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Dr. Celine E. (Sr. Vinitha)
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From The Manager's Desk

For wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge
will be pleasant to your soul. (Proverbs 2:10)

Education and its research sectors have been undergoing tremendous progress in the realm of knowledge dissemination. E-learning and e-resources characterize the primary step of research in the academia nowadays. This technological advancement has opened up new avenues and prospects for researchers and academicians across the world. Our journal has been successful in this task amidst the different hurdles of pandemic. It is with immense pride and joy that I acknowledge the unique niche that *TJES* has created in the research oriented academic world of today.

TJES is ready with yet another issue, encompassing a broad range of articles elaborating and critiquing the different contesting areas in literature and art. On behalf of the *TJES* Editorial Team, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to the readership of *TJES*. I take this opportunity to thank our authors, editors and anonymous reviewers, all of whom have volunteered to contribute to the success of the journal.

In fervent prayer!

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Editorial



Dr. Latha Nair R.

The Bearer of the Human soul

“Remember your humanity and forget the rest.” -
Bertrand Russell

We're in a curiously precarious world, caught between our dizzying technological advancements and our basest instincts. The first question that surfaces during these pandemic times is what life would have been without our escape into our imaginary adventures and imaginary experiences and having those imaginary people around us. Yes, they were formless but found myriad forms in the minds of people who gave them a value through their authentic insights. We are conscious of Escape Literature and Interpretative Literature as Laurence Perrine points out.

Literature and its inter-disciplinary engagements play a critical role in such a world. It helps us to investigate and define that social contract, our morality and values to become better humans. Even as we investigate the posthuman, we still need a polychromatic lens to understand the diversity of the world. The human instinct to survive has not changed much since the time of primitive man, but our relationship with the immeasurable forces that shape our world has evolved. The kind of narratives that unfold in this edition expose us to the fundamental question of the uncertainty that has become endemic in our post-fact world. Reading sometimes, like food, gives us different flavours.

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Interpretative writing perhaps tries to give an almost absorbing and enduring perspective about life and its hyphenated realities. It conceives a ruptured world with a fragmented conscience that uses language in a heterogenous and paradoxical manner. Writing becomes a socio-political and intellectual experience which facilitates a rethinking, that questions the stereotypical ways in which we critique texts. The most radical binaries can be destabilised when life and literature intersect.

This edition of *TJES* has captured significant trends in literature, cinema and theatre, especially around questions of identity, gender and the culture industry. Most of the authors in this edition have been incisive and their criticality focuses on varied subjects related to documentary theatre, post humanism, cultural archetypes, feminism, postcolonial studies, and ecofeminism. Rather than appreciating literary qualities of a text, most of these writers have engaged seriously with related topics of psychology, ethics, phenomenology and have remained responsible for the abridgement of exposition and argument. We are to an extent bewildered by their variety and profusion. Some of them do challenge our formulated expectations. We are happy that *TJES* offers an indispensable fund of information and ideas along with an equally different kind knowledge, knowledge experience, felt in the emotions as well as apprehended by the mind. As Emily Dickinson says "There is no frigate like a book to take us lands away. The chariot may be frugal, but it definitely bears the human soul."

The Deferred Truth in Documentary Theater: The Question of Actor, Authority and Authenticity



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A b s t r a c t

Documentary theater is a radical and experimental performance practice evolved in the wake of popularity of mass media in twentieth century. The exponents of this genre have attempted to transform theater practice as an interactive, participatory, community based, technology involved and reflective art form rooted in socio political acts and events. The actual material of documentary theater are 'authentic materials' and 'facts' collected through interviews, research and field work in an effort to claim authenticity and authority. The fundamental concept behind this performance form foregrounds myriad versions of facts and emphasises the multiple dimensions of truth which prevail the stage. This paper analyzes the notions of truth and authenticity in documentary theater by exploring the role of the actor/performer, resources and methods of presentation on stage.

Keywords: *Documentary Theater Form, Authenticity of Materials, Facts in Performance, Actor as Facilitator, Truth and Authority.*

The performance techniques popular among the practitioners of documentary theatre are to interview the subjects and script the interview material into monologues and stage the interviews in an edited, one-person format. The subjects to be interviewed are selected on the basis of their relationship to the central event around which the performance develops. Witnesses, victims, experts, friends, acquaintances, social scientists, community activists, artists, politicians and assailants constitute the category of interviewees. The concept of 'documentary' theatre comprises of contesting debates on its form and performance by incorporating "an assembly of experiments and local practices" (Filewood 62).

One of the major inspirations behind this technique is the conviction that everyday communicative acts are often dramatic pieces for presentation when it is placed in a different discourse such as theatre. The actual function of the documentary performer is to copy and translate the speech of her/his subjects into this new context though the "real life declines to present itself to us neatly ordered narratives. It is messy, rambling, garbled, producing far more noise than signal" as Soloski has pointed out (Soloski 12).

The historical roots of the documentary style on stage are innumerable including Bertold Brecht tradition of "sociopolitical parables" (Nussbaum 238) evident in the works of Max Frisch and Friederich Durrenmatt, Heinar Kipphardt and Erwin Piscator's documentary political performances. Elaborate use of the trial form and documentary projection of evidences and the 'Living News Paper' performances of New York are other instances of this experimental theatre form.

Peter Weisse's (1916-1982) works have been considered as the epitome of the conceptual framework of investigation based documentary theatre, which promoted a sense of radical incomplete-

ness to initiate social change through scientific investigation and presentation of authentic material have been phenomenal in formulating the historical premises of documentary method in theatre. "... details of the language, rhythm, juxtaposition, flashbacks" serve as the foundational techniques to incorporate "many constituent layers of reality" (Nussbaum 239).

The documentary performance art evolved into a theatre genre by adopting its crucial performance strategy from mass media, specifically television in wide variety of ways by incorporating television interviews, on-the-spot reporting, talk shows and documentaries. In documentary theatre, as in mass media, the presence of the actual or a direct reference to the actual is the kernel of the performance practice. The raw materials other than interviews and video footages are taken from a variety of sources including historical documents, news clips, case histories, performances, speeches and films.

The root word of document originated from the Latin *docere* meaning, 'to teach' and as an artistic form, documentary style and technique originated in motion pictures. Jack C. Ellis, author of *The Documentary Idea*, defines the notion of documentary in terms of subjects, purpose or points of view, forms, production methods and its effect upon the spectators (Ellis 1). The subject of documentary is specific and factual concerning public matters, people, events and places and the makers of documentary record social, cultural or political events and activities with an eye on informing the spectators. The documentary form is functional and loose and sometimes fragmentary. There is no "conventional dramaturgical progression from exposition to complication to discovery to denouement" (Ellis 3). One of the fundamentals of 'documentary' is the use of non-actors and it makes use of real people and real locations without settings or light effects. Its

effect upon the spectators is mainly oriented towards leading them to some sort of action.

On the other hand, the *Living Newspapers* of the Federal Theatre Project productions series encompassed issues such as housing, health care and labour unions with dramatic scenes, light and sound effects, images and multi-level sets. 'The Theatre of Fact' in Germany in the fifties which dealt with issues of public interest such as Holocaust, Vietnam and the atomic bomb also made use of similar techniques (Elvgren Jr.). The documentary format was experimented efficaciously by Peter Cheeseman in England in the sixties by providing a variety of voices and battling views drawn from real sources with a single actor performing all the roles by character crossings with small costume changes. In the sixties and seventies in America, theatre was overwhelmed by social issues. Though theatre groups such as the San Francisco Mime Troupe and Bread and Puppet Theatre worked on civil rights, political morality, Vietnam and other major issues of the time, the documentary format has been less pronounced in their works.

