflict, which is nature. That chaos is very much visible in Kafka's writing. Almost all his protagonists go through a chaotic world.

Kierkegaard talked about how suffering is inherent part of human condition. "Life is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced" (Kierkegaard, 235) is what Kierkegaard said in his philosophy. According to him fear and anxiety are real and must to be an existential real human being. Life is not always about a happy ending. The presence of "fear and trembling" (Kierkegaard, 236) is very real in it. All of Kafka's protagonists suffer by failing to find any meaning. Kierkegaard places his philosophy on subjectivity/individuality or uniqueness of each person. This was revolutionary because philosophy up until him considered all humans through an essentialist perspective that we are all more or less same, or have a same purpose on earth. Kierkegaard as an existentialist philosopher, questions that

existence comes first then we discover our true essence and purpose or unique self. It is through our freedom to make choices that our unique self emerges. This is the first step in the philosophy of existentialism. For Kierkegaard we all have our own choices in life. Our choices depend upon our own happiness and duties towards others. In *Anna Karenina* Tolstoy, poses this very same situation for Anna who abandons her husband and son in pursuit of her own happiness. Though the outcome was tragic for her and everyone around her. For Kierkegaard we are free to submit to authorities. For instance, we have the choice to listen to God/religion or disobey, get married or not, love someone or not, take responsibility or not. We take the decision and once we take it we have to carry them. (215)

This state of being is essentially paradoxical because it causes us fear and trembling. Freedom comes with responsibility which is opposite of freedom. Choices come with consequences good or bad which is opposite of choices. In other words, our nature pushes us in one direction but our moral duty into another direction. Like in most of Kafka's stories the protagonists are torn between their happiness and responsibilities for others. Kafka himself was torn between this dilemma. He had to do the job at the insurance company in spite of his unwillingness. He had accepted the fact that because of his job he had little time to write; and it was one of the reasons behind his incomplete stories.

Again, here we find similarity between Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, that a man is a bridge and not a goal. Making choices is also synonymous with the authority of the person to take his own decision. Kierkegaard further says that it is hard to explain those choices through rationality. The solution to modern anxiety and despair, according to Kierkegaard is exclusively personal. There is no path of happiness. The only path Kierkegaard offers is that one alone is responsible to find meaning for their life. Kierkegaard was one of the earliest theorists who put emphasis upon human choices. Human beings are free to make choices, and that moment of freedom according to him brings anxiety or angst.

Analysis

Kafka's literary influences were Charles Dickens and Fyodor Dostoevsky. For example, Dostoevsky's novel *The Double* seems to have influence *Metamorphosis*.

America: The Missing Person the first novel written by Kafka, is the only piece of writing by Kafka that ends with a note of hope. The novel is written in the style of Dickens. This novel is less Kafkaesque. *America* is the only novel where Kafka made an attempt to escape. America as a land of freedom. After this novel Kafka gave up any hope of freedom. Now we enter Kafka's nightmarish world. A dark and absurd world where there is no escape.

The Trial was published in 1925, but written probably in 1914. If *America* was written in the style of Charles Dickens, then *The Trail* was written clearly on the mould of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. It is also important to state that this is an incomplete story. Joseph K. a simple banker is arrested for a crime he doesn't know. Justice is twisted here. It is his job to prove himself innocent and not the authorities to prove him guilty. He hires a lawyer and almost become his slave. Finally, Joseph is arrested again on his thirty-fifth birthday and executed outside the city without ever finding out what his crime was. Strange that Joseph K also feels he deserves the punishment despite not knowing his crime. Kafka takes us into a complete nightmare where we don't know what is going on. Joseph moves through space, almost in a dream, suspended, always in a limbo as if life itself is a trial. It signifies that the life of an individual is not a concern for the state. In Nation state individuals are sacrificed for the good of the system, authority, colony and country. Dostoevsky puts the blame on individual to take responsibility for their crimes and mistakes. On the other hand, Kafka puts the blame on system for inventing crimes to punish and control individuals. Modern world with its intricate bureaucracy and specialisation has stripped the individuals of any power.

The nightmare continues in Kafka's other novels too. *The Castle* was written in 1922, when Kafka was in a hotel room recovering from tuberculosis. So, the remote location of the setting of the novel perhaps alludes to the hotel location. *The Castle* is also incomplete and published in 1926. One of the other reasons that Kafka couldn't complete *The Castle* was he died at the hotel. *The Castle* is about a land surveyor who is invited in the castle for a job, but upon his arrival he gets to know that it was a mistake. But he lingers in the village and tries to find out the person who had called him for the job. Here the court system is replaced by the village and the castle. In *The Trial* the court system alludes to modern world where authority has become faceless. In this novel too K never got the opportunity to meet the authorities. K's attempt to belong is very important, and he tries to avoid the solitude which was also depicted in *The Trial*. K tries many ways to go inside the castle or understand it but all his attempts fail. He is like an outsider and nobody wants to include him. It's perhaps human endeavours to get to the truth, implying that it is impossible to find the truth. Human society is like a tangled web of bureaucracy and legal system, that makes the individual powerless and defeated. Kobo Abe's novel *The Women in the Dunes* is very similar here. A man accidentally arrives at a village and gets tangled in a web of sand that he never manages to get out.

The Metamorphosis written in 1912 and published in 1915 is the first on the list that was completed by Franz Kafka. Gregor Samsa a travelling salesman wakes up one morning to find himself turned into an insect or vermin, something repulsive. Gradually his absence made him loose his job and he failed to provide his family as the sole bread winner. The sympathy for him was for a very short period. Gregor's sister Greta his only close ally has had enough and tells her father to get rid of it. This realisation that he is no longer wanted in his house, Gregor starved himself to death. After Gregor's death the family plans a vacation to refresh themselves and plans Greta's wedding. Kafka has shown in this story a very grim reality. The warm relation between family members is there as long as they are useful. Gregor's only function in the family is to provide necessities for them. Without bringing in any food he is not only useless but also a parasite. So, Gregor Samsa in *Metamorphosis* is any man who is useless in society.

The Hunger Artist written in 1922. It's about an artist who can impress people with his ability to fast for days. After a while people get bored and watch some animals perform in a circus. Suddenly the hunger artist is ignored by everyone; and someone accidentally finds him in a box on the verge of death. His ability to fast was due to inability to find the food he liked.

The story ends with him dying after forty days of fasting. Kafka himself died after writing *The Hunger Artist*. Great artists often die unrecognized. He survived for days when people were watching him. Artists need an audience to motivate and sustain them. It is an innate human desire to be admired by others. This mirrors Kafka's own life. During his lifetime he did not get the respect and recognition we have for him today. *The Bucket Rider* written in 1917 and published in 1921. This is a story about a man so poor that he can fly. On a cold winter day, he sets off to get some coal from a coal dealer but he has no money to pay. The thing is when he arrived to the dealer, the dealer didn't notice him. The poor man shouts but the dealer cannot hear his voice. At the end he flies away towards the ice mountain and disappears which signifies poverty, no voice, no weight and invisible.

Arguments

As we can see in all his stories Kafka is concerned with the powerless individual against an overpowering society. Individuals are tossed around like anything. Another picture is individual's futile effort to fit in. This probably has come from Kafka's own experience with his father whom he could never impress. His novels and stories are quite short in comparison with other authors of that time like Robert Musil, Thomas Mann and Marcel Proust. Because

he had a full-time job unlike other authors who were more privileged. Despite their short length they are loaded with meaning and hard to be understood.

Reading Kafka's book gives a very distinct feeling of gloominess. Every time his protagonists fail, succumb and never win anything. Although on the surface Kafka may appear quite pessimistic, there is a force behind his writings. He presents the picture of human condition with much authenticity and beauty. The stories of failure are not always nihilistic rather it has an implicit force of survival. Because it is through failure that we learn to survive. And Kafka's projection of failure teaches us that it is very human to fail. In fact, Kafka's failures in personal life gave inspirations to millions of people who found their stifled voices in his writing. So, there is beauty to be found in Kafka's failure. In all of his works failure is a predominant factor and if one has to characterize Kafka's own life, on the surface it's story of failure. He didn't get married because of his ill health. He was never happy about his occupation, and never finished any of his novels. He wasn't famous or financially successful during his lifetime. But Kafka's failure gave him inspiration to write. And many people find their stifled voices in his writing.

Conclusion

If there is one thing that is common in all the works of Kafka is the absurdity of modern life. In most of his novels the protagonist get entangled in a system. The readers get the feeling that nothing makes sense. Kafka's message is that everything need not to have a meaning. Things just happen in life. Kafka depicts these moments of life so beautifully and brutally. In Kafka's writing life is for the most part absurd, irrational and has no inherent meaning. All we can do is just accept its absurdities. Just the mere acceptance of it may liberate us from our insistence on giving everything a meaning. Absurdities of life are normal human condition. Kafka shows that no matter how much one tries, one cannot know everything. For Kafka the acceptance of absurdity is heroic and life is beautiful in its ordinariness.

One thing to note here is that, Kafka's heroes never give up. As readers we can understand that they have little chance in such brutal circumstances, but none of them give up. They continued their struggles to the very end. In *The Hunger Artist* the artist starves himself to death. In *Metamorphosis* Gregor too starves himself to death. Both refuses to eat which shows their determination. In *The Trial* and *The Castle* the protagonists never stopped their pursuit until they are killed.

Despite his pessimism Kafka wasn't a defeatist. Defeatist don't write or tell stories, they do nothing. Kafka wrote about it consistently; until his very last breath. Kafka was one of the first writers to make alienation central to his writings. One of the haunting aspects of Kafka is his powerful voice. In spite of many obstacles, he dedicated his life to the art of storytelling. It was his craft but also his escape. So, his pessimistic representation of reality teaches us a lesson that life is full of miseries and we have to fight it.

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Importance of Intonation and Stress in Teaching English

Anuradha Kumari
Assistant Professor
Ram Tahal Choudhary College
Ormanjhi, Ranchi

Abstract

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Corresponding author:

anuradha70045@gmail.com

This paper explores the role of intonation and stress in pronunciation, examining their functions, types, and importance in spoken English. Effective pronunciation is crucial for successful communication in any language. Two essential aspects of pronunciation are intonation and stress, which play a vital role in conveying meaning and attitude. Intonation refers to the rise and fall of pitch when speaking, while stress refers to the emphasis placed on certain syllables or words. We discuss how intonation and stress interact to create meaning, and provide examples of how they are used in different contexts. We also examine the different types of intonation patterns, including rising, falling, and level tones, and discuss how stress can be used to convey emphasis and contrast.

The paper concludes by highlighting the importance of teaching and learning intonation and stress in language instruction. We argue that a comprehensive understanding of intonation and stress is essential for effective communication in English, and provide recommendations for language teachers and learners. Overall, this article provides a comprehensive overview of the role of intonation and stress in pronunciation, and highlights their importance for effective communication in English.

Introduction

According to Mc Whorter "Intonation is a key component of spoken language, and it plays a crucial role in conveying meaning and context" (140). While every teacher recognises that it is necessary to teach English pronunciation, it is often ranked third in importance after vocabulary and grammar. Many teachers are at pains to correct their students' pronunciation errors as and when they occur, yet they do not dedicate any time to formal pronunciation presentations or practice activities. Other teachers focus only on common errors - either at the end of a lesson, or as a secondary activity in the middle for varying the pace of a lesson. The matter of pronunciation rarely takes up a whole lesson because of its potentially repetitive nature; in fact it is not unusual to see it restricted to a five- or ten-minute portion in some lessons.

Although it may seem less important than the teaching of grammatical structures and vocabulary because of the minimal time assigned to it by most syllabuses, pronunciation is an element essential to effective communication and is a subject with which all ESOL student teachers are expected to be familiar. The hardest work is usually done with beginners, who are in their initial stages of learning the sound system of a new language, however the work should continue at higher levels to achieve an even better pronunciation, to master some more complex words and structures and to prevent errors from becoming fossilised.

Spoken English is a complex and dynamic system, with various components working together to convey meaning. One of the key components of spoken English is intonation,

which refers to the rise and fall of pitch when speaking. Intonation plays a vital role in conveying meaning and attitude in spoken English, and is essential for effective communication. The Role of Intonation in Spoken English: A Comprehensive AnalysisIntonation is a crucial aspect of spoken English, playing a vital role in conveying meaning, attitude, and emotions. It is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has been studied extensively in linguistics, phonetics, and communication studies. This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of intonation in spoken English, exploring its functions, types, and importance in effective communication.

Pronunciation is understood to include three main elements: **1) intonation, 2) stress, 3) sounds**

Main Thrust

Intonation is to do with how you say a word or phrase rather than what you say. Speakers can change the pitch of their voice making it higher or lower as and when required. Thus intonation is the ‘music’ of speech which can convey various feelings or attitudes such as surprise, curiosity, boredom, politeness, abruptness, etc. It is important for the speaker to convey his or her appropriate feelings at the time, otherwise an incorrect impression might be gained by the listener, and confusion or offence might be caused. Intonation is also used for the more mundane job of showing whether a speaker has finished speaking or not. It is difficult to learn the rules of intonation, as English has a wide intonation range compared with other languages; nevertheless students should be encouraged to acquire them naturally through multiple exposures to various intonation patterns used in communication and through practising monologues and dialogues. Peter Roach said: “The study of intonation is essential for understanding the sound and rhythm of spoken language”. (203)

There are several types of intonation patterns in English, including:

1. Rising Tone: A rising tone is used to indicate a question, excitement, or surprise.
2. Falling Tone: A falling tone is used to indicate a statement, boredom, or disappointment.
3. Level Tone: A level tone is used to indicate neutrality or a lack of emotion.
4. Dipping Tone: A dipping tone is used to indicate a contrast or a surprise.

Stress refers to the emphasis we place on the syllable of a word (word stress) or on (a) word(s) within a sentence (sentence stress). It presents great difficulty for the foreign learner of English. Unlike some other languages, such as French, there are no easy rules in English governing where the stress falls on a word. All native speakers of English have made mistakes with stress trying to pronounce a word they have not seen or heard before. A native speaker can only work from experience with similar words but is not always guided towards correct pronunciation. “Word stress is not optional; it is an integral part of word identity in English.” (Kelly 67)

The stress in sentences is not straightforward, either, and requires a good understanding of the context. As already stated, in English we place stress on the most important parts of the sentence or message we wish to be conveyed. The unstressed part of the sentence is more difficult to catch; that is why foreign learners have to train their ears to pick up the less important part of the message so they can fully understand what is being said. English is often referred to as a ‘stress-timed’ language. This means that the length of time between the stressed syllables is always about the same. The greater the number of unstressed syllables between those that are stressed, the quicker the unstressed syllables are uttered.

There are 20 vowel sounds and 24 consonant sounds in EnglishNot all languages distinguish sounds by their length. In English, the long vowels are represented in the phonemic alphabet by adding a colon to the sound symbol, e.g. /:/ in ‘court’ or /i:/ in ‘beam’. When practising the rhythm of speech, check that your students observe the duration of the vowels. Sometimes failing to lengthen the vowel may cause misunderstanding. For example, saying

‘fourteen’ with a short /l/ may sound like ‘forty’. ”It is through intonation that listeners identify whether a sentence is a question, a command, or a statement.”
(Brazil 45)

Voiced and unvoiced consonants

Any consonant is either voiced (ie pronounced with the participation of your vocal cords) or unvoiced (ie produced purely by the movement of air through your speech organs). Many voiced consonants (but not all) have their unvoiced counterparts. These could be presented and drilled in pairs in order to focus students’ attention on the difference and help them to avoid.

Monophthongs and diphthongs

There are two types of vowel in English: monophthongs and diphthongs. With monophthongs, the articulation at the beginning and at the end of the sound is fixed and the sound doesn’t change while it is pronounced. For instance, /u:/ in ‘food’, /æ/ in ‘rap’ or // in ‘love’. With diphthongs, the articulation changes while the sound is being pronounced. It is as if there are two half-sounds in one, but together they form a single sound that makes only one syllable. For example, ‘beer’ contains a diphthong (/10/), where you experience a gradual change in lip and tongue position during the making of the sound. A well-known example is the phrase *no highway cowboys*. These three words contain 5 syllables and in each syllable, there is a diphthong: /n̊Yu/ ‘haiwei’ /kau/ ‘kau’ /b̊Yz/ ‘cowboys’. Students may have trouble remembering and pronouncing the Greek terms ‘monophthong’ and ‘diphthong’, so you may teach them to say ‘single vowels’ and ‘double vowels’, or even ‘single sounds’ and ‘double sounds’ for greater simplicity.

Spelling vs pronunciation

One of the biggest difficulties in learning English is that the same letter can be pronounced in a great number of ways, and the same sound can be represented by a great number of letters. This takes time for students to grasp and often comes down to memorising the spelling of each word individually.”Learners often fail to be understood not because they use the wrong word, but because they stress the right word incorrectly.”(Jenkins 52)

Conclusion

Intonation and stress play a crucial role in the teaching and learning of English pronunciation, as they are directly tied to the clarity, fluency, and emotional expressiveness of spoken communication. This paper has demonstrated that intonation functions as the “music” of speech, allowing speakers to convey a wide range of emotions and intentions, while stress—both at the word and sentence level—is essential for intelligibility and meaning. Despite their significance, these elements are often underemphasized in language instruction, overshadowed by vocabulary and grammar.

The findings of this study reveal that improper use of stress or intonation can lead to miscommunication even when vocabulary and grammar are accurate. English, as a stress-timed language, requires learners to master rhythmic patterns where stressed syllables are spaced evenly, and unstressed syllables are compressed accordingly. Learners also face challenges with unpredictable stress patterns in words, and require conscious practice to internalize these features.

Additionally, attention to related pronunciation aspects such as vowel length, voiced and unvoiced consonants, and the distinction between monophthongs and diphthongs supports greater accuracy and intelligibility. It is therefore crucial that pronunciation instruction, particularly with regard to intonation and stress, be given more prominence in the English language classroom. Explicit teaching, supported by contextualized practice, can help learners

gain confidence and communicative competence. When properly integrated into pedagogy, the teaching of intonation and stress enhances both the productive and receptive language skills of learners, contributing meaningfully to their overall language proficiency.

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Reimagining the City Space: A Critical Study of Helen Smith's *Alison Wonderland*

Rincy Kumari,
Research Scholar, Department of English Studies,
Central University of Jharkhand, Ranchi

Abstract

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This paper aims to contribute to existing scholarship in research area pertaining to urban space and gender. The potential for postmodernist feminist projects and their revisions of space is analysed through a close reading and critical study of Helen Smith's seminal work, 'Alison Wonderland'. The paper suggests a more renewed understanding of the city space as a more complex and inclusive space while shattering the illusion of neat, containing bodies and genders.

Corresponding author:

rinccsingh06@gmail.com

Introduction

Certainly, the city as a subject of literary analysis has had its fair share of history. It has stood out as an area of literary study owing to a resurgence of interest in urban spaces. The publication of *The Cambridge Companion to the City in Literature* in 2014 exemplifies this renewal. This paper studies the novel, *Alison Wonderland* for its unique take on the city space and gender studies. Robert E. Park in his work, *The City as Social Laboratory* points out that 'the urban environment represents [humanity's] most consistent and, on the whole [its] most successful attempt to remake the world [it] lives in more after [its] heart's desire. But if the city is the world which [humans] created, it is the world in which [they are] condemned to live'. (1) In other words, the city is in a state of transition. It is being reconstructed according to human desires representing the dominant values and ideologies held by our culture. This paper focuses upon urban space as an emerging interest in postmodern fiction's desire towards attaining revolutionary vision as far as feminist social change is concerned. Author, Smith uses the city setting to highlight the existing architecture of social relations in terms of physical space and what it is symbolic of or how it reflects upon the current power dynamics. As Deborah L. Parsons notes in *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity*:

The urban writer is not only a figure within the city; he/she is also the producer of a city, one that is related to but distant from the city of asphalt, brick, and stone, one that is related to but distinct from the interconnection of body, mind and space, one that reveals the interplay of self/city identity. The writer adds other maps to the city atlas; those of social interaction but also of myth, memory, fantasy, and desire. That the city has been habitually conceived as a male space, in which women are either repressed or disobedient marginal presences, has resulted in an emphasis in theoretical analysis in gendered maps that reflect such conditions. (1)

Hence, this paper explores the subversive use of Parsons' ideas of the city associated with 'myth, memory, fantasy, and desire', and 'the interconnection of body, mind and space' in the 'gendered maps' created through Helen Smith's *Alison Wonderland* (2011). By first providing a brief theoretical framework, this paper opens up a panoramic view of the city in order to study city and gender; the city in literature and the city in feminist literature before zooming in on Smith's take on her position in relation to these theories in her fiction. By using feminine outsider positions, bodies and mental condition of the characters to reconstruct the urban space in their narratives, authors like Smith allow an alternative feminine city to emerge, thereby breaking free from and shattering the bounds restrictive neatness, rationality and exclusionary systems of current patriarchal city we inhabit.

Theoretical framework

The question – 'what is a city' – has been a subject of ongoing critical debates. As Raymond Williams posits, the discussion of the city 'reaches back into classical times', long before the Industrial Revolution and rise of capitalism in Victorian era. Williams' definition, however, is often quoted as a starting point for anyone engaging with the idea of the city and urban studies for the first time. Williams in his *The Country and the City* notes:

'Country' and 'City' are very powerful words, and this is not surprising when we remember how much they seem to stand for in the experience of human communities [...] On the country has gathered the idea of the natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light. Powerful hostile associations have also developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation.(9)

Notably, readers may find striking parallels between the harsh realities of the modern city with the female position as an outsider vulnerable to patriarchal and capitalist ideologies within the urban environment. Postmodernist take towards urban space, however, complicates this. For instance, Elizabeth Grosz advocates for a more multifaceted stance when it comes to defining the city. According to Grosz

By 'city', I understand a complex and interactive network that links together, often in an unintegrated and ad hoc way, a number of disparate social activities, processes, relations, with a number of architectural, geographical, civic, and public relations. The city brings together economic flows, and power networks, forms of management and political organization, interpersonal, familial, and extra-familial social relations, and the aesthetic/economic organization of space to place to create a semi-permanent but everchanging built environment or milieu. (105)

The city is currently understood as a conduit of networks and forces that cannot be limited only into being a tangible physical space. It must be rewritten as a symbolic space in which cultural and social ideologies play out in complex ways. Its attribute of being in a state of flux is an aspect embraced by feminist writers, especially Helen Smith in her novel *Alison Wonderland*.

It is obviously more befitting to gain an understanding of the kinds of problems women face in 'real' city before delving into the ways in which they are depicted in literature especially in fiction. As Elizabeth Wilson points

The relationship of women and cities has long preoccupied reformers and philanthropists. In recent years the preoccupation has been inverted, the Victorian determination to control working-class women replaced by a feminist concern for women's safety and comfort in city streets; but whether women are seen as a problem of cities, or cities as a problem for women, the relationship is perceived as one fraught with difficulty. (72)

Reimagining the city space

After establishing the theoretical background to both city and urban scholarship, we can now focus on the city in literature. The cover of Helen Smith's *Alison Wonderland*, ginger hair parted from the middle to either side like curtains revealing the image of the city is suggestive of the shift in the twentieth and twenty-first century fiction. From the perception of the city as a backdrop or *topos* to the city as 'anthropoid' – "man-like", "resembling the human being" [...] It becomes quasi human. (Augustine 74) Notably, the city in *Alison Wonderland* is both a backdrop as well as the central protagonist having their own life-force with the ability to change and grow as any of the human personalities. (Lee 8) Therefore, the disturbed mental state of the characters become directly related to and hence a product of the schizophrenic society/city itself.

