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From Director's Desk

Research is a perpetual field that demands enduring efforts from academicians and scholars. *Teresian Journal of English Studies* intends to promote multidisciplinary research oriented studies in the field of English Language and Literature. This journal has featured significant scholarship by leading academicians across the country.

Academic writing always adheres to a set of guidelines which our journal also maintains. The scope of our journal is to facilitate researchers, scholars and academicians to share their different perspectives thereby erasing boundaries of disciplines.

The Journal has succeeded in foregrounding good quality research papers thus promoting intellectual coherence.

I'm happy that this edition of *TJES* has been successful in battling the challenges of the free virus. It embodies the perseverance of teachers and researchers who deeply care about values - ethics, integrity and commitment.

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Editorial



Dr. Latha Nair R.

2020 came upon us with no warning and a complete fracturing of the way the world works. I wonder if one ought to have predicted this, given the global turbulence of the 20's in the last century. The greatest global conflicts of the past century also led to the explosion of knowledge and technology that eventually situates us in the hyperconnected, digital world we currently inhabit. Our world has never had as much a scientific temperament as it does now, and yet, as the corona pandemic sweeps across our planet, we are terrified by the truth of our own helplessness. With all the rationality of our existence, and all the might of the progress we have made so far as a race, it still seems futile to quarrel with the "great oppose less wills" of the universe. Perhaps it is this sense of our own inadequacy in the face of catastrophe that fuels our drive to create more, to research more, and to understand the significance of erasing boundaries and expanding new horizons. However, this also gives hope that our world is now conducive to learning and unlearning, and reimagine a new reality.

It is apt that 2020 also be the year that we receive a New Education Policy. In this spirit of change and growth, the NEP is a blueprint to make India the seat of multidisciplinary research and innovation. The policy

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exclusively lays stress on the dissemination of knowledge based on research by promoting R&D across all levels of higher education. It is exciting to see this vigorous focus on interdisciplinary research and on the creation of new perspectives and new avenues of thought. One looks forward to a new wind in our research culture, with students, teachers, and academicians engaging in collaborations, explorations and publications.

With this edition of TJES, we too embrace interdisciplinarity, with ten articles by authors from various walks of life. Our authors have endeavoured to erase the binaries of disciplines and offer exciting new thoughts around the intersection of topics such as Bengali Science Fiction, Discard Studies, Holocaust Poetry, Narratology and current concepts of Aporetics, the politics of identity, *Chavittu Natakam*, Film Studies, Japanese-Canadian Historiography and Pharaonic theatre. This collection of articles is also a celebration of literary engagement with performing arts, theatre, film, history and culture studies.

The experience of curating such a collection during these peculiar times was an interesting albeit strange experience. This year, one has been introduced to a strange semiotics of life, where the rituals and symbols of everyday existence have been rendered mute. I do consider this endeavour to be a symbol of the triumph of the human will to reappraise, reconstruct and reassign meaning to the new normal. I hope that this new perspective will inspire both young scholars and academicians to venture forth on transdisciplinary journeys of their own and we look forward to welcoming your articles in the next editions of TJES.

Until then, to quote Shakespeare, let us “bear free and patient thoughts.”

The Marginal Technopia: Early Bengali Science Fiction and the City



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Speculative Fiction or Science Fiction (SF) has had a long historical trajectory in the province of Bengal since the arrival of British colonialism in the late eighteenth-century. However, SF from India finds scant mention in either historical accounts or literary studies in the field. While existing studies have primarily investigated the relationship between science and society in colonial India from a sociological perspective, not much attention has been paid to the emergence of speculative writing as a mode of narrative engagement with science and the city during its early contacts with colonial modernity. SF in colonial India was essentially a city-based writing and these narratives often interacted with and moulded the city in myriad ways. Thus, while studies have focused on the emergence of colonial cities of India as natural corollaries of scientific development during British colonialism, the way these cities were constructed within speculative narrative spaces have been severely under explored. This paper explores the intersections of science, city and SF during the period of colonial modernity in India with special reference to the province of Bengal. It attempts to examine specific sets of texts within this period that seem to fashion a "technological imaginary" within the cityscape.

Keywords: *Speculative Fiction, Science Fiction in Bengal, Postcolonial City, Technology Studies, Urban Studies.*

The term 'Science Fiction' seems to inhabit an ambiguous space especially at the time of its emergence in India.

The term, when applied to early Bengali science fiction (SF), traverses a wide array of genres that, strictly speaking, may not be included within the more formal categories of SF. In the course of this paper, the term has been used to be more inclusive than exclusive since Indian SF seems to cover the territories of fantasy literature, fabular modes, speculative fiction, oral narratives, and even nonsense literature. To continue with the travel metaphor, an apt one perhaps when one deals with a genre that often involves movement across spaces, both geographical and mental, that can be mapped and those that cannot be, the definitional boundaries, thus, seem to be exceedingly fragile and fluid and can be seen in the interactions between various claims and practices. This, however, does not mean that a definitive description of SF is available in the West and the term has undergone various modifications even there. From as early as 1926 with Hugo Gernsback's coinage of the term 'scientifiction' to Darko Suvin's description of SF as the 'literature of cognitive estrangement' (4), the genre has included a fairly large domain of productions that are called science fictions. Paul K Alkon notes that "the polysemy of the term *science fiction*, reflected in the inability of critics to arrive at agreement on any one definition, is a measure of science fiction's complex significance of our times" (9). The polysemous nature of the term, I believe, is rather an advantage than a drawback and I would like to retain its mutability. It would, however, be presumptuous to assume that Bengali SF is representative of the entire gamut of science fictions that emerged in the languages of India in the nineteenth-century though, for the present

paper, I will be limiting myself to SF in Bengal. Yet, the categories proposed may be seen as generally contingent on the pluralistic directions that SF took in India.

Science fiction in Bengal emerges at the cusp of two contiguous emergences in the 19th century: the rise of an educated middle-class (the *bhadralok*, as they were called, the 'cultured ones') and the advent of a systematic model of colonial science that rapidly disseminated through formal educational and informal print culture channels. However, there was a third element in these simultaneous developments: the rise of the city-space which rapidly established itself into a scientific-technological imaginary. In fact, Calcutta as a city, had a complex existence in many of the early science fiction stories in the 19th century. The intersection between science/technology, city and fiction was often negotiated through an imaginary that I will call the *technopia*. As I will argue, this technopia was essentially a marginal one from the point of view of the subject position of the colonized and yet offered a space that was epistemologically different from a typically passive-recipient position of the 'native.' It was often engaged in a discursive exchange that was multipart and intricate. While the points of insertion that science and the city share seem to be discernibly documented in literature (Lefebvre; Certeau; Williams; Scott; Urry; and Arnold), the negotiation of this imaginary through a fictional imagination, particularly science fiction, has been explored sparsely. This is especially true in an emergent colonial society where the cityscape itself was in a state of constant, re-designable flux that recurrently cast the colonizer-colonized position within the ambit of a contested metropolitan imagination.

Science and the City

In a utopian science fictional account written by Kylas Chunder Dutt (1817-?) published in *The Calcutta Literary Gazette* in 1835 titled "A Journal of Forty-eight Hours of the Year 1945," a proto-nationalist rebel army of educated middle-class Indians led by Bhoobun Mohan fights the British colonizers. After the euphoria of initial success, the army decides to attack Fort William, the British stronghold in Calcutta (Kolkata). However, Bhoobun Mohan is captured and decapitated and the battle ends in disarray for the rebels.

In another story by Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858-1937), one of the earliest Indian scientists of international repute and a leading thinker on electromagnetic waves, titled 'Palatak Tufan' (The Runaway Storm) (1896), the city of Calcutta is threatened by a cataclysmic storm that miraculously never arrives. After a series of scientific, semi-scientific and pseudo-scientific expositions laced with ironical overtones that subverts the logic of British colonial science, the mystery is explained away by the narrator by revealing that at the opportune moment he spilled a few drops of hair oil on the ocean floor thereby creating a strong surface tension and deflecting the storm from its path of destruction. Incidentally, the hair oil that saves the city is produced by an indigenous entrepreneur of Bengal and is meant as a miracle cure for balding heads like that of the narrator.

A similar storm blows away all evidence and proof of a fantastic expedition in an alien land undertaken by Professor Hesoram Hushiyar during which he encounters bizarre animals that defy the logic of all 'scientific' rationality. On his return to the city, when quizzed about documentary evidence for the veracity of his claims, the scientist's nephew indignantly remarks: "I am here! My uncle is here! What more do you want?"

The irate nephew, of course, leaves in a huff and does not produce a shred of corroborating evidence to satisfy the city publishers as for the 'truth value' of the story. The story by Sukumar Ray (1887-1923) ('The Diary of Hesoram Hushiyar') was published in a city magazine called *Sandesh* in 1922.

Calcutta, the colonial city, emerging in and around the British garrison of Fort William (1781), was always already a scientific endeavour. With a firm entrenchment of a colonial administration by the late 18th-century, especially after the accession of the Diwani of Bengal to the British East India Company in 1765, the juggernaut of science that this administration brought in was essentially a metropolitan enterprise. This, however, did not mean that, as colonial propaganda by British historians suggested, there was a historical arc of an "empty" period of decline after the ancient Indian achievements in science. There, for instance, against the insistent presence of the colonial city of Calcutta in the colonial imaginary, smaller centres of influence like Benares, Awadh, Kanauj and Mysore that produced knowledge in an uninterrupted fashion. However, the narrative that was consistently constructed by the colonial historians was that of a "null" and "empty" phase of decay that was then filled with plenitude by the arrival of the colonial Enlightenment scientific project (Arnold). The rise of the colonial cities – Calcutta, Madras and Bombay – may be viewed as a quintessential monumentalisation of a certain kind of colonial science. The depiction of "empty" history or "declining" intellectualism by colonial chroniclers was constructed to be the perfect counterfoil to the establishment of a metropolitan scientific narrative. The story ran thus: Indians had a phase of history where there was a constant decline which was being corrected by the intervention of the British model of 'advanced' and 'modern' colonial science and

culture. The juxtaposition of science with “modernity” that could carve out a city, and with it a metropolitan imagination, was achieved through various pathways. Firstly, by creating a historical narrative of ‘pre-modernity,’ the Indians were rendered unfit to receive the advances of modern science. Secondly, the new colonial science was governed by the more pragmatic necessity of denying Indians a competitive edge in the free enterprise of industrial technology that the colonial government brought in. It was a common practice that British firms were given an undue advantage in the free trade enterprise over the Indians. And finally, by generating a romantic, and often, exotic narrative picture of India, what Said would term Orientalism, as the pre-industrial land of princes, peasants and artisans and therefore, not to be sullied by the rigour of an industrial economy, science and technology was seen as something exclusive that the colonizers brought in (Bhattacharya and Hiradhar; Prakash).

The imposition of a non-historical mould to marginalize all forms of self-representation as a historical was, in itself, a strategy to produce a different kind of history – an attempt that can be seen in early colonial history writing with a specific locus in the Enlightenment project and science as its methodological principle. The city of scientific wonder could now be moulded within the confines of not only the new epistemological model but also the new historical model of science. This reconfiguration could be seen in the early division of Calcutta into white, intermediate and Indian towns with a set hierarchy. Thus, while the northern part of the city (intermediate and Indian parts) industrialized rapidly leading to a population explosion, the southern parts (the white, and later the *bhadralok* parts) remained largely regulated in terms of its demography. The slums around the Northern parts especially multiplied manifold.

A distinctively scientific visual code was introduced, especially in the southern parts: metalled roads, gas lighting, sewerage works and filtered water supply. A visual aesthetic was created when the city was arranged in accordance to governance principles with instruments of imperial hegemony seeming to cluster together: the Indian museum, offices of the Geological Survey of India, Government Arts Gallery, Asiatic Society, and offices of the Surveyor General of India were all placed in the same grid. Perpendicular to this axis of knowledge-production was situated the axis of commerce: the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and the Royal Exchange which oversaw the trading practices of the Empire (Chatterjee, 1995). The power/knowledge dyad was resolutely mapped onto the body of the city by the middle of the 19th century. An industrial-technological polis was slowly coming into being and yet, it was not a presence that easily gelled with the gaze of the colonized.

Science Fiction and the Metropolitan Imagination

The pervasive presence of scientific instrumentality also created a certain class of people – the *bhadralok* –that, as Arnold (2004) puts it, were ‘obsessed’ with science. Availability of scientific knowledge, first in English, and then with the spread of print culture, in Bangla, produced a disseminative force that travelled across Bengal (Chaturvedi). Between 1875 and 1896, for instance, 776 books were published in Bengali on medicine, mathematics and the natural sciences (Chatterjee). The emergent *bhadralok* class with its access to scientific colonial education was capable of interacting with the cityscape with a different epistemological tool. This class propagated and advocated appropriation of colonial science as an essential springboard for access to colonial power leading to the formation of an intellectual public sphere (Raina and

Habib). However, as it soon became apparent, this access to the scientific city was zealously guarded by the rulers often through discriminatory practices. Science which promised admittance to the city also led to the proliferation of an educated proletariat who were largely unemployed within the colonial regime. However, this led to a different kind of conjunctural praxis: a kind of negotiation that could place the colonized self within the larger colonial-epistemological structures of science.

The leading journals of the time like *Tattvabodhini*, *Rahasyasandarbha*, *Bangadarshan*, *Aryadarsan*, *Bharati*, *Bamabodhini* had major sections on scientific subjects. Specialised journals like *Bibidhartha Samgraha* and *Bijnan-darshan* dealt exclusively with science (Chatterjee). A related development was the formation of “scientific societies.” A bevy of such societies sprung up following the foundation of the Asiatic Society in 1784. By 1828, a journal, ‘Gleanings of Science’ started to be published (Kumar). The Calcutta Medical and Physical Society were established in 1823 followed by the founding of Indian Association for Advancement of Natural Science in 1841. The Indian Association for Cultivation of Science (1876) was instituted by Mahendra Lal Sircar with the express intention of engaging with science in the city. Sircar, in one of his addresses, made his position very clear: “[D]espite the inherited submission to a foreign yoke [...] we have inherited a mind not inferior in its endowments to the mind of any nation on earth” (qtd Palit 154). In fact, in many of these societies like *Bamabodhini Sabha* (1863), and later, the National Council for Education (1905) and Society for the Promotion of Technical Education (1906) (Raina and Habib), science and its dissemination played a central role. Prakash argues that science as a project of modernity had two different manifestations: to turn Indians into modern subjects it was essential to project science as a rational

instrument of colonial superiority; once, however, this modern Indian subject was created, ironically the subject indigenized science on the borderlines of Western rationality and Indian traditional knowledge systems giving rise to the nationalist project. But this also changed the nature of the city. For instance, the Oriental Museum of the Asiatic Society established in 1814 in Calcutta which was more like a ware-house was transformed into the Indian Museum in 1878 for public viewing. Just as the city itself was being altered as an object of gaze, the specific landmarks situated within the colonial city was also marked by what Bernard Cohn called the “exhibition mode” of colonial knowledge (Cohn 11). The spectacular (for example, the Calcutta International Exhibition of 1883) was almost inescapably linked to science and its display potential.

Surrounded by this omnipresent science and the ambivalent position that the colonized occupied within it, SF as a form emerges in Calcutta. This emergence can be seen in terms of what Mignolo calls “border thinking” (Mignolo), a possibility of subverting the limitations imposed by colonial thinking by releasing knowledge that have been subalternized by the hegemonic presence of a colonial rational subject-position. Bengali SF, at this point of crossover, as it were, changes the rules of this perspective. The city in its myriad forms becomes both an object of desire through its specular grandness and yet, at the same time, also remains the site where the colonized experiences a sense of otherness. The access to the city is necessary and yet this access is hounded by a fear of being completely overwhelmed by the knowledge it encompasses. One, unquestionably, needs the metropolis and yet it needs to be negotiated through an alterity an altered metropolitan imagination. This imagination creates a SF *technopia*, albeit a marginal one, where the cityscape can be re-routed through a

different kind of imaginary space though the epistemological boundaries of colonial science are acknowledged putatively.

The Technopian Imaginary

The fictional mapping of the city can also be seen as a “cognitive mapping” (Jameson 297) where the city acts as the utopian/dystopian space that enables the writers to take a leap into the unknown. This has been a familiar trope in western SF since its inception (Roberts). However, the city as a colonial space that constantly transforms and yet is amenable to the technological imagination of the colonized is something that Bengali SF offers. The city is ever-present in these early stories and if one begins with the early speculative fiction of 1835 (“A Journal”) the city in Bengali SF seems to run a full course till today. It continues as an unbroken tradition and if one takes into consideration the recent city-based novels in the SF genre in Indian writing in English (e.g., Amitav Ghosh’s *The Calcutta Chromosome*, 1995; Rimi B. Chatterjee’s *Signal Red*, 2005), the genre seems to have a fairly wide spread. In fact, the city is an ever-present spectre that seems to haunt the educated Bengali imagination especially in the production of SF. Thus, in Dutt’s “A Journal,” the final rebellion aimed at the city by an “educated” intelligentsia can never be realised since liberation from “a foreign yoke” has already been problematized by the conditions of hybridity that the story evokes. The intelligentsia which provokes the rebellion has already been infused with the “foreign” in terms of their exposure to a certain kind of education. The attempt to retrieve a pure, native self by attacking the symbolic city of oppression is almost predestined to be doomed. Similarly, in ‘Palatak Tufan’ the city can be saved not by the presence of the colonized self *in* the city but *outside* it. The drop of oil that saves the city in the story is actually spilled by the narrator when he

is on a sea-voyage away from the city. In Ray’s ‘Hesoram Hushiyar,’ the city-based intelligentsia refuses to accept the fantastic exploits due to a lack of rational-instrumental proof. Though this was a children’s story published in the children’s magazine *Sandesh*, the import of the story seems to be the questioning of ‘truth values’ that Western science assumes. The story itself, of course, is set beyond the city. Premendra Mitra (1904-88), another prolific writer of Bengali SF, depicted a hero, Ghanada, in the midst of the city and yet through a process of estrangement, both historical and temporal, makes him travel across a cosmopolitan world-space that transforms the metropolitan imagination of his habitation itself (Bhattacharya and Hiradhar). Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932), in her ‘Sultana’s Dream’ (1905), transmutes the gendered city into a dreamscape that both allows release from an oppressive patriarchy but also questions the coordinates of the “real” city within the pervasive presence of an overwhelmingly women’s science.

Early Bengali SF thus interacts with the city space in myriad ways. It is thus, important to understand the intersections, interventions, crossings, junctures and conjunctures that science, city and SF produced during the period of colonial modernity. A brief analysis of two stories, ‘Palatak Tufan’ and ‘Hesoram Hushiyarer Diary,’ would be taken up from the quite rich presence of SF in the 19th and the early 20th century Bengali writings to understand the technopian imaginary that I have been trying to argue for.

Bose’s ‘Palatak Tufan’ begins with an act of imminent threat that has recently been averted – the city is extraordinarily saved when a destructive cyclonic storm plays truant. The readers are overwhelmed with a series of explanations: variations of ‘official’ discourses that print culture had made available to the Bengali intelligentsia – a plethora of meteoro-

logical reports, newspaper reports with suggestions that taxpayers' money is completely wasted on developing colonial institutions that cannot even predict a storm, a letter from the "principal of the Medical College," 'scientific' reports that claim that the cyclone seemed to have subsided in the dreadful presence of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, and pseudo-scientific explanations. One is immersed in a stupendous polyphony that challenges all existing forms of discursive practices. The second part of the story, narrated in the first person, reveals that the narrator (predictably, Bose himself), traveling in a ship to get away from the city and effect a change in air, drops a bottle of hair oil when he sees the approaching storm, leading to the abatement of the storm according to the scientific principles of surface tension and gravity. Perhaps it is not out of place here to mention that the story Bose wrote was in response to a short story writing competition sponsored by the Kuntalin Hair Oil Company, a company owned by an indigenous entrepreneur, Hemendra-mohan Basu. Further, the bottle of oil that the narrator so ingenuously uses is the same hair oil that the company produces, though the original intention, as the narrator informs us, of carrying the oil was to satisfy the desire of his daughter who has been complaining of her father's balding head. A network of indigenous commerce, nationalist aspirations associated with this commerce and colonial scientific paradigms intersect almost seamlessly within the space of the story. Moreover, the symbolic hair oil performs two significant functions: it locates the story within the paradigms of an emerging nationalist discourse that is casting a self that is different from the colonial projection; and, it also in a transformative sleight of hand turns into a cultural symbol of negotiation – rational scientific principles co-existing within the marginality of multiple narrative forms. One of the key features

that Bose seems to inaugurate within the realm of SF in Bengal is the ironic side-stepping (the narrative is replete with the 'nonsensical') that shares an almost equal space with the rationalist categories of science initiated by the colonial model. This feature is primarily achieved through the introduction of multiple narrative forms that in their very superabundance almost overwhelm the rationalistic model of *writing* per se.