The emergence of solo performances making use of documentary theatre format can be viewed as an off shoot of the decline of modern theatres in the West and its failure to intervene in socio-political life. The decline of western concept of 'theatre' is intertwined with the evolution of late capitalist economic and political atmosphere, where the notion of community is subjected to total distortion and deformation. Simultaneously, there is a transfiguration of the spectator subject in the wake of the emergence of post modern cultural industry which embarks on converting practices of representation into spectacles and lived experiences unsettled as representations as Gay De Bored puts it. While describing Anna Deavere Smith's theatre as 'postmodern theatre of development,' S.L. Richards aptly referred to the 'the-

atres of development' in the economically under developed communities (Richards 46). Theatres of development are generally organized by government agencies and funding organisations with a view to introducing modern technologies regarding agriculture, health, and nutrition while the concept of postmodern theatre for development indicates the kind of theatre useful for elite western societies which are socially under-developed. Documentary solo performance came into prominence as a socio cultural and political alternative in societies which are robbed of community theatrical activity in public sphere. Jonathan Kalb emphasised this fact by describing solo performance work with a documentary base as a product of 'field research' and is provocative enough to unleash a debate on "public's receptivity to politics and critical thinking" (Kalb14). Such performances, undoubtedly simple, least expensive and convenient, most penetratingly brought in a paradigm for interactive theatrical practices within communities in a conspicuously dismal period for political theatre in America. At the same time, "many of the country's most politically vital groups voluntarily ghettoised their creative and political energies by playing only to select communities defined by ethnicity, party, gender or geography" (Kalb 14). The evolution of documentary solo performance signals a substantial diversion from the conventions of popular theater and a disagreement with mainstream theatres' handling of social issues.

Artistic director of McCarther theatre, Emily Mann's 'Theatre of Testimony' is developed from oral history, interviews and other documentary pieces and performed in the form of direct address evident in her recent works such as *Greensboro: A Requiem*, a play about the murder of anti-Klu-Klux-Klan activists and *Having Our Say*, a historical approach to the black life in U.S.

The Laramie Project produced by the New York Tectonic Theatre Project directed by Moise Kaufman remains as one of the prominent theatre projects produced in documentary format in recent decades. Based on the brutal killing of Mathew Shepard, a gay, in 1998 in Laramie, Wyoming, the Tectonic theatre crew collected responses from people through two hundred interviews in Laramie. The resultant performance piece portrayed Laramie people responding to a variety of issues including the murder of Mathew Shepard and the journalistic approach framed through facts with an intensified theatrical sense heightened the performance effect.

The Chicano – Latino trio's (Richard Montoya, Ric Salinas and Herbert Sigüenza) 'Culture Clash' (founded on May 5, 1984) became popular for its skit based satire on Chicano issues by embracing documentary style in *Radio Mambo*, *Culture Clash is Border Town*, *Nuyorican Stories: Culture Clash in the City* based on New York City and a performance based on San Francisco city. They were commissioned by Regional Theatre for these projects and the interview process of Culture Clash is described as 'excavatory' and 'peeling back' the layers of local history. They were also commissioned by regional theatres such as Miami Light Project, San Diego Repertory Theatre and Brava.

Marc Wolf, a New York based performer, made use of documentary theatre practice by acknowledging his indebtedness to the performative method of Anna Deavere Smith in 1999 with the kernel issue of gay relationship in U.S Army breaking out its silence on such issues. *Another American: Asking and Telling*, a performance piece based on Wolf's interviews and collecting documentary material with people of both military and non-military background for three years. Based on his exploration of the fact that 'Tommys' and gays are often subjected to stereotyping,

Wolf's each piece, gathered from his vignettes, comments critically on the other, thereby producing a sequential order.

Danny Hoch's remarkable performance pieces *Some People* (1993) and *Jails, Hospitals and Hip-Hop* (1998) directed by Jo Bonney encompass multiple voices from New York arranged with conspicuous brevity and apparent familiarity. He does not claim to be a documentor, but a performer blending inner voices with voices from his neighbourhood. Fantasy is triggered as a dominant theme, emphasising a myth of reality.

The context of emergence of documentary solo performances can further be defined by the emerging techno-culture and mass media and their impact upon contemporary societies. In a mediated society, mass mediational systems moment by moment constitute and reconstitute spectators. The complex economy of information/entertainment in these circumstances problematises the fact-fiction dichotomy as well as the authenticity/inauthenticity of facts.

The adaptation of the word 'documentary' to signify a specific theatrical activity is extremely significant in the background of documentary film and television. There is a very powerful tradition of film, television and drama in which the modalities of performing fiction and personal reign supreme in contrast with the tradition of film and television which affirms its function as rigorously motivating and informing people known. The documentary tradition anchors a historical paradigm which perpetuates the relevant and contemporary in mass media. The two major streams in contemporary solo performance art have undeniable affinities with the above mentioned traditions in film and television. The performances of Spalding Gray, Whoopi Goldberg, Eric Bogosian and Liza Kron can be seen as an epitome of personalized performance practices inspired partly by a perplexed desire

for self actualisation and partly by the present day postmodern preference for micro narratives. The other division of solo performance art described as 'documentary,' represented by Anna Deavere Smith, Marc Wolf and Danny Hoch, turns their performances into a political tool, diverting from the idea of mirroring their selves through the performing bodies. This effect is achieved by providing the spectators with opportunities to identify with others through a transformed single individual and thus bringing the "power of the mirror to the representation of otherness" (Kalb 23). This particular style of solo performance practice, variously described as "documentary theatre" (Kondo 81), "documentary solo performance" (Kalb 13), "Community theatre" (Corso 1), "performing oral history" (Fuller 126) and "post modern theatre for development" (Richards 46) foregrounds the radical openness of contemporary experimentations in documentary style.

The basic method of Anna Deavere Smith is to enquire issues, events, places or people through personal interviews, group discussions, historical documents, evidences, narratives and visuals. Then with profound editorial skill, the recorded material is arranged to match the purpose of the documentary. When the documentary technique is adapted to performance, the editorial labour is not to fix the recorded material to a certain frame already formulated or planned but to broaden the scope of the work by unrestricting the frame into multiple viewpoints in search of a greater goal like Smith's search for 'American Character.' The interview material is edited purposefully to bring in multiple dimensions of the central issue by presenting contradictory, opposing and battling voices altogether to create a panoramic theatrical as well as social experience. In a definition, reminiscent of Bertolt Brecht's invocation of Marx's XI Thesis on Feuerbach, Kalb distinguished documentary performance on the

basis of its potential to "change the audience's perceptions of its own world" (Kalb 21). The extreme social, political and cultural concerns of the exponents of documentary performances emphasise a social purpose.

The general notion of community based documentary performance includes a community's effort to look into itself and critics have elaborately associated the metaphor of 'mirror' in analysing such performances. The extensive use of the 'mirror' metaphor in the case of the performances of Anna Deavere Smith is accomplished with a wide variety of emphasis. It ranges from Barbara Johnson's observation, "*Fires in the Mirror* holds a mirror up to America" (Modelsky 58) to Jonathan Kalb's "Turning the mirror into a political tool" (Kalb 23). The performer's body aptly represented by the metaphor of mirror presents characters from the community and consequently reflects the community. Smith's performative technique of enacting a character can be seen as an antithesis to the process of representing characters on the stage in Western theatre conventions. Richard Schechner described Smith's process as 'incorporation': "Smith works by means of deep mimesis, a process opposite to that of 'pretend.' To 'incorporate' means to be possessed by, to open oneself up through and deeply to another being" (Schechner 265). Smith's strategy is a sort of 'deep mimesis' or 'hyper naturalistic mimesis' (Martin 267) by which she replicates the words as well as other microscopic details of each persona she performs.

This genre of theatre has been labelled variously as "Theatre of the real, also known as documentary theatre as well as docudrama, verbatim theatre, reality-based theatre, theatre of witness, tribunal theatre, nonfiction theatre, and theatre of fact..." (Martin 1) to signify the fact that the very idea of documentary has a pervasive obsession with truth and authenticity thought he expected

outcome remains uncertain, complex and dubious. The notion of “the theatre of real” is devised in the backdrop of the concepts of ‘simulacra and simulation’ which suggest hyper real and versions without original and reformulated variously as ‘theatre of testimony’ (Emily Mann), ‘Theatrical fictions’ (Quiara Alegria Hudes), Theater of fact and tribunal plays (London’s Tricycle Theatre) and Verbatim drama and segments of reality (Peter Weiss).