Clearly, the history of study of the city has had a complex history with the critical lens being partial to male authors since female centric texts focused more upon domestic confines. This is reminiscent of Festa McCormick's observation that 'objects cannot be seen through given sets of eyes, and the perspective varies with each viewer'. (14) Therefore, in literary representations, we have more often seen through male lens only thereby confining ourselves to only one gendered perspective on urban life in which women are observed exclusively through male gaze. This is all encompassing especially within the idea of the white male figure of the *flaneur* who wanders through the city streets, relating his experiences of the city for his readers. So then, it was and is imperative for female writers to address this discrepancy and add their own perspectives within the urban space and also in the narrative of the city. Despite the large number of publications in urban studies and feminist criticism on city space, there are glaring gaps.

The idea of women as outsiders and strangers to the city space has shifted in the twenty-first century with women now occupying urban space and their histories being added to the overarching male narrative. As Parson states:

My aim is therefore to explore the experience of the urban landscape and environment in terms of a fusion of empirical and imaginative perspectives, and to relate this to a gender-related city consciousness. The masculinist ideologies that have dominated the discourses of urban geography and literary modernism are gradually being exposed. But too often the politics of gender difference are concerned with the comparative experience of the male and female subject in the city, and overlook their relative foundations of the city [...] I have concentrated on those women for whom the city operates as not just a setting or an image, but as a constituent of identity, and who translate the experience of urban space into their narrative form [...] each writer is concerned with representing the female city consciousness alternative to that of the male. (7)

British author Helen Smith with an established career setting across four decades has often been overlooked by academics. *Alison Wonderland* is the story of Alison Temple. As a tale of a modern-day Alice wading through the rabbit hole of contemporary urban space following the fallout of a 'not so happily ever after' marriage: 'I used to have this line when people asked me if I'm married. I'd say, "I'm waiting for Mr. Wonderland and when I find him I'll get married. Until then I'm staying single"'. (1) The novel takes up a familiar theme of subversion of marriage as the 'happily ever after' conclusion. It delves deep into the politics of disenchantment to diminish the simplistic enchantment of fairy-tale sexual politics. After severing ties from her cheating husband, Alison is disillusioned of her fairy-tale domesticity and joins the all-female detective agency, 'Fitzgerald Bureau of Investigation' in London. In one of her interviews, Smith revealed that the private detective investigation firm's idea was inspired by a similar firm in Singapore and that she was fascinated by it because it was

Kick-ass and feminist. But the boss of the agency explained that the reality was that they spent most of their time following unfaithful husbands. I love the gaps between

perception and reality, and I wanted Alison to be doing fairly mundane, routine jobs at the agency until Taron shows up and sprinkles some magic into her life. (Smith)

Taron, in the novel, is a beautiful but unusual young women who believes her mother is a witch; she goes to Alison with a strange appeal:

I need some statistics about which part of the country babies are abandoned most often, what time of year, and where to find them – outside hospitals or police stations or under hedges or in phone boxes. [...] Lately my mother's become depressed and ill. She's losing the battle against the forces of evil [...] If I find an abandoned baby, it will help her. It can be her apprentice. (9, 12, 13)

Alison and Taron quickly become best friends along with her eccentric neighbor Jeff, the Madhatter like inventor who dotes on Alison but is depicted as extremely shy and vulnerable: 'There are times when his poetry makes me want to put on an apron, cook up a storm and hug his brittle body in my womanly arms' (16). Here, Alison is portrayed as the epitome of empowered businesswoman and Jeff is painted as an emasculated figure who stays at home and dabbles in poetry: an inversion of the male public and female domestic dichotomy reflecting the shifting gender roles of our time: 'he expresses his love for me in details, particularly domestic ones' (17). When the novel comes to an end, Alison becomes the hero. She rescues Jeff (the damsels in distress) as he finds himself trapped in a top-secret case which is assigned to Alison by Mrs. Fitzgerald. In the novel, another agency is shown covering up illicit activities and spreading false trials of information to hide the tracks: "Flowers", she says, "and Bird, my old adversary. Their services have been retained by Emphglott, the pharmaceutical company that specializes in vivisection and manipulation of animals" (33). This is followed by attacks by attacks and aggressive raids all over London by the hyper masculine and sexist Bird and his recruits to sabotage Alison and all others who are associated with her to keep them from gaining crucial information on the illicit experiments. The book is remarkable for its various insights into the stark mismatch between illusion – characters as they see each other – and reality – characters as they actually are inside their heads, insights privy to the reader alone. In this way, the novel gives way for alternative, feminine narratives of the city to find a place while favouring those of women in particular.

Mapping the city space

An initial glance at the cover of the novel speaks volumes of how it foregrounds the city and gender as the major focus. At the outset of this paper, Parsons was quoted with reference to 'gendered cartographies of viewing', the image design of *Alison Wonderland* creatively maps and remaps the city. As Parsons states, 'this is a blighted landscape physically, architecturally, spiritually and sexually'. (194) The pollution shown on the novel's cover is reflected in a black and white image of the Thames, the clouds in the sky resembling smoke. The man-made bridge and its metal structures bring out the unnatural harshness of the city space; the grey buildings clutter the entire landscape. The long, bright red feminine hair frames the dull city image wherein it takes the place where it should have been. The curtains of hair strands that resemble ropes and cover the picture is suggestive of the curtains being pulled on Alison's story. Alison will no longer remain faceless due to the overpowering image of the city over her own identity. Indeed, the novel will allow a woman's self and her story to emerge. However, the presence of the bridge in Smith's novel cover aptly depicts the balance of masculine and feminine. In Smith's *Alison Wonderland*, all boundaries are broken down thereby opening up avenues for shared use of the city space and the possibility of new ways of inhabiting the urban space.

Alison's reference to the dingy underground maze of London tunnels 'where the things you're scared of can hide' is a case in point. (Smith 155). We are told that Alison was only a child when the traumatic raid was carried out in her home by Bird and Flower, 'Darkness brings back my childhood fears and makes me irrational' (Smith 74). Indeed, the characters in

Smith's *Alison Wonderland* have had troublesome childhoods or absent parents. Their damaged mental states reflect the disturbed city they inhabit. The city's buildings may be read as a projection and material fulfilment of Alison's mental state. Alison proudly reinstates that, 'I live in an upside down house', the bedroom is on the ground floor with the door opening into the garden. The novel emphasises in many ways how space has a bearing on the individual and vice versa. As Stephen Piles states:

Aspects of identity, or self, develop in relation to place (people make their homes), but places set a brute limit on what individuals can make of themselves (homes make people). The home is not simply an expression of an individual's identity; it is also constitutive of that identity. (194)

Clearly, the novel can be used as an example in literature to illustrate the significant impact of city upon women—the constraints of which inhibit their expression of desires and personalities which later on manifest in the form of mental illness. This is clearly exemplified and illustrated by Alison's boss, Mrs. Fitzgerald's divergent personality in public and private space:

Mrs. Fitzgerald wonders whether you are supposed to be able to feel something when you're thinking [...] She's outwardly at ease with herself, which is why young women like Alison find her presence reassuring. Mrs. Fitzgerald has the appearance of being able to deal with any matter, domestic or business, with equanimity [...] Mrs. Fitzgerald secretly fears that she's being claimed by madness. (23,25)

The interconnectedness between mind and space is clearly illustrated by Taron and Alison's discussion on their road trip:

'Have you got the map?' I ask. 'Or is it in the car?'
'Do you mean the road map or the mental map?'
'What's a mental map?'
'It's like a wish list, but it's an actual picture of something you want to happen'.
'I mean the road map'.
'It's in the car. Do you want to see my mental map'?'
'I don't know'.

The mental map is like a primary school art project. She has made a collage by gluing a photo of herself, a photo of me and a picture of a baby cut from a magazine onto an A4 sheet of paper. We're floating together in a disembodied group, superimposed on a view of Weymouth's seaside taken from a tourist leaflet [...] 'This isn't magic, it's just using the power of the mind. You visualize something and make it happen. If you believe, you're halfway to making it real'. (102,103)

As Taron states, this novel uses 'the power of the mind' to 'visualize something and make it happen'. This foregrounds both the mistreatment and marginalization of women in urban spaces while putting across the idea that there are alternative ways of being—the city is revisable and not set in stone.

Conclusion

In the words of Parsons, women writers can construct 'cities within the pages of their texts, combining the real and the imaginary to create an urban consciousness modeled on alternative values to those of their male counterparts' (15-16). To conclude, this paper drew a framework of the problems, both historically and in present society, that women face vis a vis their situatedness of the city space. By outlining the various ways in which women have been rendered outsiders, both from physical space as well as from urban narratives, the chapter illustrates how Helen Smith foregrounds women's experiences and how these women assert themselves and their feminine perspectives as a part of the ongoing city narrative. Instead of projecting a restrictive, knowable, neat and singular objective city, the author offers an alternative pluralized city while acknowledging the diversity of lived experiences of women

characters which normally falls outside the ambit of the patriarchal system.

In the novel, Alison, while visiting a statue in an Old English Garden, holds Phoebe (the baby discovered by herself and Taron), as she worries about her new daughter's place in the world is symbolic as far as the future of the next generation of women is concerned.

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Representation of Adivasi History in Indian Comic Book: Understanding the Legacy of Tilka Majhi

Pramod Kumar Gond

Assistant Professor,
Department of English and MEL,
University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, (U.P.)

Abstract

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Corresponding author:

pkgbhu164@gmail.com

India, a nation with varied communities, endured centuries of western invasions and ultimately got freedom after a long and relentless struggle against British imperialism. This struggle involved thousands of freedom fighters who fearlessly resisted the colonial establishment in India and sacrificed their lives for the sake of their motherland. Among them, adivasi leaders, recognizing the malicious mentality, monopoly, encroachment, and exploitative policies of the British, were the first who united their tribes to protest against the British repressive forces to protect the nation and its natural resources. These adivasi leaders were the true (seminal) architects of India's freedom struggle who, facing the onslaught of adversaries, inspired countless revolutionaries to join their cause and strove selflessly and vigorously for their culture, community, and country against the oppressions of British imperialism. However, their contributions remain largely underrepresented in the mainstream archives, which have very often failed to represent the adivasi narratives, reflecting an implicit bias. This paper investigates the historical representation of such adivasi leaders in the popular illustrated comic book *Tribal Leaders of the Freedom Struggle*, which presents the glorious past of the adivasi society by visualizing the narratives of unsung adivasi warriors.

Introduction

The tribal world constitutes one of the most significant parts of human civilisation, as millions of people around the world to a large extent depend on it for various aspects of their lives. Beyond providing essential resources, it serves as a backbone of cultural, spiritual, and economic bodies of a nation. For centuries, the adivasi communities have maintained this natural heritage with their profound knowledge and cultural practices, which are preserved through their oral traditions, myths, and folklore. The adivasi world of India, which was once considered a treasure of knowledge and resources, is now on the verge of extinction due to the forceful expansion of capitalists' interests and colonial invasion. The British in India, in order to generate high revenue, expanded their power to access control over natural resources, encroaching into interior regions of the adivasis. They sought to rob the nation, disturbing and affecting its cultural heritage, specifically the indigenous way of adivasi life and their harmony with nature. This exploitative attempt of British imperialism towards the adivasi world caused the uprisings in different adivasi regions of India. Numerous freedom fighters from the adivasi community, such as Tilka Manjhi, Birsa Munda, Budhu Bhagat, Sidhu, Kanhu, etc., reacted and revolted against the oppression of colonial power and the feudal system, and fought valiantly against these brutal forces, sacrificing their lives for the sake of their nation. They played their crucial role in preserving the natural resources of the country along with their old-age culture, traditions, and philosophy of life, and struggled against the disrupting colonial power from the onset of the arrival of Europeans in this country. They were the first to encounter and resist

the colonial power, challenging the brutal actions of its agents. Adivasi movements and their heroes' contributions have been so influential and inspirational in laying the foundation of the Indian freedom struggle that the history of the freedom movement cannot be imagined without their presence. But unfortunately, they are found absent from the total history of the Indian freedom struggle. The saga of their struggle and sacrifices was erased from the archives and never discussed at intellectual platforms. Even the historians have not given them the proper space in their history writings. The contributions of these adivasi leaders to the Indian freedom movement have been left out of the history, as the tradition of Indian historiography has entirely been elitist-biased. It tended to prioritize the interests of elites that silence the voices and protests of marginalised masses neglecting their experiences, as Ranajit Guha remarks, "the Historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism—colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism....Both these varieties of elitism share the prejudice that the making of the Indian nation and the development of the consciousness—nationalism—which informed this process, were exclusively or predominantly elite achievements" (Guha 1).

In the elitist historiography of India, space has been given to those who had a strong socio-economic and political hold in the hegemonic power structure, which creates discourse as per their interests. The discourse that makes the perceptions and figures in the society outrightly disregards the presence of the communities outside the power structure. It runs a narrative in a way that the identity of such communities absolutely gets dusted and darkened. This whole systematic mechanism of creating elite discourse brings about epistemic injustice to the people on the margins and makes them silent and absent from the total history of civilization. As Spivak calls it, epistemic violence "violence inflicted through thought, speech, and writing, rather than actual physical harm....epistemic violence is when accounts of history leave out subalterns. When oppressed peoples are not allowed to speak for themselves, or to have their contributions recognized, they are in effect erased from their place in the world" (Riach 11). Spivak's argument is that the subaltern has no history and cannot speak. They are spoken for, and if they speak, their voices do not get acknowledged. They lack the agency that helps to create the discourse dealing with their issues and problems. Due to the lack of agencies and being out of the mainstream discourse, the voice and the protest of the adivasis could not find their place in the archives.

Argument

While the chaos of global issues created by the contemporary world has reached its complexity, the worldwide scholars, philosophers and writers started pondering about the adivasi world, which is the only viable alternative to preserve the planet for the future generations, but their history and literature remain out of canon. In Indian literary tradition, very little about the Adivasi world has been discussed; the core issues of their identity crisis and displacement have been completely absent in the Indian literary canon. If they are talked about, they are often stereotyped and misinterpreted, sometimes in exotic ways. However, some writings of Adivasi and non-Adivasi writers seriously portray the lives of Adivasi people and seek to bring their rich culture and traditions into the limelight. So far as the history of Adivasi freedom fighters is concerned, their contributions to India's freedom struggle gained less recognition in the corpus of history and literature. In this direction, *Amar Chitra Katha* (commonly known as ACK), a series of comic books, has played a significant role in making adivasi voices heard, initiating a step to chronicle the lost history of adivasi leaders, who by and large are the heroes of India's freedom movements but could not find the space in the mainstream history of India due to the politics of representation. A special issue of *Amar Chitra Katha* titled *Tribal Leaders of the Freedom Struggle* recounts the untold tales of nineteen adivasi freedom fighters of India and presents the glorious past of the adivasi community by

visualizing the narratives of these unsung adivasi warriors. Tilka Majhi is one of them who fought bravely against the brutal forces of the British in India and laid the foundation of the India freedom movement.

Before we proceed to explore the representation of Adivasi history with reference to Tilka Majhi in the comic book understanding his contributions to the Indian freedom struggle, it is imperative to discuss the role of comics in academia and how they supply the valuable information of marginalised society, including its history, philosophy, and moral and ethical values, to the students of the present generation. In the educational institutions, the students have plenty of knowledge about the culture, literature, and history of the elites, as extensively recognized in social and political discourse, but the histories of adivasis are alien to them. As a result, students from India are less familiar with the Adivasi heroes who sacrificed their lives to save the nation from the grip of British imperialism. The history of such Adivasi freedom fighters could not find its presence in academic discourse and never reached its present generation of youths. It is due to the lack of their agencies and power politics and their exclusion from the syllabi and curriculums of the universities, colleges, and schools, which are commonly considered the centre of knowledge dissemination. In this regard, Reena Ittyerah Puri, through her comic book titled *Tribal Leaders of the Freedom Struggle*, aimed to restore the tribal narratives by incorporating the stories of adivasi leaders from various adivasi songs and folklores, which keep them alive from generation to generation. She sought to make these stories easily accessible to the young minds, especially the school children, highlighting the struggles and sacrifices of these Adivasi heroes. The comic books, playing the role of our grandparents, present an impactful discourse through their visual storytelling to the young minds of the present generation, who are the core and future of the society and have almost been unaware of such narratives, need to be developed holistically. Today, in nuclear families, the children are devoid of the story telling activity of the grandparents. In this situation, the comic books fulfil the accountability of our grandparents to the children.

Analysis

Though, this popular genre could not find its place in the Indian literary canon despite its potential relevance. It has not been adequately considered within scholarly reflection due to its subject matter and lack of research. A false perception associated with the comic books is that they fail to convey complex ideas and deeper understandings, and comprise only funny and childish themes and contents, which are generally shunned by serious academicians. The comics are still stereotyped and placed at the periphery. It has yet to find its place in academia. However, some formalists claim, “What people choose to regard as ‘serious’ art or ‘high’ culture is also subject to changing values. Jazz, for example, once ‘popular’ music in brothels and bars, has become serious art,...From this perspective, art and literature are not eternal verities but are always open to new definitions” (37). Roman Jacobson believes that literature reshapes itself as a result of ‘shifting dominant’ (38). Today what people overlook on the margin will be in centre tomorrow. It has been seen that the graphic narrative (such as comics and graphic novels, which have achieved tremendous success that serious literature could not) in the form of popular literature is coming into the limelight with the serious and insightful historical contents, which are being used as primary sources in research and historiography. It has attracted millions of readers and triggered their reading habits, providing insightful information through its visual narrative techniques. It has become the voice of margins and is now reflecting the historical incidents, which were made absent in the Eurocentric and mainstream literary and history books. As Pramod K. Nayar in his scholarly book *The Indian Graphic Novel: Nation, History and Critique* writes:

Indian graphic narrative [like comics and graphic fiction] is poised to become a part of the global popular, taking specific local contexts and conditions of casteism

or abuse via a globally hypervisible and widely recognised medium, onto the world readership screens. In addition the graphic narrative makes it imperative that other texts, stories and modes of storytelling severely undermine the dominant literary and cultural productions of, say, official histories and add a new medium, mode of representation and way of reading in Indian Writing in English (IWE).... In this, as Michael Chaney has argued in the case of African American graphic narratives, we can discern the outlines of a 're-politicization'...This re-politicization is made possible through not only the making available, in the demotic register of the graphic narrative, radical works...but also inserting these into the cultural productions and the canon of IWE. The canon of IWE, whether in the form of syllabi and pedagogic texts or leisure reading, needs to be expanded through these texts cast in the popular medium but carrying alternate histories and reformist politics. (197).

Amar Chitra Katha has published its special issue entitled *Tribal Leaders of the Freedom Struggle*, offering multiple stories associated with unsung Adivasi heroes to the academia through its appealing visual storytelling techniques. Though, it has been critiqued for its way of presentation by various scholars and agencies. However, it has now become a powerful platform for the subalterns' voices, which are often overlooked in the mainstream literary canon. In the present paper, the focus has been on exploring the legacy of Tilka Majhi, one of the greatest Adivasi leaders who fought bravely against colonial power in India, bringing the imperial power to its knees by his valour and sacrifice, which laid the foundation of the freedom struggle of modern India. In history, Mangal Pandey is regarded as the first freedom fighter to initiate the revolt against British Company Rule. But one must also remember that it was Tilka who initially ignited the flame of rebellion against the company rule and became the pain in the neck for the imperial invaders, drowning the roaring blaze of British cannon and gunfire with the rain of his arrows.

They rained whippards on you
They dragged you by horse
Still you could not be killed
They, amidst the Bhagalpur public
Hanged you on the rope
Yet the landlords and the British were afraid
Of your angry eyes
You didn't die even after being killed
Tilka Manjhi
Not Mangal Pandey,
You were the first rebel of modern India. (Puri, 12)

But the history of India is tampered with by the colonisers who arrived from the alien land and encroached on the natural resources of India, imposing new laws, rules and hardship for the native Indians. They tried to conceal the story of tribal rebellion in the dense mountain and forest. However, they could not; still, every leaf of the *Palash* trees tells the tale of Tilka's rebellion. Tilka Majhi was the man who opposed the colonial coercive forces by which the British exercised their power to maintain the rule over adivasi masses by implementing new laws and levying heavy taxes on them. "The Company has increased the taxes.... People were starving to death and yet were getting flogged for not paying their taxes" (6). The intrusion of the British into the adivasi world not only targeted their socio-economic conditions but also disrupted their cultural harmony through the expansion of Christianity in promoting their hegemonic ideologies, as Gramsci calls it, control through 'consent'. The imposition of new legal systems by the British officials affected the lives of Adivasi people, forcing them to

grow cash crops instead of food, a back-breaking task without their choice. Their cruel colonial policy and repressive domination over tribal masses led to a protest against the company and its exploitative forces, such as moneylenders and zamidars, who were also exercising their interests to subdue the tribal masses. It gave rise to a man, Jabra Pahadiya, later called Tilka Majhi (headman), a leader of his community who did not yield to the British power and started rebellions against the oppressions. He challenges the British authority, "If they take money from us, I am going to take it back from them!"(6). He was a saviour of his motherland and became the primary shield for the nation and its natural resources. He used his traditional archery as a sharp weapon against the enemies, and leaves of *Palash* tree with the secret slogan as a medium of communication to spread the message of the rebellion across the country. There is a belief in the Adivasi community that if someone protects Nature, it will protect him/her from the adversary forces. Tilka succeeded in inspiring the community, who had been divided earlier, but united and fought together for the first time for a common cause of freedom struggle.

The Adivasi people, under the leadership of Tilka, attacked the enemies and destroyed the British camps, setting free those who were forced to be enslaved into labour for the company rule. They displayed their true courage without any fear and defeated the enemies who were pushed back, as their modern weapons were destroyed by the hail of their traditional arrows. "It was the first time Indians had launched an offensive against the British...and had won. This was 97 years before the celebrated uprising of 1857" (9). The British officials were so hopeless that they could not dare to face Tilka and his men. Therefore, the British adopted their dirty politics of divide and rule under the leadership of Augustus Cleveland, a clever collector officer who trapped some of the poor and needy natives as messengers by offering money and jobs to know the location of Tilka. Before the British force could try to capture Tilka, he shot a poisoned arrow that pierced Cleveland, who died a few months later (11). The British retaliated with their brutal forces, burning Adivasi villages, destroying their crops, and stopping food and water supplies to let them starve. Thousands of Adivasi people lost their lives. In such adverse circumstances, Tilka and his men fought bravely. But due to treacherous policy of the British, he was captured and tortured by the enemy. Eventually, Tilka was hanged to death. Though the battle was lost, its legacy lived on. The sacrifice of Tilka and his warriors' has awakened the spirit of resistance that later translated into the struggle for independence. He was the true freedom fighter who paved the way for the future generations. But unfortunately, very little information about Tilka and his rebellion against the colonial power is found in the mainstream archives.