The second story, 'Hesoram Hushiyarer Diary' begins with an enframed narrative form. We are told by the editors of the magazine, where the story is going to be published, that Professor Hesoram Hushiyar is incensed with the editors of the magazine since they have steadfastly refused to put in print, due to want of proof, the previous stories that the Professor had sent to them. However, the editors are publishing this particular story for the readers to decide whether it is 'true.' In fact, 'truth value' of the story forms an integral part of the entire narrative. The story that Professor Hushiyar has to share is in the form of a diary. The narrative that emerges from the five entries of the diary of the Professor spans a period of seventy-two days. The records themselves are extremely erratic in their reporting on travels undertaken by Hushiyar in a "distant" land. Once the story of Hushiyar is completed, a second form of enframing is introduced in the form of an interview in which the nephew of Hushiyar is being quizzed by the editors. This in a sense 'completes' the story, since the diary itself which contains the core of the story is just a fragmented narrative. The enframing in two 'truth' narratives – an editorial comment and an interview - provides, as we shall see, the subversive space of the story.

In Bose's story, as seen earlier, a variety of narrative forms embedded in the text are made to enter a dialogic relation in a spirit of the carnival esque, allowing the emergence of the

final truth in an apocalyptic fashion (in the etymological sense of the word, an 'unveiling'), the 'truth' being the prerogative of the first person narrator against the grain of all other available forms of official discursive 'truths.' Ray's story, right from its inception, is an ostensible attempt to contend with the 'truth.' The editorial comment, quite ironically, ends with: "Whether this is true or false, it is for you to decide."

One of the most striking aspect of Ray's story is its formulation of 'truth' as a contested category in the terrain that colonial science creates, especially if that truth is pitted against indigenous forms of knowledge. This terrain, in the late nineteenth century, needed an original mapping, even if it meant creating an imaginary landscape to grapple with this 'truth.' Positivist 'truth' forms the frames of all the diary entries: the date and the geographical location encapsulate the space and the time. For instance, the first diary entry begins "26th June, 1912 – Karakoram, Ten miles north of the Bandakush Mountains." This pattern is repeated across the five entries, with shifting dates and locales – the Bandakush Mountain or Kakramoti River - providing the coordinates of action. Interestingly, the imaginary space that is created within the narrative is, after all, not so imaginary, since Karakoram and the actual distances that are rigorously traced throughout the entries, actually can be drawn on a map, especially maps of the type that were a constant presence in the British cartographic imagination (Embree). However, the imagined spaces of the narrative encapsulated within these 'true' locational frames are, to say the least, subversive of the frame. The temporal and the spatial substrates, as it were, exist in avacuum, on an imaginary map on which is drawn the 'scientific' narrative. The first diary entries tell us that the team of adventurers that Hushiyar leads consists of his nephew, Chandrakhai, two hunters,

Chakkar Singh and Lakkar Singh, and six porters, though the numbers reduce as the adventure progresses. In the first adventure recorded, the exploration party stumbles upon a strange creature "like a human being, but also not unlike an ape" who is fond of consuming whatever it sees. After offering him some food, Hushiyar decides to name him "Hanglaserium" ("Hangla" in Bangla means "glutton;" "serium" is the scientific generic name). In the second adventure they come across another animal that has an overtly surly appearance and seems to be unhappy with everything. The party names him "Gomra-therium" ("Gomra" means "surly-faced"). In the other adventures recorded in the diary, encounters with creatures are common and the urge to name constant. Hushiyar and his team thus run into "Lagbagnis," an extremely unstable bird ("Lagbag" indicating "unstable"), "Langratherium," a lame bear-like creature, "Chillanosuarus," a hybrid creature with the appearance of an alligator, snake, and fish all together whose main aim is to scream ("chillano" is to "scream"), and "Becharatherium" ("Bechara" meaning the sorry figure), the helpless one who is being screamed at by the Chilla-nosaurus. Inventing a new language for SF is not a novelty, alien language always forming an integral part of the repertoire of SF (Cheyne), and Ray's ideas may have been partly derived from Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1912), yet the insistence on naming is something which calls for further probing.

A significant strategy of colonial science is 'naming' and, by extension, 'renaming.' Thus, one of the functions of the Asiatic Society was naming by either appropriating indigenous knowledge or by filtering it through the lens of positivist Enlightenment science. It is quite evident that the process of "naming" and "renaming" was further buttressed by the acts of translation, both colonial

and Indian, and acted as a means of retrieval of a certain knowledge system. It was also implicated in the relations of power that existed in the colonial mode. Simply put, who names? The domain of colonial science that entered the colonized world of India was intrinsically adomain of the names – a certain belief in the name of enlightenment, rational epistemology that has the potential to provide the indigenous with access to colonial power. Yet, as we have seen earlier, this domain was disrupted once the colonized such as Jagadish Chandra Bose demanded an engagement on equal terms. The resultant conjuncture was a space of negotiation, a marginal technopia, in the field of SF. In Ray's story such a negotiated space seems to beat play at the site of naming. The insertion of the Bengali name within the largely colonial space of generic classification – the Latin endings “-therium,” “-nis,” “-serium,” “-saurus” reminding us of the location of these classi-fications – is essentially an act of appropriative renaming. It is not simply the mix of languages that creates this space but also the frames within which this naming is located – the temporal and spatial frame of the diary entries. The names seem to be militating against the enframing that colonial science imposes and yet it is not a complete reversal of this frame; it is a hybrid, an attempt to negotiate a space within the frames of that science. The order of colonial science, in a sense, is reordered through the marginal technopia.

Interestingly, at the end of the story, when the editors of the magazine, demand from Hesoram's nephew proof-written, photographed and documented-of this fantastic expedition, we are told that the evidence that the expeditionary team had collected, has been blown away by a storm. It is almost eerily reminiscent of another storm that threatened a city and was saved by the

ingenuity of a commoner who dropped a few drops of oil. Only in the case of Professor Hesoram Hushiyar the city-bred editors who demand ‘realist’ proof are to be disappointed though the story has already been mapped onto the body of the city – a technopia that within its marginality can challenge the dominance of a colonial scientific discourse. Quite presciently, in one of the adventures that Hushiyar records, he mutters to himself: “We have to create our own maps to explore this territory.” A projection of technopia allows early Bengali SF to do precisely that.

Conclusion

The arrival of colonial science in late 18th century Bengal produced a disruptive discursive field, a contestation that was mapped onto the body of the city which, in turn, produced a space of subversion by Indians. This article has attempted to map the contours of this terrain of science and the city. Science Fiction seems to be a specialized insertion, a subversive intervention within this technopian cityscape and provides a re-routing of a narrative imagination that despite its marginality – both as a form (science fiction) as well as in its disruptive content (challenges to a dominant mode of colonial science) – charts pathways that interweave with a constantly emerging cityscape.

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Waste Matters: Discard Studies and Literary Representation



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This paper introduces a relatively recent academic field, discard studies which is concerned with waste and its social, ethical implications. More importantly, the attempt is to analyse literary representation of waste with the help of a few texts drawn from different cultural contexts. The myriad dimensions of waste such as land, class, caste, gender etc., and their narrative politics in writings are carefully examined with some examples. The aesthetics of waste is elaborated with the help of inputs from thinkers such as Zygmunt Bauman, Susan Morrison and Gay Hawkins. The impact of modernity and globalisation in producing waste are highlighted. In short, the study attempts to drive home the relevance of literary writings in rethinking our attitude towards nature.

Keywords: Waste, Modernity, Globalization, Nature, Identity, Ethics.

In a world in which material prosperity and life itself are inevitably linked to pollution and the production of waste, how can we humans – ourselves sources of waste in terms of all that we discard – understand and cope with waste?

(Morrison 1)

Waste or Discard Studies is a recent interdisciplinary area of study which is concerned with bodily, cultural and societal waste. If ecological studies are preoccupied with nature and environment, waste studies goes a step further and targets waste which “is always material (first) and figurative and metaphoric (second)” (Morrison 8). However, the author adds that “without the material that is discarded, we cannot enter the realm of the metaphoric, of literature, and of the imagination” (8). This paper focuses on literary representation of waste and I try to show its multiple dimensions of narrativity with the help of a few examples drawn from literary texts across cultures. According to Susan Morrison, waste in literature is concerned with content, plot, characterization, form etc. and it signifies disorder and emptiness. Of late, there have been serious debates and discussions going on in world at large, perhaps more in the context of the dangers of global warming. It is argued that literary discourses are useful as corrective documents in the context of global warming. No wonder, ecoprecarity and ecocide get adequate representation in literary writings and we can see the emergence of novel forms of writing including climate fiction. Western thought has often privileged the notion that nature is there for human beings to be plundered but fortunately, a shift in approach is visible which highlights the moral approach (Giddens), and a more caring attitude to the environment. Arne

Naess through his philosophy ‘deep ecology’ emphasizes the crying need for a shift from anthropocentrism to eco or biocentrism thereby, the fundamental interconnectedness of all life - forms and natural features are emphasized. In the Indian context, Ramachandra Guha questions the very idea of development and its linkage with western models of modernity. Ecofeminists such as Vandana Shiva have argued that ancient India possessed a more environment-friendly culture. As a matter of fact, what we now discuss may be called ‘literary ecology’ which dwells on human culture- nature interaction in texts. It may be added that academic fraternity all around have understood the severity of a possible impending biological disaster and have incorporated narratives on nature in their curricula with an ethically-grounded goal of disseminating ecological awareness among students.

Waste Aesthetics

Waste, a human byproduct and something which is closely related to consumption also implies ruin, decay, illness, disorder and contamination. It signifies human condition. ‘Waste studies’ looks at how society understands waste and how it is represented through different narratives. However, the ethics of creating waste and its emotional effects also need to be studied seriously. Homer described the destruction of Troy whereas we come across reference to Yorick’s skull in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Diseased and disabled body is the focus of Joyce Carol Oates’ short story “Landfill.”

Society may have developed exponentially with evidences all around but one may also neglect the other side of it. As Hawkins argues, in *The Ethics of Waste: How We Relate to Rubbish*, in cultures that pride themselves on being technologically “advanced” catching a glimpse of the brute physicality of waste signals a kind of

failure..."(1). However, garbage signifies disorder and it is closely connected with our subjectivity, and a

...part of the way in which we cultivate sensibilities and sensual relations with the world; part of the way we move things out of our life and impose ethical and aesthetic order. No matter how insignificant putting out the garbage may seem, the way we do it reflects an ethos, a manner of being. (4)

Waste is created by a system which overpowers society; it is the ugly manifestation of exploitation of modern society in all its perspectives – class, caste, gender, etc. Waste matter is a sign of decay, neglect, and deprivation. Literature which narrates waste is metaphorically a human waste. In the representations of hell, too, the body – the damned person – is just a kind of garbage (Scanlan 19). Garbage contradicts a principal idea of modernity in that it questions the belief that we control our lives, and that *we* banish *our own* past in a positive statement of self-determination (136).

Globalization has produced wasted humans all over the world with its unending craze for 'development' and progress. The ecological damage done by the ruthless plunder of Mother Earth has littered nature with waste matter beyond repair. Zygmunt Bauman argues:

Refugees, the displaced, asylum seekers, migrants, the *sans papiers*, they are the waste of globalization. But they are not the only waste turned out in ever rising volumes in our times. There is also the 'traditional' industrial waste which accompanied modern production from the start. Its disposal presents problems no less formidable than the disposal of human waste, and ever more horrifying

– and for much the same reasons: the economic progress that is spreading to the most remote nooks and crannies of the 'filled up' planet, trampling on its way all remaining forms of life alternative to consumer society. (55)

Pramod Nayar speaks about the three dimensions of waste in his work *Ecoprearity: Vulnerable Lives in Literature and Culture* (2019) in the following manner:

First, the landscape is rendered a wasteland with extensive warfare, climate change, pollution and infection, all caused by the human hand, as already noted. Thus, inscribed within the wasted landscape is a history of human behaviour. Second, there is the global degeneration of the human form – through disease and various kinds of contamination. Decaying bodies that have lost their essential coherence and key human features populate this decadent sublime. Third, there is clear cultural decay when the humaneness of global humanity disappears with the erosion of altruism, compassion and rational thinking. (68)

Litter-ature: Some Aspects

The representation of waste in literature is worth exploring and one can see the gradual evolution of a separate 'waste canon' with references to rubbish in writings by Homer, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Jonathan Swift, Dickens, Eliot, Scott Fitzgerald, Samuel Beckett etc. However, it may be observed that waste as a narrative trope touches on aspects such as land, class, caste, gender etc. to make it more complex and interesting.

T. S. Eliot's magnum opus "The Wasteland" (1922) symbolizes the decay of modern European

civilization with the statement that it has become a vast wasteland due to its spiritual barrenness. To the inhabitants of wasteland, spiritual rebirth is the only hope however distant it may be and April appears to be a 'cruel month' with references to 'dull roots' and 'dead land.' Unexpected showers cheer them up because they have been looking for the regeneration of vegetation for a long time. Tiresias, the blind protagonist compares modern man's materialistic life to a tree without roots; in fact, new ideas cannot grow out of the 'stony rubbish' of this barren land. The son of Adam who has given up spirituality long ago can now see only 'a heap of broken images' and 'the dead tree' of materialism cannot offer comfort anymore. Eliot visualizes the 'wasted lives' of modern age further by calling London an 'unreal city' which lie buried 'under the brown fog of a winter dawn,' and describes the flow of people over London Bridge with 'eyes fixed before his feet,' indicating their selfishness and unending lust for material gain. Thus, one can see that there is no better work which crystallizes the decay of modern civilization than this poem. When we come to Percy Bysshe Shelley's sonnet "Ozymandias" it depicts a ruined statue of an Ozymandias an ancient king in an empty desert. As a matter of fact, the mighty king had ordered to erect his statue to remain immortal forever, but paradoxically enough, now we see it 'half-sunk a shattered visage' with 'two vast and trunkless legs of stone.' The poem critiques humanity's impotence and presents nature as an unstoppable force which is capable of burying a civilization and its proud legacy. Time is brutal; what remains is a waste, some remains, a testament of past glory. We are reminded of the saying, the paths of glory lead but to the grave.

K. Satchidanandan's poem "Hiroshima Remembered" is an outcry against nuclear disasters and

their destruction of life and landscape and environment leaving a waste of 'charcoal, ashes, and an orchard of skulls.' The intensity of the holocaust is poignantly narrated in the lines: 'Death descended like spring in the valley//with the light of a million suns.' The poet depicts mothers trying to escape with burning children in their hands with death looming large. Though, the poem ends on a note of hope, the gruesome depiction of the situation is a warning against humanity.

Class division and caste system in India result in the segregation of relatively a large segment of people to the margins and it is an indication of the decay of social system. Such people who are treated as inhuman have to lead a life of unjust exploitation and suffering. Mulk Raj Anand's masterpiece *Untouchable* (1935) which is set in Bulandshahr, a North Indian cantonment town depicts such a condition of untouchables through the leading character Bakha, a young sweeper. However, the novel telescopes the brutal system of untouchability which has eaten into the vitals of Indian society and is an outcry against such an unjust system. Flushing of toilets is the only hope for Bakha who lives by cleaning toilets.

Sylvia Plath's posthumously published "Lady Lazarus" identifies herself with the victims of Nazi concentration camps. Like Lazarus, the poet succeeds to come back to life after death. Her skin is so white that it looks like a lampshade which Nazis made out of the skin of the Holocaust victims. Her face is heavy like 'a paperweight' and face looks like a fine piece of Jewish cloth. Susan Morrison adds:

Sylvia Plath's "Lady Lazarus" substitutes one "wasted" group (Jews in Nazi Germany) with another "wasted" group

(women in patriarchy). Herself is reduced to the body, though she does not want to be identified by her body. In a sense, Plath accepts the dualist mind/body schism whereby the mind is placed above the body. (42)

Waning cultures will eventually die out and become waste and literary representations of it poignantly highlight this aspect. For instance, if we take the case of William Carlos Williams' famous imagist poem "The Red Wheelbarrow," it metaphorizes the decline of agrarian culture and the transition to mechanical and industrial age. The wheelbarrow acts as a symbol of cultural waste, 'so much depends' on it as the poet argues and we see it in a desolate condition being exposed to rain water. Once an indispensable part of rural economy, the wheelbarrow is now obsolete because human beings have moved more towards industrial economy which depends more on machines. On the other hand, in the case of C.K. Janu, the Adivasi leader's autobiography, *Mother Forest The Unfinished Story of C.K. Janu* (2004), the tribal experience is depicted in all its pristine beauty, without even any semblance of artificiality and sophistry of the language of mainstream society. In the first part of the life narrative, story is narrated in a special kind of language which goes closer to the tribal culture. The following excerpt proves it beyond doubt:

in the uncultivated forest the trees have to be cut down and the undergrowth cropped. the bushes would be thick with creepers and thorny bushes all to be hacked down with choppers and heaped up with sticks, then the undergrowth would be set on fire. we call it torching

the *punam*. When the virgin earth catches fire it gives out a strange smell. Like it is being roasted alive... (1)

Cultural artifacts associated with *adivasi* life are drawn on page margins to give special feeling to reading. But, in the second section of the autobiography, the intrusion of 'civil society' in tribal world in the form of state and planters ruin the native culture beyond repair and the *adivasis* become objects of waste and their values and beliefs are totally destroyed.

Conclusion

Thus, the presence of waste reminds us that one has to be more ethical and humane in our dealings with others, particularly those 'wasted' beings who are denigrated by society. In fact, garbage foregrounds the issue of ethics in writing, by giving a message, sometimes acquiring a curative, therapeutic angle, eventually affecting a powerful agency for social change. Such narratives expose social inequalities, including class divisions, caste, gender differences as well as economic crises. Ecology obviously becomes the central focus of such texts but they are capable enough to critique the mainstream, hegemonic discourses of development. Waste matters a lot because it acts as a site of narrativity (Iovino qtd. in Morrison 8) and trash literature can be taken as narratives of instruction or protest. Such writings help in reimagining our attitude towards nature so that all of us can continue to 'stay alive' on this earth.

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Resistant Mourning and The Poetics of Grief: Reading Akhmatova's *Requiem* as an Anti-Elegy



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The traditional elegy is a poem of mourning and memorialisation whose objective is to provide resolution and consolation to the mourner. In the 20th century, there has been a shift in the poetics of such mourning, with the elegy becoming a site of resistant mourning that displaces consolation and replaces it with a negative dialectic that eternally resurrects the pain of suffering and loss. In *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy* from Hardy to Heaney, Jahan Ramazani observes the rise of the anti-elegy and this paper reads Anna Akhmatova's seminal holocaust elegy *Requiem* as anti-elegy. Through an exploration of the poetics of mourning, this paper will explore how Akhmatova transgresses the devices of classical elegy in the face of incomprehensible loss to offer an aesthetic response to the psychological economy of grieving.

Keywords: *Elegy, Anti-Elegy, Resistant Mourning, Holocaust Literature.*

In the 20th century, there have been seminal shifts in the way grief and mourning has been expressed by modern poets. This has been in response to the terrors unleashed upon the world in the form of war and genocide. In the works of poets such as Wilfred Owen, Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, Anna Akhmatova, Elizabeth Bishop, W.S Mervin and Wislawa Szymborska, we find evidence of this new language of mourning. In their works, we see a transition from private grief to a public mourning of the communal wounds that are inflicted upon entire communities, races, and nations. Academicians such as Jahan Ramazani, James Tatum and Karen Weisman have already laid some theoretical foundations for this new poetics of mourning, based on which this paper seeks to read *Requiem* by Anna Akhmatova as an anti-elegy and an expression of resistant mourning.

In his Nobel lecture on literature in 1970, Alexander Solzhenitsyn echoed Dostoevsky in the claim that beauty could save "...this cruel, dynamic, split world on the brink of its ten destructions..." through the artist who has "...scooped up the truth and presented it to us as a living force...." Through their works of art, they colonise us in such a manner that it remains as an eternal truth that has the power to stand the passing of time and the vagaries of human morality. In the light of the terrors that wreaked havoc on the cultural consciousness of the Russian nation by the Stalinist regime, Solzhenitsyn sees the writer as a conduit "...who will remind the world of the trinity of truth, goodness, and beauty..." so that we can we can overcome our detrimental peculiarity of learning only from personal experience.

From man to man, as he completes his brief spell on Earth, art transfers the whole weight of an unfamiliar, lifelong

experience with all its burdens, its colours, its sap of life; it recreates in the flesh an unknown experience and allows us to possess it as our own. (Solzhenitsyn)

Anna Akhmatova is an example of such an artist, who lived in Stalin's Russia and bore witness to the suffering of the millions under his regime. *Requiem* (1963), translated into English as *Requiem*, is a cycle of fifteen short poems introduced with a paragraph of prose, when taken as a whole, can be seen as the lamentation of every Russian woman—who stood outside prisons for days, hoping for one last glimpse of a beloved son or husband before their inevitable sentence of death or exile.

The vast majority of the poems in the *Requiem* cycle, where "one hundred million voices shout" through her "tortured mouth" were written between 1935 and 1940, the years during which Akhmatova's third husband, Nikolai Punin, and Lev Gumilev, her son from her first husband, were arrested and imprisoned. While many of her fellow poets in the Russian circle fled the country or were killed by the regime, Akhmatova was not "one of those who left the land to the mercy of its enemies." Instead she bore witness "in the murk of conflagration, where scarcely a friend is left to know." Akhmatova considered *Requiem* too dangerous to be written down, much less published, at the time, so until the mid-1960s it remained unpublished, and existed only as individual verses memorized by the poet and a handful of her most trusted confidants. This tradition of orally disseminating poetry during the time was called 'samizdat' and Akhmatova's close friend and chronicler Lydia Chukovskaya wrote that it was "Hands, matches, an ashtray. A ritual beautiful and bitter" (Specter).