The idea of single and monolithic truth is severally challenged in documentary theater’s strive to explore multiple versions of spectatorial gaze and layers of the guises of authenticity. According to Peter Weiss, the authenticity of documentary materials such as letters, statistical data, speeches, interviews, press, film and radio reports etc ..., are subject to an exhaustive diffusion on the stage “without altering the content, but in structuring the form” (Weiss 465). The plurality of spectatorial positions interlaced with the exhaustion of the material content, documentary performance implicates the restricted yet necessary power of factual truth (Hanna, A.) and the permeating relativistic, personalistic though pluralistic ambience of ‘truths.’ This practice vehemently unsettles “the cultural obsession with capturing the real” as Carol Martin envisages (Martin 1) and embraces cultural and technological shifts which reform the conventions of the dramaturgy of realism. Peter Weisse’s theater completely “refrains from any sort of invention” and the “authentic material” is presented onstage “un-changed in content, ... adapted in form.” Weiss’s work inspired documentary enthusiasts to formulate notions such as ‘stereometric vision’ and ‘stereoscopic vision’ (Parnum 235) to substantiate an intense sense of reality from multiple dimensions of vision. The convictions of “authentic material” and “unchanged content” cannot escape but from the fragility of an authorial truth in the context of documentary theatre.

Even though there is an ostensible sense of devaluation of specific claims of truth and authority, there is an intense yearning for truth enwrapped in the arguments of multiplicity of points of views and facts. The insistence on plurality and multiplicity from a poststructuralist point of view has ample promises of devaluing possible truth which many critics of documentary theatre have whole heartedly embraced. But the claims of plurality and multiplicity of perspectives, points of views and authenticity is not a rejection of truth as Alain Badiou describes; but it is “the means of seizing truths”(Barker 4). Documentary theatre grapples with truths of universal nature and the performer being the compiler, presenter, editor and improviser of the facts and the mercurial presence through which the truth reaches out to the spectator/participant. The presence of the performer in the situation of the ‘Event’ emphasizes the possibility of truth in a Badiou fashion. Truth is intensely related to Events though it is not apparently admissible from the situation in any way. Truths are latent in the statements, though in accessible in the situation and the statements (the materials gathered) have the capacity to connect the present context with the possibility of a truth in future.

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Posthumanism: An Aspiration for Superhumanism



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Posthumanism offers the understanding of the enhancement of eugenics and human embodiment “after humanism” or “beyond humanism.” It denotes that the concept of human is reduced or eliminated with its maximum attainable capacities. In anthropocentric study, it defines the end of the biological human and redefines the evolution of human in anatomical, psychological and spiritual assumption and transformation. Instinctually humans imagine completeness but recognize imperfectability in them. Humans imagine and perceive different identity with the fluidity of change in time, mind, social structure, technological advancements and abstracts reasoning. Since human nature is autonomous, rational and capable of free will, it always expects an apex existence through heterogeneous perspective, intellectual rigour, and technological support. While humanism is devoted to human welfare, their rights and responsibilities, posthumanism addresses the physical and spiritual evolution of individual through high intellectual capacity. Since humans are culture bearing primates, their intellectual aspiration, autonomy of belief, reification of rationality and freedom prognosticate the evolution of posthuman, a condition not in completion. The paper addresses the ontology of posthumanism, and its nature in the autonomy of human body, belief, reasoning, and moral - ethical response with an enquiry through the technological eyeglass and spectrum of animal rights and human rights. The research focus has been made both in philosophical and scientific paradigms.

Keywords: *Anthropomorphic, Anthropi, Biopolitics, Extropianism and Prosthetic.*

In contemporary academic debates and theoretical dialectics posthuman concept and context have evoked enthusiasm. The concept of human creates confusion for its onto-epistemological and biotechnological developments. The social anthropologists and bio scientists think that humans as a species have not evolved much in the last five hundred thousand years. For them the term "human" designates biological humanity and moral humanity which refer to the class of persons, as opposed to genetically human beings or humans. Their argument for some augmentation of knowledge or benefits of knowledge with the help of science, technology and philosophy can make possible to eliminate the defects or deficiencies of body and mind either prosthetically or philosophically to enable the human to transcend into the posthuman condition. Humanism is a philosophy of joyous service for the greater good of all humanity in this world solving human problems with the help of reason. Humanism emphasises the basic nature of humans which is necessarily meant for the good of the humanity. It explains the notion of human as a biological, autonomous and rational being; and asserts that man is the centre and measure of all activities in the world. In the 1960s humanism emerged as a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of human freedom, dignity, creativity, responsibility, curiosity and emotional dignity to nurture individual's cognition, behaviour and knowledge. Humanism emphasises Abraham Harold Maslow's (1908-1970) views on physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and needs of self-esteem and self-confidence for a healthy human psychology as the hierarchy of needs. In the dialectics of human as a being and sensibility humanism denotes values and dignity more in experiential learning to illuminate the dark area of ignorance.

Human beings always expect possibility of the physical and moral improvement. The nature of overcoming the self is the beginning of posthumanism. It causes the paradigms of posthumanism which includes the biological, philosophical and cultural landscapes of human life. Posthumanism is the umbrella term that covers transhumanism, antihumanism, metahumanism and extropianism in the foundational premises of liberal and democratic transhumanism, ethos of free will, autonomy and superiority of anthropoi. But "the posthuman is the state that transhumans aspire to: a state in which our species is both morally and physically improved" (La Grandeur 49). Posthumanism as a philosophical position is concerned with reconceptualising what it means to be human. It refutes all ideas of naturalness and denies the existence of a transcendent human nature as asserted by humanism. Posthumanism silences and suppresses the canons of universal humanism in its colonialist construct, a kind of techno-orientalism. In the construct of human species posthumanism transmits an imagination of superiority in thinking with the application of science and technology. It constructs human life by causing cultural disruption, disempowerment and dislocation to human life. While humanism in its centrality defines values and human relationship across the world, posthumanism expresses its merits, demerits, legalities and legacies in individual's complex evolutionary growth from past to present. It declares the human condition "after humanism" or "beyond humanism." It transcends the limitations of the physical human form. Humans are classified as high functioning animals and this high function has no limits as "no bounds have been fixed to the improvement of faculties ... the perfectability of man is unlimited" (Condorcet 34). Posthumanism denotes a philosophical position concerned with reconceptualising what it means to be human. In virtual

reality "posthumanism refutes all ideas of naturalness, and denies the existence of a transcendent 'human nature' asserted by humanism" (Cuddon 551-52).

Posthumanism deals with the virtual reality that catches 'subjectless' subject by displacing human's autonomy. The development of the concept of posthumanism is based on the notion that humankind can transcend the limitations of the physical human form. It presents and represents the death of the humanist subject. The complexity of the relationship between the histories of European colonization and contemporary form of globalization has exerted transhumanist aptitude through technological augmentation and other enhancements. Posthumanists express the commitment to progress and a respect for science and rationality for exploring possibilities. As a contemporary movement posthumanism has diverse cultural strands in European intellectual history. It replaces the privilege to be human in the normative social and cultural evolution through the science and technique of biology and environment. Posthumanism as a movement is motivated in postmodern philosophy to eliminate the contemporary human condition and human nature physically transforming the human from mortal to immortal, mental to supramental, legitimate to intelligent, and natural to technological future of enhanced humanity. Cary Wolfe comprehends posthumanism with the notion that humans are superior to other life forms and intelligences because of their preparedness through nonhuman subjects and inclusion and exclusion of many questions in intellectual aspirations of interdisciplinarity. Posthuman becomes a trans-species that questions the normative ethics of nature and promotes the communication between the triumphant embodiment and embeddedness of human beings with biological and technological determinations. Posthumanism defines installation, inspiration, and interrelation of technology in conceptual interlocution of

human formulation. In Martha Nussbaum's "utilitarian calculus" this kind of concept building is called analytic philosophy.