From 1771 to 1784, Tilka mobilised his people and fought fearlessly. History may not have given him his due but he was the first to revolt against the British. In 1991, Bhagalpur University was renamed as Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University. He remains alive in the works of Mahasweta Devi and Rakesh Singh, and in the hearts of his fellow adivasis who have devoted numerous songs to him. (12)

Conclusion

Thus, through a detailed analysis of *Tribal Leaders of the Freedom Struggle*, the study has aimed to examine the significant role of the comic books, which provide a space to include the voice of marginalized people that was unheard at the scholarly platforms for centuries. Highlighting the power of visual storytelling, it offers a historical and cultural perspective to explore the saga of Adivasi heroes, specifically the story of Tilka Majhi and his struggle and sacrifices for the Indian freedom movements. The paper has also focused on the politics of representation, investigating how the Adivasi narratives remain underrepresented due to the epistemic injustice of the established canon, which expunges out the presence of Adivasi

heroes, disregarding their contributions to India's freedom struggle. The study provides research-based historical information about the Adivasi freedom fighters, enriching a holistic understanding of the legacy and the glory of the Adivasi avengers to a wide range of readers, particularly to the minds of the young generations, as these Adivasi heroes are yet to be recognized as true freedom fighters of India in the established literary tradition.

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R. K. Narayan: Today and Tomorrow

Kumar Parag,
Associate Professor,
Dept. of English and MEL
University of Allahabad, Prayagraj

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Corresponding author:

kumprg@gmail.com

R.K. Narayan, a renowned figure in Indian English writing, is able to deftly combine elements of the past and the present in his storytelling. Within the context of his writings, this research investigates how Narayan manages to reconcile the contradiction that exists between cultural heritage and the needs of modernity. The purpose of this study is to investigate the dualities that are present in the narratives of works such as *The Financial Expert*, *The Dark Room*, and *Waiting for the Mahatma*. These books illustrate the socio-economic revolutions that occurred in India throughout the middle of the 20th century. Malgudi, the fictional village that Narayan creates, serves as a microcosm in which the town's inhabitants are symbolic of the conflicts and reconciliations that arise from these dualities. The purpose of this research is to highlight Narayan's complex description of tradition, his subtle critique of modernity, and his ability to reflect the shifting dynamics of Indian culture through the use of theme analysis. This research underscores Narayan's function as a historian of cultural evolution, giving insights that will last for a long time into the human experience throughout times of transition.

Introduction

R.K. Narayan renowned writer in English in the 20th century, reforms social values, and traditions. Which have been? Still running to play vital role in moulding the lives of Hindu people. The conventional Hindu family as the core of social structure has energetically protected its old standards, mores and qualities. Its sacredness is sacred and its infringement is out and out heresy. R.K. Narayan depicted these points masterly and lucid expressive style. R.K. Narayan has added might and majesty, greatness and grandeur and breadth and depth to the Indian English novels. He wrote novels, short stories, non-fiction and retellings of mythologies. His works have been translated into both regional and foreign tongues. He is also popular among Western countries especially in England. That is why V.S. Sankara Rao Chinnam says, "He [R.K. Narayan] has won admirers in England and the United States of America" (515). R.K. Narayan was born as Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanswami on October 10, 1906 at Purasawlkam, Madras (now in Chennai). Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanswami was shortened by his literary friend, and British Writer Graham Greene. N. Seshachalam, until he was a teenager. He rarely went to his parent's house, and enjoys a summer with his siblings. Narayan grew up speaking Tamil and learned English at school. In his autobiography *My Days*, Narayan writes of visiting his parents in Mysore and being unable to understand the

shopkeepers, who spoke Kannada, a language he later learned. He completed his elementary education on borne home. R.K. Narayan moved to live with his family when his father was transferred to the Maharajah's College High School. The well- stocked library at the school. As well as his father's own. After completing high school, Narayan failed in the university entrance examination, and spent a year at home reading and writing; According to N. Ram, friend of R.K. Narayan says that 1930 was significant year in the literary growth of RKN, for it was in this year that Malgudi, the imaginary locale which serves as the setting of almost all of his work was born. In 1933, Narayan met Rajam and fell in love with her. Despite many astrological and financial hindrances, Narayan managed to permission from the girl's father and married her. In 1934 Narayan married Rajam. In 1936, the couple was blessed with a daughter, Hema. The death of his wife in 1939 was a great shock for a young Narayan.

Analysis

Narayan is counted amongst the towering novelist in Indian writing, and though he wrote in English, but his characters were sons of the soil. He remarkably depicted the Indian tradition in his novels; he blended tragic-comic elements, humour, and spontaneity. We find these features to all his works. His views on politics were zilch, but he was close to Gandhian philosophy and wrote Gandhian thought in his fiction. Narayan's stories were produced by most notable and worthy film-maker Shankar nags on television, titled Malgudi Days. It proved historic and catches abundant fame. When we talk about Narayan, we remember the Malgudi Days on Doordarshan. This serial was popular among the children's; they watched this serial eagerly and showed great interest. This serial was filmed at Agunbe in Shimoga district, Karnataka. Its music was given by famous violinist L. Vaidyanath, and caricature of this serial was given by Narayan's younger brother R.K. Laxman. R.K. Narayan, Indian's leading English novelist got Sahitya Academy award in 1958 for the film The Guide. Most of Narayan's works has been nominated for the world's prestige's award Noble Prize, but he never received. He received Padma Bhushan in (1964) and then Padma Vibhushan in (2000), for the contribution in literature. R.K. Narayan was a member of the Royal Society of Literature and an honorary associate of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Narayan was also given the A. C. Basson Award in 1980 by the Royal Society of Literature. He was nominated the Rajya Sabha member. Malgudi is an imaginary town in India made by R.K. Narayan in his works. Beginning with his first novel, Swami and Friends, everything except one of his fifteen books and the majority of his short stories happen here. Narayan has effectively depicted Malgudi as a microcosm of India. "All things considered Malgudi is an unassuming community, everybody is inside yelling distance" (47).

Arguments

The tone of his novels is melancholy and calm and light humour with comic elements that can make readers laugh to some extent. Narayan was the writer of normal peoples and middle class masses. He never uses heroic plots and high ranked persons, but common people and makes them infuse with boldness and he showed the endeavour of life in an adversary. He does not produce remarkable characters and his heroes were average capabilities. If we take the life of a school boy like Swami, we find nothing extraordinary or strange in his life. Similarly, Mr. Sampath, Chandran, Raju, Savitri, Ramani and others live, love and suffer in maze of incidents which are just commonplace. Women is always been point of discussion, and today women is debatable question. Women are hot dog question in the recent times. It seems us as novel is revolving round the protagonist, similar like that life revolves round the women. In the present scenario women is considered hot and critical topic. In the near past, women were considered

inferior to men. They were debarred from taking part in social life. Their sphere of activities was limited to domestic work. Up to 19th century it was believed that women were the servants of homes of their husbands. In those days women were not allowed to take part in political, social life and administration. Women were not taking part in public life and in outdoor professions. If any women take active part in social life it was considered bad notion and omen. The notion was that women are biologically different from men. She has to be a mother. Women are not suitable for every job. They are too delicate to perform hard duties of life. The real greatness of women lies in her role as mother. The mother who can bring up the right sort of children is a great benefactor of society. According to Napoleon, "Give me great mothers I will bring you great nation" **The Dark Room** presents a view of country middle class women. It portrays the life of Savitri, wife of Ramani and a mother of three children. Ramani was working in an Engladia Insurance Company. He was there in a high position. In this novel the picture of women and society has been highlighted masterly. The social life of Savitri her customs, traditions, and social opinions has been penned with great experience. **The Dark Room** was third novel of Narayan in which women is depicted as an invalid piece of flesh and man with his constant tyrannical outlook. In **My Days** Narayan writes: "I was somehow obsessed with a philosophy of women as opposed to man, her constant oppressor. This must have an early testament of the "Women's Lib" movement. Man assigned her a secondary place and kept there with such subtlety and cunning that she began to lose all notions of her independence, individuality, stature and strength. A wife in an orthodox milieu of Indian society was an ideal victim of such circumstances. My novel dealt with this philosophy broadly in the background" (Narayan 1). When we browse the pages of the novel **The Dark Room**, we find that there is no fixed place for women in society. Women are considered strong builders of nation, they make founding stone to a nation, as their role of mother. They are nectar of nurturing a child. The Guide is the most popular novel of R.K. Narayan. It was published in 1958, and won the Sahitya Academy Award for 1960. It has also been filmed and the film has always drawn packed houses. It recounts the adventures of a railway guide, popularly known as 'Railway Raju'. As a tourist guide he is widely popular. It is this profession which brings him in contact with Marco and his beautiful wife, Rosie. While the husband is busy with his archaeological studies, Raju seduces his wife and has a good time with her. Ultimately Marco comes to know of her affair with Raju and goes away to Madras leaving Rosie behind. Rosie comes and stays with Raju in his one-room house. His mother tolerates her for some time, but when things become Unbearable, she calls her brother and goes away with him, leaving Raju to look after Rosie and the house. Rosie is a born dancer, she practices regularly and soon Raju finds an opening for her. In her very first appearance, she is a grand success. Soon she is very much in demand and their earnings increase enormously. Raju lives lavishly, entertains a large number of friends with whom he drinks and gambles. All goes well till Raju forges Rosie's signatures to obtain valuable jewellery lying with her husband. The act lands him in jail. Rosie leaves Malgudi and goes away to Madras, her hometown. She goes on with her dancing and does well without the help and management of Raju, of which he was so proud. On release from jail, Raju takes shelter in a deserted temple. on the banks of the river Sarayu, a few miles away from Malgudi, and close to the village called Mangla. The simple villagers take him to be a Mahatma, begin to worship him, and bring him a lot of eatables as presents. Raju is quite comfortable and performs the role of a saint to perfection. However, soon there is a severe famine drought, and the villagers expect Raju to perform some miracle to bring them rain. So he has to undertake a fast. The fast attracts much attention and people come to have darshan of the Mahatma from far and wide. On the twelfth day of the fast, Raju falls down exhausted just as there are signs of rain on the distant horizon. It is not certain if he is actually dead or merely fainted. Thus the novel comes to an abrupt close on a note of ambiguity. R K Narayan is one of the celebrated novelists of that era. The main objective of this chapter is discuss about the mixing of Indian

and western culture. Indian is a country where logic and belief sit side by side. The novel maybe inspired by an incident in Mysore. Here acute drought completely dried up Krishna Raja Sagar. Some religious chanting took place for rain. The novelist combined the enforced sainthood with that incident. The man psychologically associates Raju with this deserted place. The novelist hints that the man Velan becomes excited by the high position of Raju ‘sitting crossed legged’ as if it were a throne. A.V. Krishna Rao observes that, “The influence of temple on the democratic consciousness is so profound and efficacious that it results in the ultimate transformation of Raju. It enables the establishment of the identity of the mask and the man” (170-171). But in other way this co-existence of traditional and modernity symbolizes Indian culture. India is a land where western ideas places side by side with traditional beliefs. Even Raju at the end of the novel accept the enforced sainthood. Raju called it, “Dangerous state of affair”.

Conclusion

As a child, Narayan sat on his grandmother’s knee and learned Sanskrit, Mythology, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and other South Indian customs and mythology. These influences informed his writings. By elucidating this heritage, Narayan made it very obvious that the reader might choose between accepting and criticizing certain cultures and ideas. To preserve the original meaning of the indecipherable words and the rich Indian culture they represent, some of the material may need to be translated into English while other parts remain in their original language. The urge to preach, advise, or change contemporary society has little effect on Narayan, who is famously dedicated and persistent. Commonplace, mysterious, and unremarkable occurrences make up his sites. A subtlety and calmness permeate his writings. He creates comic book-style social novels. While these books aren’t as dark as Mulk Raj Anand’s and Raja Rao’s, they don’t aim to make readers feel anything. In all of Narayan’s works, the tone is the same. His roots are deep and genuine, bordering on metaphysical. Thanks to this secret, R. was able to achieve enormous success. On the other side, K. Narayan stands out because he is so content with the results his pupils get in terms of beauty.

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Self-Objectification in Annie Ernaux's Memoir “A Girl's Story”: A Feminist Study.

Partha Das,
Research Scholar,
University Department of English,
Ranchi University, Ranchi.

Abstract

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Corresponding author:

dpartha2017@gmail.com

The present research paper attempts to focus on the women's Objectification which has been reflected in the introspective memoir *A Girl's Story* by French feminist writer Annie Ernaux. Fredrickson and Roberts asserted that Women are subjected to pervasive and structural practices (male-gaze: evaluation, media etc) that sexually objectify the female body (75). The concept of self-objectification derives from Objectification Theory as developed by Fredrickson and Roberts and involves behaviour of women internalizing an objectifying view of themselves in response to the sexual objectification of women that is prevalent in western culture. Women's mental health is deeply impacted by self-objectification. Objectification is a very important theme in feminist theory. This paper will analyze the memoir *A Girl's Story* (French title-Memoire de fille) from the perspective of self-Objectification leading to sexual objectification, as important notion to gender and women studies in Feminism. The purpose of this article is to analyze problems through the propounded theory of objectification and this will certainly provide ample light on the term by analyzing and interpreting the text with the help of self objectification theory by Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997. Thus this research will show multiple aspects and surely help the future researchers to delve deeper into the specific theory by thorough analyzation of various texts.

Introduction

Objectification is a major conception under Feminist theory. The concept of self-objectification derived from objectification theory developed by Fredrickson and Roberts. Other important thinkers discussing objectification are Martha Nussbaum, Psychologist Karen Horney, Immanuel Kant, Rae Langton, Catharine Mackinnon, Andrea Dworkin, Susan Bordo, Sandra Bartky and many more. Feminist theorists have highlighted the western culture's tendency of objectification of female bodies for a long time. Psychologist Karen Horney stated that objectification “is the socially sanctioned right of all males to sexualize all females regardless of age or status” (qtd. In Weskott 95). Great American philosopher Sandra Lee Bartky said:

Women of all races and ethnicities, like Fanon's “Black man”, are subject not only to stereotyping and cultural depreciation but to sexual objectification as well. Even though much has been written about sexual objectification in the literature of the women's movement, the notion itself is complex, obscure, and much in need of philosophical clarification. (26)

In a research article by S Jordan entitled “*Sexual awakening, trauma, and writing in Annie Ernaux’s Memoire De Fille* and Christine Angot’s *Une semaine de vacances*” says that “ the text elaborate instead vulnerability, coercion, abuse and objectification”(6) and also added “ we learn a little later in *Memoire de fille* that in April 1959 the girl reads *Le Deuxieme Sexe* and Ernaux gives us a powerful two-page account of her engagement with Beauvoir, a new kind of awakening which provided her with a retrospective understanding that she had colluded in her own objectification.”(7)

In the memoir *A Girl’s Story* by French Nobel Laureate feminist writer Annie Ernaux, the protagonist of the memoir is Annie Duchesne. Actually she is the other self of the writer herself. It is an autobiographical writing. In the book, it is found that in the summer of 1958 in a French Lycée, an innocent girl of eighteen faces sexual encounter with a head “counselor” of the institute. She is also sexually and mentally harassed by other students and teachers also and in this way, the protagonist starts suffering from many physical and mental health problems. After the first sexual encounter of her life, she goes mad to get the bodily touch of him again. But she is avoided by him repeatedly and after the disclosure of the sexual affair between her and the head instructor, others term her as whore. Thus, the protagonist of this story, Annie Duchesne starts internalizing outsider’s view and thinks her body as object separate from the person and she considers herself to be an object of sex and pleasure. In this way, gradually this silent acceptance may be termed as Self-Objectification. The results of sexual objectification are increased feeling of shame and hunger, excessive anxiety and decreased awareness of internal bodily states. In the case of Annie Duchesne, Self-Objectification occurred due to abrupt traumatic sexual encounter and because of this she loses her identity and starts considering herself as a sexual object for providing bodily pleasure to others and she also makes sex 2nd time with one of the ‘Phys.ed’ teachers because she thinks that she has already lost her virginity and dismisses the worry of keeping the purity of body and soul. “I’m not a virgin anymore”(139).

The author also Says “.....I spent the night with [...] the head-counselor. Does this shock you? I also slept with one of Phys.ed teachers the following day. So, there you have it: I’m a moral and cynical. The worst of it is that i feel no remorse” (Ernaux 56). These psychological consequences are related to the results of the traumatic sexual experiences. After the sexual harassment, she becomes an object of sexual jokes and degrading comments which leads her to serious physical and mental health problems such as disordered over-eating, depression, anxiety, reduced self-confidence and sexual dysfunction.

Sexual Objectification Theory and Feminism

A few studies have also looked at the moderating variables in the direct association between sexual objectification and self-objectification and the relationship between women’s mental health outcomes and self-objectification. Feminism is one moderating variable that has been studied in relation to objectification theory. Studies have examined a variety of feminism related topics, such as feminist identification, feminist views and attitudes and the formation of feminist identities. (Fischer et al. 15-29; Hurt et al. 355-363; Murnen & Smolak. 186-197; Yakushko 223-234).

Annie Duchesne, the protagonist of the memoir faces mental health problems. Her traumatic experiences lead her to eating disorder (over eating), intense depression and sexual dysfunction; ceasing of her periods for a long time. The author says “for two years no cure can be found for the drying of my ovaries, not the Equanil tablets prescribed by the neurologist, nor the iodine drops prescribed by the gynaecologist. i am towed off to one specialist after another by my aggravated mother” (Ernaux 92). In the words of Fredrickson and Roberts:

According to the objectification theory, women are more likely than men to experience eating disorders, depression, and sexual dysfunction due to two key causes of mental health issues. The first route involves SO experiences and is straightforward and obvious. Women's internalisation of SO experiences or self-objectification are key components of the second, more covert route. (185)

And we find in the text that the protagonist exactly suffers from these specific issues arise from mental health problems mentioned in the objectification theory. The author says:

She eats more and more taking unrestrained advantage of the abundantly available food. The pleasure she finds in eating has become a vital necessity. When no one is looking, she bolts down sliced tomatoes straight from a big salad bowl, prepared for the children in the infirmary. All the freedom she dreams of in Yvetot becomes reality in her jaunts to the pastry shop in S to buy mocha cream cakes and coffee éclairs. (Ernaux 77)

When a woman is perceived primarily as a physical object of male sexual desire, her body or certain body parts are singled out and separated from her as a person resulting sexual objectification (Bartky 26). Women's bodies effectively become the site for system justification once the lens of self Objectification is in place, and it appears that once this lens is in place, Women are less likely to object to the system that creates and maintains this harmful lens (Calogero 317).

Self-Objectification in A Girl's Story

The protagonist of the memoir, Anne Duchesne represents herself as a sexual object that anybody can play with her. Her experience of sexual encounter with the first male body turns into a traumatic experience. This incident happens in her life in the summer of 1958, at the age of eighteen when, for the first time she leaves her sheltered family home to spend her summer in a lycée. There she develops a romantic relationship with one of the instructors and she faces her first sexual encounter quite forcibly with the head counsellor of the lycée indicated as "H." This sexual encounter happens quite abruptly without proper understanding of what is going on and being first time, she does not have any idea that it might have everlasting effects on her mind in future. After the encounter, out of obsessive infatuation, she approaches him for a relationship but he repeatedly ignores her by making him understand that she is nothing but an object of lust and desire. The author says "Her submission is not to him but to an indisputable, universal law: that of a savagery in the male to which she would have had to be subjected, sooner or later. That this law is brutal and dirty is just the way things are" (Ernaux 43-44).

Having been ignored repeatedly she starts to realise that she has been turned into a sexual object and nothing else after the first sexual encounter. Gradually she considers herself as an object of entertainment "Since H, she has needed to feel a man's body pressed against hers, feel his hands, an erect penis. The consolatory erection. She is proud to be the object of lust, and quantity seems to her the gauge of her seduction value" (Ernaux 59).

The reasons behind self-objectification are multiple. After the disclosure of the incident, some of classmates single her out, laugh and taunt at her. In the words of the writer

"I will have to present another list that includes the coarse taunts, the hooting and jeering, the insults passed off as jokes, whereby the male councilors made her an object of scorn and derision, they whose verbal hegemony went unquestioned and was even admired by the female counselors"(Ernaux 61). She also added "It was written, with my toothpaste in big red letters, free of understatement on the mirror over the sink in my room, "Long Live Whores" (63).

And this kind of mockery and insulting words have a substantial impact in the mind of the protagonist and thus gradually she starts considering herself as a sexual object as a part of self objectification and we understand it clearly from these lines of the author: “the girl of '58 does not take offense, she even looks amused ,accustomed to this mocking aggressiveness with herself as its object. Perhaps she sees it as further proof of the error of their judgement .there's been a mistake she is not what they say she is” (63). She laughs and considers herself as its object but also laughs at their error of judgement. In the words of *Mercus Tullius Cicero*: “as fire when thrown into water is cooled down and put out, so also a false accusation when brought against a man of the purest and holiest character ,boils over and is at once dissipated, and vanishes and threats of heaven and sea, himself standing unmoved” (sec. 17).

However, Annie Duchesne is able to come out of the mental health issues. She understands that her remedy lies in reading the books of *Simone De Beauvoir*. “To do so, indeed, seems to me consistent with my desire to forget H, the summer camp at S, and the shame I had felt, since my year studying philosophy and reading the works of Simone De Beauvoir, at having been a “sex object” (Ernaux 139). She became a new and purified person after gaining wider knowledge of Philosophy. In her words “The obsession with food has left me, and my appetite has returned to what it was before the summer camp at S. My period has returned at the end of October. I realise that this story is contained between two temporal boundaries related to food and blood, the boundaries of the body” (151).

Conclusion

Annie Ernaux, the French writer is seen as a feminist writer. Stark reality is presented in almost all her works. The above study has been done in order to focus the memoir *A GirlsStory* regarding objectification in the context of self-objectification and sexual objectification in the female protagonist. Through self-observation habits, acquiring an observer's viewpoint on her body, and gradually allocating cognitive and affective resources to the recurrent implicit query, “How do i look from the outside?” a woman can learn to adjust. Her focus switches to how she is perceived rather than what she is perceiving as an active subject. (Fischer et al. 128). Feminists try to focus on multiple forms of oppression done to the females. With the help of objectification theory, the nature of self-objectification and sexual objectification, its after effects have been explored by analyzing the traumatic experiences and kind of behaviour the protagonist had faced only for being a woman and the ‘other’ class. The study also explores the potential impact of self-objectification, negative impact of self-objectification and how these have been resulted into traumatic psychological issues. Further this study explores that all women are prey to sexual objectification which supports the objectification theory, a major concern in Feminist theory.

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Confessional tone In the Poetry of Kamala Das and Eunice De Souza

Randhir Kumar,
Guest Faculty, I.M.S.
Ranchi University, Ranchi

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Corresponding author:

randhirkumarcuj@gmail.com

In the second half of the twentieth Century a group of American poets started writing on a highly subjective matter. Expression of personality without escape bloomed in the poems. The emotional content appears personal rather than impersonal. In the narrative content the protagonist seems to be unbalanced, afflicted or alienated. This group of poets includes Robert Lowell, John Barry man, W.D. Snodgrass, Theodore Roethke, Anne sexton and Sylvia Plath to establish the confessional pattern in poetry. The new poets in India writing in English initiated their voice in poetry in a manner that resembled with that pattern. They used the 'self' as a poetic symbol around which hover a personal mythology. Among them Kamala Das excels the position. She started writing in open from and in open language. Her poetry displays moral courage with anti-establishment in content and alienation in common theme. This paper intends to navigate through the writings of two poets Kamala Das and Eunice De Souza to trace the pattern confessionalism which was, somehow, alien to the world of Indian Writing in English.

Introduction

Modern poetry is full of ironic remarks. The new poets have used irony as a great weapon in their poetry. New poets like Shiva K. Kumar, Ramanujan, Daruwalla, Grieve Patel, Arun Kolatkar, Kamala Das, and I. H. Rizvi etc. excel in the use of the ironic mode. They have not the blind followers of British English. They have evolved a distinct idiom to express their voice. They have succeeded to nativize or Indianize English in order to reveal typical Indian situations. Shiva K. Kumar uses the apt idiom to describe the abominable practice of floor crossing in an Indian politician: "Vasectomized of all genital urges for love and beauty he often crossed floors as his wife leaped across beds". However, confessionalism dwells on a different platform and we have to dive deep in the writings of Kamala Das and Eunice De Souza.