The most common understanding of the term “elegy” is that it is a poem of solitude and mourning, or verses composed in honour of the dead. Traditionally, the elegy is composed of three elements that aim to provide consolation in the face of loss. An elegy begins with expressions of lamentation, followed by verses of praise and adoration for the subject, and concludes with ideas of consolation and solace. Its purpose is to facilitate the process of private grief and to memorialise the loss of a specific individual, object or idea. This progression of grieving is seen in some modernist poems like W.H Auden’s *In Memory of W.B. Yeats*, or in Walt Whitman’s elegy for Abraham Lincoln *O Captain! My Captain*.

In traditional elegies by the poet neutralises the pain of the death or loss by creating a literary memorial. However, in his book *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney*, Ramazani observes that “the poetry of mourning for the dead assumes in the modern period an extraordinary diversity and range, incorporating more anger and scepticism, more conflict and anxiety than ever before” (Ramazani 1). He uses the term anti-elegy to refer to this new poetics of mourning that has emerged in the 20th century. Instead of memorialising the subject of the poem and enabling the author to neutralise their grief, the anti-elegy takes on a radical form wherein it becomes “anti-con-solatory and anti-encomiastic, anti-Romantic and anti-Victorian, anti-conventional and sometimes even anti-literary” (Ramazani 1-2).

This new tradition insists on mourning without closure because it is a way of grappling with the intense psychological upheavals that result from the incidents that these elegies memorialise. When millions of Russians were killed in the Gulag, or when entire Jewish populations were exterminated in concentration camps, the impact of loss can no longer be contained within a single

individual. When entire communities are tortured, dislocated and erased, the traditional process of mourning becomes ineffectual. Instead of a healing process, the anti-elegy seeks to enable the writer to “practise losing farther, losing faster, so that the ‘One Art’ of the modern elegy is not transcendence or redemption of loss but immersion in it” (Ramazani 4).

In transgressing the traditional mechanism of elegy, Anna Akhmatova goes beyond the classical progression of grief to consolation. The subject of her elegy is her own life, which she uses as metaphor for the life of all the Russian women of her age who went through similar experiences. The responsibility of her elegy is not to lament and console the collective Russian psyche that was damaged by the loss and suffering of Stalin’s regime. Instead, it is to respond to the unsettling actuality of trauma and loss, to bear historical witness beyond her own time and country in a way that refuses to put the dead to rest. As Solzhenitsyn expected of art, Akhmatova’s anti-elegy converts the dead into spectres that the living must remember and struggle with, forever carrying the reminder of past sins.

Unlike the objective of classical elegy, the objective of Akhmatova’s anti-elegy when examined through the example of *Requiem*, can be theorised as threefold. In the cycle of poems, she deals with her anti-elegy as a form of dissent or resistant mourning, as receptacle of memory, and as a vindication of her subject’s suffering. In *Requiem*, the poet does not mourn death but the process of suffering and grief.

The Poetics of Resistant Mourning

David Wells writes that Akhmatova’s muse is the same as that of Dante (80), implying that her task of describing the horrors of Stalin’s Russia, is similar to the Italian poet’s mandate to immortalise in words his experience of hell. In

the 1924 poem *Muse*, she writes, "I say to her, "Did you dictate the Pages of Hell to Dante?" She answers, "Yes, I did." In the section called *Instead of a Preface in Requiem*, Akhmatova writes echoes these lines in a conversation with a woman she met in a prison line. "Can you describe this?" the woman asked her, to which she replied "Yes, I can."

In the way it was written, memorised, orally shared and disseminated, the existence of *Requiem* itself was an act of resistance. During the years in which she authored the poem, even being in possession of it would have meant death and execution, but she wrote it anyway. In the 'samizdat' tradition, she taught it to her close female friends and asked them to remember it. By choosing this "pre-Gutenberg" method, her greatest act of resistance is in ensuring the survival of this poem by locating it not within the pages of a book but within the minds of her readers (Puchner).

Requiem is a documentation of suffering, and an visceral immersion into it, which instead of providing consolation to the reader, takes "suffering to its limit, so that there is nothing to fear" (Haight 106). As the poems bleed with the lamentation of the 'stabath mater,' the images are always of women standing - in prison lines, at the door while loved ones were "taken away at dawn," gathering "to wail with the wives of the murdered streltsy, inconsolably, beneath the Kremlin towers...," and most poignantly, the image of the poet's statue in front of the prison "...where I stood for three hundred hours, and no-one slid open the bolt."

By writing the speaker of the poem not as a passive mourner standing at grave, but as an active participant, going through the process of grieving and surviving grief, Akhmatova paints forever not the quiet victimization of the dead, but the eternal never-ending cycle of dealing with

and surviving grief over and over again. Thus, the objective achieved is not that of consolation, but of triumph over suffering, and consequently, triumph over the forces that caused the suffering. Therein lays the sound of her dissent. "Even if they clamp shut my tormented mouth, through which one hundred million people scream; that's how I wish them to remember me when I am dead."

Madness, Memory, and the Stages of Resistant Mourning

The use of elegy to preserve memory bears witness to the life of the dead subject and immortalises their identity. Akhmatova however, must bear witness not to the glorious life of her subject, but the suffering of Russian women in the face of violence committed against an entire people. She therefore chooses to immortalise the process through which suffering is endured and survived, both on a personal level by each individual that she speaks for, and also by a nation at large in terms of political circumstances. By doing so, the set of poems that comprise *Requiem*, becomes immortalised as a lamentation for suffering itself.

The progression of emotions in the poem starts with mute disbelief "You were taken away at dawn. I followed you as one does when a corpse is being removed..." and moves on to a sense of growing disbelief "It isn't me, and someone else is suffering. I couldn't. Not like this....." This forecloses the powerlessness that surrounds the poet and confines. She then moves on to an exercise in rationalisation of her trauma "I have a lot of work to do today; I need to slaughter memory, turn my living soul to stone, then teach myself to live again...." Her grief then reaches a stage of madness where she wishes to die "Madness with its wings has covered half my soul. It feeds me fiery wine and lures me into the abyss." Finally, the poet reaches a stage of steely

resolve to remember forever the suffering that has been endured and survived:

I'd like to name you all by name, but the list has been removed and there is nowhere else to look. So, I have woven you this wide shroud out of the humble words I overheard you use. Everywhere, forever and always, I will never forget one single thing.

She finishes the epilogue with the image of the statue of a woman standing in front of the prison, so that not even in death might she or the future generations forget the suffering.

Negotiating New Identities through Memorialisation

A traditional elegy only embellishes an existing identity of its subject. It is static in the sense that like an obituary, it only records. In the anti-elegy *Requiem*, Akhmatova charts the creation of a new identity for the subjects of her elegy that is rooted in and galvanized by their suffering. Throughout the poem, the identity of the heroine is disoriented. First, she is one of the many wives who watch as their family is dragged away, then she transcends herself in her suffering, as she writes about herself from a third person point of view, "The moon sees a woman lying at home. Her son is in jail; her husband is dead, say a prayer for her instead."

This is followed by an examination of herself in an alternate reality where she is "...everyone's darling, the carefree sinner of Tsarskoye Selo...", and in her anguish she identifies her experience with that of the mother of Christ, standing below the cross where her son was crucified, "But there, where the mother stood silent, not one person dared to look."

By the epilogue of the poem, her identity finally makes peace with its roots in suffering through

her promise to always remember the experience of trauma. As a result, the reader is left with a final impression of a strong, resolute, transformed heroine who forever embraces the experience of suffering, waving it like a flag instead of laying it to rest.

Unlike the classical elegy which immortalises the subject through the best moments, or the highest achievements of their life, the anti-elegy exposes forever the worst experiences of its subjects so that instead of consolation, there is only continuous remembrance and reopening of the communal wound, with no respite leaving it to fester eternally.

Problematising Suffering

Through this process of committing to eternity the process of suffering, without offering consolation, Akhmatova's poem becomes an anti-elegy. It problematises the suffering, by leaving the speaker and the readers to forever remember but remain incapable of making amends or finding peace. This is an illustration of Ramazani's idea that modern and contemporary elegies mourn without healing "...and refuse to rationalize death by countenancing the rebirth of the dead in nature, divinity, the nation, or even poetry itself" (*Poetry*). In this vein, *Requiem* is similar to the post-Nazi writings of Jewish poets who also elegise suffering to inspire constant remembrance by future generations as the only form of vindication for a people that were victims of organised eradication or persecution.

While there can be no direct justice offered to those who undergo the kind of suffering that Akhmatova wrote about, the anti-elegy serves the function of remembrance, which leads to some semblance of vindication through the constant penance of the living readers as they struggle with the spectres of the long dead sufferers.

This brings our attention back to Solzhenitsyn's ideas about the role of the writer as the chronicler

of past glories and past tragedies because literature "... beyond distinctions of language, custom, social structure...can convey the life experience of one whole nation to another..," and hence prevent humanity from meandering back to the same mistakes. So, unlike traditional elegy, the anti-elegy also serves a final purpose of transmitting the lived experience of the dead as an admonition or warning. Through the new poetics of mourning, the poet and the anti-elegy become the keeper of humanity's mistakes, who like Atlas, have the burden of holding aloft the darkness inherent in human soul, so that we who see it, may overcome it, and remember forever the suffering that men inflicted on their fellow men.

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Narrative Contours of Space and Time in N.S. Madhavan's "Higuita"



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A b s t r a c t

The present paper titled "Narrative Contours of Space and Time in N.S. Madhavan's "Higuita," tries to examine the multiple layers of narrative space and time, followed by the subsequent aporias created through this multiple distribution, in the short narrative, "Higuita" by N. S. Madhavan. It also tries to address questions like how each narrative becomes a site of infinite narrative possibilities, or how the manifestations of multiple metaphors give rise to different infinite independent narratives within a specific narrative. The analysis here invokes relevant theories of spatial and temporal configurations in art and literature and applies them to some basic concepts of narratology, along with some insights from the readings of the past and current concepts of aporetics.

Keywords: Chronotopes, Narrative Mode, Aporia, Narrative Representations, Voices.

Time and space have always been the fundamental aspects of human life. They have been complementing each other ever since the inception of mankind on earth. They are as abstract as their workings and are inevitable in our understanding of the world. Since every narrative is the representation of lived-in human experiences, these two concepts become pivotal in comprehending the essential value of any narrative. The nature of narratives corresponds with the temporal character of human experience. In this respect, time becomes a major element enunciated through any narrative. This means that a narrative obtains its full importance when placed within the appropriate temporal plane (Ricoeur 4). Then again, this idea is applicable to space as well. That is, a narrative also consistently affirms of a specific space. The text itself occupies a space, and thus the spatial is ever-present. Moreover, the fluidity of these concepts makes multi-meanings and multiple readings possible. Thus, contemporary narratology and related theories owe much to the spatial and temporal framework in which a narrative is produced. In other words, a thorough reading of a narrative is possible only through the proper reading of the spatial and temporal configuration in which it is produced as well as placed.

While considering the temporal and spatial configurations of narratives, Bakhtinian chronotope is a major landmark. Bakhtin observes that in art and literature, the temporal and spatial are indistinguishable. The analysis of literary chronotopes proves that they are highly sensitive to historical changes. Various social orders and time periods bring about various chronotopes both inside and outside the text. So in order to understand the idea better, a few insights concerning narratives must be also related. For instance, some of the theories of Russian Formalism, including the differentiation between

'fabula' and 'syuzhet' become critical in the comprehension of narrative chronotopes. This implies that events in complex narratives do not occur in a sequence arranged by chronology, but their order could be "recovered," as it were, by rearranging the "distorted" pattern of events back into their "proper" or, as it is sometimes called, their "real-life" chronology, which we know is just our perspective of chronology. Therefore, stated in the most basic terms, "a particular chronotope will be defined by the specific way in which the sequentiality of events is "deformed" (always involving segmentation, a spatialization) in any given account of those events" (Holquist 114). Underlying this thought of division between story and plot, is an old assumption, uncovering a basic difference between literature and life - the assumption that in narratives events can be differently organized, following any sequence, while, in life everything happens chronologically. This rule mirrors a general propensity of the early formalists to make absolute distinctions between literature and lived-in experiences. Bakhtin does not accept a distinction between "conventional" and "real" time as foregrounded by formalists; he embraces the idea of dialogism, where the chronotope is grounded in synchronization at all levels, including those of literature and life. These concepts lead to the conclusion that there is no purely chronological sequence inside or outside the text.

The chronology of events is, however, consistently deciphered in various manners at various times, being formed by the assumptions certain 'space-time' emanates and the need it provides for events and causation. For a considerable period of time, western culture fed a picture of a linear temporal trajectory within perfectly closed spatial configurations, predicating a unidirectional, linear temporality progressively moving towards completion. These conceptions of time

and space have radically modified in the second half of the twentieth century. The geographic mobility of capital with globalized investments escalated the demographic mobility of the modern societies. The estranged, migrating worker of the globalized world fragmented by the loss of a sense of place and community, now faced the disintegration of the traditional support system formerly provided by the extended family. "The weakening of this sense of belonging to a place and its people and temporal scales has made the individual spatially disoriented and temporally accelerated" (Vukanović and Grmušić 14). This becomes a characteristic of the postmodern man as well as postmodern literatures. The loss of temporal orientations had made new individuals who prefer to live more seriously in the present, and believe that "the present is all there is" (Harvey 240).

"The loss of a sense of living and participating in a historical continuity - delineated by traditional values and beliefs - and the collapse of future expectations define the continuous 'present' established in postmodern society" (Vukanović and Grmušić 14). Thus, the postmodern writings deny conclusion based spatio-temporal structures and highlight unrecognizable, insecure characters battling for autonomy in a world in which different frameworks restrict their personalities, forestalling the person's capacity to seize the control of the events that encompass him/her. These works depict the increase of divergent temporal configurations within similarly divergent spaces, showing temporal discontinuity in the individual and social domains, and accentuating the basic vulnerability of the postmodern man. "The motion of time in accordance with the life events and mental states of the characters" in such narratives can be analyzed as a "reflection of cognitive structures containing the concept of time or referring to it metaphorically." They conceptualize time "in a

bidirectional in-out relation with the human body, as a destructive force and as spatial distance." Also, "as the space of time proposes a model of a continuum in which a certain space may be active only in a certain moment of time, the important notion of being beyond time is discussed" (Buivytyté and Ulvydiené 58). Similar non-linear patterns of space can also be derived. Thus, in short, each narrative in this post-humanist era becomes a spot of innumerable structural and thematic conflicts.

Thus, it can be rightly claimed that the meaning of a narrative is the end product of all these diverging 'chronotopes,' and that the attempt to choose the right set of 'chronotopes' to arrive at specific interpretations leads to metaphysical dilemmas, which can be termed as aporia. The concept of aporia is probably, as old as Plato, who used the term in the context of his philosophical discussions. The concept was pushed to the forefront by Derrida, the Algerian-French philosopher, in his theories of Deconstruction. Aporias can be expected or unexpected, resolvable or unresolvable, giving birth to infinite other similar tensions. However, in any case, these tensions present a challenge to the reader and also reveal the paradoxical nature of every narrative by influencing the pace of the narrative in two different ways: either accelerating or decelerating. The more the conflicts, the higher is the momentum.

Generally in a narrative, aporia can act along two planes: one of temporality and the other of spatiality. Also, the logics behind narratives are quite different from other text-types. There exists double temporality as well as double spatiality. That is, in a narrative, there occur two different time planes: one is the external time plane, which suggests the actual time taken to read, interpret, or present a narrative; and the other, the internal time plane that hints the duration of the events within the narrative. For instance, if a narrative

presents the life of the concerned characters over a period of ten years and a reader takes hardly a day to complete reading the text; then the former is the internal time and the latter the external one. This dual existence happens even in the case of the spatial element. The significance of space in narratology, like time, is not restricted to the portrayal of the physical world, and is perhaps, more complicated than the latter.

In his *Production of Space* (1974), Lefebvre introduced a number of influential concepts into spatial and geographical theory. The most significant of his contribution is the concept of “social space” where he regards space as structured through social relationships. This inference is more or less ontological and establishes the implicit presence of space in the acts of creation and being. In other words, the process of living itself is inseparably linked with the production of different spaces. Foucault also held a more or less similar view in this regard. He sees space as a site of relations and uses theory of power to analyze history spatially. In his “Of Other Spaces,” he states that “the anxiety of our era has fundamentally to do with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time” (Foucault 2). This idea resonates with an earlier statement by John Berger, restated by Edward Soja, the American geographer and social critic, in his 1989 book, *Postmodern Geographies*, “it is space, not time that hides consequences from us” (Soja 22). Soja made serious attempts to replace the paradigm of time with that of space. He also argues that our contemporary environment is not just a “product of history ... but also a construction of human geography, a social construction of space and the continuous reshaping of geographic landscapes” (14).

Today, in literary theories, ‘space’ is treated as a cultural construct and social product, whereby the text becomes a culture-specific code for space. Such an approach also justifies the co-existence

of many spaces within the same physical space and asserts that there is no such thing as an unspatialised reality. According to Gaston Bachelard, literature – and literary theory – should focus on “the sorts of space that may be grasped” (Bachelard 31). By this he means spaces that we possess and inhabit, like the house, the countryside, or the city, where the literary imagination refuses to conform to the familiar patterns and configurations of everyday life. This suggests that “space is not what we once thought it was” and that it is not absolute, isotropic, three-dimensional or independent of the objects it contains (Greene 123). All these observations encourage the inference that there is no separate space and time at all, but only the space-time, a unified entity of the universe.

A story or the fabula of a narrative is well preconceived by the mediator, who conveys it. This brings us to the question of mediacy. Mediacy, a term popularized by Stanzel, is the process by which a narrative is constructed and conveyed to the reader. The narrator is the one who generally mediates a story. Now, the narrator may or may not appear in the temporal and spatial frame of the narrative discourse. His geographical and historical planes may be entirely different from that of the narrative. Thus, another set of chronotopes are added to the narrative. When more than one element is present, there arise conflicts or tensions. Similarly, the existence of multiple chrono-topic elements triggers a kind of conflict in the narrative or the mediative process. How this aporias or conflicts get manifested in different narratives, therefore, becomes an interesting area of narrative scrutiny. While in some narratives, the conflict reaches its peak with a rhetorical shift in the time frame; either from the descriptive line to the main line of the narrative, or vice versa; in some others, the spatial scale becomes the central element. In some others these conflicts occupy both the temporal

and the spatial trajectories of mediation. The text chosen here, falls into this category and thus, stands as the finest specimen of aporetics, combining different diverging threads of spatio-temporality.

Higuita is a Malayalam short story written by the Sahithya Academy award winning writer N. S. Madhavan. The story forms the central piece in the collection titled the same, which came out in 1990. The story revolves around Father Geevargheese, a priest in a cathedral in South Delhi. The title of the story alludes to Rene Higuita, the Columbian goalkeeper of the 1980s who was known for his remarkable style of playing – facing unnecessary risks and effectively coming out of his territory to foresee opponents, play the ball out to defenders, embrace singular dribbling runs, and endeavor to score goals. Thus, the title itself affirms the story's deep ally with the game of football. An aporetic spark also emerges from this title. The knowledgeable football fans recognize in the title their hero of the football ground. The voracious book reading fans might perceive it as related to the character of the goalkeeper of a German novel they have read. The spark invokes curiosity. The story follows Father Geevargheese as he saves the life of a poor tribal girl Lucy from the clutches of the evil trafficker, Jabbar. Thematically the story is significant in its treatment of a very sensible issue in a considerably smooth fashion. But the story has got multiple layers woven into its very fabric.

The very first line of the story catches the reader's attention and throws him into a whirlwind of tensions that soon follow. In other words, the opening line itself is capable of portraying the entire thematic and structural conflicts that the reader is about to encounter in the course of the story. Here, we come across the title of a German novel by the Nobel laureate Peter Handke - *The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*. Father

Geevargheese hears about this book from the Italian, Father Capriati, who is something of a litterateur. As soon as Father Geevargheese hears the title, he feels as if he had completed reading the novel – not once, but several times. He never felt the need to read the book, because he thought that by reading the book he would be destroying the many tales of reincarnations of the goalie. He could not bear the thought of fossilizing the goalie to a mere character portrayed in the book. Instead, in his mind grows the process of aporetics as the image of the solitary goalie becomes the generating point of many narratives. Out of the multifarious tensions the solitary figure undergoes in confronting a pre penalty circumstance and his subsequent sense of being “deserted by all,” Fr. Geevargheese weaves yarns, not one, but several. With each succeeding flames of imagination more narratives are born.

Structurally, the story represents the very process of writing, reading or understanding any narrative. This structural quality is what makes the story a distinct one. Every reader is destined to face a distinct kind of aporia when provided with a narrative. This is same in the case of the author as well. As soon as he encounters a thought or situation appropriate for his narrative, it starts to produce endless questions of representation in his mind. These issues would be resolved only at the completion of the narrative. Now let's think of a situation where these aporias stand unsettled. The aporias or the dilemmas or the confusions sprout and germinate in the mind of the author, giving rise to multiple possibilities and choices of narration. Father Geevargheese passes through a similar mental space when he hears the name of this German novel. He feels it necessary to give wings to his imagination, in a way the author himself might have thought, or might not have thought, thereby attributing several stages of meta-morphoses and reincarnations to the goalkeeper. He himself,

thus, becomes a co-author of the novel. Undoubtedly his past experiences and preachings have also become a key feature of the new versions of the novel that unfurl in the mind of Father Geevargheese. Thus, Christ, Goliath, Onan and Higuita become the central metaphors to externalize the anxieties of the goalkeeper protagonist. Father Geevargheese himself goes through an inevitable sense of dilemma, a similar one faced by the eponymous goalie in the face of the penalty kick, while he encounters his life, actions and decisions.