Bioethics makes humans different from other animals. The philosophy of posthumanism in its ontological dichotomies postulates the methodologies which never avoid bioethics rather deconstructs the ordeal of ethics of humanism's practice of culture/nature, mind/body, spirit/matter, and reason/feeling "with the functional distinction system/environment" (Wolfe 254). The paper explores the different stands, movements, significations, and possible effects of posthumanism in the use of science and technology. Posthuman concept postulates the study of its areas and scope in the contexts of transhumanism, antihumanism and metahumanism. While analysing the human desire as a sinthome for superhumanism, Ihab Hassan coined "posthumanism" in 1977, Aldous Huxley's the biologist brother Julian Huxley coined "transhumanism" (13) in 1957, Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser coined the term "antihumanism" in 1964 in his criticism of traditional humanism and philosophical anthropology; Chris Claremont coined the term 'metahuman' in 1987 in a brilliant vision of unleashing infinite potential. All the paradigmatic concepts in the philosophy of posthumanism explore together our transformation from authenticity and integrity to a more sustainable sense of gratification with the involvement of intuition, insight, creativity, imagination and possibilities. When posthumanist philosophers, writers, biologists and rationalists think science and technology can be instrumental for the transition of the human to posthuman, Nietzsche has declaimed human in the expression that "man is something that shall be overcome." (Huxley: 14). This kind of imagination of superhuman becomes very frequent in its use in contemporary science fiction, futurology, contemporary art, philosophy

and technocreative uses expressing the state of human beyond his normative condition. The philosophical movement provides a philosophical condition to the human through technologies with the improvisation of sensory reception, emotive ability, and cognitive capacity. Posthuman philosophically evolves the spirit and capacity to improve human condition, cognition and emotion both by bio-technological interventions, improvements and re-significations. To overcome the human status both in essence and cognition posthuman serves "an insatiable desire" by confronting the self both in philosophical reasoning and free will or idea of evolution that never stops.

Posthumanism comprehends a new reality of humans who will be definitely superior to the normal humans. In posthumanism intelligence occupies a centre stage to enable the human occupy a new place in the universe where humans are imagined to be superior to normal humans. Posthumanism is theorized as "the intersection of consumerism and techno-culture" (Beard 114) which speculates something better to extend human life spans or deform humans in "apocalyptic tone" (Derrida 3). It is too premature to fore say what will be the future of human? In late twentieth century and early twenty first century technological developments have facilitated human life in multiple ways. But this has greatly affected individual's normative physical growth and autonomy of mind. Attempts have been made to invade human's body and biology in the study of human gene, cells and other organs. Prosthetic developments, organ transplants, artificial limbs, pharmaceutical developments to control and change body chemistry and regulate the human biology with the mechanical and scientific help have not only changed the body hormones but also have affected the psychology and thinking capacity of the humans. Too much of emphasis on computer and artificial intelligence have been customized in the nature/culture dy-

namics of life. Frequent application and addition of biological knowledge through software and artificial intelligence to compute the human body worldwide has raised the concern for the future of human species. In the name of enhancing life expectancy and physical efforts or efficiency new healthcare measure are being taken with the help of technology. The digital healthcare technologies, artificial intelligence, VR/AR, 3D-printing robotics and nanotechnology in the recent times to control, care, and improvise human genetics have prognosticated a departure from human and nurtured new hopes for the future of humans. The introduction of medical technology to reshape our healthcare system for faster and more relief or development, either in surgical procedures or in anatomical experiments has changed the traditional human's body shape and mindscape.

In medical science and technology attempts are being made to enhance or change the human's physical and mental states. Critical discussions and inventions are made to enhance and improve the human body and mind technologically. This change for progression through technoscience or cyberculture marks the end of morality or a boom for posthumanity. The imagination of posthuman in theoretical orientation and technoscientific understanding poses challenges for our assessment of nonhuman actors and forces in the understanding of human. Human's transition to posthuman is although an abstract notion it creates a "collective hallucination" in Donna Haraway's 'cyborg' fiction and William Gibon's 'cyber space' and cyberpunk fiction. Both the authors have strange imagination of a creature in place of human who will be part human and part machine. The steady progress of human to the posthuman with the change or augmentation of body organism and technoscientific knowledge favour the scientists, technologists, biologists, medical practitioners, philosophers, writers to

think about the posthuman as narrated in literary works. Haraway writes about this kind of machine man with artificial body organisms and artificial features which seems absurd to the social reality in her essay "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s" (1985). This condenses the belief that posthumanism as a social and philosophical movement would technologically improve human biology, increase human sensory reception, increase emotional ability, and cognitive capacity by radically improving or extending human condition. The idea of posthuman is the end of human what American postmodern literary critic N. Katherine Hayles reveals as a kind of nightmarish dream in her book *How we Became Posthuman* (1999) and Hans Moravec narrates in *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence* (1988). Too much induction of technology to human body for the improvement of body and intelligence can make the body metallic and brain artificial.

Postmodern and poststructural thinkers give their perspectives emphasising the scientific understanding of ideology, holding all meaning to be fluid rather than universal and predictable. But in posthuman narratives it draws the human attention for the application of human intelligence in the condition of human. This application with the help of machine and computer software enables to deconstruct the anthropocentric existence. Posthuman as a postmodern idea gives the ability to distinguish humans from other animals determining the truth in rational mind with emphasis on human's ontological position in the dictum, "I think, therefore I am" (Descartes 36). In theoretical hypothesis "Postmodernity is not a new age, but the rewriting of some of the features claimed by modernity, and first of all modernity's claim to ground the legitimacy on the project of liberating humanity as a whole through science and technology" (Lyotard 30).

The prefix 'post' before humanism disclaims human position in a backwardness with the forwardness of modern age and innovative thought for profound advantages in Copernican revolution. The 'post' defines the future of humanism presenting its traumatic and unpleasant condition in discourse. In ontological position posthumanism is amplified as a vision of the idea of human through technologies. It is a radical characterization of human who exceeds the frontiers of the appearance of *Homo Sapiens* what is perceived for long in anthropology, history, culture, belief, and thought. Posthumanism as a condition fashions the "scriptural tomb" (Certeau 2) of humanism in the critical practice of our inside and outside, as well as makes us 'us' symbolising the old dying in the underway of coming of the new. It is not a peril but signifies a success or succession in the progress of recognition. The posthumanists eliminate the boundaries of human as a being as they think "There is nothing external to a human, because the extent of human cannot be fixed. If we accept that the mind and body cannot be absolutely separated then we are left with the apparently absurd yet logically consistent conclusion that consciousness and the environment cannot be absolutely separated" (Pepperell 11). It raises the question whether posthumanism engages humanism in problematic deconstruction and tries to repeat humanism through the deconstruction of anthropocentric thought.

Posthumanism is not exactly outside and beyond the space of humanism. In the computer and technological space human as an anthropomorphic figure appears to be a pathetic one for the antihumanist thinkers such as Lacan, Foucault, and Althusser whose "questioning of humanism" (Derrida 117) defines human's transgression. It is believed that the realm of posthuman is left in the digital environment where humanist matrix

is distinctly apparent. The understanding of posthumanism "requires humans to think beyond traditional humanist limitations and embrace the risks that becoming-other-than-human being" (Herbrechter 2). While abandoning the anthropocentric paradigm and its ethical paradigm one decides that man should not deserve the privileges to be human because he is not different from other animals. This makes the reading of posthumanist narratives more exciting and understandable in the changed terrain of human attention which shows and claims to be more terrifying. It is because "Anthropo-centrism always already contains of its own transcendence" but when one gets self-absorbed as human it will be foolish to speculate to be posthuman in a technoculture that make us think "posthumanism has finally arrived, and theory, like "man" "himself," no longer has a place" (Badmington 1). In posthuman narratives such as Donna J. Haraway's *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (1991), N. Katherine Hayles' *How we Became Posthuman* (1999), Chris Hables Gray's *Cyborg Citizen* (2001), Elaine L. Graham's *Representations of the Post/Human* (2002), and Ted Mooney's *Travel to other Planets* (1992), it becomes difficult to indeterminate the human position as a being for possessing a wider cultural environment as well as physical structure in a technological environment. While assessing human "In posthumanist thought, the human is no longer ... the adoption or the expression of man but rather the result of a hybridization of man with non human otherness" (Marchesin 54). Ordinarily one draws the impression that humanists makes humans as distinct beings, but posthumanists consider humans to embody the characteristics exceptionally in the technological world as the most important and central focus of the universe for interpreting values and experiences.