Analysis

As a confessional poet, Kamala Das confines herself to the reasons of her own experience. By showing she becomes very frank and honest, close and intimate, in her details. He hardly ever writes about 'old, unhappy, far-off things', as words worth and his band of followers did. That's why 'confessional' poetry sounds so appealing and so convincing. The poet's failure in love is displayed clearly in the poem in "My Grandmother's House":

*I who have lost /My way and beg now at strangers' doors to/
Receive love, at least in small change?*

As Kamala Das is devoid of getting emotional attachment from her husband, that's why she keeps relationship with many unknown person to get pure love. Such a confessional attitude of Kamala Das has heightened her universal appeal.

Her hollow marital relationship comes under fire in the poem "Captive" :

*My love is an empty gift, a glided
Empty container, good for show nothing else.*

"Composition" brings to the fore rottenness of her body and the uselessness of her love pranks. In it she states:

*To be frank
I have failed.
I fill my age and my
Uselessness.*

Kamala Das was totally dissatisfied in her marital life, as she was deprived of getting love and affection, so she expresses her view in a melancholic condition. In the poem "The Old Play House":

*There is
No more singing, no more a dance, my mind is an old
Play house with all its lights put out.*

When the light of love is put out, an encircling gloom pervades the mine. This happens usually with a sharp, sensitive person like Kamala Das. Kamala Das has written quite a few poems on decay, disease and death. Many poems like "winter", "The End of spring", "A Relationship", "A Request", "The Suicide" and "Palam" etc. The poem "Too Early the Autumn Sights" signifies early decay and subsequent cheerlessness of the poetess:

*Too early the Autumn Sights
Have come, too soon my lip*

In the poem "The Suicide", the poetess expresses her desire to die when she is unable to find true love. She says:

*O Sea, I am fed up
I want to be simple*

"Palam" is another poem dominated by the thought of decay and death :

*Walk-off from me into lonely night
With my finger-prints on you,*

And death beginning, this day of ours is helplessly ending.

Obviously, Kamala Das is a typical 'confessional' poet who pours her very heart into her poetry. She is largely subjective and auto-biographical, anguished and tortured, letting us peep into her sufferings and tortured psyche. Thanks to her that a reliable poetic voice has been heard in contemporary indo-English verse.

Eunice de Souza is a contemporary Indian English language poet, literary critic and novelist. Among her notable books of poetry is Women in Dutch painting (1988).

In A Necklace of Skulls, Eunice de Souza says, “We push so much under the carpet—/ the carpet’s now a landscape/ A worm embedded in each tuft/ There’s a forest moving.” We’re almost a hundred pages in so can at this point say with confidence that de Souza’s poetry has a great deal to do with this metaphorical, infested carpet. Saying the unsayable, bringing things out from under the carpet, is what gave her first collection—*Fix* (1979)—its potency, a collection which, 30 years on, still comes across as powerful, funny, uplifting and, despite the poet in rebel mode, wonderfully restrained. Is this continued appeal a sign of the timelessness of all good poetry, or is it the result of more local factors?

Perhaps, De Souza doesn’t just say the unsayable, she says it the way characters in her poems say the sayable—the voices in which they push things under carpets, complain about their husbands, scold their children, make idylls of the past and speak to God or his intermediaries. In *Fix*, many of whose poems concern the life of the Goan Roman Catholic community, de Souza takes apart the clichés—the marriages made in heaven and the pillars of the Church. These should be, conventionally, sneering poems, but they turn out, on closer reading, to be sympathetic ones. Take Mrs Hermione Gonsalvez:

In the good old days
I had looks and colour

This, at first blush, reminds one of de Souza’s predecessor, Nissim Ezekiel’s experiments with ‘Indian English’ poems, which featured characters speaking a strained, ‘funny’ English in lines such as “You are all knowing, friends,/ what sweetness is in Miss Pushpa./ I don’t mean only external sweetness/ but internal sweetness...” (‘Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.’) Ezekiel is not, however, speaking in the vernacular; he is at best ventriloquizing it, and at worst, caricaturing it. De Souza does neither. There is a subtle alliance between her voice and the other voices in her poems, an alliance both of idiom and emotion.

Of course, there are also potentially darker poems in *Fix*. There is ‘Autobiographical’ which starts: “Right, now here it comes./ I killed my father when I was three. / I have muddled through several affairs/ and always come out badly./ I’ve learned almost nothing from experience./ I head for the abyss with/ monotonous regularity.” And later “Yes, I’ve tried suicide...I was surprised/ to wake up in the morning.” This is Sylvia Plath territory—“Daddy, I have had to kill you./ You died before I had time...” and the famous “Dying/ Is an art, like everything else” from the poem ‘Lady Lazarus.’ De Souza’s confessional poems have none of Plath’s fascinating neuroses, however. The dead daddy in Plath’s ‘Daddy’ is a figure whose absence is full of sinister meaning, the terrifying Fascist brute, the devil the villagers are stamping out with their dance, the bastard who must be—not remembered but—reckoned with.

To explore what de Souza can do with personal tragedy, it is worth turning away from poems like the one quoted above and instead consider others that are not self-evidently confessional. There is a kind of awkward briskness about the phrases, “Right, now here it comes” and “Yes, I’ve tried suicide” above, a half-embarrassed sense of needing to get over with the confessing. Whereas in a poem like ‘One Man’s Poetry,’ which starts out in confessional but quickly moves into recollection mode, the sympathetic note re-enters and de Souza is suddenly on much firmer ground. She is talking about a dead father.

He left a desk, a chair,
a typewriter and a notebook.
—————
with her in-laws travelling first
in the same train.

EUNICE DE SOUZA'S position as a sympathetic ironist is connected not just with her immediate aims as a poet but with her larger convictions as a feminist. The collection is called *A Necklace of Skulls* but is de Souza really Kali? I think not. Plath ("I eat men like air," etc.) is a more convincing Kali, whereas in the de Souza poem in which the phrase 'necklace of skulls' occurs she has only ventured as far as jokily terrorising bank managers. Kali and Medusa ("Remember Medusa,/ who could not love/ even herself?"), are figures who represent the full force of female rage. They can be invigorating reminders but they do not enter the fibre of de Souza's poems in the way that an idea of feminism as solidarity and sisterhood does. (Among de Souza's achievements is the anthology *Nine Indian Women Poets* in which she presented often-ignored, contemporary poetry in the light of poems Indian women have been writing since 1000 BCE.)

'Transcend Self, You Say' is an illustration of this kind of solidarity—a poem where, in response to that injunction and to the suggestion that she should connect with myth and history rather than just talk about herself, de Souza suddenly plucks out, from that very same history, a teenage widow who was forbidden to see the sun for a year. This is the larger history de Souza fits herself in, this long and subterranean history of women and their silences. In the poem 'de Souza Prabhu's she starts on a more personal note, however:

No matter that
my name is Greek
my surname Portuguese
my language alien.
There are ways
of belonging.
I belong with the lame ducks.सससय

This question about 'ways of belonging' has long been native to Indian English poetry. Ezekiel, who also had to bear the burden of his name, and whose poetry has dwelt on it, again compares interestingly with de Souza here. He can be equally succinct about his mixed up roots: "I went to Roman Catholic school,/ A mugging Jew among the wolves./ They told me I had killed the Christ,/ That year I won the scripture prize./ A Muslim sportsman boxed my ears." But yet again, the comparison between the two poets cannot be sustained for long because de Souza has made a quick jump from the cultural alienation described above to, in the very next lines, another kind of loss—"I've heard it said/ my parents wanted a boy..." Suddenly, a private history of being sidelined has become a shared history of being sidelined.

The opening poem in De Souza's second collection—*Women in Dutch Painting* (1988)—carries forward the idea of giving voice to the silent or silenced ones ("...an aunt who did not answer her husband back/ and not because she was plain"). The phrase 'giving voice' can be misleading, though, because I don't want to suggest that there is anything missionary about de Souza's poetry. Her poems are all the more powerful for not being arguments—they merely relate, and they relate as laconically and deftly as possible.

Talking about her own poetry in *Nine Indian Women Poets*, De Souza says she learnt after the publication of *Fix* that it had been denounced from the pulpit at St Peter's Church in Bandra. She also quotes a critic called Victoria Brady who considers her poetry 'religious.' The contrast between argument and portrayal becomes important here. In what ways are de Souza's poems about faith? Christianity has a very concrete presence in her poems but it has less to do with theological questions and more to do with the social forms Christianity takes in Goan life—as conversations, gossip, family history, material aspirations, prejudices, and hypocrisies.

The concerns here are not so much about good, bad, right and wrong as about who should marry whom and “who should decorate the altar and how.”

For a grappling with Christianity as belief one has to turn to a poet like Emily Dickinson, who has no qualms about directly addressing the pulpit: “You’re right—‘the way *is* narrow’—/ And ‘difficult the Gate’—/ And ‘few there be’— Correct again—/ That ‘enter in— thereat’—.” This is from a poem in which Dickinson mocks the idea of religious salvation as some kind of a deal with the divine which you pay for with death and following which, if you’ve been a good investor, you receive the ‘dividend’ of heaven. Both poets can be scornful but De Souza never generalizes her scorn, whereas Dickinson is a poet of abstractions.

One of my favorite poems in *Necklace* illustrates this quality of intimacy:

The Road
As we came out of the church

I am still learning
to cross the road.

This is not obviously a religious poem but neither is it obviously not one. Religion is a film that settles over things—a faint wash that makes things both sadder and more exasperating. The poem weaves back and forth unstrenuously between the images of girls in first communion dresses, the wordless smile of a grandmother, the memory of a nun who possibly provided some kind of a bulwark against childhood anguish, and the guilt-inducing as well as guilty ‘they’ who appear in several of de Souza’s poems.

‘The Road’ is a poem in which the question of faith is rendered as a kind of nostalgia. The Emily Dickinson kind of conversation with the pulpit may have taken place in the poet’s mind, but if so, it took place at some indefinite point way before the poem came to be. In the present of the poem all that remains is the gently ironic wish for lofty thoughts, ironic because de Souza neither wants to be—nor can be—lofty.

This is liberating for both poet and reader. The critic Craig Raine says of Emily Dickinson, “Her attitude is theologically relaxed rather than atheistically militant. She can be sarcastic about sectarianism yet tender towards the central Christian myth.” De Souza has an even more relaxed attitude, for she is concerned with the tenets of Christianity only insofar as they seep into local life and she is, besides, concerned with much more than those tenets. She talks to the saint-poet Tuka, tells him she loves his verse but scolds him for neglecting his wife. She offers a coconut at the temple for her lover. She addresses, in different poems, a kind of immanent ‘god rock.’

“God rock, I’m a pilgrim./ Tell me—/ Where does the heart find rest?”

A *Necklace of Skulls* brings together four collections of Eunice de Souza’s poetry and also includes older, unpublished poems as well as recent work. This represents a career spanning 30 years and, at a little more than 100 pages, it is an undeniably slim output. This slimness, however, is entirely acceptable, even welcome, because it is an indication, in de Souza’s case, of rigour. She is the kind of poet who will not make public a line more than what she absolutely must.

What is worth considering, though, is the sense in her poetry, from her second collection on, of a closing inwards, as if she has been moving from very early in her career towards a place where silence will take over. (“Where does the heart find rest?”) There are marvellous poems in the collection *Women in Dutch Painting* such as ‘The Road,’ ‘Transcend Self, You Say’ and ‘Five London Pieces.’ But on the whole, that particular collection sometimes comes

across as a reprise to *Fix* and at other times seems focused on the need to stop the fevered wrestling with the self via poetry and just let things be. In the five-line ‘Don’t Look for My Life in These Poems’ we come very close to a feeling of complete negation:

“All I’ve learnt from pain/ I always knew,/ but could not do.”

Conclusion

Both Kamala Das and Eunice De Souza extend their personal world to the exterior exigencies to expose the turmoil that runs within.

Talking about how the ‘pitch’ of a line is an index of its honesty, Derek Walcott says, “The strange thing about poetry that makes it survive and makes it immortal is that somehow in the language of the mind of any race...what survives is that reality, that vibration that happens differently to millions and millions of people over generations, and that is where the validity of the thing is.”

He is talking about de Souza’s poetry. It will survive in the language of the mind, the vernacular in the deep sense, because that is the language in which she has, with unerring instinct, chosen to write it.

In the same way Kamala Das, too, delves on the pattern of confessionalism mostly.

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Concept of Dhvani and its Implications for Signification

Dyuti Mishra

Guest Lecturer,

Rajeev Gandhi Government Post Graduate College Mandsaur (M.P.)

Prashant Mishra,

Professor,

Swami Vivekanand Government Post Graduate College, Neemuch (M.P.)

Abstract

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Corresponding author:

drprasantmishra@yahoo.co.in

The concept of dhvani, or suggestion, is central to Sanskrit poetics, as theorized by Anandavardhana in *Dhvanyaloka* and expanded by Abhinavagupta. Dhvani transcends denotative (abhida) and metaphorical (lakshana) meanings to reveal a deeper, suggestive meaning (vyanjana). This paper explores the three powers of words—denotation, indication, and suggestion—arguing that poetic discourse relies on dhvani to evoke aesthetic experience. Through analysis of literary and theoretical perspectives, it establishes dhvani as the essence of poetry, distinguishing it from everyday communication. The discussion also highlights dhvani's role in artistic suppression, metaphor, and layered interpretation in literary expression.

Introduction

According to the principle of *dhvani*, *dhvani* is the soul of poetry. Anandavardhan (c. A.D. 860) is the most important exponent of the principle of *dhvani*. He developed the concept of *dhvani* in his important work *Dhvanyalok*. According to this principle, poetry that possesses the elements of *dhvani* is the highest kind of poetry. Poetry endowed with *dhvani* has been regarded as the poetry in which the *sabda* (word) and *artha* (content/meaning) instead of expressing their original form and meaning express the meaning which is the highest mystery of poetry. *Dhvani* implies different types of meaning including *vacayartha* (expressive), *lakshanartha* (indicative) and *vyanjanartha* (suggestive). These three types of meaning are called the power of words (*shabda Shakti*). Hence in order to explain the nature of *dhvani*, it becomes necessary to explain the power of words (*shabda shakti*).

Abhinavagupta (c. AD 980) discusses three important powers or functions of words. These three important powers of words are *abhida*, *lakshana* and *tatparya*. *abhida* refers to the denotative or the literal meaning of words. It gives the lexical meaning of words. *lakshana* refers to the metaphorical meaning or sense. It provides indicative or secondary meaning derived from the metaphorical sense of words. Besides *abhida* (lexical meaning) and *lakshana* (metaphorical meaning), there is another power of word known as *tatparya*. When the isolated word meanings provided by 'abhida' are put together into a sequential whole, the meaning generated by the sequential association or relationship is called *tatparya*. Besides these three functions, Abhinavagupta describes the fourth important power or function that he designates as *dhvanior* suggestivity. *dhvani* is different from the first three powers *abhida*, *lakshana*, and *tatparya*. It is known by different terms such as: *dhvanana*, *dyotana*, *vyanjana*, *pratyayana* and *avagama*.

Dhvani or suggested sense is that which is derived from beyond the denotative and indicative senses and is even in addition to both of the denotative and indicative meanings.

The denotative and indicative meanings are not erased but are drowned in the suggested meaning. The literal and metaphorical meanings are extended to the suggested meaning and become a part of it.

Arguments

The power of word that provides us information about the sign or the formal literal meaning is called *abhida*. The word containing *abhida* is called *vacaka*. *Abhida* is also known by the names of *mukhya* (main) or *agrima*(front/first) as it provides us the main or the initial meaning of a word. The word that apprises us about the real denotative meaning is called *vacaka*. *vacaka* is the primary literal meaning of a sign or a word that is assigned arbitrarily and conventionally. *lakshana* refers to the secondary meaning of a word which implies a different meaning other than the primary literal meaning of a word. The metaphorical meaning of a word derived from its contextual use is called *lakshanartha*. The literary or poetic discourse is different from the mundane everyday communication. Everyday speech is confined to *vacka* or the literal meaning of words. Poetry involves embellishment and its language dominates in the use of metaphors, paradox, hyperbole and such other tropes. The *lakshanartha* or metaphorical use of words in a context is regarded as the secondary meaning of a word. Apart from the primary and the secondary meaning of words, a third and the higher level of meaning that is grafted on the primary literal meaning and secondary metaphorical meaning is called *vyanjanartha* or suggested meaning. The denotative and the contextual meaning facilitates in the comprehension of the suggested meaning. The suggested meaning cannot function if divorced from the denotative and the metaphorical meaning. According to Thampi (1992), “The suggested meaning cannot be considered to be the sum total of the component parts based on these meanings; but it also transcends them. It is like the loveliness of a beautiful woman which is not the total of the beauty of the separate limbs and features but something transcending them though based on and projected by them” (316). The suggested meaning can be interpreted only in association with the denotative and the connotative meanings. The primary and the secondary meanings are a means to understand the suggested meaning in poetry. According to Thampi,

... we understand the primary meaning of words in a poem not to rest on it but to relish the suggested meaning. The primary meanings of words are fixed by convention; but the suggested meanings are accessible only to men with trained poetic sensibility. A person may be a competent grammarian or a lexicographer; but if he lacks poetic sensibility the suggested meaning will elude him (316-317).

The power by which the *sabda* (word) and *artha* (meaning) becomes secondary and the suggested meaning becomes visible and comprehensible is called *vyanjana*. It is the power that removes the outer layer meaning and makes expressible the inherent suggested meaning. The meaning that remains invisible by *abhida* (denotative meaning) and *lakshana*(metaphorical meaning) is made visible or brought to light by *vyanjana*. There are two types of *vyanjana* (i) *sabdi* (word) and (ii) *arthi* (meaning). Where meaning is the main and the suggested sense is echoed through it, it is called *sabdivyanjana* and where meaning dominates, it is called *arthivyanjana*. *Vyanjana* is a word power but in cases where a word by its meaning again suggests another sense, it is *arthivyanjana* and the word is it's only auxiliary. In addition to it, in *sabdivyanjana* element of *arthivyanjana* too or meaning suggestion is present and in *arthivyanjana* too *sabdivyanjana* is present. In *sabdivyanjana* when polysemous words are used then the ‘*abhida*’ regulator controls one sense of *abhida* and that sense is its *vacayartha*. This is called *abhida* centric *vyanjana*. But in another case when a metaphysical phrase is used to fulfil some end, it is known as *lakshana* centric *sabdivyanjana*.

In *arthivyanjana*, a particular word aids to the comprehension of the intermediary suggestive meaning. In this case, the suggestiveness is of the sense but at the same time, it is also of the intermediary or auxiliary word. In some cases, suggestiveness takes place through *vacarthaand* in some cases suggestiveness or suggestive meaning takes place through *lakshanartha* or metaphorical meaning. Some important conclusions derived from the *dhvanitheory* are: (i) Suggestiveness cannot be seen in terms of *abhida*(denotative) and *lakshana* (indicative). (ii) Suggestiveness is inherent in poetry. (iii) Suggestiveness is related to *vacyartha* or the stated meaning. Anandvardhan in *Dhvanyaloka* provides the concept of relationship between the stated meaning and the suggested meaning explaining it with the metaphor of the lamp and the jar:

Just as man interested in perceiving objects (in the dark) directs his efforts towards securing a lamp since it is a means to realize his end, so also does one who is ultimately interested in the suggested meaning proceed by first evincing interest in the conventional meaning.

Just as the purport of a sentence is grasped through the meaning of individual words, the knowledge of that sense is got at only through the medium of the explicit sense.

Though by its own power the word-import is responsible for conveying the sentence-import, just as it escapes notice once its purpose is served – so also that suggested meaning flashes suddenly across the truth-perceiving minds of perceptive critics when they turn away from the literal meaning (Devy 32).

Jespersen talks about the three qualities of speech mainly Expression, Impression and Suppression. *Abhida* parallels expression, *lakshana* impression and *vyanjana* suppression. According to Jespersen, suggestion is impression through suppression. *Vyanjana* applies not only to the signification of the ordinary everyday communication but it is the central doctrine of Sanskrit poetics. It has been discussed more in relation to the literary discourse than the everyday mundane communication. The poetic discourse is not a direct one. Many elements are suppressed in a literary art. It is marked by *vyanjana* or suggestion. But it is the suppressive hidden element that is significant in suggestion. Professor Sastri (1970) explores the cases of suppression in art. According to him, novelty is not the cause of suppression though the things suppressed appear novel when they are allowed to appear in art. Similarly concealment is not suppression. The things concealed for a time being when allowed to be unveiled charm us. According to Sastri, "... *Vyanjana* makes it possible for art, for every suggestive art, to re-live its life in itself through a purely artistic process and to find its fulfilment and consummation in a definitely artistic purpose. That is the secret of the force of the whole charm of *vyanjana*" (29). Sastri regards *vyanjana* an artistic process. He rejects the previous arguments which regard *vyanjana* as the 'prima facie' meaning of words. Similarly he also rejects *vyanjana* as the secondary significatory power. According to Sastri, "Secondary significatory power is a sort of fiction which we have introduced in the philosophy of interpretation for purposes of convenience, the result of the superimposition of a certain subjective aspect made intentionally and consciously by the subject upon the expression that is used" (29). The secondary significatory power cannot also be regarded as *vyanjana* as the readers pick up some loose phrases used by the writers and interpret them subjectively to explore the intention of the writer. They confuse the interpretative freedom of interpreting phrases in a different manner than the primary meaning of phrases with *vyanjana* or suggestion. According to Sastri, this is not *vyanjana* because:

No: the reason is this: you deliberately resort to a certain process of interpretation, because you feel some difficulty in understanding the phrase in its literal sense. The phrase used cannot be construed strictly and your conscious experience of some hitch or difficulty is at the root of the secondary interpretation that is adopted. That

is what I mean when I say that it is a sort of fiction which you create for purposes of interpretation. That is not suggestion (30).

However, when a speaker intentionally uses a phrase with some purpose by adopting the secondary mode of expression, he wishes to conceal an idea for a time being while intending it to be understood not in a subjective but in an agreeable manner by gathering its secondary meaning from the content. The veiled element is not interpreted from the expression or statement but inferred from the content. According to Sastri, this suppressed or suggested element inferred from the content is *vyanjana*. Sastri regards *vyanjana* as an artistic process. According to him,

It is an essentially artistic process as it involves suppression, not of the everyday type but of the agreeable type. It is an essentially artistic process because it gives us an impression, not the ordinary commonplace impression which sentences give, not the impression of the craftsmanlike or mechanical type but a delicate impression described as artistic thrill (31-32).

Dhvani refers to *vyanjana* or suggestive meaning though it contains in itself *abhida* (literal meaning) and *lakshana* (metaphorical meaning) as well. It is the suggested meaning that is comprehended through going through the successive chain of the literal, metaphorical and the tertiary meanings.

Dhvani cannot be equated with only *abhida* or *lakshana* or *vyanjana*. The concept of *dhvani* cannot be restricted to only single sense as 'suggestion'. *Dhvani* covers all the aspects of language – the physical, the metaphorical and the aesthetic. It pertains more to the literary discourse than the ordinary communication. Referring to the unlimited potential of *dhvani*, Isaeva (1995) writes, "Both *abhida* and *lakshana* are subordinated and conquered by *dhvani* when it moves on, being carried away by its passionate longing to reveal something about the universe that only language can know" (169).