The aporias in this short narrative are not just confined to Father Geevargheese alone. Every reader faces a similar chunk of aporias as he/she starts reading *Higuita*. The title itself is enough to kindle the flames of the multifarious narrative proliferations. The eponymous Higuita gets transformed to Christ and Goliath at various points, forming their own distinctive narratives. A reader, who is unaware of the stories of the Son of God and David and Goliath, is left to deal with his own confusions, while a well-read reader is thrown into an even greater pool of aporias. The actual narrative becomes imprisoned at this point for such a voracious reader, who would be able to interpret the story of the German novel with the Biblical stories. The imprisoned narrative is, however, capable of producing infinite free narratives, accordingly. Here, we are led back to the significance of a penalty kick. A 'goalie' is forced to face a penalty kick when his team mates perform a foul. Thus, he is facing the burdens of someone else's sins, just like Christ carried the sins of the whole mankind. He is being betrayed by all his teammates, like Christ was betrayed by one of his most 'trusted' disciples. He continues to be Christ for several days and perhaps, grows anxious of his position and gradually transforms into the gigantic Goliath, fighting the penalty kick with equal solemnity. In these two cases, the

goalie is at the receiving end, of the penalty kick as well as the hopes of thousands of spectators.

The narrative also portrays multiple voices, shifting constantly, thereby creating ambiguity and confusions for the readers, regarding the nature of narration. The instance Capriati mentions the German novel; he unknowingly ignites a million voices capable of producing a million narratives. Here, we see a third person intra-diegetic narrator, describing the football court, where the goalie stands with spread hands to save the penalty kick, amidst the howls of several "dried-up throats," but still under the pulverizing weight of his solitude. The reader along with Father Geevargheese is transported to this narrative space, eagerly waiting to see the goalie relieved of his tensions. The much-awaited penalty kick, however, never happens, leaving the spectators as well as the readers in the maze of their own imaginations.

The narrative frame is suddenly shifted to capture Father Geevargheese's past encounters with Lucy. Along with the spatial frame, the temporal frame and the representation also change. The diegetic mode gives way to mimetic presentation, followed immediately by an interpolation of memory. The goalkeeper makes his re-entry at this point. He is now, no more Christ nor Goliath, but Onan, the son of Judas. The Biblical story intensifies the already raising tension, leaving the readers to ponder about the fate of Onan and the goalie, who is now struggling under the weight of expectations and his own solitude, to save the penalty kick. The images of the goalie and Lucy, however, disintegrate quickly to Father Geevargheese's own past, where he was an equally famous footballer in his locality like the actual Higuita. This rhetorical shift in the temporal and spatial configuration has narrative significance as well.

It becomes a point where diegetic and mimetic narrations converge to produce a sense of omnipotent mediation.

The narrative follows a regressive pattern till this point. This means that the pace of the narrative was on the low scale affected by the weight of past memories and events. The Goalie realizes that he is not burning under the weight of his solitude, but that his solitude is disrupted by the heedless screaming of the crowd. The actual Higuita is different in this respect, for he is never affected by the emotions of the crowd. He rather likes to take matters into his hands and act upon his own discretions. Thus, he becomes an ever-present metaphor in the story, inspiring Father Geevargheese to save the penalty kick shot by Jabbar to alleviate the scope of Lucy's damnation. The thematic aporia is resolved at this point, but the readers are still trapped in the football ground with the goalie spreading his hands out to save the million penalty kicks that await him in different corners.

"Higuita," thus evokes the sense of multiple spaces: the imaginary football ground where the goalie is getting ready to face the penalty kick, Father's cathedral where he encounters Lucy, Lucy's past with Jabbar interspersed in Father's memory, the football ground in Thalasserry where Father excelled other players as a footballer, or the streets of Delhi where Father at last meets Jabbar. All these spaces are engendered by a single statement made by a character whom we never meet. These different spaces bring different time frames and mode of representations with them, thereby heightening the readers' sense of dilemma, yes aporias. At several points, one is forced to analyze the metamorphosis of the goalie as a reflection of Father Geevargheese's alter ego, where the distinction between the real and the imaginary space-time blur.

Hence, it can be concluded that *Higuita*, the short narrative, makes an excellent attempt towards the convergence of the real and fictive 'chronotopes,' trying to grasp their complex relationship and the meanings of temporal and spatial parameters detected within them. Possessing multiple and context-independent structures and significations, the story displays intersecting space and time, exposing "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin 84). In other words, "Higuita" traces the trajectory of the experiences of the protagonist using multiple voices and spatio-temporal configurations to elicit relishing narrative experience of a series of aporias.

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Annihilated Identity in *A Number* by Caryl Churchill



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Man has always been in the race to move forward to increase his knowledge and understanding based on scientific method and research. Science has succeeded in transforming all things connected with our manner of living. Accumulation of scientific knowledge and its application in the form of technology have manifested in our lives tremendously. It has gone to the extent of prolonging human life by having a break through knowledge of understanding even the generic code. But it has culminated into a stage where there is the controversy between the thin line of ethics and legality regarding the applicability of scientific innovations. One such burning concern is that of human cloning. The subject of human cloning or the dangerous possibilities of artificial creation can disturb the balance of nature. Caryl Churchill the renowned postmodern dramatist of contemporary Britain has always been a literary figure who is wary of how scientific progress can eliminate the qualities of making humans human. The paper titled "Annihilated Identity in *A Number* by Caryl Churchill" aims at exploring how scientific progress can eliminate those very qualities which make us human.

Keywords: Cloning, Identity Crisis, Uniqueness, Seriality, Nature, Nurture.

The year 1997 is marked in genetic science with the ground breaking announcement by Ian Wilmut and Keith Campbell - both British embryologists - that they had cloned the first sheep Dolly. Following this 'Dollymania,' we heard from other scientists around the world that they have successfully cloned other animals. Dolly became the central point of worldwide unease regarding the whole issue about the myriad aspects of cloning. The concerns were not limited to any exclusive pitch but encompassed a wide range of ethical, political, legal and even religious fields. There is no doubt that the debates associated with the issues of cloning continue even to this day. Following the furore many countries took the immediate steps to ban the research activities connected with human cloning. Others regulated their laws aiming at curbing researches into this side of science. The scenario undoubtedly ushered in the age of 'the second creation.' Dolly was the cultural signifier of new forms of scientific experimentation and innovation. In the words of Sarah Franklin:

as the founder animal not only of a new form of reproduction but for a novel alignment of the biological, cultural, political and economic relations that connect humans, animals, technologies, markets and knowledges... Dolly's existence can be seen to redefine the limits of the biological, with implications for both how sex and reproduction are understood and practised. (5)

Cloning remained a hot topic for several decades. In reality the creation of cloned babies is forbidden though it remains a fact that the creation of human embryos up to the age of 14 days is permitted for research. The debates surrounding human cloning are complicated and it can pave the way for arguments which can

never be solved in a satisfactory manner. Scanning the past years, science fiction novelists, graphic artists and Hollywood producers have successfully exploited the angst of the humans into exploring themes connected with human cloning. In the genre of drama, the emotional maelstrom connected with human cloning was aptly brought in by Caryl Churchill with her one act play *A Number*. Caryl Churchill is the postmodern British playwright whose place among the writers of the contemporary times is beyond doubt. She has won several meritorious awards and was appointed as the first woman writer in residence at the Royal Court Theatre (1974) of Britain. She stands foremost as the icon of modern feminist theatre. Her works are characterised by a deep sense of class and gender, balance of power between men and women and how it affects relationships, questions concerning identity, and how it affects the general outcomes and parameters of life. As time passed, Churchill matured into a writer who wrote about modern day concerns of ecology and globalisation. She was eager to record apprehensive questions connected with the ethical alertness of the public. She was fervent to dramatise the anxieties of the current moment into a play. This was the focus of her attention while writing the play *A Number*.

The play is about how a father is confronted by his three sons – two of whom are clones of the first. It initiates us into the complex relationship between a father named Salter and his son Bernard. Interestingly only these two characters appear in the drama and they act complementary to each other. Caryl Churchill has utilised the basic structure of the family to analyse the inherent question of identity. This is a sure theme which haunts an average person. It also offers glimpses into the social effects of cloning with reference to the father-son relationship and to family relationship in general. It goes without saying that our sense of belonging begins from a

family where we get recognised as sons or daughters. The protagonist Bernard who is the son is worried about the prospect of his identity as a son and as an inhabitant of the society being under threat. He argues with his father about his matter of uniqueness, though he gets a confirmation from his father that he is 'not the someone else.' The play can be rendered as an exploration of the identity of a person by himself through self knowledge. The question of identity is in fact an interrogation allied with matters of self hood and self knowledge. The dialectics in the play is centred on the themes of loss of identity, subjectivity and uniqueness. These elements can have various perspectives when evaluating it in the framework of a family. Caryl Churchill has succeeded in letting these themes of concern become identifiable with common people by experimenting it in the most apparent scenario of the times – the family.

The title of the play suggests an identity fallacy that is accompanied by the fear of innumerability and eugenic cloning, an assumption that human clones would be produced in large numbers, giving rise to clone armies and loss of human diversity (Luckhurst 159). Thus the play is an argument between uniqueness on one side and seriality on the other. This takes us to the original concern which the dramatist had in mind while writing the play for the attention of the public. The world portrayed is that of reproductions – thanks to human cloning – and Bernard is worried about his authenticity and his rational identity. Salter the father figure in the play is worried about how 'the copies' can damage and be a threat to the identity and uniqueness of an individual. The fear portrayed in all the characters can be summed down to the existential concern of identity crisis.

A related fear is concerning who stole the identity of Bernard. His fight is marked by the right of an individual for his individuality which has been

taken away from him without his knowledge. Bernard becomes anxious about his existence when he confronts his 'numbers.' It is the world where there are more people like someone. The space that they have is very confined. In that restrained space, they find it tough to make it clear to them that they are different from his 'number' or 'copy.' This world where there is the annihilation of identities is a fearful prospect when thinking about how the prospects of human cloning can change our concept of the world.

The drama becomes a search for the question of identity in the family. Salter is concerned about this frightening world where he is not able to point out his real son from his genetically modified 'numbers.' As the father figure in the life of his son the identity of the father also comes in question when he is not able to differentiate between his real son and the genetically modified son. The culmination of the crisis of identity arises when Bernard confronts his number and wonders out loudly 'if this is what I am.' Bernard tries to solve the problem by consoling and identifying himself to be a part of science. He is glad that he is a part of a scientific change. Once this aspect is clear, Bernard gets the courage to meet his number. Salter was concerned with the concept of the loss of identity even at the time when he had lost his wife. That was the time when he cloned his first son who he considered as 'perfect' and 'most beautiful.' Thus cloning to Salter was a way of overcoming the crisis of his loss of identity. But rather than solving the crisis and finding a way of redemption, he was only transferring his fear to his sons Bernard 1 and Bernard 2 who are struggling to and rivalling for identity. The son Bernard 2 is concerned if the father had given the other son the same name as his. Again it creates the question of a search for identity among the brothers to prove that one is basically different from the other.

The concern in the prospect of diminished identity makes the characters behave in an angry manner. The son Bernard 1 speaks rudely to his father. The son tries to clarify if the father could have identified the real him.

Also if the father is earnestly interested in knowing if the son had a bad day that day. Salter is confused and fails to answer reassuringly. This uncertainty on the part of the father is quickly transferred to his son. Thus we can find the link between the father and son in terms of loss of identity. Both are grappling with the matter of crisis in identity. Salter is questioning his inability to recognise his real son. Though Salter is unable to solve his personal paternal identity crisis, he argues that he went for 'a number' because he thought that his son was the 'best.' As for Bernard 2, the loss of identity makes him run away rather than confronting his numbers which Bernard 1 did. He is afraid of the clash between 'this person who is identical to me.' He feels unable to 'disentangle' the 'complications' of his life. He feels least confident and this scenario makes Bernard 2 threatened by the existence of Bernard 1. He is on the run for establishing his identity. But that makes Bernard 2 a person who is less sure about his place in the world. In other words, this lack of identity makes him alienated from others in the world and also from other members of his family.

A Number takes the reader in embracing the attitude of the author towards an advancement which is scientific in nature. The context analysed to hit the nail on the mark is human cloning. The play is the writers take on social relationships and moral values. On analysing the play we agree with the playwright on the problems connected with identity arising from the clash between uniqueness and seriality on one hand and normalcy and artificiality on the other. These two terms can be analysed from the two Bernards in

the play. Seriality implies annihilation of identity. The power arising from scientific evolution and artificial creation lead to startling effects. This in due course reveals man's powerlessness to master his creation. By breaking moral and social rules, Churchill's characters become alienated and baffled.

The playwright offers another perspective in *A Number* that of alienation of multiple personalities with different personalities. This aspect emerged from the outrage associated with animal cloning. It creates personalities who are identical physically but each displaying a different personality. But this concept of multiple personalities becomes negated as ultimately it is the same individual who becomes visible, as the clones are actually parts of the original, have evolved/grown up from a "speck" or a cell of the original which is manifested in the clones. The result eventually lies in linear characters that do not know each other and refuse familial relationships.

The case of Salter is sympathetic since the identity of him as a father is lost when he loses both his sons Bernard 1 and Bernard 2. But this curious case of a person losing his identity owing to the generation of a number attains an ironic twist when we meet Michael Black who is a clone of the Bernards. Salter gets a resurrection once he identifies and adorns the role of a father with Michael Black. Bernard 1, Bernard 2 and Michael Black are related to Salter the father biologically in that they have a shared DNA but all of them are different. Bernard 1 is bold, aggressive and is jealous of Bernard 2. Bernard 2 is weak and he is the substitute created by his father for Bernard 1. He falls prey to a crisis of the self. Bernard 1 to establish his place in the world and to get an identity of his own kills Bernard 2 thus solves his question of uniqueness and punishing his father. But Bernard 1 is not able to handle the

pressure of his own existential conflict that he commits suicide. As to Michael Black, he is a balanced, ordinary individual who displays a harmonious identity from a filial context. The play makes it clear that social and cultural factors contribute to the total construction of the identity of a person. This is best displayed in Michael Black. But the irony is that he is a clone. The probable reason for his balanced behaviour might be that he accepts his lineage – that of a number. The crisis in identity experienced is because of two prominent reasons. One is that they feel they are just ‘a number’ or a clone. Another is that if he is the original, his natural uniqueness could be stolen to create ‘a number.’ Either way there is the question of a total obliteration in identity. The characters are worried about authenticity in a world dominated by reproductions.

The major dramas of Churchill are a quest for self knowledge. The question of ‘how do I know who I am’ is transferred into the language of stunning dramatic form using the language of the stage. *A Number* is a domestic drama which has the family structure and the construction of the family as being fundamental to its existence. Churchill investigates the questions relating to masculinity, personal identity, and the belief that there is the presence of an essence in all human beings. These issues are definitely existential in nature. But when put through the genre of drama by incorporating the elements of science they attain a scientific tinge. The basic question of identity that is contested in the play gets divided into a thousand other questions pertaining to issues related to the life of an individual. The playwright makes the reader address the challenge of deciding on the individuality of the sons whether they are natured or nurtured. She indirectly makes it clear that individuality is a makeup of our beliefs and culture, goals and aspirations. It is a meeting point of what we like and dislike. It defines how we communicate, form

and foster relationships. The underlining factor is of all is that of our genetic composition. Nature versus nurture is yet another focal point in the play. In other words the question is what defines us more is determined by our environment or by our genetics. Arguing from the point of view of science, we are closely linked to our genetics. Environment only plays a small role in our development. Churchill contends this belief and proves that environment plays a stronger part in our development than genetics through the brilliant portrayal of Bernard 1, Bernard 2 and Michael Black.

The drama throws light on the fact that there is some relation between us and other human beings. It high lights on the fact that there are certain specifics which constitutes who we are and that characterises our individuality and further more our personality. The reality remains that our biology and our family history have a role our sense of identity. The accountability of our genes in predetermining our identity is remarkable. According to Adam Phillips “Cloning is for obvious, and not so obvious reasons, a compelling way of talking about what goes on between people” (Phillips 94). Caryl Churchill uses it to scale the issues of neglect and abandonment, mental break down, denial, guilt and suicide. She says “*A Number* has cloning at the centre of its story but I never quite feel it’s a play about cloning – it lets me look at a lot of the things that interest me. I realised after I’d written it that I’d thought about some of the same things in *Identical Twins* more than twenty five years earlier” (Plays 4: viii).

The play is similar to Huxley’s *Brave New World*, warning us against the unexpected, traumatizing effects scientific evolution can have and implies that once the process began, it can no longer be controlled or stopped. It also shows that the annihilation of identity problem is a relative one,

as it is closely related to the social and cultural background of the individual experiencing it. It is only one of the results of the collision with the anthropocene in the context of humanity cascading towards an untenable future. Churchill through her play *A Number* talks about the language of science where the question of replication of humans leading to their annihilated identities should weigh on the readers mind as a serious ethical issue. Churchill merged this existential angst of the world by collapsing the emerging idea of new genetics into the versatility of contemporary drama. The play was a huge success in terms of the idea of human individuality a favourite subject of Churchill's, which she unfolds in the best possible dramatic exuberance.

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Indigenised European Theatre: The Transfusional Narrative of *Chavittu Natakam*



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A b s t r a c t

Chavittu Natakam is a chivalrous, musical dance drama that is deeply associated with the martial art of Kerala, *Kalarippayattu* and intimately linked with the ancient temple art forms like *Kathakali*, *Koodiyattam*, Sanskrit, Tamil Drama and folk arts like *Kakkariissi Natakam*, *Kanyar Kali* and the Renaissance European Theatre. *Chavittu Natakam* that brings together a myriad of cultures and art forms of the Western and the Eastern cultural and art scenario, also upholds individuality in diversity. Various elements of this unique art form that is found only in Kerala have been analysed here with some glimpses into its historical background. When the first *Chavittu Natakam* 'Karelsman Charitham' was staged, it was also the commencement of the first theatre in the thespian history of Kerala. Karelsman Charitham is based on the heroic battles and military endeavours of the Emperor Charlemagne (Charles the Great) and his legendary twelve Peers. The article also attempts to observe certain elements that *Chavittu Natakam* shares with other Western as well as indigenous art and cultural perspectives.

Keywords: *Chavittu Natakam*, Kerala Latin Christians, Christian Theatre, *Kalarippayattu*, Renaissance, European Theatre, *Kathakali*, Malabar Opera, Stamping Drama, *Karelsman Charitham*, Charlemagne, *Gothuruthu*, *Kutty Srank*.

On a religious perspective, Kerala is considered as the Indian state having the highest Christian population. Christians of Kerala claim to have a long Christian tradition that dates back to the arrival of St. Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ, in A.D. 52. According to Stephen Neill:

There was a persistent tradition among the people who called themselves Thomas Christians and perhaps not only among them, that the Apostle Thomas himself was the founder of their Church. (174)

St. Thomas Christians constituted a prosperous and congenial community, engrossed in pepper trade, enjoying the privileges allowed by the respective rulers.

When Vasco da Gama reached the Malabar Coast in 1498, he was accompanied by some Portuguese missionaries who not only ushered in Latin Christianity, but also a distinct version of a religious drama that was established in their native country. The Christians they found in this newfound province bore a shadowy link with the patriarch of Babylon and were neither herded under the aegis of a Bishop or priests nor had regular canonic worships. These were more than enough reasons for the Portuguese, who accepted the Roman authority, to class these Christians as heretics.

It is worth noting that the colonial advent in Kerala occurred adjoin to the European Renaissance, an episode that marked the 'rebirth' and 'reconception' of the artistic, cultural, political and economic realms of the European civilization. The period saw an outpouring of fresh ideas and modernity in astronomy, spirituality, classics, expedition and exploration not to mention the radical change in the pers-

pective of common men. When the Portuguese missionaries carried the radiant spirit of the Renaissance into the cultural sphere of Kerala, it was the dawn of a new vista, the imprints of which could still be drawn out from the stories, costumes, music and other features of the colourful 'stamping drama,' or the 'Malabar Opera,' *Chavittu Natakam*.

Only Kerala can boast of the existence of a definite Christian Theatre, purely endorsed by the Portuguese invasion, not in their crude European style, but blended and indigenised with the local art forms. Thus was the birth of *Chavittu Natakam*, taking in the essence of two distinct and far apart cultures and performed for major church fetes.

Keralites had a life so captivated in cultural and ritualistic activities that they felt desolation in their civilising arena after the Synod of Diamper forbade their active involvement in the Hindu customs and practices even after their embracing Christianity. Synod of Diamper was a milestone that deeply impacted the social, cultural and religious facets of the contemporary Kerala Christian community, while being instrumental in instituting a unique religious drama that ratified a Christian identity in its theme, costumes and conventions.

The religious drama derived its name from the act of forceful stamping of the feet upon a specific wooden stage by the actors ('chavittu' in Malayalam means stamping of foot and 'natakam' means drama). Among the folk arts of Kerala, *Chavittu Natakam* stands apart as it skillfully fuses the European theatre and operatic elements with indigenous art forms and the local martial art, *Kalarippayattu*. As Chummar Choondal points out, the art form is a synthesis of "the religious, cultural, social and artistic aspects of (Latin) Christianity in Kerala."