Posthumanism is regarded as the cause of the 'loss of human centrality.' It repeats a more profound and traumatic lack. The history of posthumanism recognises the limits of the possibility of natural hybridization between species creating confusion between human and human environment. It is understood as a cultural configuration with the displacement of traditional disciplinary boundaries in favour of interdisciplinary approaches. It is significant that post-human in nature and culture determinants let human and non-human coevolve, coexist and collaborate ontologically and agentially. In Darwinian theory human biologizing has its historical construct but in the science of cyborg poetics conceptualizing posthumanism as a discourse and thinking of human and nonhuman beyond a systematic 'scientific' study in literary works. Posthuman philosophy is a 'metaphysical revolution' in the conceptual framework of science and technology which disembodify human consciousness, mind, and denying the permanence of a thing such as human nature. Posthumanists believe that human can be delimited because limitation is a restriction to the organic body. Human beings have the power through knowledge and intelligence to configure themselves by reducing and replacing the body aspects with the technological possibilities. In contemporary philosophical reflection posthumanism is alleged that it has crossed the ethical limits and the relationship between natural and artificial. In bio-ethics human species cannot be replaced with technology because ontological transformation in speculation or hypostatization of human biology. With the improvement and enhancement of technologies in anthropocentric concepts, cybernetic art forms, imaginative possibilities, and reproductive activities human beings are determined. No doubt technology is necessary for human beings but its interference overtakes the influence as it affects the modalities of human biology with strangeness marking the beginning of postmankind.

Posthuman philosophy helps to study the status of being human which is necessarily not a technological subject but understood as a condition of thought that predicts human choice in autonomous exercise. It signifies the "end of humanity" in the theory of embodied intelligence which will affect nature and culture, sovereignty of body, and human feeling. Posthuman will be a kind of intervention of the deep structure of human being just by modifying and hybridising it. Posthumanism interprets and argues for or against the use of enhancements of human via technology without any consideration of animal ethics and its implications. Posthuman philosophy helps to study the status of being human as well as its alternative perspectives which require to question, destabilize and decentre the human. For the future of humanity, biotechnology and biopolitics contribute to shape the concerns for the contemporary articulation of posthumanity. The methods and application of technology become the subject matter of posthumanism as well as the philosophical enquiries into it. It interrogates the significance of species boundaries that concentrates on the prominent discussion of 'hybrid embryos' and 'transgenics' in a kind of scientific experiment and Foucauldian biopolitics "to ensure, sustain, and multiply life, to put this life in order" for "super individual creature" (Foucault 35) the understanding of human biology as well as political wisdom in ethical contestation. Neo-Darwinists believe that the synthesis between Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection and the assumption primarily by gene mutation to help the formation of new species need to be removed and suggest for incorporating certain essential component of evolution by isolating the existing ones. Human body or its basic definition when comes under the political power for its enhancement the biopower of gendered category get affected. Anna Haraway writes "I would like to proceed by placing meta-

phorical reliance on a much-maligned sensory system in feminist discourse: vision. Vision can be good for avoiding binary oppositions. I would like to insist on the embodied nature of all vision, and so reclaim the sensory system that has been used to signify a leap out of the marked body" (677).

Thinking the convergence of human and non-human problematises the conventional hermeneutic of posthuman. Because posthumanists believe that human is understood for permanence as well as possibility in scientific enquiry and phenomenology. Since the concept of being and becoming human is an ontological concept, posthuman cannot be understood without making a distinction from human. The concept of posthuman is a radical departure from the realm of human. In contemporary paradigms human beings are understood and explained by scientists and sociologists in technological projects, its material settings and holistic appreciations. Human subjects are accountable, epistemological and theoretical but in modern application and empirical studies posthuman has a "conceptual footing" in an effort to conceptualise the "mangle practice", and "the interaction of human and non-human agencies in science work" (Jones 291, 292). Posthumanism, a variant of constructivist sociology of science dismisses the inherent humanist bias for all its ambition and intention in sociological enquiry. In contemporary fiction and theorizations of posthumanism, the human subject displays a decline with dystopic human side. It dismisses the inherent humanist bias for all its ambition and intention in sociological enquiry. Posthumanism delivers the inconsistencies of human beings in analysis and uneasy synthesis of pragmatist and poststructuralist influences.

In poststructuralist accounts posthumanism refuses to address the question of human nature and transforms the human action within it. In

recent times the theme of posthumanism is gaining significant attraction in the disciplines of anthropology, cultural studies, literary theory and philosophy. Humans have their enormous process of development in history which has deliberate rejection of 'scientific realism' both in text and discourse. Human as a text has its cultural designs and narrative order of things but when the human aspects and subjects are interrogated in enlightened discourse of science and technology human shape, power, action and intention get affected. In other words, "posthuman does not mean to be indifferent to the humans, or to be de-humanized. On the contrary, it implies a new way of combining ethical values with the well-being of an enlarged sense of community, which includes one's territorial or environmental interconnections" (Braidotti 190). In theoretical and philosophical paradigms posthumanism is a rebellion of the condition of human that expresses "hope for a new creation. Man is the only creature who refuses to be what he is. The problem is to know whether this refusal can only lead to the destruction of himself and of others ..." (Camus 11). Posthuman is conceived as an ontological leap as well as an ontological gap without getting trapped in anthropomorphism. The interest of reason expressed in the law of specification motivates posthuman approach as a discontinuity in the cognition of human form that motivates its approach.

Human existence is absurd since they live in a world that does not meet their needs with the hope that the new creation will overcome the absurdity of existence. Posthuman is a conceptual leap for the human in the conflicting interests of reason, laws of homogeneity, and contemporary theory. Plato's *Republic* divides the human beings in different grades on the basis of intelligibility going back to the philosophical roots of human as well as in the conception of reality. The concept of human as a being and his existence in

the transition of time cannot be understood in ontological vacuum. In oriental and occidental philosophy the concept of posthuman is understood in relation to the human and his development in a kind of radical departure from one kind to other in several examples. The meaning of 'post' is not simply a passé but it refers to the continuity between human and the posthuman.

In Indian context posthuman is very ancient in myths and beliefs, either intentionally or unintentionally in the unravelling of the myth of Ganesha whose superficial anatomy for the implanting of an elephant head never suspends his human habits, qualities and intelligence rather cultivates the human imagination in the form of a transspecies. Similar concept of transhuman body is revealed in case of Narasimha, with man-lion body, the fierce avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu who appears as the destroyer of evil and religious persecution with the intent to restore Dharma on Earth. In Hindu temple shastra different forms and shapes of posthuman are found on ancient temple walls. It reveals that posthuman imagination has its existence in the narratives of myths. In Hindu mythology Yakshas, a class of nature-spirits were the custodians of treasures hidden in the earth and in the roots of the trees, and shape shifters known as prototypes for attendants of gods and kings in later Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain mythologies. Similarly Apsaras, the water nymphs, the singers, dancers and courtesans of gods; and the Gandharvas, the musicians for gods though skilled in warfare were not pure humans.' They were innovative aesthetic creations of God and more than ordinary humans. Their extraordinariness in capacity, tendencies and possibilities in Indian myths also make them posthumanistic texts. In puranic age the concept of human consciousness was seen, judged and evaluated in the human shape and in the assemblages of heterogeneous elements. In the periodic table of

Darwin's evolution of human species there are some missing links which indicate that human as a text has its cultural design and narrative order but the human aspects and subjects are interrogated in enlightened discourse of science and technology. However, posthuman is a continuity of the development of body and mind in the process of genetic modification. It views that the concept and idea of human is over "As post and transhumanism have become significant topics over the past decades or so, their boundaries have become muddled by misappropriations and misunderstandings of what defines them, and especially what distinguishes them from each other" (La Grandeur 49). But posthumanism seems to be the proliferation of possibilities which spin in human imagination for a possible world through technoscientific endeavour.