Conclusion

The *dhvani* theory extended the denotative and the metaphorical meaning to augment them into suggestive meaning. The *abhida* (denotative) and the *lakshana* (metaphorical meaning) are revealed in literary discourse as a part of *vyanjana* or suggested meaning. The concept of *dhvani* or *vyanjana* is more relevant to literary discourse than the everyday communication where the denotative (*abhida*) and the *lakshana* (metaphorical) meaning dominate. Literary discourse is always deviant and characterized by suppression of many elements. These suppressive and deviant elements are rich in *vyanjana* or suggestiveness. *Dhvani* refers to *vyanjana* or the suppressive elements in poetry. The suppressive element cannot be interpreted from the literal language but can be surmised from the context. The inference of the suggested meaning from the context is *vyanjana*. Abhinavagupta, in this way, extends the discussion on the denotative and metaphorical meaning to the suggested meaning. His concept of *dhvani* is all inclusive. It included in its purview the denotative, the metaphorical and the suggested meanings. However, unlike the concept of *sphota*, *dhvani* applies more to literary discourse than the everyday communication.

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Coelho's Symbolic Psycho-Spiritual Portrayal in *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept*

Erenius Toppo
Research Scholar,
University Department of English, Ranchi University, Ranchi

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Corresponding author:

toppoerenius@gmail.com

Abstract

This journal explores Paulo Coelho's novel **By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept** (1994) as symbolic prototypes that reflect complex human psychological, religious, spiritual, anthropological, and social phenomena. An analysis of both protagonists namely Pilar and Santiago and minor characters, highlights Coelho's craftsmanship in prototypical plot construction and character portrayal, emphasizing their quests, meaning of life in religious faith and the pursuit of destiny amidst challenging journeys. Drawing from Todorov's theories, the text discusses the dual nature of characters as individuals and prototypes, revealing how they can embody universal traits or represent limited perspectives. In *The River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept* Coelho's characters illustrate the intricacies of human nature, showcasing a spectrum of behaviours and attitudes that reflect broader existential themes.

Introduction

The characters in Paulo Coelho's **By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept** (1994) are not merely individuals but symbolic prototypes embodying human psychological, Religious, spiritual, anthropological, and social phenomena. By exploring Coelho's characters, we uncover the complexity and enigma of human nature, quest, longing, and attitudes. They represent in them the simplicity, complexity and enigma of human nature, aspirations and attitudes. They become behavioural and attitudinal representations of entities and types.

Coelho exhibits great craftsmanship in his construction of plots and the selection and portrayal of his typescripts. The plots are based on personal quests and achieving one's destiny through tortuous, daunting, conflicting life journeys. Characters are individuals as well as prototypes, as Todorov describes in *Theories of the Symbol*:

"If the defining feature of symbols, and thus of the technique of symbolic interpretation, is their constant and universal meaning, the associative technique is defined for its part, as we might suppose, by its individual character, the individual in question being obviously not the interpreter but the producer." (Todorov. Theories of the Symbol251)

The characterization is not limited to individual flat characters always. At times they represent limited individuals, narrowing the vistas; at other times they are immediately universal

as Todorov further explicates;

These associations on the part of the dreamer, recorded at a particular moment in his life, are, “as we might expect, devoid of any universality. One symbolizing element may evoke innumerable symbolized elements; conversely, one symbolized element may be designated by an infinite number of symbolizers. ‘Not only are the elements of a dream determined by the dream-thoughts many times over, but the individual dream-thoughts are represented in the dream by several elements’” (ID, 4, 284). (Todorov.Theories of the Symbol 252)

Symbolism is a literary device that employs symbols—such as words, people, marks, signs, locations, or abstract ideas—to represent meanings beyond their literal interpretation. In literature, symbolism creates impact by adding depth and significance to actions, objects, or names. It connects concrete elements to more abstract concepts, enhancing the overall meaning.

This technique enables writers to convey ideas indirectly, allowing for nuance and complexity in their work. However, it is crucial that the entire context of the narrative supports the symbolic meanings being presented.

Symbolism operates on multiple levels, ranging from static signs and expressions to more complex ideas that reveal intrinsic truths and mysteries. Its pervasive nature contributes to a transcultural quality, making it relevant across different contexts. The exploration and analysis of symbolism can be seen in **By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept** of Coelho.

Arguments

The novel **By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept** by Paulo Coelho revolves around the protagonist Pilar’s journey to find herself. Other characters in the novel are Santiago, Pilar’s childhood friend who has become a spiritual leader. The Lady comes across as the one who teaches Pilar about the feminine side of God, and the Devil represents the negative aspects of life. (supersummary.com)

According to the bookrags.com summary, Pilar is the main character in a book who starts off as a closed-off and timid person, deeply focused on planning her future and finding love. Growing up in the conservative town of Soria, Spain, she dreams of marrying a good man and having a stable life. However, her past experiences with relationships—particularly her missteps with love and fear of rejection—leave her feeling doomed in her romantic pursuits. When she reconnects with a childhood friend, she begins to learn to let go and trust more in her relationships.(bookrags.com)

Further, Supersummary.com finds her in her late twenties who has grown disillusioned with her life and is searching for deeper meaning and fulfillment. Pilar is intelligent, introspective, and emotionally complex, often reflecting on her past and the choices she has made.

Throughout the novel, Pilar undergoes a significant transformation. Her reunion with Santiago, her childhood love, acts as a catalyst for this change. Santiago’s spiritual journey and teachings challenge Pilar to confront her fears, embrace her emotions, and open herself up to the possibility of love and faith. Pilar’s journey is one of self-discovery and spiritual awakening. She learns to reconcile her past with her present, finding strength and clarity in her emotions and experiences. Her character embodies the themes of love, forgiveness, and the pursuit of one’s true path in life.(supersummary.com)

In Coelho’s novel **By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept**, Santiago is a key character who has transformed significantly over the years. Once a childhood friend of the protagonist, Pilar, Santiago has evolved into a charismatic spiritual leader. His journey has taken him around the world, where he has explored various cultures and religions, particularly focusing

on the feminine aspect of divinity.

Santiago's character is marked by his deep spirituality and ability to inspire others. He plays a crucial role in helping Pilar open her mind and heart to new possibilities, guiding her through her struggles and fears. Their reunion and subsequent journey together form the core of the novel's exploration of love, faith, and personal transformation. ([supersummary](#))

Santiago's spiritual journey has had a profound impact on him in several key ways. Santiago's life and philosophy are impactfully spiritual and psychological.

There is an enhanced Spiritual Understanding in Santiago. His exploration of different cultures and spiritual practices deepens his understanding of spirituality, particularly the feminine aspect of divinity. This broadens his perspective and enriches his faith. His journey transforms him from a curious seeker into a charismatic spiritual leader. The experiences he gains along the way shape his beliefs and strengthen his resolve to inspire and guide others. Santiago's reunion with Pilar forces him to confront unresolved emotions from their past. This leads to significant emotional growth and healing, allowing him to move forward with a clearer heart and mind. Santiago's spiritual insights and teachings have a profound impact on those around him, especially Pilar. His ability to guide and support others on their spiritual paths highlights his role as a mentor and leader. Overall, Santiago's journey is one of continuous learning and transformation, deeply influencing his character and his interactions with others. ([Paulo Coelho - Allen Cheng](#))

Santiago's views on love and spirituality are deeply intertwined and central to his character in **By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept**. His views are symbolically representative of Christian upbringing, teaching and tradition.

Santiago sees love as a powerful, divine force that transcends human understanding. He believes that true love is a reflection of the divine and that it has the power to transform and heal individuals. For Santiago, spirituality is not just about religious practices but about a deep, personal connection with the divine. He views love as a pathway to this connection, where loving deeply and truly can bring one closer to God. Santiago's spiritual journey emphasizes the importance of the feminine aspect of divinity. He believes that embracing this aspect can lead to a more balanced and holistic understanding of spirituality. Santiago views both love and spirituality as means of personal growth and healing. He believes that through love, one can confront and overcome personal fears and insecurities, leading to profound transformation. Santiago's teachings often focus on how love and spirituality can guide and inspire individuals to live more meaningful and fulfilling lives. He encourages others to open their hearts and embrace both love and faith. Santiago's perspective on love and spirituality is holistic, seeing them as interconnected forces that enrich and elevate the human experience. ([goodreads.com](#))

In **By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept**, Santiago and Pilar's relationship evolves significantly as pathfinders' guide, spiritual solace and consolation to desperate seekers of meaning and fulfilment in Christian religious faith and tradition.

Despite years of separation, their bond as childhood friends remains strong. They reunite and embark on a journey of rediscovery, reconnecting on a deeper level. They have emotional and Spiritual Growth. Santiago's spiritual insights challenge Pilar to embrace her emotions, fostering emotional and spiritual growth. Their love and faith increase. Their relationship blends romantic love and spiritual connection, influencing each other's perspectives on love and spirituality. Their relationship is challenging but bringing healing and wholeness. Despite facing challenges, their relationship brings healing and strength, fostering forgiveness and growth. Ultimately, their relationship is transformative, guiding Pilar to find her true path and deepening Santiago's understanding of love and spirituality. ([goodreads.com/book](#))

Further Goodreads.com discovers that their relationship highlights the interplay between love and spirituality, inspiring personal growth and change. Santiago and Pilar's relationship in *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept* is a compelling journey of rediscovery, emotional and spiritual growth, and transformative love. Despite years of separation, their childhood bond remains strong as they reunite and delve into their emotional and spiritual depths. Their relationship intertwines romantic love and spiritual connection, ultimately guiding them towards personal growth and transformation. (goodreads.com)

Santiago's teachings and enlightenment to Pilar in **By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept** are deeply spiritual and transformative. Here are some key aspects of his teachings according to goodreads.com.

Santiago emphasizes the importance of recognizing and embracing the feminine aspect of divinity. He believes that this balance is essential for a holistic spiritual understanding and encourages Pilar to explore this concept. Santiago teaches Pilar that love is a divine force capable of profound transformation. He encourages her to see love not just as an emotion but as a spiritual path that can lead to deeper faith and personal growth. A significant part of Santiago's teachings involves helping Pilar confront and overcome her fears. He guides her to face her insecurities and doubts, showing her that embracing vulnerability is a strength. Living in the Present: Santiago stresses the importance of living in the present moment. He teaches Pilar to let go of past regrets and future anxieties, focusing instead on the here and now as a way to find peace and clarity. Faith and Surrender: Santiago encourages Pilar to have faith and to surrender to the divine will. He believes that true faith involves trusting in the journey and being open to the guidance of the divine, even when the path is unclear. Through his teachings, Santiago helps Pilar understand that true change comes from within. He guides her on a journey of self-discovery, helping her to reconnect with her inner self and find her true path. (goodreads.com)

Santiago's teachings are not just about imparting knowledge but about inspiring Pilar to embark on her own spiritual journey. His guidance helps her to see the world and herself in a new light, leading to profound personal and spiritual transformation.

Santiago imparts deeply spiritual and transformative teachings to Pilar, guiding her on a profound spiritual journey. His teachings encompass embracing the feminine divine, recognizing the power of love as a divine force, overcoming fear, living in the present moment, having faith and surrendering to the divine will, and undergoing inner transformation. Santiago's guidance serves as an inspiration for Pilar to embark on her own spiritual journey, leading to deep personal and spiritual transformation.

Pilar's response to Santiago's teachings evolves significantly throughout *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept*.

At first, Pilar is sceptical of Santiago's spiritual beliefs and teachings. She struggles to reconcile his views with her own experiences and doubts the practicality of his spiritual insights. As they spend more time together, Pilar begins to open her mind and heart to Santiago's teachings. His genuine faith and the depth of his spiritual understanding start to resonate with her, prompting her to reconsider her own beliefs. Santiago's teachings challenge Pilar to confront her fears and insecurities. This process is often difficult and emotional, but it leads to significant personal growth. Pilar learns to embrace her vulnerabilities and find strength in them. Pilar experiences a spiritual awakening as she delves deeper into Santiago's teachings. She starts to see love as a divine force and begins to understand the importance of the feminine aspect of divinity. This awakening brings her a sense of peace and clarity. Ultimately, Pilar undergoes a profound transformation. She becomes more connected to her emotions, more open to love, and more attuned to her spiritual path. Santiago's teachings help her find

a new sense of purpose and fulfilment. Pilar's journey also impacts Santiago. Her willingness to engage with his teachings and her own spiritual growth inspire him and reinforce his beliefs. Their relationship becomes a mutual journey of discovery and transformation. ([goodreads.com](https://www.goodreads.com))

Pilar's response to Santiago's teachings is a central theme of the novel, highlighting the power of love and faith to inspire personal and spiritual growth. Throughout the novel Pilar's response to Santiago's teachings undergoes a significant evolution, reflecting the transformative power of love and faith. Initially sceptical, Pilar gradually becomes more open to Santiago's spiritual beliefs, leading to emotional confrontation and personal growth. This process culminates in a spiritual awakening and profound transformation, as Pilar embraces her vulnerabilities and experiences a newfound sense of purpose and fulfilment. Importantly, Pilar's journey also impacts Santiago, inspiring mutual growth and reinforcing the novel's central theme of personal and spiritual transformation through love and faith.

Conclusion

In Paulo Coelho's *The River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept*, the interplay of symbolic prototypes within the narrative offers profound insights into the complexities of human psychology, spirituality, and social dynamics. Through the multifaceted characters of Pilar and Santiago, along with the other minor characters, Coelho crafts a rich tapestry that explores the duality of individual experiences and universal themes. Pilar's transformative journey encapsulates the essence of self-discovery and the quest for deeper meaning in life, while Santiago's evolution as a spiritual leader reflects the struggles between personal desires and existential purposes.

The application of Todorov's theories on symbolism further enhances our understanding of these characters as both unique individuals and representatives of broader human conditions. Coelho's portrayal of human nature reveals a spectrum of behaviours and attitudes that resonate beyond the pages, urging readers to contemplate their paths and aspirations. The intricate symbolism embedded within the plot reinforces the significance of the characters' journeys, inviting reflections on faith, destiny, and the challenges of existence.

Ultimately, Coelho's work serves as a reminder of the power of storytelling to connect with universal experiences, encouraging readers to embrace the complexities of their own lives. By intertwining personal quests with overarching existential themes, *The River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept* becomes not just a narrative of individual journeys, but a broader exploration of the human condition itself.

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Methods of Teaching Pronunciation

Shilpi Sinha
Research Scholar
University Department of English
Ranchi University, Ranchi

Abstract

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Corresponding author:

sinha.shilpi13@gmail.com

Effective pronunciation instruction is essential for language learners to communicate accurately and confidently. Pronunciation is a complex skill that involves the coordination of articulatory, auditory, and kinaesthetic abilities. This article discusses various methods of teaching pronunciation, including the audio-lingual method, communicative approach, phonetic method, task-based learning, and technology-enhanced pronunciation instruction. The article aims to provide language instructors with a comprehensive overview of pronunciation teaching methods, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses. It also explores the integration of multiple approaches to create a comprehensive pronunciation program that meets the diverse needs of language learners. The article also aims to provide language instructors with practical suggestions and insights for teaching pronunciation effectively. It also seeks to promote a deeper understanding of the complexities of pronunciation instruction and the importance of prioritizing pronunciation teaching in language classrooms.

Introduction

Pronunciation is increasingly recognized as an essential skill that learners must command for effective communication (Munro & Derwing 11). It is the bridge that connects language learners to native speakers, enabling them to convey their intended meaning and participate fully in social interactions. Despite its importance, pronunciation instruction often receives inadequate attention in language classrooms. Language instructors often prioritize grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension over pronunciation, assuming that learners will naturally develop accurate pronunciation through exposure to the language. However, research suggests that pronunciation instruction requires explicit teaching and practice to help learners overcome the interference of their native language and develop the necessary skills to communicate effectively.

“Teaching of pronunciation is a complex task as pronunciation of a word varies from language to language and even region to region. The pronunciation of English itself has undergone a drastic change from time of Chaucer to the present times. It is therefore, interesting to study the changes in pronunciation during different era.” (Rai 145)

Pronunciation instruction poses several challenges for language instructors. One of the primary challenges is the diversity of learners’ native languages and pronunciation backgrounds. Learners from different linguistic backgrounds may have distinct pronunciation patterns, making it difficult for instructors to tailor instruction

to meet individual needs. For example, “In Hindi, each letter stands for a particular sound and each sound has only one fixed symbol but English is a peculiar language. For twenty-six alphabets, there are forty-four sounds. Hence, difficulties are faced by the learner.” (Rai 147)

Main Thrust

Pronunciation instruction requires specialized training and expertise. Instructors need to have a deep understanding of phonetics, phonology, and pronunciation pedagogy to design effective instruction and provide learners with constructive feedback. “The teacher should pay proper attention to teach the stress, rhythm and intonation patterns of English which are different from those of the mother tongue of the child. Sufficient practice should be given to the pupils in these aspects until they become automatic habits.” (Kohli 104)

Various methods / approaches have been developed to teach pronunciation which are discussed below:

Audio-Lingual Method

The audio-lingual method emphasizes listening and repeating. Learners listen to native speakers and repeat words, phrases, and sentences to practice pronunciation. This approach focuses on mimicry and drilling, aiming to develop learners’ ability to produce accurate pronunciation through repetition and imitation. “Listening plays a very important role in the mental development of the child. The students should be trained in learning the process of listening and imitating to learn correct pronunciation.” (Siddiqui 185)

Communicative Approach

The communicative approach prioritizes communication and authentic language use. Learners engage in real-life conversations, role-plays, and discussions to practice pronunciation in context. This approach emphasizes functional language use, encouraging learners to use pronunciation to convey meaning and achieve communicative goals. It emphasizes meaningful interaction and practical application, rather than simply focusing on phonetic accuracy in isolation. It aims to equip students with the skills and knowledge they need to communicate effectively and confidently in real-world situations.

Phonetic Method

The phonetic method focuses on the physical aspects of pronunciation, such as articulation, intonation, and rhythm. Learners learn the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to transcribe and practice pronunciation. This approach provides learners with a detailed understanding of pronunciation features, enabling them to make informed decisions about pronunciation production. “The method of Phonetics is a scientific method. Here the teacher presents before the students the ideal form of word pronunciation. The students are given knowledge of English phonetics including many entirely new sounds in English.” (Siddiqui 187)

Task-Based Learning

Task-based learning is a student-centred learning which involves learners completing tasks that require pronunciation practice, such as ordering food, making a reservation, or participating in a job interview. This approach emphasizes authentic language use, providing learners with opportunities to practice pronunciation in real-life contexts. The goal is to improve pronunciation through meaningful

communication, rather than through rote repetition or drills. In communicative approach, focus is on overall communication and social interaction whereas task-based learning has a targeted focus on the language form and structure needed for specific tasks, including pronunciation.

Technology-Enhanced Pronunciation Instruction

Technology-enhanced pronunciation instruction utilizes digital tools to provide learners with personalized pronunciation feedback and practice. Software programs, mobile apps, and online resources offer learners opportunities to record themselves, receive feedback, and engage in pronunciation practice exercises. This approach provides learners with flexible and autonomous pronunciation practice opportunities.

Each of these methods has its own advantages and disadvantages. The audio-lingual method, for instance, can be effective for beginners, but it may not provide sufficient opportunities for authentic communication. The communicative approach, on the other hand, emphasizes authentic communication, but it may not provide sufficient attention to pronunciation accuracy. The phonetic method requires a very well trained teacher. Once the students understand the rules they understand the pronunciation very properly but this method is less practised. Also, students tend to forget pronunciation of many words after a certain lapse of time. Task based learning pronunciation focuses both on the fluency and accuracy but it can be less suitable for learners with specific language needs, such as those with learning disabilities or those who are not yet comfortable speaking in the target language. While technology enhanced pronunciation teaching improves accuracy, increases accessibility and personalizes learning experiences, there is the possibility of reducing human interaction and real-world problem-solving abilities.

Integrating Multiple Approaches

While each approach has its strengths and weaknesses, language instructors can combine multiple approaches to create a comprehensive pronunciation program. For example, using the audio-lingual method to introduce new pronunciation features, followed by communicative activities that provide opportunities for authentic language use. Incorporating phonetics-based instruction to provide learners with a detailed understanding of pronunciation features, and then using task-based learning to practice pronunciation in real-life contexts. Utilizing technology-enhanced pronunciation instruction to provide learners with personalized feedback and practice opportunities, and then engaging in communicative activities that encourage learners to use correct pronunciation to convey meaning. By integrating multiple approaches, instructors can create a pronunciation program that meets the diverse needs of learners and provide them with a comprehensive range of pronunciation skills.

Conclusion

Teaching of pronunciation is very essential to cultivate the habit of listening and speaking. (Rai 145). It is a complex task that requires a multifaceted approach. Language instructors can draw on various methods, including the audio-lingual method, communicative approach, phonetics method, task-based learning, and technology-enhanced pronunciation instruction. By combining these methods and approaches, instructors can create a comprehensive pronunciation program that helps language learners achieve accurate and confident pronunciation of the target language.

When learners receive explicit pronunciation instruction, they are better equipped to participate fully in social interactions, convey their intended meaning, and negotiate meaning with native speakers. Moreover, pronunciation instruction is not a one-time event, but rather an ongoing process and is an integral part of language instruction that requires continuous practice and feedback. Instructors should provide learners with regular opportunities to practice pronunciation, receive feedback, and reflect on their progress. Effective pronunciation instruction can enhance learners' language learning experience, promote cultural understanding, and foster global communication.

Pronunciation should be integrated into all aspects of language teaching, including grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, and listening. Finally, instructors should stay updated on the latest research and methodologies in pronunciation instruction. They should attend conferences, workshops, and training sessions to enhance their knowledge and skills in teaching pronunciation. "A pupil's pronunciation cannot be better than that of his teacher. The teacher of English who wants his pupils to speak English correctly should ensure that his own pronunciation is not defective. His speech should be clear and natural." (Kohli 104)

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Representation of Animals in Garo Folktales

L. K. Gracy,
Department of English,
North-Eastern Hill University.
Tura Campus, Meghalaya

Abstract

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Corresponding author:

lkgracy@gmail.com

Humans and animals have lived together since the beginning, and in earlier times to understand nature, humans turned to animals to derive some explanation. One prominent feature of folklore is its connection to nature and natural phenomena. In this paper, I would be examining the representation of animals and their connection to humans in Garo folktales. In this context, I have selected Dhoronsing K Sangma's collection of Garo folklores *A' "chikGolporangBak I* (Garo Folklore) Part-I (1988), as it contains short stories encompassing a wide range of traditional beliefs and customs passed down within the Garo community. These stories serve as a cultural identity marker, preserving tradition and imparting moral and social values and includes a wide range of mythical beings, heroes, gods and supernatural creatures, apart from humans and animals. Part I of this book has a number of animal stories.

Animals have always been a part of folklore and folklorist have always had a keen interest in animal lore. Recent studies have turned their attention to the fluid boundary between humans and other animals. Referring to it, Sabina states, "Whether in the form of animal tales or in folk beliefs, as symbols, or in what would today be called traditional ecological knowledge" (Sabina 2). Similarly, Donna Haraway in her work, *The Companion Species Manifesto* (2016) challenges the traditional view of human as dominant over animals. She argues that humans and animals are co-evolved and co-constitutive, shaping each other's realities, and she urges a re-evaluation of our relationship with the animal world.