Chavittu Natakam entrusts great emphasis to its performance text, known as 'chuvadai.' It has a place of reverence from the beginning of its ritualistic practice sessions up to its original performance. Chuvadais are not to be published or printed, but to be preserved personally by the 'Asan' (Master) to be handed over to the posterity. This led to obscurity in determining the authorship of many plays. The early performance texts were inscribed on palm leaves in "Grandhaksara" or "Vattezhuthu" script, which are the archetypal scripts of Kerala. Though the texts of the early plays like *Karalman Charitham*, *Janova Charitham* *Brijina Charitham* that were popularly performed in the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth centuries are extinct, they are said to be written in the above stated way. 'History of Genova,' 'Charlemagne' were the themes of the popular European miracle plays and these were precisely the stories that were dealt with in *Chavittu Natakam*. Malabar Operas might have been presented here as the Kerala version of these European stories and legends. To make it more localised, they adopted many attributes of the contemporary Kerala art forms as well as *Kalarippayattu*, the Kerala martial art, one of the oldest fighting systems in existence. It was compulsory for every men of every caste to have this Kalari training so as to serve in the defense force of the country. Since all the 'chuvatukal' (steps) of *Kalarippayattu* were familiar to the common folk, the missionaries opted it for a background. As Sebina Rafi points out in '*Chavittu Natakam*,' though this art form exhibits closer affinities towards European theatre tradition, it possesses a unique individuality of its own. The exclusive 'chavittu' and the music that goes in tune with the classical music tradition of Kerala, contributes it an uncommon place in the cultural scenario of Kerala.

The first ever *Chavittu Natakam* was 'Karelsman Charitham' that gained immense popularity

through its magnificent depiction of chivalry and its splendid balancing of vibrant music, narrative and dramaturgy. The play earned so higher a position in the hearts of the audience that the mere mentioning of the name of the play was a metaphor for *Chavittu Natakam*. The story upon which the play is based is Ludovico Ariosto's epic *Orlando Furiso*, which delineates the historical episode of the medieval ruler, Charlemagne, who united Western Europe and ruled the Roman Empire from C.E. 768 to 814 along with his gallant and dynamic knights known as the Peers (Paladins). The story envisages the adventures, the momentous battles and other daring endeavors of the Emperor and his Peers, among whom Orlando (Roland) is attributed with a heroic leadership.

'Karelsman' in Malayalam has the root word 'Charlemagne' in French that bears a literal meaning 'Charles the Great.' Charlemagne is one among the few kings who were endowed with the Title 'the Great' by the European history while his adventures are compared to those of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. Philippa Hardman and Marianne Ailes maintains about Charlemagne as:

The medieval chivalrous literature glorified valiant emperors like King Arthur and his Knights and the Emperor Charlemagne and his Twelve Peers. Charlemagne stories, celebrated as 'Charlemagne Romances' managed to acquire a distinguished individuality. All through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, 'Charlemagne Romances' reigned French literature and extended towards the English readers up to almost Sixteenth century. Caxton printed the story of 'Charlrmagne the Great' along with *Morte D' Arthur*. (Hardman and Ailes)

Thus proving that Charlemagne and his Twelve Peers had a legendary literary appeal.

The Karelsman *Chavittu Natakam* focuses on the battles fought by the Emperor Charlemagne against the invader, the Turk Emperor Abdul Rehman and his Turkish army so as to reclaim the sacred ground of Jerusalem. The rivalry and clashes between the Christian and Muslim community of the medieval ages would have stimulated the realistic portrayal of the encounter episodes and the warfare. Charlemagne's troops were reconstituted in the Imperial Roman army model and his Twelve Peers were commanded each section of his royal army. These Peers namely Oliver, Guerin, Geriar, Oton, Brugier, Samson, Anseis, Gerard de Rousella, Guidever Gonj, Baudouin, Abunj and Ganelon, with Charlemagne's nephew and courageous Roland as their leader, became historical figures. The Moor forces were thrown out of the European boundary and peace reinstated with the strenuous works of Charlemagne and his Twelve Peers.

Charlemagne and the adventures of his Twelve Peers have invariably inspired an array of classic as well as literary volumes such as Orlando Furioso, Chanson de Geste, The Song of Orlando etc. The popular European oral heroic chronicles and the narratives of the crusade wars found their way into these epics from time to time. The crusade wars and its bloody but fanatical spirit that permeated the European continent during the Eleventh, Twelfth and the Thirteenth centuries, often deduced stimulus from the Charlemagne adventures. As Jace Stuckey puts in:

Many of these types of texts depict Charlemagne as the idealized military leader of Christianity - greatest of Christian warriors and defender of Christendom. What I propose to do in

this chapter is to look at Charlemagne's perceived connection to Jerusalem and his Spanish campaigns were used to transform his legend into the image of crusader. This phenomenon is perhaps most dramatically illustrated in Ekkehard of Aura, who reported a story that circulated around the time of the first crusade, in which Charlemagne actually rose from the dead to lead the campaign to Holy Land....The representation of Charlemagne as defender of the church and proto-crusader actually predates the launching of the crusades to the East and the epic literary tradition of the Twelfth century. (Stuckey 1)

Charlemagne himself emerged a historical hero by way of the later literary works and its flabbergasted narratives of his endeavours, thereby diminishing his human paucity. His as well as his Peer's enterprises were portrayed as exceptional accomplishments, beyond the bounds of rational thinking and establishing them phenomenal martyrs of the religion.

P. J. Thomas, the Kerala historian, has asserted in his book 'Malayalam Sahityavum Christianikalum' that the resentment the Portuguese felt about the early Christians' fascination with the myths and stories of Hindu mythology and the temple art form, *Kathakali*, might have resulted in the European Christian themed *Chavittu Natakam*. An implicit urge to entice people to Christianity could be faintly determined. So *Chavittu Natakam* has assimilated many aspects and elements from the European Renaissance theatre, especially the Greek and Elizabethan Theatre and the opera.

The high pitched song in opera attracts and tunes the mindset of the spectator with the mood of the scene. Roger Highfield has reported the findings of a study on the high-pitched opera songs which states:

A study has found that in order for sopranos to be heard above the sound of a large symphony orchestra, they tune into resonances in their vocal tract to amplify the sound at the high end of their range. Although this enables them to make a sound that can fill the Albert Hall, it sacrifices intelligibility because the vowels sung by sopranos in full voice all sound the same. (Highfield)

The high-register songs in an opera helps the audience in understanding them as most operas being in different languages than the viewer can comprehend, the tones help create an apprehension and the character lineage of the story. When the pitch is at the highest peak, the onlooker also reaches the peak of his experience. This style has been adopted in many of the *Chavittu Natakams* also. In Brijeena Charitham *Chavittu Natakam*, a ninety feet song sung by Queen Brijeena in high pitch is an example of European Opera style song. Moreover, *Chavittu Natakam* commences with a lengthy song known as 'Vandana Virutham,' accompanied by music. *Chavittu Natakam* is performed in Chenthamil that conspicuously deviates from the spoken language of the crowd. The disparity is often made up by these high-pitched songs through which the extremes of emotions are conveyed. The sonnets, the duets and the chorus in the *Chavittu Natakam* can be attributed to the influence of the Western culture.

So this epic work named Orlando Furioso that has illustriously been called Iliad of Italy, the base upon which 'Karalman Charitham' of Kerala has been created; 'Karalman Charitham' is an impeccable dance drama pursuant to accepted drama indicators. It also conforms to the Greek and Sanskrit theatre canons as far as its sticking to renowned motif, bold and daring heroes, dynamic plot, fascinating portrayal and chara-

acters with integrity are concerned. Even when the five distinctive parts, that the whole drama has been divided into, examined independently, it is evident that they adhere firmly to the three unities prescribed by Aristotle. The incredible theme in the drama has been treated incredibly. The substantial tone that reign over the drama is chivalrous, cautiously structured so as to preserve a comfortable level that does not grow into violence. The play has succeeded in the conception of humanistic and aristocratic characters that make up to almost forty to fifty, but upholding individual traits.

'Kattiyakkaran' or 'Vidhooshakan' serves a prominent role in every *Chavittu Natakam*. The term 'kattiyakkaran' is an ancient Tamil word that means 'fool.' His counterparts in Elizabethan drama and opera provide an entertaining relief to the serious actions and romance.

But Kattiyakkaran in *Chavittu Natakam* bears a close resemblance to the 'vidhooshakan' in *Koodiyattom*, a temple art form that is believed to have an existence from the First or the Second century. Through his amusing interpretations accorded to the turn of events, his whimsical attire and his buffoonery manners, Kattiyakkaran provides mitigation to the audience in the midst of war, fighting and measured foot stamping. In the same manner with the Elizabethan fools, a Kattiyakkaran relishes absolute discretion and a distinguished status throughout the play.

Chavittu Natakam is performed on open stages. Just as its acting and costume, the stage also bears a close resemblance to the Greek or the Greek inspired Italian stage or the Elizabethan Theatre. It was designed to be performed on a 12 metre width and 36 to 44 metre long stage when as many as forty to fifty actors mobilised during historical battle or hunting scenes that delineate King and the courtiers with their attendants in

their absolute entirety. G. R. Hibbard states the length and breadth of the Elizabethan Stage that exhibit some interesting similarities with the authentic *Chavittunatakam* Stage:

The contract states that the stage shall be 43 ft. Wide and that it shall "extend to the middle of the yards." Practically all investigators of the Elizabethan play-house conclude that the Fortune stage was therefore 27 ft.6 in deep, but as I shall suggest below, this does not necessarily follow. It does follow, certainly, that the yard was 22 ft. 6 in. Deep in front of the stage and 6 ft. wide on either side of it. (Gibbard and Gibbard 78)

There were upstaired projections of 6-8 ft. height, constructed on either sides of the stage with stairs leading to the stage that are beneficial to the retreat of the royal party.

The Elizabethan stage observed peculiar acting manners. The actors expressed themselves in a highly operatic manner with flamboyant expressions. The actors speaking directly to the audience, the soliloquy was a typical characteristic of the Elizabethan stage. Since the stage was relatively unadorned, the actors depended solely upon the visual colour and pageantry of their elaborate costume to give a colour to the play. Sometimes there was an attempt to wear historical costumes, but most often they wore decorative and elaborate Elizabethan dresses. Realistic portrayal of wars and duels presented the viewers with a visual treat. According to Fr. Joseph Valiyaveetil, *Chavittu Natakam* takes these stage aspects from the Elizabethan theatre and stood apart from the sixteenth century Kerala art forms in terms of its symbolic depiction of battles and unrealistic costumes. Presenting the realistic versions of gallows of Oliver, the performance of Richard upon horseback, the dragon of St. George,

Goyithavar's ship are the real life blood of *Chavittu Natakam* stories. The things that are presented on stage gained more prominence and appeal than the steps or dialogues. The actors are attired with realistic costumes that get in tune with the time, place and situation of the story consistently, without any artificial elements like masks or fake faces like the Greek drama or contemporary Kerala art forms. Since the ancient Roman historical stories, crusade wars and the feudal kings of Europe marked the themes of *Chavittu Natakam*, the costumes were extravagant and splashy that offered enhanced stage effects without much stage settings. When almost all the coeval arts employed curtains, *Chavittu Natakam* tracked the European theatre custom of not using curtains.

Many of the pre-performance observances of *Chavittu Natakam* has been inspired from the indigenous art forms such as *Kathakali*, *Koodiyattam*, Sanskrit Drama and many of the folk and ancient art forms. From the advertisement of the performance, invocation, prologue, ritualistic initiation to the post-performance observances, *Chavittu Natakam* is indebted to the contemporary Kerala art and folk forms. The frequent wars and conflicts between the princely states of Kerala have encouraged an air of hero worship and chivalric dexterity, the instinctive impact of which could be perceived in the *Chavittu Natakam* stories as well. But the portrayal of warriors and heroes was quite challenging as it called for consistent *Kalari* training. In *Chavittu Natakam* too, the actors undergo years of uncompromising *Kalari* training, just as in *Kathakali*. Similarity of the purpose of propagating ideology could also be observed in both these art forms, as any art form inception was to disseminate ideals. Apart from these similitudes with *Kathakali*, *Chavittu Natakam* has accepted several attributes of *Koodiyattam*, *Kakkarissi Natakam*, *Kanyarkali*, the Bhakthi

Movement and elements of Hindutva culture including Arya and Dravida religious connotations. It also commemorates great and ancient poets in Tamil and Sanskrit.

Artistic expressions or all folk or classical art forms should have a present-day establishment as far as its growth in the present times is concerned. It is not a desirable trend in any art form to curb its innovative expansion in the name of preserving its individuality, as it may enhance its being an archaic fossil. When even the deeply restricted temple art forms adopted inventive paths of growth, why *Chavittu Natakam* should be left behind. Revisions have taken place in this avant-garde realm, in accordance with personal preferences, audience appeal and lyrical trends. As a popular art form, even the judicious reflections upon the cultural as well as societal norms have strong influence in the root structure of *Chavittu Natakam*. This brought about the origin of various schools of *Chavittu Natakam* with distinct deviations in its 'mura's (steps involving one's whole body) and 'mudra's (symbolic gestures involving body parts), such as 'Vadakkan Chitta' (Northern style), 'Thekkan Chitta' (Northern style) and 'Madhya Desa Reethi' (Midland style).

The advanced *Chavittu Natakam* was made possible keeping in mind the urge of *Chavittu Natakam* enthusiasts to protect its life and spirit, even while making it condensed, apt for the modern times. The authentic *Chavittu Natakam* performance that took three to four days to complete a story gave way to twenty minutes to one-hour performances, conserving its authenticity in all its basic aspects. Compact, comprehensible and economical *Chavittu Natakams* such as 'Thirayum Theerakkattum,' "Marthomayude Bharatha Pravesam' were born when contemporary social, political and ecological issues gained their due acceptance in the story themes.

These experimental ventures need to be encouraged extensively so as to preserve a unique, transfusional art form from its death by wealth, manpower and time.

However, the post independent period has favoured this cultural heritage and its rejuvenated exploration to discover pastures new. Researches and ventures by Dr. Chummar Choondal, Mrs. Sebeena Raphy and Fr. Joseph Valiyaveetil need special mention in supporting the progress of this art form. Mrs. Sebeena Raphy and the Gothuruth *Chavittu Natakam* team presented a revived art form from 1957 to 1964 in New Delhi before a distinguished gallery including the President and Prime Minister, to great acclaim. But in the years that followed, this art form was doomed to neglect owing to poor patronage, the state of subalternity of its exponents and lack of research and encouragement from the authority and the Church.

The village of Gothuruth, Kochi, Kerala, one of the ancient hubs of *Chavittu Natakam* and the people with a passion for it in the veins, houses the Kerala *Chavittu Nataka* Academy, an organization, solely dedicated to the promotion of this art form. Alappuzha, another centre of *Chavittu Natakam* cherishes yet another cultural academy and training centre for the development of ancient and folk arts with a special significance to *Chavittu Natakam*, namely Krupasanam Ranga Kala Peedom, under the guidance of Fr. Joseph Valiaveetil, fosters innumerable enterprises appealing to the budding generations. The Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2012 showcased a five-day-long *Chavittu Natakam* performance and captured the scrutiny of the critics and common men alike that, to an extent, revived the interest on it. The development of tourism has also greatly strengthened the international interactions of *Chavittu Natakam*. But the real milestone in the

history of *Chavittu Natakam* is its inclusion in the Kerala School Kalolsavam (Asia's largest annual cultural-literary-art event) as a competition item. Striving to preserve the authenticity, all the while coupling dynamic innovation and robust enthusiasm, *Chavittu Natakam* became a showstopper in that cultural extravaganza. This could also save several of the artists who had preserved and held on to this art form even in the worst times. When the affluent patrons abandoned *Chavittu Natakam*, it was the fishermen, labourers and hireling who strived to sustain it on out of sheer love for it. When the poor authorship and crappy craftsmanship of ignorant hands curtailed its enlightening value, the Kerala School Kalolsavam restored its grandeur in all senses.

Kutty Srank, a 2010 Malayalam movie directed by Shaji N. Karun, starring Mammooty, has successfully incorporated the *Chavittu Natakam* tutelage and performance with its dance, music and battle into its narrative effortlessly. The use of original *Chavittu Natakam* costumes and artists has lent an air of authenticity to its scenes. The songs were either traditional *Chavittu Natakam* songs or were composed in that fashion. Mammooty enacting the role of Roldon (Orlando) turned out to be an exquisite treat as well as a reminder to preserve this unique art form. The film grabbed four national awards that also include one for costume designing and won critical acclaim all the while initiating a discussion on this art form and its conception, nationally.

When culture is unique to all geographic entities, cultural diversity and cultural harmony are to be treasured for the establishment of an absolute, harmonious world. So, in cultural harmony, diversity and intercultural discourses, definitely manifests the paradigmatic changes that encompasses a wide variety of societal and perspective elements of a culturally inter-

connected society. These are conspicuously observed in a society where *Chavittu Natakam* is performed in temple premises, which is thus a categorical example and model to the world at large. Thus, overcoming the constraints and vulnerabilities valiantly, *Chavittu Natakam* continues its triumphant campaign by essaying fresh heroic prospects through and beyond the spread of a liberated India.

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Spatial Defamiliarization in Contemporary Malayalam Movies

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The present paper is a provisional look at the way in which contemporary Malayalam movies have increasingly and effectively defamiliarized cinematic spaces and narrative templates by presenting them as fictitious, deracinated, remote and exoticized or as a combination thereof. It briefly discusses how our movies have evolved over time, and how they represent urban landscapes and lived experiences by deftly creating spaces which can be called 'possitopias' where things that are outright impossible elsewhere are not only possible but actually inevitable. These spaces are often presented with a tinge of nostalgia and romanticism, though their perspectives are not unsympathetic to the woes of the characters portrayed.

Keywords: Malayalam Movies, Representation, Exotic Spaces, Possitopia, Defamiliarization, Urbanization, Romantic Perspective.

The scenarist Dennis Joseph, who churned out a series of hits in Malayalam movie industry in the 1980s and early years of the next decade, in a popular television show reminisced that he advisedly chose the capital of India as the locale for the blockbuster *New Delhi* (1987) because people, in an age when the visual impact of television was extremely limited, imagined the metropolis as a space where anything and everything was possible after the consequential assassination of Ms. Indira Gandhi in 1984. As an additional rationale, he suggested that it would be difficult for Malayali viewers to digest the portrayal of a vernacular newspaper editor manipulating the press to seek his private revenge. In a manner of speaking, he was spelling out the prevalent practice among new generation writers and directors of using defamiliarized social spaces to visualize their stories. A social space, as Henri Lefebvre says:

... is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity—their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. It is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be-reduced to the rank of a simple object. ... Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others. (73)

Traditionally a place is a geographically-bounded entity which is in various ways a site of authenticity, is singular, fixed and unproblematic in its identity (Massey 5) and is defined by its relationship to a local articulation, marked by its history and specificity at a point of time (14). Anthony Giddens has argued that one

consequence of modernity has been the separation of space from place:

Modernity increasingly tears space away from place by fostering relations between 'absent' others, locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction. In conditions of modernity... locales are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them. (Qtd in Massey 6)

Social space is predictably a more complex and nuanced idea, and is functionally defined here as a constantly shifting place structured by and saturated with the organic agents who inhabit it, and thus has a non-physical existence. Improvements in cartography, navigation, telecommunications and media have demolished old conceptions of social space and have ushered in new ones endlessly. A pointed transformative agent is contemporary media production practices which reorganize spaces and places of everyday life into potential sites of mediation (Parmett 183) and movies are pivotal in modern media. As Lauren Rabinovitz demonstrates, film spaces are as important as film content in defining new sensibilities of public and private space that hinges on the production of new gendered norms and identities (qtd in Parmett 183) in the modern era.

Space and/as Possibilities

In political, literary and cinematic imaginations we have demarcated certain ethnic and social spaces as what can be called 'possitopias' where everyday ideas of morality, law and penalty (otherwise sacrosanct and inviolable) are expunged possibilitating queer events in the process. Needless to say possitopias stand in a dichotomic relation with spaces which are designated as 'familiar' and 'normal' which form

the arena where naturalized conventions rule supreme, with the minimal chance of being interrogated and critiqued. That is why the movies of Sathyan Anthikkad, which are repackaged conventional wisdom with a sprinkling of didacticism, invariably take place in the latter. All the social institutions and practices (such as marriage, family, consanguinity, friendship and education) differently manifest in these spaces. To be more accurate, institutions and practices have no intrinsic features and values but acquire distinctive qualities and attributes of the space they are inserted into. It has been argued that what made *The Exorcist* (1973) phenomenally resonate with the American public was the fact that its conster-nating events take place within the most sacrosanct of all spaces in popular imagination: the home (Forristal 278). For the American public, and for that matter for most people, a few deaths or inexplicable behavior would not raise anybody's eyebrows, let alone attract medical attention, in a battlefield or the vast swathes of a distant continent like Africa.