Posthuman scenario depicts a condition through genetic enhancement in order to hold the future possibility in loss. In the hope of enhancing human condition and expecting a distinguished human existence both in technological possibilities and political concept posthumanists think of genetic emancipation of human beings from nature's law and rule. They think the concept of posthuman is an alchemists dream with the thought that "Humanity must not stagnate: to halt our burgeoning move forward, upward, outward would be a betrayal of the dynamic interest in life and consciousness" (More 40). This kind of belief designates posthumanism as a necessity for continuity with 'disconnection' and difference between individual in Francis Fukuyama's *Our Posthuman Future* (2000), Chris Hables Gray's *Cyborg Citizen* (2002), and David Roden's *Posthuman Life* (2014), Gray believes this posthumanism in the imagination of 'cyborg' citizens distinguishing them from "pure humans" and "human existence" (131, 19). When technological innovation eclipses the traditional concept

of humanism, posthuman condition begins with the development in the progressive character of technology. This is how

Basically, transhumanists believe in improving the human species by using any and every form of emerging technology. Technology is meant in the broad sense here: it includes everything from pharmaceuticals to digital technology, genetic modification to nanotechnology. The posthuman is the state that transhumans aspire to: a state in which our species is both morally and physically improved, and may be immortal - a species improved to the point where we perhaps become a different (and thus "posthuman") species altogether (La Grandeur 49).

This shows that humanism has a drift from culture and consciousness. Even in genetic engineering, cyber technologies, and pharmacological enhancement posthuman condition is enhanced in computer or robotic improvement without rational, emphatic and moral implications. In Kierkegaardian 'despair of possibility' and contemporary discourse of technoscience "Dreaming of possible construction of the impossible leads to real transformations, new type of life, changes in the very way we think of space, time, erotic art, artificiality, perfection, of life and ourselves. Technoscience is constantly deconstructing the idea of the impossible" (Gray 94). Posthuman thinking has become distinguishably a human existence in political concept also. Posthumanist believe in the enhancement of human condition seeking of an improved human. They imagine the transhuman development could lead to the creation of posthuman who would have a developed cognitive capacity of human. It is apparent that technological knowledge through software and

Computers are good at swift, accurate computation and at storing great masses of information. The brain, on the other hand, is not as efficient a number cruncher and its memory is often highly fallible; a basic exactness is built into its design. The brain's strong point is its flexibility. It is unsurpassed at making shrewd guesses and at grasping the total meaning of information presented to it. (Compbell 190)

It is claustrophobic to imagine that the future of technological posthumanism is phantasmagorical in essence and hierarchical knowledge. Concept is ontologically anomalous and logically illicit in conceptual leap within the scientific boundary. The possibility of future human needs the biological and moral improvement in a transhumanist movement. The alluring emergence of technologies symbolises the possibility for the enhancement of human condition and cognition in "a new way of understanding the human subject and its relationship to the natural world in general" as the "new epistemology that is not anthropocentric and therefore not centered in Cartesian dualism" (Bolter 1). Posthumanists try to find alternative ways of looking at the world by decentering the anthropocentric views that are very limited and inflexible. This offers the posthumanists to think theoretically a "genealogical endeavour of humanity within multi-versality" (Ferrando 220) in constitutive comprehension which is beyond human.

Posthumanism as a school of thought looks beyond 'being human' and explores many possible ways to understand the existence of human beings. It is an effort to make the human invincible through expectations and perceptions. Posthumanist thinkers believe that humans require to think beyond their traditional humanist limitations and embrace the risks that becoming other-

than-human is to meet the future challenges. Posthumanist trends are more about the implementation of technology and its prospects. Posthumanists described as 'bioliberalists' believe in the enhancement of technologies like transhumanists in the arguments of human cognitive and physical or mental capacities beyond bioethics. Posthumanism is illustrated as a shift in the traditional paradigm of thought to embrace the possibilities that the future changes might bring in order to deal with the sense of lack and mental insecurity. Posthumanism is an evolution of thought beyond the contemporary social boundaries and is predicted on the seeking of truth within a postmodern context. It rejects previous attempts to establish 'anthropological universals' which are imbued with anthropocentric assumptions. In postmodern analysis it is evolutionary and tries to establish a new framework for conceptualizing the human in the assumption of human uniqueness and supremacy. The relationship between posthumanism and postmodernism is experimented in evolutionary anthropology. It is more declaratory than evidence-based manner in the fusion of human and artificial intelligence for human enhancement in its cosmic and biotic evolution.

Imagining a new framework for conceptualizing the human for its uniqueness and supremacy constitutes the arguments for human. In Enlightenment thinking posthuman is an anthropological site to rethink the relationship between nature and culture as well as its phenomenological perspectives. A critical engagement with this phenomenology develops one in dualistic thinking of Heidegger's 'destruction of metaphysics' in Helmuth Plessner's unifying the several empirical investigations, of human nature in an effort to understand individuals as both creatures of their environment and creations of their own values. In 'philosophical anthropology' posthumanists recentre the 'posthuman turn' in anthro-

pogenic activities suppose that earth surface processes and forms will change significantly because of anthropogenic forces. Posthumanism is a human predicament within methodological boundaries that addresses anthropology underscoring human life. It is rooted in a set of ideas and viewed in a strongly historical sense in Platonic and Judeo-Christian metaphysical traditions. Since "the whole earth is now conflated with humans, and more precisely, with technological man" (Weber 69), posthuman "as a universal concept that has to be broken down into many different people with contradictory interests, opposing cosmoses ... (Latour 80-81). Posthumanist theory deconstructs the project of striving to overcome the anthropocentrism of modern humanism developed during the European Enlightenment. The Western civilization orients the world view of Plato's eido, (comprehending ability of a creative person) Aristotle's *energia*, (visual recreatives sometimes in words) Christianity's *ens creatum*, (conception of entitles), Descartes' *res cogitans* (extended and unthinking, thing) *res extensa*, (a thinking and unextended things) and *material resources* of the modern period in Nietzsche's geneology of knowledge. Technological thinking has developed 'forgetful of being' in reverse through manipulation and exploitation in the 'logic of relations' and reversibility of energies between humans and technologies either for a 'constitutive rootlessness' or on a 'utopian standpoint.'

Posthuman thinking is a decolonization process of traditional thought of human in denaturalization and defatalization. The posthumanists think of derecognizing humanness, transcending into 'utopian standpoint' and deciding sensitively our anthropocentric futures. Posthuman philosophy literally refers to a person or entity that exists in a state beyond human. It states that humankind can transcend the limitation of physical human form. This concept represents the death of hu-

man subject and qualities that make human a privileged position or unique. It eliminates human nature to high functioning animals as well as change in our culture. Different critical scientific understanding like transhumanism, antihumanism, metahumanism and extropianism are in theoretical practice to understand the paradigms of posthumanism which is characterised by skepticism, subjectivism, relativism, suspicion, and acute sensitivity to the role of ideology in twenty first century. Transhuman theory denotes that human race can evolve beyond its current physical and mental limitations by means of science and technology. It transforms humans to make them immortal, intelligent and superhuman intellectually, physically and psychologically by eliminating aging and immortality for a new future. Transhumanists believe in the possibility of future human who needs the biological and moral improvement.