Introduction

Dhoronsing Sangma's collection of folklores in the form of short stories relate to nature around us, and some of the stories with regard to animals serve as conduits for human understanding and wisdom in the Garo community. *ChipuNa' "katok* is a tale of an Asiatic water snake who was allotted his portion of venom by the creator. On his way back home, he was tempted by the shallow water full of fishes. He left his venom on the sandy bank and had his fill of the fish forgetting the precious venom. Soon there was a heavy shower and the water level started rising, the venom was swept away by the gushing water and fishes downstream partook of the venom. Hence some varieties of fishes like the catfish still has venom when it stings. *Chipuna' "katok* on searching for the venom after his hearty meal found it missing and hence till this day this variety of snake is venom less. Apart from the entertainment value, this

story has a moral scope. The lesson derived is that one should not be greedy enough to forget the priority and be distracted, or else one loses what has been given. It serves as an instruction to the listeners.

Another lore on why some monkeys have distinct discoloured bottoms is alluded in the folklore *Seng* "WatmungMakke. The monkey in the story forges a close relationship with a firefly. One day, the firefly along with his family gets invited to have freshly harvested rice by the monkey. After a couple of days' feasting the firefly decides to go back and as curtsey invites the monkey to come over to his place. Since it was getting dark, the monkey offers the firefly a torch but he declines saying that he has one of his own, the next that the monkey saw was light appearing in the bottom of the firefly. Intrigued and fascinated by the this the monkey was left in awe of this sight.

Argument

The day came when the monkey and his family went to the firefly. They were welcomed in a similar manner and had two days and nights of feasting. Towards evening, the monkey decides to leave, sensing that the darkness may impair their movement the firefly offers them torches but the monkey refuses. As they walk on, darkness soon engulfs and they couldn't see the path. On the roadside some had recently cooked a meal and taking the burning coal, he tied it to his bottom and proceeded much to his discomfort. But he tolerated the burning sensation and walked on. On reaching a river, he could no longer bear the pain and sat in the water giving him some relief. He somehow reached his home but since that day onwards the monkeys have red burn like scar on their bottom. Thus, folklore shapes the way we perceive and interact with animals and we gain a greater appreciation of how things work in nature.

The other story which has a moral bearing is that of the pangolin and the tiger, *Kawate Ku* "dikdila. A *kawate*, that is a pangolin, after foraging was rolling back to its home when it came across a tiger. Seeing food, the tiger tried to take a bite of the pangolin but it's hard, overlapping plate like scales protected the pangolin. The tiger was confused and was hovering around thinking how to kill the prey. The pangolin oblivious of the tiger's presence said aloud that the tiger should have taken the time when the pangolin would be lying flat, then sat on its chest and taken a bite. It was even boisterous to claim that the tiger made a wrong move by trying to bite its back. On hearing this, the tiger was pleased and waited patiently, when the pangolin started walking it took a plunge and ate it up. As per this folklore, the tigers since this day learnt to eat the pangolin and it also sends a message to humans that one should never reveal one's weakness lest it is taken advantage of. These stories encode moral lessons and reflect the much required societal values. It also demonstrates the richness of human imagination.

In almost all cultures, a certain section of animals is depicted as cunning, clever and able to outwit others, the tricksters. Garo folklores too have such characters. The story of why the wolf keeps looking up to the sky and howls is related to the folklore *Peru*. *Peru*, which is wolf, was once a habitat of the sky, living with the gods there and had the status of a dog. He was pampered, had whatever food he wanted and lived comfortably. The crow was jealous of this and wanted him to come to earth and struggle for his survival. He tricked the wolf by saying that if he lives on earth he will be free like the crow, fly wherever he wanted and stay wherever he pleased but in heaven the wolf has to depend on the gods. He had no freedom there, in fact all animals are free unlike the wolf. Curiously the wolf asked the crow whether conditions on earth were better than the sky, to which the crow answered that it is ten times better on earth. Believing the crow, the wolf left the abode of the gods and followed the crow to the earth. He realised the blunder he had made when he had to struggle to ward off hunger. He would have fear of the humans during the day and shiver when it was cold on earth. From

that day onwards, the wolf would look up to the sky morning and evening and howl, wanting to go back to the former abode which was out of his reach.

As per the Garo folklore, hens have a reason when they make frantic sound after laying eggs. In the initial days of the earth all animals could speak with each other. The hen, when her time to lay eggs came, was expecting to give birth to a beautiful daughter but much to her shock, she realised that what she laid had neither a head nor a tail but something white and round. Unable to accept it she started shrieking frantically. Seeing the hen distressed, the rooster goes to her and tries comforting her, calming reassuring her that everything will be fine and they just need to wait for some time. Hence, till today, a hen makes frantic sound after laying an egg and the rooster would rush to her making pacifying sounds.

Of all the snakes, the python is considered to be the largest and the most beautiful, hence he was given the title *nokma*, the traditional head. The creator, *patigipara* "ronggipa", one day, asked all the snakes to assemble so that the venom could be distributed amongst them. On the designated day, all the snakes proceeded to take their share and asked the python to join them, but pride overtook him and he decided to go on his own much later. By this time, the creator chopped up the portion of venom and gave it all away as per their requirements. By the time the python arrived, he had given away all the venom. When he demanded for his share, the creator reprimanded him and said that he may be a fool at times and at times the most intelligent but since he had missed the opportunity he will no longer have venom. Hence, till date, the python is non venomous, and he is still called *chipujada*, the snake who is of a lower calibre.

The folklores mention the way the Garo community believes in certain way things function in nature. As the children listen to these tales narrated by their elders they are imbibing the traditional knowledge and these narratives influence people's attitudes to certain species of animals, and as such sayings related to animals in language appears. Thus, folklore helps in educating the folks:

In many non-literate societies the information embodied in folklore is highly regarded in its own right. To the extent to which it is regarded as historically true, its teaching is regarded as important; and to the extent to which it mirrors culture, it "contains practical rules for the guidance of man." (Bascom 345)

Vinciane Despret, a Belgian philosopher and psychologist in an interview by Agnes Bardon (UNESCO) for The UNESCO Courier, argues that animals possess agency and intelligence often underestimated and decries the traditional separation of animals and humans. Her views on this question is noteworthy-

Recent discoveries have revealed that animals have abilities that we would never have expected. What consequences might these discoveries have?

It is more interesting to consider animals as having agency because it allows us to enter a different conceptual framework, leaving room for intentionality. The observed phenomena can then give rise to new interpretations. If you see animals as beings driven solely by the need to survive and reproduce, you miss out on a whole range of social and cognitive skills that they employ. (Bardon 2024)

The folktales of the Garos send a strong message that animals are not viewed as mute and directionless, but that they have their own individuality and uniqueness, they are seen as fellow creatures. The stories make a person realise the importance given by the forefathers to the animals and the way they try to make us understand in their simple way the natural phenomena.

Conclusion

The stories may be fictitious and the didactic tendency may not be technical in nature but it is socially essential. At times it functions to validate institutions and exercises social control by highlighting on the lessons to be learned by listening to the flaws committed by the characters, though they may be mere animals. They inspire hope as well as warn of all the wrongdoings and creates a sense of community. Much before science came and explained all the phenomenon in nature with rationality, the folklores explained in its simplest terms the way the world of nature functions. In fact, the ecological knowledge, sustainable practices and ethical values of a community are passed down through folklore.

With recent studies where scholars are laying the groundwork for reconsidering the animals as co-creators of meaning and advocating for an ethical reconsideration, the folklores of the Garos have paved the path, in making the animals inclusive.

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CREATIVE WRITINGS

STORIES

The Hot Shade

Kahkashan Perveen

Former Head,
University Department of Urdu,
Ranchi University, Ranchi

It was Friday.

On this day, Champa Gul did not practise her profession. She would have a bath, dress herself in a beautiful saree, and, making herself more attractive, sit in her room waiting the whole day for the arrival of Bale Khan.

Bale Khan was not her husband because she had not committed the folly of entering into a marriage contract. Since her very childhood, the idea had been implanted into her mind that she was at liberty to enter into any contract—but not marriage. She had clung to this piece of advice with all her heart. Many visitors came to her, but none of them met her expectations. Time rolled on, and the advice became deeply entrenched in her mind. She used to sell her body without much remorse.

One day, Bale Khan visited her. But he too could not impress her. She treated Bale Khan like the other visitors, but saw him off with love. As such, Bale Khan became sentimentally attached to her. He used to visit her frequently.

Although Champa was not endowed with special qualities, the constitution of her body was markedly distinguished among hundreds of women, if not among thousands. Her radiant, crimson face invited the gaze of all who beheld her. Her beauty looked like the rays of the sun scattered on the surface of the earth after a short drizzle. This is why those who looked at her felt emotionally charged.

There was no dearth of visitors at her parlour. The visitors might have thought that since her visible appearance was so beautiful, the covered part of her body must be even more glorious. There was nothing to prevent such feelings among them. It was enough to put a few gold coins into the hands of Champa Gul and enter the gate of the golden world. There was nothing beyond that, although it was an occasion for producing storms of feeling within a few hours.

Champa's trade was at its peak. Under such circumstances, there was no scope for Bale Khan to impress her. He used to visit her like the others, though there was one thing that distinguished him: he never kept account of the money he gave her. Whatever was in his pocket, he gave her all.

At times, Bale Khan would be absent for weeks. During these periods, Champa used to think of him. It was he who had added "Gul" to her name. On that day, she looked even more charming, dressed in a saree of onion colour.

Bale Khan looked at her closely and said,

"People call thee Champa. I shall call thee Champa Gul."

He was seeking her consent. Actually, this was the moment when the knot tied to her heart—that she should never marry—got loose. After all, Bale Khan was the only man who had given her a name—maybe in his ecstasy. It was the first drop of love placed at the gate of Champa's heart.

Since Champa was a prostitute, she did not know the urges and aspirations of a housewife. She was just a means for the gratification of men's lust. But it was Bale Khan who had given a beautiful name to Champa, who was nothing more than a bare prostitute.

Although Champa Gul traded in flesh, she hated the consumption of wine. At first, when Bale Khan roared under the influence of wine, Champa Gul kept quiet.

Since she had received a name from him, she gathered courage and said:

“Bale! Do not make so much noise. My heart palpitates at it.”

She trembled when Bale Khan looked at her with red-hot eyes. But he laughed and said, “If it is thy desire, I give up wine.” He threw the bottle of wine outside into the lane. Women are usually kept hungry and athirst; there is no ray of joy in their lives. However, when a male begins to love her and to listen to her, she feels as if an inexhaustible treasure of joy has been laid at her feet. From that very moment, Champa Gul started thinking as to how fine it would be if she got the love of Bale Khan and made him the companion of her life. It would undoubtedly dispel darkness from her life and fill it with beauty, grace, and exuberance. She had seen visitors dancing to the tune of her beauty and grace. Still, they failed to provide her with real joy—the joy which she got on the day Bale Khan gave up drinking wine at her request.

Some of her visitors promised to raise her to the heights of the sky, but she was fully aware of the truth that the promises were hollow. Bale Khan, unlike them, was a different man. He was not the so-called gentleman; he was a dacoit by profession. While playing with the body of Champa, he had never taken her to the world of dreams. He was fully aware of the relation that existed between him and Champa Gul. When there is a storm in a sea, the waves try to break through its shore; but, as soon as the storm is over, the sea looks calm and quiet. Similar was the relation between Champa Gul and Bale Khan. In spite of it, the heart of Champa Gul did not like to part with Bale Khan. She desired the moments in his company to become endless. She wished that the perfume of her body should never go and the enjoyment of beauty and love should last long. But, Bale Khan could not always live with her.

Often he was away for months together.

One day when Bale Khan turned up, she was busy with a customer. He therefore returned. When Champa Gul knew it, she felt struck at heart. The neighbouring prostitute wanted to entertain him but he refused. He asked her to tell Champa Gul that he would visit her on Friday. Champa did not entertain any customer on Friday and used to sit in her room awaiting the arrival of Bale Khan.

At last, he turned up. When he was leaving her, Champa Gul could not control herself.

She looked with tearful eyes at Bale Khan and said,

“Why dost thou not come every Friday? Why?”

Bale Khan turned and said, “I feel no charm in this profession. Why dost thou not come very often?”

Champa Gul had lost her heart to Bale Khan; and, when a woman loses her heart to someone, she wants to unfold the charm of her beauty and grace before him. Champa Gul now wanted to eat from one pot, which Bale Khan understood.

He spoke, “Close thy shop from today whether I visit thee or not, I shall send money for thy expenses.”

He went away and Champa Gul closed her shop. Now she lived for Bale Khan. Bale Khan did not come, but his men used to bring money to her. The idea came to her mind that she had a claim on the income of Bale Khan. She decorated herself on every Friday because it was the day on which Bale Khan usually visited her.

It was Friday and she was looking for the arrival of Bale Khan. She was lost in the world of imagination, which was shattered by the arrival of Hawaldar Mohan Singh and Constable Vijay Ram into her room. Formerly too, they used to visit Champa Gul and derive pleasure from her body.

Champa Gul recognized them. She thundered, "Go back, you people; I have given up my profession."

The demon of sex was pulsating within their veins. They looked at her with their sinful eyes and shut the door.

"Thou daughter of flesh-trade!" Saying this, they flung themselves at her. Champa Gul wept bitterly and cried,

"O devils! I shall lodge a complaint against you."

They laughed. Champa Gul wept, sobbed, and became silent. She had no courage to go to the Police Station. After all, she was not an 'honourable woman' who could have been heard or whose case could have been recorded. She was nothing more than a dirty gutter of the town in which anybody could throw his dirt and filth. Though Champa Gul had been deflowered, yet her feelings for Bale Khan were pure and chaste.

The day she started loving Bale Khan, she had reserved her body and soul for him. Since he was not coming, she grew pale. Still, Hawaldar Mohan and Constable Vijay Ram visited and tortured her. These two men, like hungry wolves, tried to prey upon Champa Gul. The more she refused, the greater was the insistence—rather force and brutality. She, like a helpless weak creature, bore it calmly. Entertaining the customers was not something new for her. But the nearness and love for Bale Khan, though very short in duration, had brought over a revolution in her world of thinking. Conflict grew in her thoughts. The separation from Bale Khan and the oppression of the police had torn her heart into pieces. She fell ill and continued to suffer. Bale Khan, in the meantime, returned. He was struck with wonder at her shattering health. Champa Gul broke into tears and narrated her sad tale to him. She said, "They never listen to me. They want to cut me into...pieces. I am too weak to do anything against them."

"Gul, disclose their names," said Bale Khan.

Hot blood came up in him wave after wave.

"No, Bale!" Champa Gul felt terrified at the blood-thirsty eyes of Bale Khan. "Thou would not succeed in taking revenge upon them. They will implicate thee in false cases and send thee to jail. They will punish and torture thee. I will never like such things to happen to thee. I am an ordinary woman. They trample me under their feet since I am weak. My joy which is my right is denied to me. Risk not thy life for my sake. I shall not disclose their names. Take me away from here."

When the persuasion of Bale Khan failed, he thundered, gave a few slaps into her face and went away. The world had no charm for Champa Gul; it looked deserted. She lay in her bed for the whole day. At times she managed to get something from the hotel that stood nearby. As a matter of fact, her hunger and thirst had gone along with Bale Khan. Treading on the path of hope, every day she awaited the arrival of Bale Khan. She was never ready to enter into the flesh market again.

Feeling offended, Bale Khan had left her, but his love was deeply entrenched into Champa's heart. That day also she was looking for Bale Khan when Hawaldar Mohan and Constable Vijay Ram entered into her room. She trembled when she saw them.

"No, no! To-day I shall not permit you people to satisfy your lust." Saying this, she stood up. The two policemen laughed at her simplicity, went forward, and said:

“This renegade is again making plea today. Today again she will not be able to save herself from their clutches.”

She felt terrified at the outcome of their intent and shook within herself. She moved slowly towards the...door, but the two had blocked her way.

Havaldar Mohan took her wrist in his strong grip and spoke, “Thou wouldst not be allowed to run away.” Then he started bending on her. Champa Gul with the back of her hand tried to keep him away from her, but the pressure kept on mounting. Constable Vijay Ram was standing on one side awaiting for his turn. In the meantime Champa Gul’s eyes fell on a scissors that was kept on the table. A flash of lightning ran through her. She scolded her previous life and became ready to do or die. She put her hand on the waist of Havaldar Mohan in such a way as if she was trying to free herself from his grip. She started receding backward. Havaldar Mohan began to stretch his another hand on her shoulder. In the meantime Champa Gul raised the scissors from the table. This sudden act of Champa Gul baffled Havaldar Mohan. Constable Vijay Ram who was standing there, surging into action, caught hold of Champa Gul from back and thundered, “Thou darest this!” The scissors fell from Champa Gul’s hand. She gave a kick on the chest of Havaldar Mohan and pressing her teeth against one another spoke, “You wicked dogs!”

“Thou art a pross and thou darest challenge us! We shall teach thee a lesson.” Burning with anger Havaldar Mohan picked up the scissors and plunged it into her chest.

“Ah! there was a groan which could not come out of her mouth since constable Vijay Ram had put his hand on it. Both the razors of the scissors had pierced into her chest. Her eyes were open and she was looking at the flow of blood from her body. Since she was drenched in blood, they...got frightened. In the meantime, there was a clap at the gate and somebody kept calling, “Champa Gul! Champa Gul!” The pale face of Champa Gul looked partially radiant.

For a moment she gathered courage and managed to reach the door. This provided an opportunity to Havaldar Mohan and Constable Vijay Ram and they stealthily slipped away from the back door.

Outside the door it was Bala Khan who was repeatedly giving the call. Champa Gul opened the door but fell to the ground out of pain. She was completely drenched in blood. Bala Khan sat near her and impatiently asked, “What did happen to thee? Who had come? Who did so?”

Champa Gul’s lips were trembling so she could not easily speak. It appeared as if her soul would bid adieu to her body. She caught hold of Bala Khan’s hand and uttered in a feeble tone, “They were the same people... Havaldar Mohan and Constable Vijay Ram. I kept fighting with them. They have brought me to this end. Hearing your voice, they ran away from the back door. Don’t spare them, never spare them. Think not of me.” Saying this she slipped into her lap. For a moment Bala Khan looked at her and then left the room. The next day there was a headline in the newspaper.

“A terrorist assassinated Mohan who was a dutiful Havaldar and Vijay Singh who was an honest Constable. Both of them were going to enquire into a case when a motorcycle-born terrorist shot them dead and ran away. Both of them died on the spot. The assassin could not be traced. It is thought that the act was done in a planned way to spread fear and terror by the terrorists among the people.”

AMUSEMENT

Rajesh Kumar

Former Head,
University Department of English,
V.B. University, Hazaribagh, Jharkhand

Sharma ji retired from service in a balmy month—when the air was clement and not loaded with the oppressive, fusty smell of the monsoons and the winter was still somnolent some four weeks ahead. But even in these wholesome days he felt he had turned insubstantial and like so many other men who had retired before him, he found himself on a turnstile of unease—he suspected it was connected to identity, also because his sexual drive had swollen out of nowhere and he had started paying supplementary attention to the small-breasted housemaid who had always considered him harmless.

But the more pressing buckle was where to settle down. He had acquired a snug flat in this town where he had slogged for more than forty years but his ancestral house that was in the city was much, much superior although it had been lying almost derelict. It was tended casually by one of his numerous relatives who was on the point of contending that it was *his* house, not Sharma ji's.

“Let's tell him to vacate it. We can live in some comfort there. And there is a sizable piece of land attached to it. We can grow all the vegetables we need.” His wife suggested yet he was uncertain because he fancied thinking that all important decisions in the family were his responsibility only. So, while undertaking his customary walk around the hill and the weald that was hardly half a kilometre from his town flat, he thought and thought and thought fiercely and arrived home with a resolute, defiant expression, “We should go to our house in the city,” as if it was his brainchild originally. The worthy wife refrained from a rebuttal because she wanted to give him some headroom after the precipitous fragmentary void in his life. After all, it had been hardly a week of his superannuation. She simply added, “Call your uncle and tell him to go hunt a house for himself. Every time I go there, I find our house grimier and more run-down. It badly needs repairs.”

The whole day, he kept on calculating how much it would cost him, the passage to the city in his car, the sundry expenses on the way, the costs involved in even the most modest renovation of the house. He added mentally the amounts he would receive as provident fund, gratuity and earned leave. He also tallied the pension. In the excitement of getting so much money he overlooked the verity that the state government functioned tactically in dispensing all these pecuniary salves to ensure that each pensioner, meanwhile, would waste away in gerontic ailments and kick the bucket, thus halving the monthly pension drain on the exchequer.

By evening, he was very receptive to the idea. “We can leave next Monday. Be sure to get up early. If we start early, we should be able to avoid the horrendous traffic snarls on the way.”

The worthy wife growled, “You know the household chores have to be finished before I go. Then I have to instruct the maid to come periodically and water the plants in the pots. You can give one set of the keys to the outer doors to the neighbour. She will take it from him and hand it back when she is finished.”

Since he found himself inadequate to dispute her logic, Sharma ji went back to reckoning sullenly how long it would take him to reach the city house if they were stuck in a jam. However, providentially, when they went, he took the roads less popular and astonished himself by touching home in under six hours.

The first full-sized challenge turned up as soon as he flicked on the verandah lights.

The switch clicked but the bulb did not glow. He groped for the lock in the darkness, opened it by feel and turned on the cell phone light. The uncle who had been inhabiting the house and who had left in a very indecent state of mind after Sharma ji's plan for the city stay, had taken care to jiggle the wire violently enough to disrupt the power supply. Not the one to concede defeat, Sharma ji ferreted out a longish bamboo pole from the backyard and approaching the street light pole from where the connection came in, jolted the wire with great difficulty but was rewarded when he caught his wife's exultant cry, "We have the power!"

The first day was spent in taking stock of short-, mid- and long-term domestic exigencies. A generous expanse of dust reclined all around, coiled on furniture, suppliant on wardrobe shelves and belligerent at the door-sills. The once lovely sward was stuffed with weeds and waist-high grass. Plumbing was emaciated and the wires and switch boards had gone wobbly and were often non-functional. The bedsteads and the wooden sofa sets swayed and creaked in mortal agony every time someone used them. So, the first four days were spent in neatening things up and on the fifth day, he lounged in the verandah, enjoying the sun and reading the morning newspaper. A cup of steaming tea lay beside him and he felt happy as he took sips with his wife who had stolen a maid from one of the neighbours. But his contentment dissolved little by little into a sort of absent-minded despondency. He began feeling he had no consequential bonds with the city apart from the phone numbers of the electrician, the carpenter and the workers who had stripped him of a lot of dough on the pretext of mowing the lawn and caring for the patch meant for raising vegetables. Sharma ji's sense of alienation bulged with the passage of the sun and by noon he was fidgety enough to ring his junior colleagues, who were still working, and inquire about the state of things back in the office. The chat calmed him down for a handful of hours but restlessness gripped him again like a clenched fist by evening and he slept a very erratic sleep that night. The next morning too, it lingered like a tropical fever. In fact, every day, it grew and expanded and ripened and the spiteful moment in due course came when his active associates began to fend off his calls. Humiliated and miserable, he sought anchorage in the moronic terrene of apps on the cell phone but it only sharpened the edge of his despondency when he realized that the world was getting by brightly without the tiniest token of concern for him. Finally, on an unendurable day of imaginative torment, he walked into a nearby park and perched himself on a bench under the verdant awning of a many-columned banyan. By a quirk of fate, there were no other retired fellows around, and he felt more morose with each passing hour, feeling he was the most pathetic person in the whole wide world. Saddled with monumental depression, he got up when the callous hands of the watch showed four and it was at this moment that something hit him softly at the back of his head. He turned around in impotent displeasure but his irritation dissolved when he realized it was a little boy of around six playing with a rubber ball. The boy looked frightened. Sharma ji stooped and handed over the ball to him. Eyes widening, the little boy asked him, "Who are you?"