One key point we have to remember is that possitopias are purely a matter of perception and imagination. The denizens of a possitopia generally do not identify themselves with their mediated representations or appreciate their domicile as a social site with infinite, and at times disruptive, potential for out of the way events. For them, the systemic restrictive structures wished away in popular imagination are too real to neglect and overcome. Perhaps that is why the Hindi remakes of *New Delhi*, which was completely loyal (including camera angles), to the Malayalam version, bombed in the box office: for the Hindi audience New Delhi was not distant enough to be imagined as a possitopia.

It is clear that for more dramatic and outlandish plots we need spaces which are fictitious, dera-

minated, remote or exoticized, alone or in combination, in other words possitopias. In older Malayalam movies too we can spot the technique, though in a lesser degree: one favorite locale was the hinterlands or obscure villages of Tamilnadu teeming with landlords openly defying law either through the connivance of enforcing authorities themselves, flexing their political muscle or bluntly by means of their goons. But in movies which can be called 'new generation,' locales constantly move farther and farther afield from the conventional understanding of normalcy—that is to say naturalized experiences—in such a way that we feel tempted to call this practice spatial defamiliarization. We can divide the new locales into four broad categories.

Fictitious

One movie which successfully tapped the immense possibilities thrown up by fictitious but easily relatable scenes of action (like Malgudi of R.K. Narayan, Khazak of O.V. Vijayan and Hogwarts School of J.K. Rowling) is *Amen* (2013). Pictured in a fictitious place named Kumoramkari and steeped in western orchestration, the movie is an allegory because it has one dimension which tells the hackneyed tale of lovers from different classes, but at the same time through its characters and events addresses the incidence of corruption and nepotism that have eaten into inner ecclesiastical circles. It shows how the machinations of a coterie comprising a haughty priest, corrupt sexton and a rapacious businessman are thwarted by the direct intervention of the virile St. George who revealingly is not a saint any longer in Catholic hagiology. Thus both the locale and the 'hero' are fictitious though it did not prevent the audience to appreciate the movie but actually predisposed them to accept every action as possible.

Deracinated

Deracinated spaces are a derivative of fictitious spaces. When a familiar place is stripped of its defining markers and emplaced within unidentifiable spatio-temporal coordinates, it becomes as good as fictitious. The major difference between the two is that the former is easier to identify. One interesting example is *Kunjiramayanam* (2015). A pleasant blend of parody and pastiche, interspersed with petty squabbles and unpredictable course of relationships, the movie has its locale Desam, a village near Alwaye in Ernakulam. It is real so far it goes, but it does not go much. The term 'desam' can mean simply any place in Malayalam just like Vaikom Mohammed Basheer describes the locale in a few of his novellas as plainly 'sthalam' (place). This nomenclatural ambivalence amounts to greater freedom on the viewer's part: s/he can construe Desam as a real enough territory, but it is a place inhabited by people stuck in a time warp: there are no mobile phones and its denizens use discontinued automobiles. In fact there are no *mise en scène* with which we can pin down the movie to a specific period or place. It is in such a floating time-frame that its events unfold which grow into a study in how beliefs are born, and eventually crystalize into larger faith systems.

Remote

A surprisingly large number of recent Malayalam movies have remote and often inaccessible locales, occasionally outside Kerala. *Ayyappanum Koshiyum* (2020), *Moothon* (2019), *Uyare* (2019), *Sudani from Nigeria* (2018), *Eeda* (2018), *Aadu* (part I 2015 and II 2017), *Thondimothalum Drik-sakshiyum* (2017), *Kattappanayile Rithik Roshan* (2016), *Maheshinte Prathikaram* (2016), *Iyyobinte Pusthakam* (2014), *Oridinary* (2012) and *22 Female Kottayam* (2012) are some that instantly suggest themselves.

These places are outlying only from the standpoint of metro cities, where movie industries have concentrated. Spaces like Attappadi or villages of Idukki are not shown as dangerous, primitive or immoral but they crucially create an ambience in which strange events appear to be the order of the day and thus make the movie appear natural and realistic.

Predictably the relation between these and 'normal' spaces is dichotomic as already mentioned. Cinematic Malabar, for example, with spaces abounding in communal violence, political strife and ravenous gourmets, is frequently posited as the other, a breeding ground for things which are inconceivable under normal circumstances. One factor that enhances the possibility quotient of Malabar is its current backwardness which is retrospectively imagined as having been in existence forever. The historical reality, however, is different. Malabar is the original epicenter of Kerala modernity. Exposed quite early to overseas trade, inhabited by an international population of different races and faiths, ploughed on by Tippu's invasion and administrative reforms, it also witnessed the first modern European foothold of mercantilism in the fifteenth century. The first and second Malayalam newspapers were published from there. It was in Malabar that the first cadastral survey was conducted and taxes levied and feudalism developed its first cracks. Roads and railways added to the momentum. Revitalization movements of Ayurveda enunciated the vision of a unified Kerala for the first time, much before the Indian National Congress came up with the demand. Nationalist aspirations, political movements, a progressive public sphere, hospitals, printing press, aggressive missionary enterprises, emergence of an enlightened middleclass, anti-caste movements, direct colonial interventions, etc., redefined the political map, reconceptualized normative discourses and

recast the social sensibility of the region. That early Malayalam novels such as *Indulekha* (1889) and *Saraswathivijayam* (1892) contains references to Tippu's invasion, the advent of railways, Nair Marriage Bill, feudalism, slavery and slave trade, and colonial ethnography is a testimony to its modernist orientation. But the cinematic perspective from Cochin or Trivandrum reconfigures everything. What structures Malabar as a possitopia is the modern middle-class consciousness which was born from the reconciliatory gradualism and community reforms of Travancore and Cochin, which were more or less elitist in nature, not the kind of violent strides of emancipatory modernism in Malabar.

Exoticized

Of all the new cinematic spaces, exoticized ones are the most interesting and revealing. Exoticized spaces are marginal and/or interstitial in that they are often poor neighbourhoods in suburbs or impoverished living pockets embedded in rich and sophisticated urban settings. In Malayalam movies Ernakulam, generally considered the commercial capital of Kerala, best illustrates this paradoxical hybridity. Downtown Ernakulam is the backdrop of movies dealing with business tycoons, successful entrepreneurs, leading professionals and familial affiliations where the representation of space and representational space (exquisite lines, refined pleasures, the sumptuous and cruel dissipation of wealth accumulated by all means) are mutually reinforcing (Lefebvre 74). Contrastingly the coastal Cochin is the most pervading presence in those movies abounding in ungainly persona, shady deals and abject privations. Right within Ernakulam there are interstices where people are hemmed in because of reckless and exponential urbanization and juxtapose themselves with the thriving businesses, glitzy shops and tran-

snational economic zones that mark out the city. As Martin Luther King described, these places form "a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity." *Kumbalangi Nights* (2019), *Thottappan* (2019), *Oru Yamandan Premakatha* (2019), *Ee. Ma. Yau* (2018), *Parava* (2017), *Kammattipadam* (2016) and *Amar Akbar Antony* (2015) are cases in point. The bright downtown and dark suburbs/interstices, along with their associations, produce an ethos similar to one described by Foucault as heterotopia in that they are have a tantalizing aura of reality about them:

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. (4)

Admittedly, the sight of poor human beings wriggling like worms in slush—literally and figuratively—of life in suburbs and interstices may provide the more fortunate viewer the opportunity of power-inscribed gaze, especially those who watch movies in expensive multiplexes or on streaming platforms within the comfort of the home. These spaces, however, are not solely presented as a visual treat for the wealthy voyeur. In almost all the cases they are merely pictured as providing preconditions for events which are impossible elsewhere. There is

a strange kind of romantic perception about such places and their inhabitants, especially the Latin Catholic flock. Perhaps no other community has been as romanticized and exoticized as the Latin Catholics of Kerala. This, however, many not be entirely innocent. As converts from lower social strata and with historical documents locating their evolutionary trajectory, Latin Catholics function as the Other of the Syrian Christian who is mostly presented as rich, elite and fair. The kind of musicality and flamboyant life imputed to them amid insecure livelihood and bouts of intoxication often reminds us of the way in which Negroes were perceived and portrayed in the nineteenth century colonial imagination. George Combe in his *A System of Phrenology* (1825) wrote that the negro is easily excitable and in the highest degree susceptible to all the passions; to the negro, mere removal of pain and hunger brings about a state of enjoyment; as soon as his toils are suspended for a moment, he sings, he seizes a fiddle and he dances (qtd in Ferguson 263). Advertisements in the nineteenth century also presented blacks as “uncivilized, inferior, but smiling, happy and grateful in their subservience” (Rattansi 52). Even today in jingoistic imagination they are an inherently inferior race whose idea of happiness never goes beyond food and freedom.

Conclusion

The most crucial characteristic of all the four categories of possitopia we have discussed so far is their engagement—more accurately rupture—with time. It is by freezing or visually reversing accumulated effects of time such as urba-nization, modernization, mobility and social reforms that these movies manufacture possi-topias. This is like the position of the European political philosophers during the Renaissance who believed that corruption came from time, from the particularity of historical events, while the universality of space was presumed to promote

virtue and morality (Lipsitz 227). The consistent movement away from cities and such other familiar spaces which characterize these movies is clearly is an attempt to freeze or reverse time because as Lewis Mumford says in cities:

Time becomes visible: buildings and monuments and public ways, more open than the written record, more subject to the gaze of many men than the scattered artifacts of the country-side, leave an imprint upon the minds even of the ignorant or the indifferent. (40)

The way in which Malayalam movies have moved ahead in the last few decades can be understood using different conceptual categories. One among them is space. As we know in their infancy, virtually every movie was shot in studios, within the confines of artificial sets or buildings with limited freedom to move about. As the earliest commercial movies were concerned with family matters, spatial restrictions were not much of a concern. In the 1970s, with works like *Olavaum Theeravum*, our movies began to explore and exploit possibilities of the space in unprecedented ways. As Parmett argues media are more than technologies, systems of production, texts, audiences, and are instead part of a broader matrix and set of contextual relations; it is in understanding social, political, cultural, and economic life in this broader sense that media space research offers the most promise for critical media studies (183). A deeper study into the intricacies and selection of spaces in Malayalam movie is in order as it is sure to provide productive insights into our unconscious preoccupations and inherited prejudices. In the process we will be able to understand our own inclinations and naturalized preferences better. Given that movies are still the most influential medium today in producing/reflecting reality, such an approach does have the potential to yield rich dividends in the study of visual culture.

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The Familiar Turned Uncanny: The Japanese Canadian Internment and its Erasure in Canadian History



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A b s t r a c t

The Paper looks at how the Japanese Canadian internment in Canada during the Second World War has been erased from mainstream history books and school textbooks that teach Canadian history. It also looks at how the internment sites chosen by the government where familiar, endearing landscapes which were turned into hostile territory by the government. This gave the public the feeling that Japanese Canadians had been sent by the government on a holiday trip, thus disguising the suffering of the Japanese Canadians.

Keywords: *Japanese Canadian Internment, Racist Act, Familiar Landscapes, Erasure of the Episode from History Books.*

Of the Asian Canadians, the first ever to make it to Canada were the Chinese. They arrived in groups to work for the Pacific Canadian Railway work. The Chinese labourers were predominantly the ones who worked hard to complete the Trans Canadian Railway line with half the wages given to their white Canadian counterparts. But the photograph of the finishing railway line work does not figure a single Chinese worker. This should have been the first visible act of erasure of history by the Canadian government. Canada has relentlessly tried to erase the contribution of the visible minorities to the development of the country from its history and thus from public memory.

The Japanese Canadian (JC) immigration to Canada started in the 1870s and by the 1940s they had established themselves well in the West Coast of Canada. But with the bombing of the Pearl Harbour by the Japanese, America declared war against Japan and Canada followed suit. The JCs were sent to internment camps in the interiors of Canada, first at Hastings Park a former horse stall, stinking with the smell of dung and then to Ghost towns where temporary shelters were erected for the JCs. Meanwhile all their properties were sold by the government without their consent. After the war they were told not to settle back in the West Coast and given a dictum to either move to the Prairies or the Rocky mountains or to repatriate to Japan. Many JCs decided to move to the interiors of Canada. The forced mass movement of the Japanese Canadians "was the largest exodus in Canadian history [where] roughly 22,000 Japanese Canadians were forcibly moved from the West Coast to other parts of the country" (Falkenhayner19). The internal displacement of JCs in Canada has been the focal point of JC history in Canada and bears significance because a

community that had successfully established itself in the Pacific Coast was uprooted and internally displaced like refugees, to hostile lands.

A blot in the history of Canadian democracy, the Japanese Canadian Internment never received the global attention it should have got, primarily because there was a silencing of this grotesque episode by the Canadian Government. The paper looks at how the Canadian government devised the internment of the JCs at familiar places that they frequented and how these places were suddenly transformed into uncanny sites. It also looks at how the history of JC internment was deftly sidelined and erased from Canadian mainstream history textbooks for study.

As Goellnicht points out, "No history presents absolute truth, for all history is textualized, and while it may form our concept of past 'reality,' inherent in language lies the possibility-the necessity even-of manipulation through selection, judgment, choice of rhetorical tropes, and so on, so that "reality" becomes distorted, "truth" biased (290). A case in point is Canadian history texts meant for school children. These books that should play an important role in creating awareness about the history of minority citizens in children marginalise their history instead. Many critics have repeatedly pointed out to the sweeping way in which JC history has been portrayed in history texts meant for schools.

Jenifer Tupper in her study on the textbook representation of JC history, "Silent voices, Silent Stories: JCs in Social Studies Textbooks" (2003), verifies how JC history and internment are portrayed in select school textbooks. She warns, "in Canadian schools, students are in danger of learning history that includes only the voices and experiences of individuals who belong to the dominant cultural group" (328).

Tupper states how in the textbooks she used to study the way in which JC history is represented, two pages are set apart from the main body by borders to talk about JC internment. She observes that this is a “physical act of marginalization” having the potential “to trivialize the importance of this history allowing teachers and students to skip over these parts of the text and continue with the main body of the text” (331). Although the textbooks provide students with an account of the history of JCs, neither do they touch upon the history of racism that led to the internment, nor do they mention the inhuman treatment meted out to the JCs there. She points out how in all history textbooks taught in schools, “internment appears to be the beginning of Japanese Canadian experience in Canada” (331). Nothing is said about the racism undergone by the JCs before the war, their economic contribution to Canada and their economic growth. There are even passages, that “suitably sanctions” the internment (339) that leave readers with the notion that the camps were justified by military necessity. Thus the history of JCs in Canada and the injustices done against them are masked as the voices and writings of JCs are “either marginal or nonexistent in the text” (339).

When Maryka Omatsu, the first woman of East Asian ancestry to be appointed a judge in Canada, came to know of the internment after her father’s death, she laments about not having known her history from her dad who experienced it, “Unbelievably, you let me learn about the most central event in your life from my grade twelve history textbook, which reduced your incarceration, property confiscation, and degradation to four lines. Somehow I memorized those four lines for my history examination without connecting them to you or to me” (36).

The places chosen by the government to intern the JCs contributed much to the distress of JCs.

Familiar and frequented areas were chosen as sites for internment and were transformed into hostile spaces, which caused psychological trauma in JCs. The government tactfully chose places that masked the miseries that the JCs suffered during their internment. The JCs were interned in the Pacific National Exhibition Ground in Hastings Park which was visited by people to spend a happy time with family. Takashima as a child was interned in the Hastings Park and remembers vividly in her book *Child in the Prison Camp*,

the strong, summer July sun is over our heads as we near the familiar Exhibition grounds. But the scene is now quite different from the last time I saw it. The music, the rollercoasters, the hawkers with their bright balloons and sugar candy are not there. Instead, tension and crying children greet us as we approach the grounds. A strong odor hits us as we enter: the unmistakable foul smell of cattle, a mixture from their waste and sweat. (8)

The familiar, endearing landscape was families spent their leisure time suddenly turns eerie for the JCs. The contrasting experiences that the same landscape provides grind the JC inmates.

Fullilove observes,

one’s place must be understood according to its symbolic construction by those within the place and by the larger society. The soundness of individual place identity rests on having a place and on knowing that one’s place is held in esteem by others. When identity is betrayed in either of these ways, alienation may result. (1520)

The filthy stinking stalls, the chicken coup farmhouses, the un-insulated shacks in which they

were housed, all led them to fall in their own self-esteem. As Kogawa puts it in her autobiographical novel *Obasan*, "None of us... escaped the naming. We were defined and identified by the way we were seen. A newspaper in B.C headlined, 'They are a stench in the nostrils of the people of Canada.' We were therefore relegated to the cesspools" (118). It was this feeling of being relegated to "this place" that shattered JC identity as the place assigned to them became their source of identity," "We were taken out of the 'benjo,' the word for toilet-'but the 'benjo' wasn't taken out of us" (15).

Joy Kogawa in *Obasan* points out this trauma of being pushed to the margins,

We come from the country that plucks its people out like weeds and flings them into the roadside. We grow in ditches and sloughs, untended and spindly. We erupt in the valleys and mountainsides, in small towns and back alleys, sprouting upside-down on the prairies, our hair wild as spiders' legs, our feet rooted nowhere. We grow where we are not seen, we flourish where we are not heard, the thick undergrowth of an unlikely planting. (226)

Terry Watada in his *Daruma Days* portrays his experience in the internment camps and ghost towns in a fictionalised manner and points out to the callousness of the government that sent its JC citizens to an uninhabitable ghost town, Sandon,

Until the 1940s, the town lay in the shadow of isolation. "Don't go there," legend warned. "It is a land of perpetual night, a mere ravine caught between steep mountain precipices, where men dare not breathe, lest their very breath turn to ice." Despite the warning, men,

women and children did go, forced to go by an authority that deemed Sandon perfect for its purpose. (23)

Kirsten Emiko McAllister points out how the unnerving reality of the stinking stalls and uninsulated shacks at the ghost towns were masked in postcards that held the pictures of the camps. She observes, "Concealing the identity of the camps as small villages in a distanced hazy gaze, they [postcards] kept safe as a secret known only to the beholder" ("Held" 30). While the Japanese American internment camps were enclosed with barbed wire fences and guarded by armed soldiers, the JC camps in the ghost towns which though housed shacks reflected a scenic beauty in the background of the mountains. Without the army to guard them, the general public always thought of them as free and enjoying a holiday trip. Kirsten Emiko McAllister observes,

Located in forested mountains by, yes, it is true flood - prone rather than meandering rivers, the camps were set within a landscape that calls up the imagery of *furusato* (Japanese village). Under the wash of its nostalgia, the boredom and uncertainty of confinement come to be recalled as the simplicity of life, and the rows of leaking cramped shacks as rustic. (29)

The landscape disguises the sufferings of JCs in the uninsulated shacks.

Pamela Sugiman discusses how the JC inmates compared the spatial structure of their internment with that of the Japanese Americans. Betty, a former internee remarks,

If you get down to the States where they were in these camps in Niagara, and if you go down to LA, you'll see their museum. You'll see these camps that they

lived in with guard towers and guard, soldiers walking all around outside with guns. Then, I think you'd feel it. But [for us] there was no wire, there was no fence. You knew this was your place. . . . (373)

The erasure of the places of suffering from history, affected the JCs the most because it erased everything from public memory. When in America, the Japanese American internment camps were preserved as museums, in Canada there was nothing left of the internment camps. As Emiko McAllister observes:

While the camps were physically dismantled in 1945-46, they continue to impose confines and set enclosures of another order. It is an order from which one can neither escape nor be granted freedom. Occupying no place, having no location, it cultivates an interiority which takes on a flesh of its own, a flesh which one comes to inhabit. (21)

For the JCs the landscape of internment is not just a physical one, but one that has been internalised.

Obasan portrays the experience of going back to the internment camps and finding all evidence of the camps erased. Kogawa relates her experience of visiting Slocan, twenty years after the war through Naomi,

We looked for the evidence of our having been in Bayfarm, in Lemon Creek, in Popoff. . . . where on the map or on the road was there any sign? Not a mark was left. All our huts had been removed long before and the forest had returned to take over the clearings. (117)

Kogawa also talks about how the language used in government documents were deceiving and contrary to what JCs experienced during their internment. The government called the intern-

ment of JCs as "Interior Housing projects" and named the relocating areas as "sick bay" and "the protected area" and "the pool" which masked the violations that JCs had to endure as citizens of Canada. The media too played a major role in hiding the real circumstances of the inmates. The reality of back breaking work assigned to JCs at Alberta sugar farms was often concealed by newspapers with headlines like "Grinning and Happy" and with a photo of a smiling JC family. As Roy Miki points out,

What [the] details from history say nothing of, though, is the interior place, the ravaged heart, the tearing away from everything that had been associated with 'Home,' the family, the community, all the nuanced network of the social, cultural, and spiritual life built by the *Issei* and the *Nisei* for over fifty years. (17)

By transforming familiar terrains frequented by JCs into internment camps, the familiar landscape turns uncanny to the JCs. The mainstream population is ill informed by the postcards published by the government that shows the shacks set in scenic environments so much so that the mainstream believes that JCs have been sent on a paid holiday. By bringing down temporary structures and buildings where JCs were housed during the internment after the war, the Canadian government deftly brought a closure to a chapter of racist history and undid the human right violation meted out to its citizens based on race.