The alluring technologies of twenty first century analyses new possibilities in human experience symbolizing additions to the despair of possibility. The power of super intelligence with the help of emerging technologies can enhance human beings in the management of opinions and assessment of our existential condition.

When technology makes everything possible, then it becomes itself the absolute necessity. Necessity which was once the mother of invention has created an inventive process which is the mother of a necessity. "The loss of possibility signifies either that everything has become necessary ... or that everything has become trivial." Infact, with modern technology, both happen at once. (Ellul 95).

The possibility of future man needs the biological and moral improvement of the human in a transhumanist movement. Our technological self-

alteration from human to posthuman is an attempt for physical improvement but it undermines the possibility of genuine more improvement. The emergence of technologies can not have the philosophical speculation as this cannot achieve moral improvement. Transhuman progress or development can bring the possibility as "the future of life and mind might not only be stranger than we imagine, but stranger than we can currently conceive ... Does this mean that talk of "posthumans" is self-vitiating nonsense?". (Roden 6) Transhumanists use technology, though positively promising, is controversial for being assumed so dangerous to humans when it's acceptable for life-enhancement. Transhumanism has virtually no checks and balances to "go too far" as humans have a shift from human body to technology as a source to sexual pleasure that transcend human dependency on other body.

Transhumanism avails itself of advances in science and technology as resources for immortality. Technology, artificial intelligence, computer software, their use and abuse have made many things easier for us as well as created confusion in our democratic liberation. Transhumanists advocate the desirability to enhance human beings by means of technology and typically defend certain objective standard on how to enhance human beings in 'social experiment.' Traditionally higher thinking, reason, and logic of life make humans enjoy the autonomy to define what human is. But with the development of technology and understanding of physical characteristics of human body, attempts have been made to eliminate physical and elemental deficiencies in augmentation of prosthetics for bringing radical changes in human species. Transhumanists share the belief in the ongoing and accelerating progress of science and technology. In transhumanist philosophy, perpetual progress with the appropriation of technologies in the imperatives of scientific research favours the future people

being posthuman rather than human.' While bioconservatives view against genetic technologies, bioliberals intellectually, artistically, and physically like to enhance procreative beneficence through "research into human enhancement" (Harris 192). For the bioconservatives transhumanism seems ethically inappropriate and they like its prevention of 'genetic genocide.' They apprehend that the use of technology in the enhancement of human species in reverse of "the celebration of the demise of the ethical" and the "substitution of aesthetics for ethics" (Bauman 2) can cause devastation.

Transhumanism as a philosophical movement accepts the critical acceptance of the technological and scientific elimination of boundaries of the possibilities of human as manifested in history until now. With the glorification of technological potentials "Contemporary transhumanists argue that human nature is an unsatisfactory "work in progress" that should be modified through technological means where the instrumental benefits for individuals outweigh the technological risks" (Braidotti 199). In their view transhumanism lies in human desire and "There is nothing external to a human, because the extent of human cannot be fixed" (Pepperell 10). In Immanuel Kant's view man as the centre of universe is a finite being, both within reason and limit which one cannot go beyond and is morally dangerous in humanistic conception. Critics of transhumanism raise philosophical concerns and argue that intellect and sophisticated technology can enhance and improvise the formation of physique. The concept of nature-culture dynamics will be seriously affected without legal sanction. Humans will lose control over their bodies and control over psyche without sanctity or sanction of rationality on progeny.

Technology develops eugenics without coercion. It promises the human enhancement with essen-

tial human characteristics but in evaluation of right actions and evaluation of life's questions it threatens human quality, rights and dignity without morality and ethics. The enhancement of human eugenics through the maintenance of morphological system and reproductive freedom in the name of 'enjoyment of a right to autonomy' make the transhumanists aspire to prefer "proactive choices which foreseeably and avoidably result in less than the best child" (Savulescu and Kahane 278). While the posthumanists think in a nonanthrogenetic way to dismantle the concept of humanness, transhumanists focus on equal access to human enhancement either democratically or technologically for enhancing potential physical ability and intelligence ability.

Transhumanism is an engagement with posthumanism. A postmodern and poststructural analysis of the posthuman and transhuman characteristics serve a purely therapeutic "research into human enhancement" (Harris 192) of eugenics. Transhumanist vision is a kind of liberatarianism for perfectionism indefinitely. Enhancement of human genetics with the help of technology and scientific research is contrary to the tolerant humanistic and scientific tenets of transhumanism.

Some philosophers claim that there are features of human moral life and human subjectivity that are not just local to certain gregarious primates but are necessary conditions of agency and subjectivity everywhere. This "transcendental approach" to philosophy does not imply that posthumans are impossible but that-contrary to expectations - they might not be all that different from us. Thus a theory of posthumanity should consider both empirical and transcendental constraints on posthuman possibility. (Roden 6)

Scientific progress and technological advancements formulate the condition for humans from

prehuman or primitive biologism to theologism to posthumanism. The advances in biotechnologies and aspiration for human enhancement through the evolutionary conditions of anthropogenesis will not only bring a change in evolutionary history but also have its short comings. Transhumanism can evolve higher degree of intelligence, better physique, and cognitive power but cannot assure moral and philosophical excellence and ascertain the cerebral improvement for posthuman. The application of intelligence to overcome the human through the prosthetic development; organ transplant, pharmaceutical developments, and artificial intelligence in healthcare measures, biotechnological experiments, and anatomical research help to fight ills and evils of human life during technoscientific transition.

Antihumanism is a philosophy and social theory critical of the traditional ideas of humanism, human condition and philosophical anthropology. It views that human nature or humanity should be rejected as historically relative, ideological or metaphysical because of the thinking that humanism is over idealistic and a means for a weak to constrain the strong. In Marxist belief it rejects humanism as a symptom that dehumanises the man. It is egoistic, emancipatory and asserted in extreme inequalities. If humanism ascribes universal essence and privileges in consciousness and idealism, antihumanism as a paradigm of philosophy establishes Heideggerian rejection and Kantian notion of autonomy in inauthentic deviations to humanism. But in Althusserian belief 'antihumanism' does not mean opposition to humanity; it signifies opposition to the belief that there is such a thing as 'human nature.' It means a rejection to the idea that human beings have an essence, as there are certain unchanging properties of human beings which an individual fail to possess. While humanism is constructed in social relations but "not constitutive of the social

process" (Soper 104), in philosophical practice it is based on human beliefs, desires, preferences and judgements which are the products of social practices. Antihumanism rejects many of the primary convictions of humanism that assumes the universal 'human nature' in the belief of a rational and autonomous individual. Louis Althusser when coined the term "antihumanism" in his essay "Marxism and Humanism" (1965) his aim was to trouble the trend of the fusion of humanism and Marxism with the intention to defend Marxism from the perceived notion of its maligning influence of humanism. He spoke of 'humanity' that denies the primacy of historical forces and observes the principal dynamic by which society is organised. In retrospect 'antihumanism' is used in Heidegger's metaphysical construct that misconstrues the nature of being in Freud's argument how humans are driven by irrational desires beyond their control. In posthumanism antihumanism becomes a modern substitute by Althusser's student Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1966) in which he declares the 'death of man' echoing Nietzsche's and Hegel's earlier pronouncement of the abandonment of God. Poststructuralists while consider humanism as a modern substitute for religion, the postmodernists think antihumanism as a substitute for the obsolescence of humanism propounding it a prospect of ways of being and thinking.

Metahumanism is a critique of some foundational premises of humanism that expresses free will, autonomy and superiority of anthropi. It deepens the view that body as the field of relational forces in motion and of reality embodies the process of becoming. Metahumanist critique proposes to deepen the understanding of reality as unquantifiable field of relational bodies in changing and constitutive relation with one another. Traditionally, relationality has been developed

and subjected to a variety of systems of intensive relations. It is the biopolitical system of control in which metabodies are being perceptually appropriated. Jaime de Val and Stegan Lorenz Soryner stress in "A metahumanist Manifesto" that Metahuman as a postanatomical body "does not aim at an ideal final state but stresses the need to permanently overcome contemporary challenges which arise by necessity through ... immanetism ... with the perspectism of the posthuman, stressing the importance of movement vers identity" (*The Agonist*). Anatomy, as a map of human and social bodies, can only be articulated from an external perspective to the body challenging Cartesian split that situates the human as subjects external to an objective reality and to other subjects through re-appropriating and subverting technologies of perception that dissolve the destiny of the body. Metahumanism thus proposes an aesthetic of the amorphous, by considering metamedia, metaformativity as possibilities to permanently redefine sensory organs. Thus, metahumanism is neither a stable reality and essence or identity, nor a utopia, but an open set of strategies and movements in the present.