Abruptly, Sharma ji's spirit lifted and with a buoyant smile, he answered playfully, "Oh, I'm a wrestler!"

"What is a wrestler?" The little boy, although still afraid, was unable to overcome his curiosity.

"A wrestler gets into a ring and fights other people."

The word "fight" was enough to terrify the boy and he took off nippily. Sharma ji was alone again but he felt as if a shadow had been lifted off his blighted heart. "So, this is what I will do! I will take on a new identity every day and defy this uncaring city!" He felt jubilant but mused. "No, it would be just a harmless game. I would simply don a different profession every day and see how people treat me. I will not change my name though."

Was it proper? The question teased his uprightness. Won't there be any legal complications? "Oh, no. It will be just a chaste amusement. Nothing more," he reassured himself.

The next day, when he went to the local hair salon to get a haircut, he flexed his first innocuous identity. "Crop them short; it gets into my eyes when I use the microscope."

Naturally, the barber, belonging to one of the most resourceful informal social media professions, asked him curiously, "Are you a scientist, sir?"

"How did you know?" He was glad secretly his new identity had been accepted by the gullible chatterbox.

"You mentioned a microscope. You can see enlarged pictures of things in them, sir?"

"Yes, I just cultured a new microbe that can kill the coronavirus."

The barber looked at him in awe, "Sir, you are such a great man! I will give you a free hair-cut!"

He felt euphoric, "No, it's my principle never to have free lunch. You'll take your money. I will come regularly to your shop only on this condition."

The barber insisted with him not to pay anything but he thrust a one hundred rupee note in the pocket of the guy and left in a very happy mood. His day was made. His first identity and it had come off so well!

He now inserted another tactic into his charade. He would surf YouTube fervently to gather some information on the identity he planned to assume the following day. While watching the clips, he grew interested in football techniques and decided he would be a football coach for the Mohun Bagan team today. In the afternoon he went to the playfield in the centre of the city and stood avidly by a gaggle of boys playing football. He spoke softly as if to himself when one of the boys in the ragtag team came out of the field, "The boy in the red shirt should have dribbled the ball instead of going for a long pass. And the player in the centre half should have blocked his opponent from the left side." He made many knowledgeable remarks and the boy who had come out, asked him, "Do you play football, sir?" He answered with foisted pride, "No, not at my age now. But once upon a time I used to share my techniques with the Mohun Bagan team, when I was in Kolkata, especially with Chuni Goswami. Also with Baichung Bhutia. Both of them finally became great players." The boy, who was the captain of the team practicing in the field, bent down and touched his feet in reverence and called out to the other players. But wary of being exposed, Sharma ji gave an excuse saying he would be coming the next day to discuss the techniques and the skills and also to coach them personally, and moved off as quickly as possible.

In the coming days, he changed his identity every day—one day he was a submariner, another day he would be a pilot, still another day he would be a key-maker. He was glad the world was now on the Internet. He could pose as any professional but just for jest. He would not exploit anybody. And he kept his promise meticulously. He never duped anyone of anything—not money, not eatables, nothing—the ruse was only an idea. Sometimes he stayed at home at a stretch for days because he did not want to overdo it.

One Friday morning, he planned to go to the electronics market to get his old transistor set repaired. It was a 1980s model and had become quite moody. He and his wife had thought that it would keep the house lively if they could listen to their favourite music in the evenings. He had resolved he would be himself today but as soon as he approached the rickshaw-puller, the identity bug bit him. The rickshaw-puller had an impressive set of peppered whiskers and while negotiating the fare, he told the puller, almost in a whisper, that he too had been a rickshaw-puller in his young days. The rickshaw-puller looked at him and said, "No surprise,

sir. Hop on, I will take you to the market at a discount!”

He mounted the rickshaw and as it wended through the crowded streets, he added, “Once I pedalled my rickshaw non-stop thirty six hours to ferry passengers that had been injured in an accident. Since the site was not accessible for an ambulance, I did it all by myself.”

The rickshaw-puller replied with his thumb glued to the bell, “No surprise, sir. I myself once carried a soldier wounded in a border battle in my rickshaw a hundred and three kilometres because there was no hospital nearby.”

“How and why did you carry a soldier?” He asked with interest.

“No surprise, sir. I had taken my rickshaw to the border area because it was my long-pending wish to visit the Himalayan glaciers. I wanted to set a record by being the first man to lug a rickshaw across the snowy heights. By chance, the fight between India and China broke out that very day.”

“But how did they allow a rickshaw near the front?!” He exclaimed in disbelief.

“No surprise, sir. When I was pulling my rickshaw along a steep slope, I saw a military vehicle that had broken down. It was the company commander’s Gipsy. He was going to the location where a skirmish had erupted between our soldiers and the Chinese. I offered him a lift and he agreed readily. That is how I was allowed at the border. Unsafe it was but I enjoyed it.”

He squirmed in the cushioned seat, “It must have been quite risky. I too have taken many such risks. Especially because I used to ply my rickshaw in the forested areas of Darjeeling as a spy in the 1990s.”

The rickshaw-puller turned half towards him, “I’m blessed, sir, to meet a person after my own heart! You see, when I brought the wounded soldier to the hospital and after the doctor declared him to be out of danger, the colonel of the regiment told me to work as a spy. It was easy because nobody suspected a rickshaw-puller could be an undercover agent. You won’t believe it, sir,” the rickshaw-puller stopped pedalling and drew his face near his as he recklessly ducked an oncoming bike, “but it was I who spotted the killers of Beant Singh in Punjab!”

He drew back, trying to evade the odour of tobacco from the rickshaw-puller’s mouth. When the fellow turned away, he found an opening, “As secretary of the Akhil Bhartiya Rickshaw Chalak Sangh, I once met the prime minister and requested him to include a rickshaw-pullers’ race in the Delhi Commonwealth Games. I was really fast with the rickshaw in my younger days, so fast that they had nicknamed me “Sadak Bijli (Lightning of the Roads)”!

The rickshaw-puller shouted jauntily over the traffic noise, “No surprise, sir! I too was pretty fast! One afternoon, I was passing through the Hazaribagh National Park stretch, carrying a child from his village to school when I spotted an elephant blocking my way. It swayed its trunk menacingly and trumpeted in rage when he spotted us. But I pedalled like a whirlwind, passing under his belly in a flash, holding the child steady with one hand and by the time poor gajraj realized what had happened, we were through! He plodded after us almost for a mile but I outran him like this!” He snapped his fingers.

Sharma ji suddenly realized that the rickshaw seat was unbearably sore. Unable to contain himself, he broke in, “Once I”

The puller interjected, “You know, when Queen Elizabeth came to India last year, she had asked for a ride in my rickshaw. But I was training the cyclists of the state Olympics team in the Andamans then and was unable to go. The chief minister

himself had felicitated me for saving the child from the elephant and appointed me instructor!"

Sharma ji cried impatiently, "Stop! I have to get down! I just recalled I have to buy tilkut from the shop here!"

The rickshaw-puller stopped and opened his mouth to say something but Sharma ji pulled out a fistful of currency notes hurriedly from his purse and thrusting it into the rickshaw-puller's hand, took off in the opposite direction almost at a trot. When he entered the sitting-room of his city house, his wife was skimming through the back issues of Grah Shobha. He slumped into a chair and murmured in a deflated tone, "Let's go back to our old town."

* * * * *

POEM

I

Should I Tell You ——

Should I tell you?

Where I stand?

In the midst of clouds: white and black,

In the cologne of shrubbery: amidst flowers and butterflies,

In the shuttling of crowd: amidst shout aloud,

In the lightening of temple: before God and his people,

In the vibrance of library: deep in books and pages,

In the bottomless awareness: as thought and notion,

In the unwavering self: as none but one.

So, it goes: unseen, unclaimed,

And I belie, to locate myself:

Where I am ?

And for what???????

————— G. S. Jha

The Guilt of Narrative Technique

Author :- Chandan Pandey, Production Manager,
at Metahelix Life Science Ltd., Bangalore

Translator :- Kumari Urvashi, Department of Hindi
Women's College, Ranchi

Dhurjati Pandey is the first, second, and last man for Umi Dei. Whether or not there is a guest in the house, Umi adds just as much salt to the vegetables as Dhurjati likes. Their lives are so completely intertwined that they know each other's every habit: what to say and hear while eating, how long to hold each other in love—everything is predetermined, like directions. Time, proportion, quantity. There is no room for coincidence in their lives, as if coincidence belongs not to life but fiction.

Today, the scene is different. Life has shed many layers over the years, and now Umi's brother Radhe has arrived. Last night, when there was a knock on the door, Umi murmured in her sleep as if some memory had knocked. When the knock came again, she woke up. Her brother stood at the door. Amazement surfaced like a fine line on Umi's soul. She stepped aside so that Radhe could enter the house. She could not even ask how he had found the address of her new home.

Ever since Radhe arrived, Dhurjati has been restless. His sleep has gone missing somewhere between the pillows. He has no objection to his brother-in-law's arrival, but the problem is that Radhe is a wanted man. Many years ago, caught up in books and the complexities of human struggles, he was forced to go underground.

In a world apart from Dhurjati, Umi has only this one sworn brother—Radhe. When Dhurjati married Umi, on one of those nights, she lay over his exhausted body and pleaded that the doors of this house remain open for Radhe, for he had no one else in this world. Dhurjati, kissing her flushed face, had readily agreed. At that time, Radhe was about eight or ten years old, so Pandeyji got him admitted to a moderately good school.

The boy was intelligent. He studied, learned, and gradually blended into the forests. This all happened so smoothly that by the time Dhurjati realized it, Radhe had already been named in police records for his swift movements and growing connections. A bounty of twenty thousand rupees was placed on his square-shaped head. The home was left behind. Sometimes in the forests of Kanker, sometimes on the hills of Mainpat, sometimes in Bastar—wherever news of him emerged, his sworn sister read it carefully. She would share these updates with her loving husband. This benefited Dhurjati in many ways.

There were two things at play: the real fear of police batons and Dhurjati's invisible yet profound fear. While quenching the thirst of some office file with his ink, Dhurjati would suddenly remember that, sworn brother or not, Radhe was still a relative. The mere thought of it would dry up the ink in his inkwell. The advantage of this was that he would re-read the file two or three times, correcting any remaining mistakes. His work began to be praised. He was given opportunities to conduct training sessions in office workshops. He got promoted, earned money, and bought a new house.

The first ten years of marriage were ominous, and the anxiety of being childless started dissolving into every bite of their meals. Around the same time, Radhe became a wanted man.

After that, their once-unbroken love began to fragment, but even this, Dhurjati turned to his advantage. It would happen that, in a moment of unconsciousness, Umi would mention Radhe, and that alone was enough to make Dhurjati go pale and weak. He would start imagining police batons. His wife would gather him like scattered mahua flowers and prepare him for love once again. Just as this was happening, something else was unfolding—over the years, two daughters were born into their home: Snehal and Suvarna.

Early in the morning, Radhe met his nieces. Both were apprehensive, hesitant to come near him. The elder one was watching from her room, while the younger, Suvarna, stood behind her mother, staring at Radhe. Every time Radhe called her, she would hide in her mother's sari. Umi was recounting to her brother all that had transpired in his absence.

Eventually, both nieces warmed up to Radhe. When he promised to get them something, the two little girls finally opened up to him. As soon as they did, the elder one asked the first question: "Uncle, are you a human?" Radhe, in a lighthearted tone, replied, "Of course, I am." At this, the elder one retorted sharply, "Then why do my school teachers call you a Naxalite?" Radhe burst into laughter at this question. Lifting the little girl in his arms, he turned to Umi with an open laugh and said, "Didiya re, your daughters are really sharp!"

The real trouble, however, was confronting Dhurjati. Radhe's arrival had unsettled him completely. Sitting on the edge of the bed, then on the commode, he kept thinking—someone must have seen him coming. If so, then both his life and his job were doomed. What would happen to the children? And his wife? The mere thought of it choked him up. It took him twenty-five minutes just to brush his teeth. Then, feeling the need to think some more, he sat back on the commode. This was the only place where his thoughts flowed in some proper sequence.

At the breakfast table, they finally faced each other. With a forced, official smile, Dhurjati acknowledged Radhe's greeting. He asked just one question: "So, how far has the movement reached, dear brother-in-law?" By then, he was already drenched in sweat. He could feel the air swirling inside his chest, and his restlessness kept growing. His wife had prepared breakfast just to his taste, yet even at this age, the excitement of meeting her brother was still evident on her face. Radhe gave his reasons for coming, but Dhurjati neither believed them nor cared to.

When he asked his wife for an anxiety-relief pill, she grew worried and asked, "What's wrong with you?" Around the same moment, Radhe mentioned that he was about to leave. His sister insisted that he stay until the evening. The wife handed her husband the medicine and advised him to take the day off from work. The brother knew exactly what was troubling his brother-in-law. The brother-in-law knew that if the daughters mentioned anything at school or anywhere else, or if news of his brother-in-law's visit spread through any other means, this 'police district' would not care that he was a government officer. For some reason, he too asked his relative to stay until the evening, and with the terrifying anticipation of what lay ahead, he somehow left for work.

On his way, he instructed the driver to turn the car toward the Superintendent of Police's office. When he managed to secure a meeting, he poured all his eloquence into the conversation. He pleaded with the Superintendent, saying that in return for this piece of information, all he wanted was for his wife to remain unaware. The Superintendent is the king of the police district, the ultimate authority. He thanked Dhurjati for fulfilling his civic duty, embraced him, patted his back, embraced him again, thanked him once more—as if saying, "Dhurjati, you have no idea how great a favor you have done."

Had there been even the slightest flaw in judgment here, much would have been written about Dhurjati's guilt—something so damning that both the publisher and the writer would have been charged with cutting down a tree for publishing it. In fact, this was where the guilt of 'coincidence'—a narrative technique—was supposed to be mentioned.

Upon hearing Dhurjati's plea that "his wife must not find out anything," the Superintendent told him the story of the 'coincidence thread.' He explained that coincidence had aided the Indian police more than uniforms or even the greatest of battles ever could. The public holds coincidence in such high regard that the police never face any trouble. "If coincidence were a real person," he said, "we would reward it and keep it by our side." Meanwhile, 'coincidence' itself, exhausted from being repeatedly used by the police, wanted to commit suicide, but its hands were tied. Its solid tears were dispersing into the air, yet people's limited understanding mistook those tears for mica, coal, or some other mineral dust and swallowed them unknowingly.

The Superintendent then narrated an ancient myth to Dhurjati, one involving Shiva, Parvati, a parrot, and death. In this story, there was mention of a mountain cave. The Superintendent insisted that, in this case, the mountain cave should be in the forests of Kedarpur. Dhurjati memorized the first part of the story to share with his wife—the part where the messenger of death stares at the parrot, Parvati pleads with Lord Shiva to save its life, and Shiva, the very lord of death, secretly pleased by his wife's insistence, sends the parrot a hundred yojanas away to a distant mountain.

But it was the final part of the myth that the Superintendent emphasized the most:

As soon as the assembly of the gods concluded, Lord Shiva summoned the messenger of death and asked why he had been staring at the parrot. The messenger prostrated before Mahadev and replied, "My Lord, I was looking at it with doubt. The reason is that today, a hundred yojanas from here, in a mountain cave, a snake was destined to swallow that very parrot. And yet, here it was. How could such a fragile creature possibly fly a hundred yojanas? Surely, Yama has made some mistake." At this, Shiva informed the messenger that, by his divine power, he had already sent the parrot to that very mountain."

In this story, the bird of the future remained alive, and thus, Dhurjati understood the parallel. The Superintendent walked him to the door and, with a characteristic police assurance, advised him to remain at ease.

Dhurjati, unwell and exhausted, returned home in the scorching afternoon. His wife grew deeply worried. He took his medicine and lay down in his room. Understanding the reason for Dhurjati's condition, Radhe began preparing to leave. To his sister, he was still her little brother, and with the same sense of authority, she kept trying to stop him. But now, he was determined not to stay. He would have already left, but Dhurjati made him sit beside him.

Barely an hour had passed when there was a knock on the door. Outside stood a few policemen in plain clothes. They said they were part of a public awareness campaign, meeting citizens, warning them of imminent attacks, and gathering information. Without hesitation, they stepped inside. They cautioned the household about potential dangers.

One of the policemen kept glancing at Radhe repeatedly. Their sergeant asked two questions. As they were leaving, that same policeman looked at Radhe once more. His sister noticed this and she grew afraid.

As soon as the police left, Radhe got ready to leave as well, but his sister's anxiety held him back. Radhe knew the worth of his own life, and his emotional sister's worry could not stop him. But the sister, slipping into the role of a wife, kept pleading with her husband again and again: "Why were those policemen looking at my brother so intently? Do something. Get him out of the city."

Her brother reassured her, "Didiya, don't worry. I will leave." But irritation crept into his voice. The wife insisted that her husband use his connections. The husband replied, "It is merely a coincidence that the police happened to start their public awareness campaign today. What can I do?" Even the brother said, "You are worrying unnecessarily."

Just as the brother was about to leave the house, the husband exercised his authority: "Take my car and head towards Kedarpur. The driver will drop you wherever you say." Due to his sister's insistence, the brother had no choice but to accept this costly favor.

That same dark night, the husband narrated the beginning of the myth that the Superintendent had told him about the power of coincidence. He told his wife about the time when Shiva and Parvati were on their way to a gathering of the gods. Just outside Indra's palace, Parvati noticed that a messenger of death was staring intently at a parrot, which was busy nibbling on a guava fruit. Parvati was troubled by this and pleaded with Mahadev to protect the bird. Shiva expressed his helplessness, saying, "This is all a matter of coincidence. How can I alter its fate?" But Parvati remained adamant. She insisted, "Save this parrot." Bound by the will of his beautiful wife, Mahadev used his divine power to send the parrot a hundred yojanas away, to a cave on a distant mountain—otherwise, flying such a great distance in a single day would have been impossible.

The husband narrated the story to his wife as if it ended there. Listening to it, the wife, like an excited young girl, was filled with joy and embraced her husband.

POEM - II

Come Along, and Come Fast ——

Today, I begin to count my days:
That I have spent,
And those, that wait, still ahead,
Fair or what, I cannot say.
They say rathernew:
That slipaway,
And lost in all.
Yet, I wish,
To know.
All along:
To do or not,

The harking years,
That flaps to make:
Good or not,
Loose or gain,
The tallied hours,
Waiting for end,
Leading to none.
None and none,
None alone.
But faster than fast.

————— G. S. Jha

Oh! That Maiden —————

Gauri Shankar Jha,
Former Professor, Head & Dean
University Deptt. of English,
Ranchi University, Ranchi

Last night I thought of writing a story, but the question was story of what: of the little bird that chirps for the whole day, of and on, by my window; or, of the smiling flowers, swinging in my balcony; or, of the little cat, running here and there, without aim; or, of the twinkling star, up above in the heaven, as eternal source of joy and pleasure; or, of the little maiden loitering in some vague mode, all around, and so, and so on. Yes, our life is full of stories; we need not wander far and wide, just pick one from the treasure, and lay down before the audience.

For today, let me go for this little maiden. I don't know who she is: but, yes, she is; visible to all, of and on, here and there, and most frequently, most reliably, and most often. There is no question of liking or disliking, as she is a profound presence, to be read and understood. She must be around ten, not more, not less. I could see her from the window of my balcony: not always, but, whenever there was a pause in time. Most of the time, she could be seen roaming in her small garden: kidding with the flower plants, running after the butterflies or doing something nonsense. She could be traced, being all alone, most of the time. After hours together, some sort of loud voice could be heard, perhaps of her mother:

“Where are you, baby? All the time you are away. You never think of books and school. I don't know, for what you have been made. Always busy in some nonsense; simply wasting time and nothing else. Come, come fast.”

And the girl would rush back into the house. Thereafter, nothing could be heard. Perhaps, the mother would be talking of school; she must have been admitted to some school; she must have some books; she must be availing some school-bus; she must have some friends; she must have some school-teachers – and likewise, so many questions propped up in my mind. If there was a school, there must have been a time table of going and coming, and some leisure hours also. My time of going to the University was around 10.00 a.m.; and while coming out of my flat and getting into my car I could locate her either in the garden or by the roadside: and all the time, all alone. The thing to be noticed was that she could be found, being all alone, all the time. No friends; no parents; none to tell her what to do and what not. She was her own guide. She was her own guardian. She was her own friend. This fact drove my inquisitiveness to ponder over this unique case. I set to know her circumstantial upbringing: a tedious task, no doubt. To whom should I ask. And how? Even a pinch of doubt could spoil my whole fabric. Better to keep mum. Who cares? And why bother? Every individual has his/her own life: free to be as he/she likes. Why should I lead, if at all. Even my better half would not agree to my proposal. But somewhere within, it was a matter of discomfort, vexing me continually. I decided to go for it.

The first and foremost was to get myself close to her, to mix with her, at any cost. So, I planned: while going to my University, I met her by the roadside, and I asked with a tweak of smile:

“Halo! May I know your name?”

She didn't reply. She was looking the other way, ignoring my query, knowingly; that much I could gather. Within no time, she was lost in some corner. I moved away to my normal duty, and so, this was the first encounter, so to say, with the little piece of joy and innocence. After that, there was a long pause, as I was busy otherwise. And then, all of a sudden, I found her on the same spot, at the same time; and I raised the same question. This time, she was a bit lenient and responded:

“My name is Lo —— Lo—Losy.”

Actually, it was Rosy. She was unable to speak clear. Nothing unusual; it happens so at this age.

“And where do you stay?”

“There, in that little house: that is mine.”

She was pointing towards a small house which seemed to be old and abandoned.

And then, again, she flew away – to her little hut. Yes, it was a hut, a thatched house; no doubt, an old one, but, perhaps, livable; that's why they were there. I moved to my office and by evening, back to my habitat. Again, there was a gap of a few days, and then the meeting; this time, somehow hassle-free. She saw me the other day; threw a smile: I took advantage and queried:

“Hey! Rosy, do you go to school?”

“No.”

“Why so? What do you do all the day.”

She laughed and quipped, all at once:

“No sir, I don't know.”

She flew back again. I was taken aback. If so, what was the voice of that day – scolding her for school and books, and for so many things. She was not admitted to any school. No question of books either. There must be some strong reason behind this “NO”. Only God knows. I wanted to discuss it with someone. But the same question of unreasoned advanced query stopped me. I tried to forget it. No unnecessary commotion within.

“No, no, I won't go for it. Be blind to all. After all, I am not authorized to monitor all that happens around me. Not at all. Be silent. Keep everything to yourself. I am not a judge. If at all, I pass a comment, I may be in trouble. The world is not as easy anyone may presume. Away, away, go far away.” I told myself.

Finally, I decided to keep mum.

But, how long?

Time continued to slip away. It was to bring some misnomer or something strange.

All of a sudden, came the blow: the blow that undid all I hunted to keep abreast.

I happened to meet a passerby who was equally worried to know everything about the little baby and was successful in digging out the fact. What he said was not surprising; it happens so in this callous world. Actually, the story goes like this.