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Modern and Post-modern Echoes of Ancient Egyptian Theatre: An Analytical Study of the Features and Evolution of Pharaonic Theatre



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This paper is an attempt to shine a spotlight on the special nature of ancient Egyptian theatre. As one of the oldest civilizations, its unique value systems, religion, culture and law have had a role to play in giving birth to this distinctive theatrical tradition. Attempts to decipher its specific features have also given rise to debates about how Pharaonic theatre can be situated among theatrical traditions across the world. This paper endeavors to explore the themes and techniques of this Pharaonic theatre and seeks the remnant echoes of it in contemporary Egyptian theatre. It also looks for examples of modern attempts to revive this form of theatre in Egypt.

Keywords: Ancient Egyptian Theatre, The Abydos Passion Play, Ritual Drama, Satire, Osiris, Modern Theatre, Tawfiq Al-Hakim.

Egypt is a transcontinental country bridging the northeast corner of Africa and southwest corner of Asia. With the Mediterranean Sea in the north, the Nile in the south, the Red Sea to the east, and the Saharan Desert and Libyan mountains in the west, it has a unique geographical position. Egypt lies at the confluence of the eastern and western world, and so this land is no stranger to new ideas and many foreign influences.

Egyptian performing arts from different historical periods each had its own unique theatrical themes and styles, starting with the ancient Egyptian rituals. Through the ages, Egyptian theatre has been moulded by its interactions with Greco-Roman cultures, Christian and Islamic influences, the rule of various Arabian dynasties, as well as the colonial imperialism. With a seven-thousand-year history, today, its modern and postmodern texts and performances are a result of the assimilation of the divergent influences from the past as well as its modern Arab affiliations, globalization, and current socio-political events.

Pharaonic Civilization and Theatrical Space

Ancient Egyptian theatre had reflected the pharaonic civilization and their beliefs. They used to perform on the banks of the river Nile, especially during the Opet festival which was held annually to celebrate the flooding of the river. The Nile has been both an ecological lifeline as well as the major cultural artery of Egyptian civilization, even to this day. It has played a great role for Egyptian in every life aspect from economy to entertainment and theatre. Herodotus rightly observed that Egypt is "the gift of the Nile."

This river has is not only a cultural symbol but also the cradle of innovations in irrigation,

farming, transportation, art and philosophy. Even the ancient Egyptian calendar was based on the three cycles of the Nile with each season consisting of four months of thirty days each. The first season called Akhet, which means flood, was the time of the year when the Nile flooded, leaving layers of fertile soil behind, helping agricultural growth. Prêt was the growing season, and Shemu, the last season, was the harvest season when there were no rains. The Nile was an important part of ancient Egyptian spiritual life, Happy was the god of the annual floods. It was believed that Pharaoh and this god had the power to control the flooding. They also believed that the Nile represents both life and afterlife, with the east of the Nile being a place of birth and the west, a place of death. This is also why all the great tombs were built west of the Nile because Egyptians believed that in order to enter the afterlife; they had to be buried on the side that symbolized death (Hassan 2000).

The geographical features of any nation play a crucial role in shape their art and culture. In Egypt, the rise of permanent settlements and societies around the Nile created the conditions required for the emergence of art and theatre. In countries with only deserts, one sees that people lived as nomadic tribes, perpetually seeking water and resources to survive. This left them with little no cultural energy to create art at the level of the ancient Egyptians. The comfortable, fertile lands around the Nile facilitated the rise of a society that was civilized, explored the arts and philosophy and was largely devoid of the harsh, barbaric, practices of their contemporaries. Women in ancient Egypt occupied a more progressive role, and had active roles in governance, culture, art, and religion. Women were rulers, priestesses and artists in that society and one of the most revered and powerful deities in their pantheon were Isis, the mother goddess. Human settlement in Egypt dates to at least

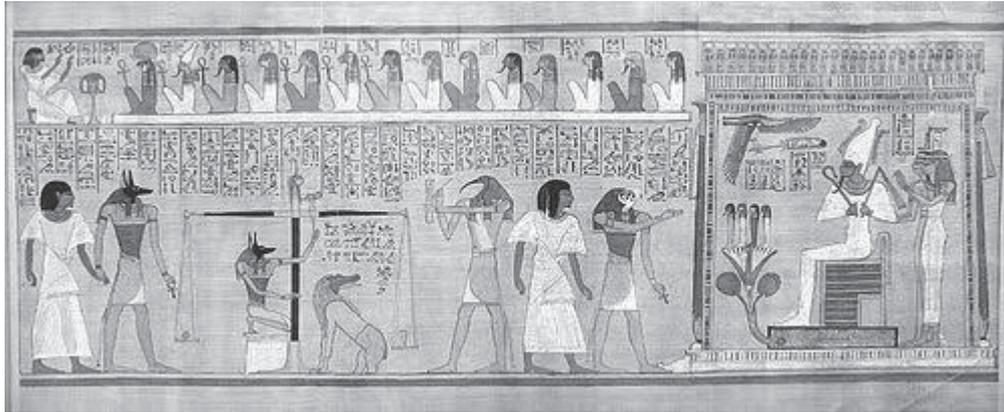


Fig. 1: Book of the dead, Osiris

40,000 BC, and by 7000 B. Cits civilization was firmly established and thriving. Pharaonic Egypt invented writing, agriculture, architecture and city development, centralized governance, organized religion, judicial systems, law enforcement and even the first written human rights document. The pharaonic age ended with the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great, who fell in love with the last Egyptian queen Cleopatra. By the time of her death, Egypt had become a province of the Roman Empire (Hassan 2000).

Iconic monuments reflect this magical legacy such as the great pyramid of Giza and Sphinx, as well as Memphis, Thebes, Karnak, and the Valley of the Kings, all of which remain a significant focus of scientific and popular interest. Egypt's long and rich cultural heritage is the most important part of its national identity, which colors every aspect of their life, including art and theatre. There is historical evidence of a theatrical space in Dendera where the carvings depict a large procession of priests participating in a ritual performance during the Khoiak festival. Priests from all over Egypt would travel to attend the festival and the carvings also mention their place of origin. Three of the priests are not identified, however, and one wears a large mask of Anubis, the god whose role he was enacting for the ritual. Another priest in line behind him appears to be

assisting him as if he cannot see properly through the mask. Ceramic Anubis masks like the one depicted in the Dendera temple carving have been recovered and dated to 600-300 BCE (Leprohon 269-70). Ceremonies and performances took place in the temples by the Nile and annually at Abydos and Heliopolis, during festivals. This gives us an idea about the nature of the ancient Egyptian theatre and its connection with the religion and rituals.

Ritual and Pharaonic Theatre

Recent studies discovered that Ancient Egyptians were the first to enact theatrical performances, even before the Greek. This is recorded on the Shabaqostone which is now preserved in the British museum. The description of the play found on the Shabaqostone shows a grand ceremonial religious drama, which is a late copy of probably the first drama in history (Banham 14).

Like the Greeks and the ancient Indians, ancient Egyptian theatre is primarily associated with religion and was mainly a ritual drama performed at seasonal festivals. They used to perform plays that reflected their belief system. The idea of rebirth was so central to ancient Egypt and one of their most important stories revolved around the god Osiris, his son Horus, and goddess Isis and some other gods like Amun, the



Fig. 2: Musical Performance in Ancient Egypt

Sun god. As the story goes, Osiris ruled Egypt wisely but he was murdered by his brother Seth who cut Osiris' body into pieces and scattered it all over Egypt. His wife Isis gathered up the pieces of his body so that she could bring him back to life. Through a magical union she gave birth to his son Horus who sought revenge against Seth and won back his throne and established the ritual of Osiris-worship.

Isis, the mother goddess of magic, healing and fertility had a great place among ancient Egyptians. She was the mother of gods and had much respect for her great role with Osiris. She was worshipped until the influences of Christianity arrived in Egypt from Europe. The Roman writer Apuleius, in 2 A.D. mentioned the importance and the universality of Isis that the Goddess herself appears and explains: "I am Nature, the universal Mother... The primeval Phrygians call me Pessinunctica, Mother of the Gods; the Athenians sprung from their own soil, call me Cecropian Artemis; for the islanders of Cyprus I am Paphian Aphrodite... and the Egyptians who excel in ancient learning, worship me with ceremonies proper to my Godhead, call me by my true name, namely Queen Isis" (Stone 22-23).

The people of ancient Egypt worshipped gods through rituals in temples and by performing plays. Most of the plays were about Osiris, Horus and Isis. The traditional plot can be categorized under the gender of sentimental or passion plays. The Abydos Passion play, which was discovered among the Pyramid Texts was a yearly ritual performed until 400 BCE (Fort 4). The plot of the play centered around the murder of Osiris and his followers by his brother Seth. The discovered documents revealed more than 12 scripted plays. They were characterized by its diversity in texts as they dealt with storytelling, dramatic performances in addition to religious rituals ceremonies and moral lessons (Dorton). The plays that depicted religious rituals were reenactments of myths and role-playing of the gods. Usually these rituals were performed and witnessed only by members of the priesthood. The rest of the people would be able to participate in the festivals only when the deity's statue was removed from the sanctuary and displayed in an elaborate procession (Leprohon 259-60). These plays were mainly written in prose, except for three which were written in verse. Records also show that at least one of these plays combined both prose and verse. Some examples of these scripts based on the historical legend of Osiris



Fig. 3: Isis-Osiris-Hours

are *Isis and Seven Scorpions* and *The Triumph of Horus* (Dorton).

One of the most important ritual dramas was the one which was performed during the Festival of Victory at Edfou. The ritual celebrated the beginning of Egyptian kingship and the triumph over all her enemies. By analyzing these 12 scripted plays one can observe features of both the written form of the play as well as its performances. For example, in *Isis and the Seven Scorpions* we can find that the gods are treated and perceived as humans, who have a psychological effect on the attendees. This also goes on to prove that ancient Egyptians had some sort of understanding about human psychology (Dorton). This is also reflected in the performance of the actor enacting the character.

In these plays, the main roles were played by priests who wore masks representing their characters. This Passion play, which lasted for several days and included battle scenes with real life killings, was divided into three parts, creating intensity among the audience (Dorton). The discovered texts include acting instructions and the script with the name of the performer and their dialogue. These plays have both a prologue and an epilogue and its plot shows conflict

through the battle of Horus and Seth. The text also has notes about the musical accompaniment required for the play. Rattling percussion instruments such as the tambourine and the sistrum were depicted in the carvings on the temple walls (Nelson 29-31).

Music has been an integral part of Egyptian culture since ancient times and most of the ancient Egyptian art forms contained music. The ancient Egyptians credited the gods Hathor with the invention of music, which Osiris in his turn used as a part of his efforts to civilize the world. The ancient Egyptians used a vast array of musical instruments such as harps, lutes, drums, flutes, cymbals, clappers, and tambourines that played a prominent role in melodic compositions of ancient Egyptians composers and musicians. Only musicians associated directly with the dancers on stage by clapping their hands, using clappers, or playing tambourines, drums, sistrums or other percussion instrument to beat out a tempo and rhythm. It was rare to find wind or stringed instrument players close to dancers in the same scene. However, it was noted that whenever musicians are depicted, dancers were not generally far away (Manniche Lise). The dance scene was very important for the ancient Egyptians, the word dance meant 'rejoice.' It was an integral part of religious ritual: "the pharaoh comes to dance; he comes to sing." There were many ritual dances and choreo-graphed processions (Banham; Zaki).

We can divide the types of performances in ancient Egypt into three categories. First passion plays are centered around the stories of gods. The second genre is the plays written and performed to celebrate Pharaohs and the third is satire. An example for the second type of play is the one about Sensusret celebrating his rise to the throne. In the case of satirical plays, the pharaohs did not fear this art form but instead, embraced it.

Some of these satirical plays were also centered around the gods. In one satire play, they mocked the council of gods who took more than 24 years to decide who should inherit from Osiris, Sethor Horus. It also portrayed Seth as the symbol of stupidity and evilness combined. The play also took a stab at Horus by portraying him to be an immature child who cries when beaten (Awad 2007).

Evolution

These ancient ceremonies still take place in modern Egypt, through what is called *Al Moulid*. Villages in the north and south of Egypt still celebrate *Al Moulid* in the same way their ancestors did in the ancient days. They would act, dance and sing in a performance typical of the traditional theatrical phenomenon. On the other hand, the professional theatre in Egypt after independence has been inspired by the ancient Egyptian civilization in general. They believe that history and a strong cultural identity should be projected in all art forms including theatre. It is similar to the Indian movement of going back to the country's classical roots in art. Modern playwrights like Tawfiq Al-Hakim, Mahmoud Diab, Nouman Ashour, Nawal El Saadawi, Fathia al-Assal and other playwrights in the modern and contemporary Egyptian Theatre are concerned with social issues, and they have a distinct set of opinions, ideas and theatrical style. However, there is no doubt that most of them find inspiration from Pharaonic theatre.

The echoes of the past can be seen in modern and postmodern Egyptian theatre through the themes, some features, or the way techniques and theatrical elements are implemented. We will try to read these echoes through two selected plays and one performance. The first is a modern Egyptian play *Isis* which has been written in Arabic by Tawfiq Al-Hakim, an Egyptian novelist

and playwright. The second is a postmodern play and performance *The Eternal Battle/Horus* written and directed by Shimaa Nabil Khalid in English.

Tawfiq al-Hakim is a prominent literary figure in Egypt and his efforts are internationally considered as an important legacy of Egyptian and Arabic literature right. His works are characterized by his expressive techniques use of language. In fact, he is the sole founder of an entire literary tradition particularly in the domain of Egyptian theater and plays (Roger 204) and is considered to be the founding father of modern Egyptian drama. His themes covered the need for modernization, and he wrote about sixty plays, some of which are more suitable for reading than for performance. He wrote in different styles encompassing symbolism, realism, and even the absurd, combining both educational theatres, as well as intellectual theatre which is only for reading and not for performance. Accordingly, he refused to call them plays and published them in separate books only for reading. He wrote his short stories, novels and plays based on the Egyptian culture and published articles in newspapers. All his major works in theatre have been translated into English. Some of them include *People of the Cave*, *Shahrazad*, *Angel's Prayer*, *King Oedipus*, *The Fate of a Cockroach*, *Song of Death*, *The Tree Climber*, etc.

In his play *Isis* he kept the main characters as we have previously mentioned them but he has changed some names. In this plot, Isis, after the murder of Osiris, wanted her son Horus to be the king and she used every possible way to reclaim the throne. The conflict in the play is between two visions of the world. The idealistic vision with Osiris as the king who serves the people but doesn't know how to protect himself and the materialistic vision of Seth as the king who does not serve his people but rather, uses

them. The conflict in the play is between good and evil. Al Hakim saw that goodness without the power to protect is useless. The dramatic space in *Isis* is the Nile and he uses a combination of prose and verse. The techniques of this play are western, where he uses long discussions between characters as a theatrical technique to deliver his philosophical ideas. The influence of Brecht can be seen in the trial of Seth in front of the people.

The play uses the same story and theme as that of the ancient Egyptian theatre but Al Hakim avoids the rituals and the magical elements. He even changed some of the main events like the magical union of Isis and Osiris for rebirth. In the ancient version, Horus gets his throne back by defeating Seth in a battle. In his version, Al Hakim creates a psychological battle through discussion, where Horus gets back his throne through a public trial of Seth. Tawfiq Al Hakim, like other dramatists of his generation, is concerned with social issues and tries to share philosophical ideas through their writings. In *Isis*, Al Hakim's focuses on ideas over other elements.

The other play and performance is *The Eternal Battle/Horus*, which is written in English by Shima Nabila a novelist and dramatist from the Egyptian contemporary generation. Focusing on feminist issues like equality for women and other contemporary topics, her work reflects a concern for the Egyptian citizen as a universal human being. As an academician and gender activist, she adopts various genders and style in her writing and direction. She was worked with performances such as *Gods are Angry*, *The Muzzle*, *Two Maids*, *Raihan* and other plays. *The Eternal Battle/Horus* is a play based on the sacred story of Isis, Osiris and Horus, similar to the storyline from Pharaonic theatre. In this play, *Isis* decides that it's time for Horus to avenge his father Osiris and

reclaim his throne. Using a flash back, the dramatist stages the whole story of the past, including the murder of her husband. The conflict in the play is between good and evil in the same way as the ancient passion plays. The play retains all the ritual and magical events in the original story. It is written in English and uses both prose and verse.

Through the performance, thus play tries to revive the magical and sacred elements in the story. The ritual theatre focuses more on body language than words and symbols and there is simplicity of the stage in scenography. The combination of these techniques also finds parallel in the aesthetic Indian art form *Kathakali* with its *mudras*, stereotyped divine characters, and iconic makeup. As a postmodern play, *The Eternal Battle* was performed in the form of *Kathakali* with some elements from *Mohiniattam* and *Kalarippayattu*. The traditional Egyptian plot is synergized when combined elements from various Indian traditional art forms.

Conclusion

Some scholars do not consider the ancient Egyptian theatre as a full dramatic theatrical performance. As Sarah Stanton said "Even though Egyptians had highly organized ritual performances, they do not quite qualify as a full dramatic theatrical performance. The rituals have spoken parts, but there is no true dialogue between characters. Also, most of the dramatic rituals were performed in temple sanctuaries and were only observed by the god's cult status and members of the priesthood. The lack of a true audience shows that Egyptian cultic drama was not designed as a community activity, but only for the god and his priests" (Stanton 241).

However, this research suggests that we can validate that ancient Egyptian theatre was a full

form of theatre and not just a form of ritual performance or incomplete theatrical phenomenon. It has both actors and an audience which is the prerequisite for any theatrical activity. Even though these plays were performed inside the temple, we have seen how the public became an audience for it during the festival days. In addition, historical evidence indicates that there were other genres of plays such as satire which was mainly created for laymen and not just priests. Even though the ancient Egyptian theatre couldn't survive intact in its original form since the Pharaonic period, the echoes and influences of this almost forgotten art form appears only as a part of a 'back to the roots' movement in modern and post-modern Egyptian theatre.

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Filming Nature's Panorama: Deep Ecology in Jayaraj's *Ottaal* (2015)



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A b s t r a c t

Among the numerous accolades that the Malayalam film *Ottaal* won internationally, the National Award for Best Film on Environment Conservation/Preservation makes it relevant in the contemporary scenario of environmental crises. This research paper delves primarily into the possibilities of reading this film as a text of ecological significance. Deriving its theoretical framework from principles of Deep Ecology (and loosely on the 'raw v/s cooked' analogy of Levi Strauss), the paper understands *Ottaal* as a piece of eco-literature which explores the politics of human-nature interface. The major findings of the paper include the existence of two different lifestyles within the same ecosystem, and the impact each has on the other as well as on their ecosystem in the context of the life of Kuttapayi, Vallyapachayi, and the all-pervading nature that encloses them. The role played by cinematic techniques like cinematography in enhancing the thematic concern of ecocriticism is also discussed. The scope of the paper lies in widening the film canvas to serve as eye-openers towards sensitive and urgent concerns like the present environmental crises that threaten even the existence of the universe.

Keywords: *Cinematography, Deep Ecology, Anthropocentrism, Ecosystem, Ecosophy, Ecoliteracy.*

The latest researches on the current environmental crises have revealed the imminent perils which await human civilization and the ecosphere on which it thrives. The most recent news has been about the drowning of some of the major cities in the world (including Mumbai, Shanghai, etc.) in the forthcoming fifty year span, published in the Nature Communications Journal in the end of October 2019. To particularize the global issue, Kerala (the southernmost state in India) has been witnessing a series of floods and landslides during the past few years, as if nature has now begun to take toll for the prolonged processes of mining, unmindful construction, and deforestation.

The contemporary media is filled with a desperate immediacy about these environmental crises that has long-needed purposeful awareness and action. Greta Thunberg and her attempts at environmental conservation have been among the latest voices heard internationally in this regard. In such an urgent context, the relevance of arts (the textual/visual/auditory/audio-visual/

performing) in spreading a pro-environmental stance cannot be overlooked. In their article titled "Towards Ecological Sustainability: Observations on the Role of Arts," David J. Curtiz et al. suggest that "art is a response to an embodiment of environmental conditions, contexts, and crises," and art's relevance is mediated through its capacity to build knowledge, create empathy, and integrate with ecologically sustainable development.

It is in this framework that Jayaraj's film *Ottaal* (2015) finds relevance, that is, to be investigated in the line of the rightful honour that it won in India's National Film Awards: The Best Film on Environment Conservation/Preservation (2015). The basic thread of the film narrates the issue of child labour in very subtle terms, justifying the theme adopted from Anton Chekov's short story "Vanka" (the source text). But in the course of the story's adaptation from Russia's cold winter and harsh landscape to Kuttanad's (an agrarian village in Kerala) paddy fields and greenery, director Jayaraj has successfully inculcated the concepts of human-nature



Fig. 1: A Picture Depicting the Assam Floods of 2014 in the Hindu Newspaper

Interface that surface as an equally significant issue in the film's diegesis.

An introduction to a research article based on *Ottaal* requires a mention of the photograph (Fig. 1) by Ritu Raj Konwar, the newspaper's news photographer from Guwahati, which appeared in *The Hindu* in 2014 during the Assam floods. In an interview given to the newspaper, the director of *Ottaal*, Jayaraj, said, "The photo made a deep impression on me, and it haunted me; I wanted to use that very scene in my film . . . I was able to connect this beautiful picture with Anton Chekhov's short story 'Vanka'; I had been wanting to adapt it for a film for a long time. It was this photo which appeared in *The Hindu* that inspired me to make *Ottaal* the way I did" (qtd. in Kumar). The very fact that an environmental disaster proved to be an inspiration for a film that advocated an environmental stance makes *Ottaal* a text worth investigating on an ecocritical platform. (The shot 00:50:00 in *Ottaal* is a recreation of the photograph which appeared in *The Hindu*).