This little baby was a fatherless child. She lost her father long back. Her father was in the infantry, as a common soldier, not as any officer. He was positioned in Kashmir. Just a few months back, he was slain by the intruders from the neighboring country, perhaps. For around fifteen days, there was a lot of hue and cry. A lot of Government officials kept on visiting the house of the martyr. The pension was fixed. By and by, everyone left. The mother was not having any educational qualifications as such so she could not be placed in a government job, despite the pressing assurances, from the political lobby. She had to be content with the little that she could get as pension. In the family, there was none to take care. The old in-laws had left much early. Somehow, the mother was pulling on. So, no question of School for the baby, or anything of that sort. Everything in the family was stagnant. The world had ceased to be a vibrant source of life with positivity – only darkness; a pointless world with hollowness at its extreme: nothing in hand, none to help and none to lead. How to proceed? How to move ahead – that was the crux of the matter; no solution in sight. Yet, a ray of hope, from some unknown hand, something unpredictable.

Now, we were two, to move together, to help her. We drove to her house. We could know her constraints. The little baby was admitted to a school nearby. We could procure books for her. We met the Principal of the school and briefed her all about the bereaved family. She promised to help. And that was the beginning. Life continued thereafter as usual. This is how the world goes: deficiency and nothingness teach us all; and the life strides ahead.

However, the scenario was changed thereafter.

Rosy was not to be found in her garden now, neither on the roadside. She became a rare species. On Sundays, she could be seen with her mother, giggling and cheeping, with all her innocence intact as ever. I could have profound sense of soothing experience – a gentle respite. I do recall vividly that maiden.

* * * * *

BOOK REVIEW

I

Green Over Red, by Ram Chandra Ojha, translated by Rajesh Kumar, Astitva Prakashan, Chhatishgarh, India, 2024, Price: Rs. 449/-

This novel is a first-hand account of the personal experience of the author Ram Chandra Ojha who was posted in that particular area as Police Officer; he had witnessed the turmoil and mayhem of the area with the flattering of ideologies and persistence of individual objectives. It also tells us the dichotomy of the past and the present. All the places, mentioned here in this book, that is, Bettiah, Bagha, Ramnagar, Lauria, Madanpur, Balmikinagar, and even Adhura Guest House (Rohtas) and Saranda Forest (Singhbhum) had a peaceful and gracious past, but the present of all these places is highly disturbing. The novel, apparently, is autobiographical, though a bit fictional.

The novel opens with a call by villagers of the attack of dacoits (robbers), followed by the ugly description of abductors and Naxals. The central character, Dev, is given the responsibility of eliminating the forest of these troubling elements; the name of the operation is Operation Black Panther. Interestingly, Dev himself is mentally sick and being taken care of by Dr. Sinha, a psychiatrist. The reader is acquainted with the personal background of Dev. Dr. Sinha is not happy with the work of the Police and equates the Police with the prostitutes in performance and dealings. There is a series of murders, that of, Lachchan, Rambachchan and Algu – all leading to the arrest of Raju, who is having a good treasure of weapons. The key question is why do we have this prodigious generation of dacoits or Naxals – and the author hints at the disparity in the society caused, mainly, by the caste politics, coming out of the slavery system of the early days; we have the evidence of attack on such practices by Kabir, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, etc. By and by comes the story of scorpion and ghost of Yamuna, simply a superstitious deal, and the Emergency of 1974, a political reality. Female characters like Maina and Sunaina are also inducted to give a twist to the story and to maintain the rational stability of the agitating minds of the novel. The readers are also introduced with Shyam Babu who claims to know everything and may be termed as Mr. Know All of the novel. In the twelfth chapter, the author has elaborated the political scenario: rise of Communism (Charu Majumdar), ABVP and SF. One prominent point to be noticed is that all the leftists belong to well-off families. In the Fifteenth chapter the real face of Abhigyan is unmasked who ignores his parents to justify his association with the Left ideology. In the seventeenth Chapter, there is elaboration on sex and man-woman relationship. The eighteenth chapter tries to find out the reason behind the prevalent crime which cannot be attributed to the caste system alone. The Police tries to normalize the situation by indulging in social activities involving the whole society, for instance, Asthjam and Football tournament. Maina reappears trying to get closer to Dev. The twenty-third Chapter is a sort of homecoming where Abhigyan appears to be tired of Marxism and begins giving tuition to students; he also plans to start a school for kids. Now he can understand that Das Capital is of no use in day-to-day life. He suggests Dev to go for VRS. Accidentally, Anmol, the dreaded criminal is killed and Dev is scolded by the new DIG, Mr. Kumar. By twenty-sixth chapter all gangs are eliminated and Dev is recommended for IPS, though opposed by one section of the Department and the villagers. By the twentieth chapter Dev is declared mentally ill and the recommendation for the President award is turned down.

Finally, in its open-ended story, the readers can envisage the collapse of all ideologies and philosophy, for the simple reason that the author has cited not only Marx and Lenin but also Gandhi and Nietzsche. Obviously, the author intends to hint at the prevalent sick system

of society and bureaucracy. He wants to revamp the whole system and transform the society to bring equality and get rid of the evil practice of the caste system. His clear message is that violence is not the solution of any problem and Communism is the most misunderstood ideology.

**Reviewed by G.S. Jha, Former Professor, Head and Dean,
University Department of English, Ranchi University, Ranchi**

II

Bihar's Literary Quest: English Poetry from Bihar, Editor, Ram Bhagwan Singh, Aadi Pub., Jaipur, India, 2025, Price – Rs. 1095/-

Though the Editor, Prof. Singh does not agree to the fact that this book is a compendium of Bihari poetry in English, a common reader may infer it to be so. The poems collected here are of twenty-twopoeats, ranging from the poets of nineteenth century up to the poets of this day. One can easily notice the poets of pre-Independence period, such as, Babu Avadh Bihari Lal, Gurudas Mukherjee, Umeshwar Prasad and Amrendra Kumar whereas the rest of the poets are from the post-Independence era. Among the four names mentioned above, the first one is genuinely a pre-Independence poet, but the works of the rest three spill over to the post – Independence era and hence we can note the difference between the two sets. Babu Awadh Bihari Lall explores the nature and social fabric, including the status of women, the custom of marriage and the evils of patriarchy. Gurudas Mukherjee moves from nature to the social landscape; Umeshwar Prasad revolts against prevailing hypocrisy and corruption in public life and Amrendra Kumar touches the contemporary issues. R. K. Singh's poems are both mirror and criticism of life. Prabhat Kumar Singh speaks the conflicts of love, lust and loyalty. R. K. Sinha leaves nothing untouched from the "Puri Beach" to the "Fifty Years of Freedom". Pashupati Jha's poems are concise and touching, capturing the everyday experience in simple yet stunning style. Kumar Vinod Chaudhary finds poetry as a means of self-revelation. The poems of Anil K Prasad unburden his confusion and seeks to provide peace in all. The poems of Punita Jha are centered on her feminist attitudes, unraveling the queer composition of women in general. Vijay Mishra dwells on his own self and the influence of culture, gender and the contemporary politics. C. L. Khatri's poems have the innate quality of simplicity and originality coupled with irony and a zeal to fight against poverty, illiteracy, discrimination and disparity. Samar Pratap Singh pre -senses the imminent catastrophe in nature and social structure. The poems of Kalpana Singh Chitnis have a wide canvas right from her ancestral home to the mystic creation. Binod Mishra's poems are wrapped in contemporary reality of everyday character of all walks of life. Tabish Khair prefers to raise the common day issues whereas Sumirasko has a profound philosophical vision. Bhaskaranand Jha Bhaskar dissects the unexplored heath and Abhay Kumar's poems are a sort of path – finder. Surbhi Seram's poems influenced by her wide travel and Agraneet Shree's poems make public her personal experience which were unaided and untouched. Precisely, all these poets have touched a wide variety of topics to tell the world their own ideas and belief.

Bihar has been misunderstood most of the time, though Bihar has been able to deliver the first poet of the Indian Writing in English, and many poets of substance and repute. This anthology has not been able to cover all the English poets from Bihar; the Editor feels the necessity of bringing out the second volume, in continuation, that may incorporate the rest of the poets from Bihar. For the present volume that encompasses some of the great poets as unsung heroes. The crux of the problem is that these poets from Bihar do not occupy one platform to assert their solidarity and presence. However, the present volume acquaints us with the enormous poetic talent of poets from Bihar and hence an indispensable piece of writing.

Reviewed by R. K. Sharma, Associate Professor, University Dept. of English, Ranchi University, Ranchi

III

GYNOCRITICAL DISCUSSION OF THE SELECTED NOVELS OF ANITA NAIR

By Randhir Kumar, ElitePublication, 2024

This book elaborates Anita Nair's belief and the real experience of the life lived (actually) and the appeal of the surroundings, the neighbourhood, and the community. It can be felt in her characterization, the meticulous details of the landscape and the analysis of the behaviour and interaction which develops into the intricacies of life. Her characters try to preserve their identity as daughter, wife, mother and above all as a respectable human being in a tradition bound, hegemonic Indian society. Her portrayal of middle-class women and their issues, issues pertaining to parent-child relationship, marriage and sex, and their exploitation and disillusionment, she has been called a feminist which she vehemently negates. She strongly asserts that no amount of theorizing would solve women's problems in India and discards any such categorizations. Her understanding of feminism and the freedom of movement that women have in society is very different. If she had attempted to explain what her notion of feminism is, that would have clarified things. But she doesn't. She belongs to the elite section of the Indian society who cannot be compared with the majority of Indian women. Considering the kind of society in which we live, where writers have to undergo various ordeals, it may also possible that she denies calling herself a feminist to avoid controversies. Recently Kerala witnessed its own Perumal Murugan withdrawing his novel due to some protest. S Hareesh who writes in a popular Malayalam Weekly was forced to withdraw his novel as the protestors attacked his family for his writing. Anita Nair expressed her solidarity with the writer in this context.

The active feminists' choice of freedom in this novel becomes a turning point in their life. Many times, their individuality and freedom mongering tendency lead them towards Existential problems. The female characters such as Akhila, Sheela Vasudevan, Prabha Devi, Janaki Prabhakar, Margaret Paulraj and Marikolanthu face the tenets of existentialism such as fear, dread, isolation, loneliness, helplessness and strangeness to their own world but they never forget to risk their life to attain their identity and freedom. As Feminist Existentialism stresses women's authenticity over their lives, Nair achieves that through her protagonist Radha. Women have become the subject matter for the writings of many men, and women themselves in India writings in English. Because nothing can reach completion when half of its population is secluded and literature is not an exception. In the good old past, women wished to have their identities as so and so's wife, daughter-in-law, mother or daughter. But in modern era, women wish to have an identity of their own. They are no more the extension of someone's or somebody's identity. None can blame only men, but women themselves enjoy being the bearers of those shelters in the past. But the same women who once accepted their identities and found shelters in the hands of any close male relationships willingly started to introspect their positions. The mentality of women has undergone a sea change.

They no more want themselves to be addressed as self-sacrificing creatures. They want to be labelled as unique human beings with an identity of their own. Many women novelists have come out with many bold characters and their strong determination to protest against atrocities. Writers such as Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande including Anita Nair have all talked about complex issues openly in their works and what is to be appreciated is their 'Indian-ness' in conveying these messages by maintaining a correct balance in giving correct space to human relationships, men's psyche, women's psyche and manwoman relationships and most importantly the potentials of women. It is obvious that these novelists have gone deep in to the psyche of their women characters.

Though in general, it leads to negative remarks such as what is new there to know or understand in the undergoing of tortures and torments in the lives of women, it should be

noted that, women who are suppressed and denied rights to come forward in their lives seem to be more motivated and self-developed, for they have experienced the cause and effect of their failure. The personal experiences of their hearts will certainly push them towards empowerment.

No doubt, this book provides an in-depth understanding of the reasons which prohibit women from enjoying their freedom and individuality. For years together women have been trained to fit into a system created by the Patriarchal society which teaches them humility, obedience, sacrifice, submissiveness and softness, and a woman's entire life space ought to move within these boundaries.

Reviewed by Kumar Parag, Associate Professor, University Deptt. Of English & MEL, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, U.P.

IV

Unwinding Self, by Susheel Kumar, Vishvanatha Kaviraj Institute, Cuttack India, 2020, Price : Rs. 250/-

Unwinding Self is a collection of forty-two poems written by Prof. Susheel Sharma, university of Allahabad. It should be taken as venture to unravel his own self and thereby innumerable selves of the world. Human life is full of vicissitudes and contradictions and it requires deep contemplation and micro-observation to get to the bottom of its fabric. It is a mix bag of feelings and observations. the poet dwells on different ingredients of human life, its different phases, unused, misused and overused spaces, dreams and aspirations of a common man, confusion and contradictions of human perceptions and final disillusionment leading to the end of life. The opening poem *Snapshots* pieces together the titbits of the universe, a questioning man and a silent God. It is an obvious acknowledgement when he flashes: "We are God's creation." *The End of the Road* confirms the pattern of the world: "The world has lost its original colour." Rain of *Durga Puja in 2013* reminds us the rain of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* where its absence is the prime concern of the poet. His dream itches within, in the poem *On Reading Langston Hughes' "Theme for English B"*: "I have a dream of a better life". In the poem *The Destitute* the poet tries to define his identity shaped by the aspirations he possesses: that of his job, his health, his education and leisure which throttles the identity of the future generation: "I have to kill myself for generations." *The Black Experience* questions the justice of Jesus: "Where was the god of justice." In the heavily crowded universe, the poet reassures himself in the poem *Me, a Black Doxy*: My God is with me/ Me ain't contaminated/ Me ain't a sinner." *Thus, Spake a Womanis*, perhaps the biography of a common woman who is raised as a dreamer, closing with ultimate realization: "Life was fine/Life ids final/ Each one of us has to die." The poet's inquisitive nature persists in the poem *A Voice* where it degenerates in the throng of technology, and the emotion is decided by 'the mouse' and 'the curser'. Human mind still thrives on dreams and the poet's dream by the Ganges attract the audience in the poem *Chasing a Dream of the Ganges*. *The New Year Dawn* brings new resolutions: "I take on life and death/ With equal strides." In *Bubli Poems*, the central character, despite her accomplished structure fails to decide her destination. *Kabir'sChadar* questions man's journey that maligns its purity and another question in the poem *The Unlucky*: "Why did I choose to be a poet and a teacher." The Kerla Flood 2018 is struck between human and inhuman, between cow and slaughter and its opposition. Leading to suffering. The poet is deeply hurt which is further intensified in the poem, *Strutting Around*. Like a diaspora soul, in *Sahibs, Snobs, Sinners*, the poet's longing for a home is crystalized. *Endless Wait* talks of his

treasure of books and *The Soul with a New Hat* oscillates between Karma and devotion. *Renewed Hope* is in search of salvation. In *Akshya Tritiya*, the poet resolves to vote for the day and the immeasurable human aspirations are reflected in *Buy Books, Net Diamonds*: “The search for diamond is on.” In the *Lost Childhood*, the poet defines childhood as : “The childhood lost in Dickens/ Is found in Anand”; it is a bit symbolic but it has grains of truth. In *Distancing* the poet attacks the urban life of Bombay and questions: “Why did the boy then return to his village?” – a pertinent question on the fascination of this mega – city. *Hands* tells us he relishes the role of hands: “I need to take more care of them/ I need to read the lines in his palms.” The poem *Crowded Locals*, the poet finds it full of human experience: “The local is maximum experience/ In the maximum city.” In the poem *A Family by the Road*, he embraces the whole world : “The world is my home/ The Scholar Gypsy was my relative too——Let me enjoy my freedom / I am proud of my poverty.——I am Shiva/ Shivoham”. In *A Gush of Wind*, the poet challenges the wind : “Let the wind gush into my room/ I am not afraid of it”. And in the poem *Coffee*, he admits that he has learnt the art of living: “I have stopped asking silly questions/ I have learnt to live with it.” In the poem *The UnbornPoem*, he defines the poem: “The poem remains a mirror/ A shadow, a mirage, a stain. Irony, satire, humour, jamboree/ Stare at the enjambment.” The Fountain Square is a replica of possible Mahabharata: “Will he play/ Or won’t he/ Radha conjectures—— Mahabharata is taking shape —— Does it matter to me?” The poem *Ram Setu* asks: “Is it so difficult to make stones flat and / Create a liveable and loveable planet earth?” *Connaught Place* has a lot to say: “Like a vagabond I have/ Wandered here year after year/ Looking for lessons, home and friends.” The last poem *Stories from the Mahabharat* raises timeless queries: “Dharm and moksha hang on a tree/ Seers watch avariciously —— Dancing is necessary/ To the tune of the flute.”

This book of poems cannot be shelved as an ordinary piece of writing rather it requires thorough analysis for proper understanding; each piece carries the burden of morality and worldly values of immense significance.

**Reviewed by G.S. Jha, Former Professor, Head and Dean,
University Department of English, Ranchi University, Ranchi**

Interview

Interview with Parwati Tirkey, Sahitya Akademi Yuva winner 2025

Parwati Tirkey is a young promising writer, working as Assistant Professor in Hindi at R. L. S. Y. College, Ranchi. She hails from a village named Tatargutu in Ghaghra Block of Gumla District of Jharkhand, more than one hundred kilometers from Ranchi. She belongs to Kurukh tribe and her tribal language is Kurukh. She had her early education in the schools of Gumla and thereafter she shifted to B. H. U. Varanasi for Higher education, that is, B. A., M. A. and Ph. D. She is a keen observer of the nature, the society and the community as a whole. She has been awarded with Sahitya Akademi Yuva award of 2025, for her first book of Hindi poems **Phir Ugna**. She is indulged in writing short stories and critical writings. Her multifaceted talent could earn worldwide recognition at a very early age. She moves with the call of time and with a dream to change the social fabric in the best possible way. I got an opportunity to interact with her and know her mindset, and plan to move ahead. Interview with her is as below:

GSJ: At first, my greetings and congratulations for the award of Sahitya Akademi, 2025. What was your first reaction, when you got the news that you have been chosen for this prestigious award.

PT: I was immensely pleased to learn that I have been chosen for this prestigious award and to learn that the sentiment and ideology of the tribes have been accepted and recognized by the Jury of our country.

GSJ: What was your first writing, at what age? What about the original language in which you started writing?

PT: My first poem was titled Karamchando, written in 2021, both in Hindi and Kurukh, my own tribal language; the Hindi version is published but the Kurukh is yet to be published.

GSJ: How many books have you written so far. Please name the titles. Are all books in the form of poems only? And what are the subjects?

PT: So far, I have written only one book **Phir Ugna**, for which I got the award. It comes out of the perception of Khoren (new Branch), a natural phenomenon which asks us to initiate; we can take it as a call for the new beginning; and I began – moving ahead, all the time. Poems in the book, for which I was awarded, are centered on the life style of the Tribes, man – nature relationship, traditional faith and belief, knowledge system, cultural elements of dance, song and different rituals related to Chalatonka, a religion that is free from the prevalent religions of the world. It also tells us of their present status, glorious past and their expectations through folk tales and folk songs, etc. My book is a humble attempt to incorporate all these elements.

GSJ: What are the major influences in your writing? Which writer or poet or circumstances compelled you to write?

PT: Right from my University days I have been influenced by the writers of Bhakti Movement particularly, the Nirgun Sahitya (formless / attribute – less literature; it refers to the

concept of a divine being or ultimate reality that transcends all attributes, characteristics or limitations. It is a core concept in Hinduism, particularly, Bhakti tradition, emphasizing the formless, infinite and incomprehensive nature of the divine.) The most abiding force of the influence came from poets like Kabir and Mira bai. We have so many folk tales and folk songs which matches with the ideology of Kabir. In our tribe there is an important sect known as Kabirpanthi. So, we are, really, pragmatic in our approach towards life and the world.

GSJ: What do you intend to convey through your writing? Do you want a sort of social transformation or social reformation or anything else – please elaborate.

PT: Yes, of course, I am basically a rebel and so, somehow, unconventional. My chief intention is to transform the society (to rationalize the social fabric) and to get rid of traditional unscientific and irrational practices and rituals. I believe in man - nature relationship. Man can never be divorced from nature, and if so, he has to suffer the consequences. We should try to eliminate the evil practices which ultimately damages the human life.

GSJ: Have you written any prose piece, for instance, short story, novel, drama, etc.

PT: Yes, I have written three stories which have been published. I have also written critical writings which have been published in National and International journals, and widely acclaimed.

GSJ: Can you elaborate your future plan - about writing, about your society/community/ state/country.

PT: I wish to have a better society, free from all prejudice and bias of the traditional faith and belief. People away from our place should not carry the impression that we are lagging behind in any sphere; be it education, the demands of modernity or the economic independence. Precisely, I look forward to a better society and brilliant future.

GSJ: Do you think your literary work can influence your society or community or tribe?

PT: Definitely. My work aims at a better tomorrow devoted the whole lot of Tribes.

GSJ: Do you think your teaching job helps you in creativity? If so, how?

PT: Certainly. Actually, my job is that of teaching of Hindi literature where I interact with students from various backgrounds including students from tribal background. There is exchange of ideas and I am made aware of their opinions about different things, their problems, the present status of the tribal society (economic, legal, political religious and political), probable solutions and their expectations from the rest of the society and the state. I can incorporate all these ingredients in my writings and it has a positive bearing, too.

GSJ: Do you think your poems can be dramatized or any film can be made out of it?

PT: Why not? I am looking for some sponsoring body which can help me in proceeding towards the making of documentary film or cinema, based on my writings, because I have a strong conviction that visual presentation would prove to be more effective and

logical to motivate the tribal society and rest of the world.

GSJ: Do you find any language barrier in creativity?

PT: No, there is no barrier of language: it is a matter of understanding and acceptance.

GSJ: Is your work targeted to a particular tribe or it aims at the entire tribal community – please explain.

PT: My work is addressed to the entire tribal community, not only of Jharkhand, but the entire world. After all, the tribal population living in any part of the world are facing the same sort of problem; their sufferings and pleasures are identical.

GSJ: What is the specific aim of your writing?

PT: The specific aim of my writing is to confront the social turmoil, to regain the lost identity and to prove ourselves in the mainstream, and not languishing as marginalized entity. The day I am able to achieve all these, that will be the day of celebration, not only for me but the entire tribal community. In simple words I move with the motto: Preserve Culture; Preserve Identity. I wish to be thoroughly pragmatic, scientific and rational. It is the question of ethics and we have to maintain its essence ; we must be conscious of our integrity that may help in our progression and prosperity.

GSJ: What is your message to the budding writers?

PT: My brief message to the budding writers is that they should take care of the words they use in their writings. Words matter a lot. Words are the most powerful weapons that the writers can use to convince the audience and the world at large.

GSJ: Thanks, Ma'am, for sparing your valuable time and your kind cooperation in deliberating over your work: your legacy of the past, convulsions of the present and possible strategy for the future.

PT: You are most welcome, sir. I am delighted and feel honored to get this opportunity to share my views: the way I deal with my past, the moors of the present and the manipulations for the future.

The interviewer is Prof. Gauri Shankar Jha, of the University Department of English, Ranchi University, Ranchi. The interview was conducted in Hindi and subsequently translated into English by the interviewer.

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- MSS must be neatly and flawlessly typed in Microsoft Word (Times New Roman, 12 – point font size, double space).
- Submission: profgsjha06@rediffmail.com, chandrashekhardu99@gmail.com
- Preferred length of MSS:

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Short Story: 2,500 – 3,000 words

Poem: 20 - 25 lines

Book Review: 700 - 1000 words

- MSS must be accompanied by a Brief Bio - Data and one colour passport size photo.
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