Ottaal narrates the tale of an eight-year-old boy named Kuttapayi, who is brought up under the protection of his grandfather Vallyapachayi, as

his parents committed suicide due to agrarian debt (a nagging issue in agrarian India). Rearing ducks and trading eggs for a living, both do not stay in a permanent locality; instead keep roaming Kuttanad seasonally. Hence Kuttapayi's formal education is only a distant dream. But the people he meets, his observations of Vallyapachayi, and the world around him itself becomes his textbook. Beginning from a Humbling storyline, the plot evolves into a sad ending, through a panorama of visual imagery and thought-provoking ideas. They carry the spectator on a philosophical encounter with the ecological interlinks that define human beings as a beautiful strand in nature's well-knit web.

Laying a Deep Ecological Framework: Poster, Setting and Cinematography in *Ottaal*

This research paper is an inquiry into the ecological significance of *Ottaal*, rather than the underlying issue of child labour that it primarily portrays. It explores how a surrounding ecosystem shapes, and is shaped by its inhabitants, opening the possibilities of different lifestyles within the same sphere of life, each learning from and reacting to it in its own way. The paper is more about the location and setting of the film,



Fig. 2: Theatrical Poster of *Ottaal*

and an understanding of the setting's capability to imply further meanings, thereby carrying the narrative forward and imbuing the filmic text by higher standards of artistic and ethical values. Hence, as important as the characters of Kuttapayi and Vallyapachayi are the setting (Kuttanadan landscape), flora, and fauna included for the film's totality.

The ecological significance of the film, though included as an implicit feature, raises its head right from the title and theatrical poster. The title "Ottaal" literally means a trap that is set to catch fish in coastal areas of rural Kerala. Fig. 2 showcases how the Malayalam title incorporates this idea of trapping the fish within a coir and iron net. The film is an elaboration of how human lives (especially that of children) and ecology are both trapped within the enticing net of anthropocentric attitudes of corporates/other human beings, unable to even recognize, let alone free themselves of the danger they are enmeshed in. Modelled in a caricature style with bright shades of blue and green, the theatrical poster of *Ottaal* speaks more about the setting(s) of the film, rather than the human characters being presented as focus points. Thus, the theatrical poster of the film may be considered as epitomizing the deep ecological principle of human beings being a mere strand, and not an authoritative species in charge of the whole universe.

Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis, in their book *Film: A Critical Introduction*, suggest that though the primary function of a setting is to establish the time, place, ideas, themes, and moods, the director uses the visual and spatial attributes of a particular setting, since "those qualities inevitably transmit cultural meanings and emotional implications" (62). Choosing Kuttanad as the ideal backdrop for the film plot establishes the predominantly agrarian lifestyle and values that influence and shape the cultural and

emotional make-up of the inhabitants of the locality.

There are several instances in the film captured in panoramic, long, and still shots which describe the location in its scenic beauty; each imbued with the varying shades of the sky marking the passage of day and night, the ever-spreading backwaters, and the accompanying greenery that fulfills the *mise-en-scene*. Apart from the chiaroscuro lighting and the soothing background score that functions to add to the perfection of the cinematography, these shots are also markers of the interconnectedness of every factor that complete the balanced ecosystem in Kuttanad (00:06:28, 00:07:58, 00:10:50, 00:07:50 - 00:09:05).

Unearthing Principles of Deep Ecology in Ottaal

There are two basic ideas that these introductory shots convey for the spectators. The first encompasses the underlying tenets of Deep Ecology that consider human life as just one among many equivalent components that compose the universe. Arne Naess (the founder-propagator of the Deep Ecology movement) has theorized this idea beautifully through the concept of "biospherical egalitarianism" (95-96). This fact is emphasized by the presence of a dog (whom Kuttapayi calls Perillapatti), the swallows, ducks, storks, the all-pervading water, trees, water hyacinth and other water-plants, red and white water lilies in bloom, etc. along with the few human characters who share the screen space in equal proportions. Each thrives in its natural ambience and follows the cycle of life, not being egotistic, but being inter-dependent instead of the anthropocentric worldview that most films mechanically adopt in their narration.

Kuttapayi and his Vallyapachayi are filmed as human beings who have naturally imbibed the idea of interdependency with nature due to their inbuilt close existence in nature. The sense of

'constructing' (generally related to the anthropocentric sense) does not happen at the cost of destroying nature, but is more symbiotic in structure. Whether it be their temporary home in the midst of the fields, or the star they make for Christmas using bamboo, paper, and thread, the products, by-products, and waste are all degradable (though they are not consciously making a decision to go ecofriendly).

When Vallyapachayi explains to Kuttapayi about the breeding patterns of the migratory swallows, he asks him about the parentless birds, signifying himself as one alike them (00:19:15-00:20:15). Further, when Kuttapayi queries about how the young ducklings (devoid of their parent ducks or the hen used for incubation) would survive, Vallyapachayi answers saying "God who created them would find a way to feed them" (Ottaal 00:56:30-translation mine). This again is a parallel drawn to Kuttapayi's fate of being orphaned at a timid age - in nature, survival is only a matter of circumstances, be it humans or any other living being.

The second thread that underlies the diegesis is the earning of a livelihood from natural counterparts, not by taking advantage of the available resources, but by complementing the human life with that of the other living beings, availing mutual kinship akin to the symbiotic relationship visible among animals. "And the so-called struggle of life, and survival of the fittest, should be interpreted in the sense of ability to coexist and cooperate in complex relationships, rather than ability to kill, exploit, and suppress" (Naess 96). The film focuses on Vallyapachayi and Kuttapayi earning a living by rearing ducks; feeding them and letting them live their natural way in the mud and murk, and in turn, collecting their eggs for money (00:15:10). They also let the ducks breed naturally, adopting natural means

for incubation (instead of artificial incubating mechanisms). Moreover, Vallyapachayi and Kuttapayi build their temporary home with bamboo in the midst of the fields (00:11:50-00:12:40), which in the film is carefully paralleled with the nests of a particular species of swallows (*Thookanaam Kuruvi*) found hanging on coconut trees.

Kuttapayi's formal education in the human establishments is replaced by his naturally acquired education that his observations of nature. "By way of direct experience of non-human nature, one recognizes the equal intrinsic worth of all biota as well as one's own ecological interconnectedness with the lifeworld in all its plenitude" (Nelson 206). Kuttapayi's time spent in nature helps him acquire not just knowledge about his environs; it enriches him with a broad mindset and instills in him, empathy for the myriad life forms that surround him. For instance, when his friend Tinku suggests taking one of the young ones of the swallows home to domesticate, Kuttapayi gently denies it saying, "No Tinku, let them fly freely" (00:31:55-00:32:10).

Kuttapayi's perspectives about life and the world around him are formulated by the exposure he gets in the lap of nature. The age-old dictum of ancient tribes and civilizations that teach the younger generations to place their ancestors among the elements of nature is echoed in the film. Vallyapachayi informs Kuttapayi that the stars in the night sky are the souls of the dead ancestors, his father and mother being amongst them, watching Kuttapayi and guiding him from above (00:12:55-00:13:35). This reminds the spectator of Chief Seattle's speech where he fondly remembers his ancestors as always remaining with the predecessors even after their mortal demise: "Our dead never forget this beautiful world that gave them being. They still love its verdant valleys, its murmuring rivers, its

magnificent mountains, sequestered vales and verdant lined lakes and bays, and ever yearn in tender fond affection over the lonely hearted living, and often return from the happy hunting ground to visit, guide, console, and comfort them" ("Chief Seattle's Speech 1854"). This concept is also reflected in Kuttapayi's logic of gifting Tinku with the star that he and Vallyapachayi made. He says that he has all the stars in the sky instead (01:00:54).

Nature also acts as the medicine that cures Kuttapayi of all his mental ailments. When Tinku doesn't appear to have a prior-promised lunch with Kuttapayi on a Sunday, Kuttapayi goes to a secluded space in the fields for consolation. (Vallyapachayi is also seen lying down alone in his canoe and weeping, when he feels sad). Kuttapayi also doesn't regret having to live in poor circumstances, rather he enjoys it to the core. When Vallyapachayi comments that he has great brains, and should've been born in some rich house, Kuttapayi replies, "To be born in this beautiful place, below this widespread sky, near this big-mustached Vallypachayi..." (00:46:15-00:46:35) trailing off, indicating that he couldn't have been born in a better place. Fortune, for Kuttapayi, is not acquiring wealth or property, but to live a simple, but happy life with whatever bare necessities he is offered. This consoling power of nature is found in numerous other literary works as well; for instance, *The Diary of a Young Girl* says:

The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quite alone with the heavens, nature and God. Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be and that God wishes to see people happy, amidst the simple beauty of nature. As long as this exists, and it certainly always will, I know that

then there will always be comfort for every sorrow, whatever the circumstances may be. And I firmly believe that nature brings solace in all troubles. ("Anne Frank Quotes")

The Raw V/s the Cooked: Co-Existence of Shallow and Deep Ecology in Ottaal

Though far preceding ecocriticism as a school of thought, structuralist Levi Strauss' study of the universality of myths throws light on two crucial aspects of societal formations, that he terms 'the raw and the cooked.' The 'raw' communities, in Strauss' terms, are those that live in a holistic relationship with nature, whereas the 'cooked' communities are those whose inhabitants practice scientific manipulation, that is, those who work upon whatever resources and raw materials available. "Unlike scientific thought which deconstructs reality, however, the savage mind is holistic; it seeks ways to understand all types of nature, and contains fields which science deems non-researchable, fields pertaining to faith, magic, imagination, and subjective experience. To this end, the savage mind employs the existent. It is a type of bricolage, improvisation based on available materials and tools" (qtd in Elyada).

Structuralism is not directly connected to Ottaal except in the concept of the 'savage mind' that Strauss introduced. In the film, the existence of two parallel lifestyles may be found, that of the 'raw' and the 'cooked.' The raw is exemplified by Kuttapayi and Vallyapachayi who live in harmony with nature; the cooked is represented by the family of Kuttapayi's friend, Tinku. Tinku is the only son of Betty and Molly, permanent residents of Kuttanad. Tinku's father Betty is a businessman who also makes money by engaging a tourist homestay at his house. Tinku's mother Molly is a homemaker, and is empathetic

towards Kuttapayi; very often she provides Kuttapayi with delicacies, and even offers to teach him. Tinku studies at the nearby private school. Though Kuttapayi and Tinku are portrayed as friends, both of their life patterns are entirely different, and even prove to contrast each other. A comparison of both living circumstances can show the varying attitudes towards ecological sustainability.

The mode of education is what differentiates Tinku and Kuttapayi at the very basic level. Kuttapayi's school is the wide sky and vast backwaters through which he travels. The lessons of life that he learns owe a major share to the people and nature that surround him. His other teacher is his Vallyapachayi, who teaches him to rear ducks, collect eggs, row boats, observe, share, care, and be an integral part of the universe, without interfering or interrupting the natural ways of ecological sustenance. Kuttapayi, however, yearns for a formal education (like Tinku), as the education he receives otherwise is far more advanced, practical, and empowering compared to a mere knowledge of facts that Tinku receives at his school. Kuttapayi's education opens up his intellectual and emotional quotient, makes him creative, and empathetic towards the ecology which surrounds him.

The diegesis proves to the spectators that Tinku's education is materialistic, aimed at short-term progress, and completely theoretical. It turns him into a mechanically operating anthropocentric human being who is directed towards making profit (like his father). The shots of Kuttapayi and Tinku roaming around together reveal even from their attires that they represent two different classes of human beings. Kuttapayi is clad in an old loose vest and trousers, and not wearing shoes. Tinku, on the other hand, is dressed in Western-modelled school uniform, with socks and shoes (entirely irrelevant to the Indian

climate), and a bag and water bottle on his shoulders (00:35:55-00:36:10). Tinku goes to his school for a fixed time to gain limited information, whereas Kuttapayi's school travels with him, and imparts knowledge rather than bombarding him with information.

Though Molly tries to teach Kuttapayi how to read and write, the film lucidly conveys how futile this attempt proves for Kuttapayi. On the other hand, Kuttapayi's knowledge of his surroundings proves very beneficial and enlightening for Tinku. When Tinku forgets to draw the diagrams depicting the life cycle of a butterfly, Kuttapayi saves him by handing over a living pupa (one of the phases in a butterfly's life cycle) through the window. Next time he similarly takes a tadpole from Kuttapayi; but unfortunately gets caught by his teacher and is sent out.

When Tinku is scolded for not having brought any exhibit for an art exhibition held at his school, it is again Kuttapayi who helps him out. He makes a clay model of a fisherman fishing with a hook, patiently waiting for his catch. As is obvious from the film's diegesis, this model is constructed based on a real-life character, an old man whom Kuttapayi observes fishing every time he passes by.

Though unaware of a set curriculum, Kuttapayi's education is more holistic compared to Tinku's established institution of schooling. Apart from the fishing old man, Kuttapayi also befriends many other people in Kuttanad, like the postman, the old man who lights the chimney lamp, the person who turns the water wheel, and the people at the toddy shop. Each of them teach him something or the other about life. For instance, when Kuttapayi tells him of his desire to get formal education, the man who pulls the water wheel tells him that like the water wheel

which goes round and round, life's equation would always boil down to a zero (01:00:04). Vallyapachayi tells Kuttapayi that the man who lights the chimney does it just to help anybody alone in the fields at night (and not for any financial benefit), though many techniques have been intended to serve the purpose. In a beautiful shot, the setting sun is visualized as lighting the lamp, conveying how connected the old techniques of living were to the ensuing natural environment (01:00:04). Kuttapayi also learns many folk songs native to the place from these old men.

Kuttapayi's education also makes him an ethically inclined individual. As mentioned above, he advises Tinku to not domesticate the young swallows they find in the coconut tree. He values their freedom as important as his own. He also very promptly returns the book (Toto Chan) which Tinku lends him to read. Though Tinku owes him a lot of the wisdom and material help, Kuttapayi does not expect anything in return. His clay model earns accolades to Tinku at his school. Kuttapayi gifts the star they made to Tinku, he and Vallyapachayi themselves carrying it to Tinku's house and hanging it there. He even invites Tinku to spend a Sunday with him, buying utensils, and cooking for Tinku with the help of Vallyapachayi, which Tinku turns down casually.

Unfortunately, the 'cooked' community (represented in *Ottaal* by Tinku's father Betty) looks upon the 'raw' with disgust, and suspicion. Every time Kuttapayi comes to Tinku's house, Betty imagines he has come in search of food or money. He scolds Tinku for befriending Kuttapayi, an 'uncultured' child in his terms. He is symbolic of the anthropocentric attitude which demands only human profit at the expense of every other form of life. With the aid of technology, Betty is the modern consumerist human being, blind to the existence of a parallel lifestyle that considers

ecological sustainability along with human development. He underestimates Kuttapayi and Vallyapachayi as mere 'poor' and 'uncivilized' people, and lives in the blind faith of being 'civilized' himself. The film -in its course- proves him wrong. His selfishness also denies them any help to provide a space for Kuttapayi, when he dearly needs it (owing to Vallyapachayi's disease).

Apart from exposing two different lifestyles that co-exist within the same geographical ecosystem, *Ottaal* is also an arrow pointed towards the faulty and partial education system that turns a blind eye towards an ecologically sensitive education. It is an indictment that highlights the perpetuation of a human-centered corporate mode of existence, which in the long run would prove lethal to human species itself, among the other living beings. In the conclusion of their article titled "Toward an Ecology of Environmental Education and Learning," Tidball and Crasny identifies the immediacy of "an ecology of environmental education" (14), where human beings need to consciously situate themselves in larger social and ecological frameworks from where the change in the educational practices should sprout. *Ottaal* advocates and addresses the immediacy of the same issue.

Ottaal also identifies the danger of the 'raw' trying to imitate the 'cooked' instead of it being the other way round. This emerges from the limited (human-centered) knowledge that Vallyapachayi and Kuttapayi have about the world in which they live. Kuttapayi yearns for a formal education in a school, though he is surrounded by a better ecologically oriented learning atmosphere. When Kuttapayi is sent away to work at a distant and unknown place, Vallyapachayi tells Tinku, "He has left. He has left to learn how to live" (01:15:30-translation mine).

'Living' here is intended to mean 'how to make money and survive in the human world.' Vallyapachayi does not recognize the real loss that Kuttapayi would suffer in being uprooted from the Kuttanadan landscape, when he sends him away.

The short scenes where Kuttapayi bids farewell to his friends at Kuttanad before he leaves for work are noteworthy. He wishes everyone good luck with their life, and speaks hopefully of the education he would receive in the town, unaware of his real future at the factory. Though there are a couple of people who are close enough to take care of Vallyapachayi, it is to their dog (Perillapatti) that he asks to look after him. He is also seen wandering alone in natural locales where he spent most of his day-time, playing, learning, acquiring and giving back the love and knowledge that until then, moulded him to become what he was.

A very significant sequence in the film which symbolically prophesies Kuttapayi's dark future after he leaves Kuttanad is that of his last visit to Tinku. In a little boat carefully woven with tree

bark, Kuttapayi takes his parting gifts to his friend: a red water lily and a yellow duckling (along with the book *Toto Chan* that he returns). He places them in the crib that they made together, and leaves before Molly could hand over some money to him. Tinku places the duckling in a bucket-full of water, where the duckling swims uncomfortably (01:17:00-01:17:17). Kuttapayi, uprooted from his original habitat of the vast Kuttanadan landscape and placed in a congested room along with other children employed in the factory, suffers the same fate of the duckling. On a larger scale, a human being uprooted from his/her natural ecosystem undergoes the same desperation that a fish suffers when it is placed out of water.

Also, when Kuttapayi is taken by his grandfather to Mesthri (who would deliver him to the factory owner), most of the shots of their journey in the boat are shot in panoramic sequence. In one such panoramic shot, the camera tilts the view for the spectator to feel as if they are travelling from one corner of the globe to the other (Fig. 3). This is another indication of how Kuttapayi is transplanted from an ecologically conducive locale to



Fig. 3

an anthropocentric environment, from where he struggles to break away, but in vain. What remains interesting is that until he is trapped without an escape from the factory, he doesn't understand the real intentions of Mesthri. Mesthri may be read as a representative of the corporate mentality: trading even the natural and exhaustible resources for mere economic profit.

Conclusion

In his article titled "Deep Ecology: Educational Possibilities for the Twenty-First Century," Fritjof Capra studies the basic principles of 'deep ecology' that are enumerated by the founder of the movement Arne Naess. It is in comparison to 'shallow ecology' that 'deep ecology' receives its dictums of operation. Capra observes: Shallow ecology . . . is anthropocentric. It views humans as somehow above or outside of nature. It sees humans as the source of all value and ascribes only instrumental of use value to nature. . . . It leads to an attitude of how to manage the environment for human purposes. Deep Ecology does not separate humans from the natural environment, not does it separate anything else from it. It does not see the world as a collection of isolated objects, but rather as a network of phenomena that are fundamentally interconnected. Deep Ecology recognizes the intrinsic value of all living beings and views humans as just one particular strand in the web of life. It recognizes that we are all embedded in dependent upon the cyclical processes of nature. (202-03)

Ottaal illustrates these basic principles of Deep Ecology through its cinematography, choice of setting(s), and diegesis. Though primarily a film that throws light on child labour and child trafficking, Ottaal develops its plot to include the environmental concerns, and rightfully earns the accolades in this regard. Through the story of Kuttapayi and Vallyapachayi set in a Kuttanadan

landscape, it draws the attention of the spectators to the various manners in which nature weaves its interconnections to assemble its constituent parts in the single web of life. Further, by showcasing the parallel lifestyles of Kuttapayi and Tinku, it also underlines an anthropocentric v/s ecological existence, both within the same geographical terrain.

The film's cinematography is orchestrated to vibrate with the Deep Ecological perspectives of ecological interconnectedness. Kuttapayi, Vallyapachayi, the ducks that they rear, the people they meet, the dog (Perillapatti) that accompanies them, the swallow-nests, the storks, red and white water lilies, the wide blue sky, the migratory birds, the flowers in bloom, etc. share the screen space equally. Many shots (aforementioned in the paper) exemplify not just the scenic beauty of Kuttanad, but serve to explore how human lives exist harmoniously in a symbiotic web of life. The intrinsic value of each living being as having an independent value not subject to human usage is the basic maxim of Deep Ecology conveyed through *Ottaal*. "Ecosophy" (learning from the indigenous people about how to inhabit a place without harming the surroundings) is one major philosophy advocated in *Ottaal*.

Ottaal points a finger at the need for "ecological literacy" (ecoliteracy) in education to make sustainable communities and development a reality. As Fritjof Capra reminds us, "The first step on the road to sustainability is ecological literacy or ecoliteracy, that is, understanding the principles of organization that ecosystems have evolved to sustain the web of life" (207). The awareness that is required from both the multinational companies, like-minded enterprises, and the populace are pinpointed at. The dangers of bringing up a human-centered generation that gets educated only in profit-

making narrow-mindedness, ignoring the environmental concerns that require immediate attention is another implication that *Ottaal* brings into focus. In short, the film is an indictment against Shallow Ecology and an advocacy for Deep Ecology.

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