Extropianism is inclusive in posthumanism. It refers to the advances in science and technologies which will give a calculated evolution overcoming the natural selection someday and let people live indefinitely. It is the philosophy of 'Extropy' that refers to the belief after utopianism. It is the belief that cultural and technological developments tend to oppose and will overcome the extent of living, in the organisational system of intelligence, its functional order, vitality, energy, life experience, capacity and drive for improvement and growth in the "evolving framework of values and standards for continuously improving the human condition." (More 2003) Extropy refers to a perpetual progress through

intelligence, wisdom, and effectiveness with the removal of political, cultural, biological, and psychological limits. It affirms continual ethical, intellectual, and physical self-improvement through critical and creative thinking, proactivity and experimentation through the designing and managing of technologies for improving life. Extropy promotes independent thinking, opposes authoritarian social control, and unnecessary hierarchy of a static view based on blind faith and dogma. When Tom Bell coined 'Extropy' and Max More defined it in 1988 it explained "the extent of a living or organisational system's intelligence, functional order, vitality, energy, life, experience and capacity, and drive for improvement and growth" (*The Principles of Extropy*). It expresses interest in artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, genetic engineering, life extension; mind uploading, idea futures, robotics, space exploration, and the politics and economics of transhumanism. In current scientific understanding, and critical and creative thinking extropianism defines a set of principles and values that could make sense of new capabilities opening up to humanity. In postmodernist approach it refers to the promoting of an optimistic futuristic philosophy for making human "essentially competed" for overall happiness in the principle of utilitarianism.

Transhumanism promotes the belief that human race can evolve beyond its current physical and mental limitations by means of science and technology. It is "critical of traditional humanism or ideas about humanity, traditional ideas about humanity and the human condition" (Childers and Hentzi 140-41) in antihumanistic tradition because its central concept is to reject human nature, man or humanity as historically relative and ideological. Antihumanism posits the philosophy of humanism in cornerstone and constrains the strong to facilitate the emancipation of life with

posthuman resignification, intelligence consumption, signification of sensory reception and cognition through data interpretation, artificial intelligence, 3D-Printing, robotics and nanotechnology. In the foundational premises of humanism posthumanism, transhumanism, antihumanism and metahumanism are the critiques of free will, autonomy, and superiority of anthropoi implies the need to deterritorialise strata of power and violence and induce new forms of embodied relationality by producing a frontier body that operates on existing boundaries. Metahumanism is a utopian concept on open set of strategies and movements in the present. Like metahumanism, extropianism refers to the philosophy of Extropy that evolves a framework of values and standards for continuous improving the human condition. Extropians think that the advances in science and technology will someday let people live indefinitely in futurist vision. The deconstructive analysis of posthumanism and its philosophical paradigms both in education and construction are hypothetic, scientific, and observational in the phenomenon of its explanation. Metahumanism is understood in the anatomical, genital, and binary sex that avoids permanent superiority of a force over others. It is neither a stable reality nor a utopia, but an open set of strategies.

To conclude the analysis it can be said that posthumanism is distinguished in theory as a productivist ethos. While in metaphysical level it opposes 'humanity' and 'human nature,' it posits human not rationally an autonomous subject at philosophical level. Posthuman paradigms deconstruct belief in humanism and human not in anthropocentric philosophy but as social and historical beings. Marxist thinker Louis Althusser deconstructs humanism in revolutionary rejection and judgement in scientific theory. His student Foucault believes 'human nature is at the centre of all morality,' that exercises Nietzsche's

proclamation of the 'Death of God' in the oppositional hypotheses of traditionalism and conventionalism. In Foucauldian argument enlightenment, reason and knowledge provide emancipatory zeal that deepens the desire for posthumanism and freedom from intensive nature-culture regulations. Posthumanism is a break away from traditionalism for radical pluralism in perspectivism.

In an age of information technology and medical technology human body, psyche, ability and capacity have been greatly influenced. The effect of technology for the human enhancement and perfection of human abilities has made the humans posthumans in philosophical exercise of metaphysics and phenomenology, as well as in theoretical exercise of literature on posthumanism and transhumanism. In post-Kantian rationalistic perspective, posthumans are the "autonomous beings are intentional agents that determine their principles of action by reflecting and deliberating about the desires and principles they should be moved by" (Roden 125). Posthumanism is an aspiration for superhumanism in the understanding of infiniteness of human nature from Plato and Aristotle to the postmodernist utopians and dictators who sought to remake mankind for ideological ends. This makes us expectants to imagine the possibility of future in which our humanity itself will be altered beyond recognition as we have failed to recognize our *Home Sapiens ancestors*." Posthumanist philosophers believe that this will be "the end of history" for the potential effects of genetic exploration due to the informative survey of contemporary bioscience and its political implications indicating the end of mankind. In contemporary literary narratives imagination of 'Cyborg Citizens' represents the end of belief in humanism and hope for superhumanism and immortality.

This suspends the morality in Nietzschean sense as a fiction used by the herd of inferior human beings to hold back the few superior men.

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Mortal Combats from Classics to Contemporary: Archetypes in the Matrix of Melville's Nautical Fictional Combats



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When the pandemic-stricken world battles with the invisible and invincible enemy globally, the metaphoric battles have been waged in the spacio-temporal literary world from time immemorial. The archetypal battles between the hunter and the game permeated the literary classics and got evolved to fit in well with the socio-political life of human beings, appropriate to cultural variations. The mythical quest to reclaim the lost Paradise after defeating the lethal monsters underlines all the literary works which are centered on the archetype of hunter. When the physical world is shrouded with the mortal fear of the pandemic, the literary world has something to offer for the humanity to tide over the disillusionment and catastrophe resulted by the COVID 19 pandemic. American literature abounds in immortal literary characters who have leapt out of the pages and inspired the readers with indomitable spirit and an indifference in facing failure. Herman Melville's epoch-making novel *Moby Dick* accelerated the momentum of nautical fiction globally and reiterated the existence of the mortal combat with an invincible enemy to bring order and morale in one's life. This paper titled 'Mortal Combats from Classics to Contemporary: Archetypes in the Matrix of Melville's Fictional Nautical Combats' attempts to unearth the archetypal battle for survival from classical nautical works to the evolutionary encroachment of the same in the physical life of mankind.

Keywords: *Archetypes, Leviathan, Nautical and Unconscious.*

The sea narratives from Homer's *Odyssey* (BCE 8) to the arguably first sea novel *The Pilot* (1824) by James Fenimore Cooper to *The North Water* (2016) by Ian McGuire are suspenseful narratives teeming with telling challenges, excruciating hardships and mortal combats. A panoramic view of character, plot and setting of the sea narratives lead us to the vast depository of character traits and situations which originate from the literary and religious narratives of time immemorial that are transferred from one generation to the other in the form of a historical sense or 'Collective Unconscious,' to borrow the term of Carl G. Jung, the notable Swiss Psychologist. In those narratives many heroes have eked out their living in the sea, while many have proved their prowess to conquer the elemental forces in the sea. Many have befriended the fauna in the sea and many have lost their lives in the sea.

The year 2019, the bicentennial birth anniversary of Herman Melville, witnessed the second revival of Melville whom Harold Bloom praised as the classical writer of American literature. The name and fame of Melville is reborn every turning of milestones in the history of the world. Herman Melville, the unsuccessful American writer during his lifetime, was born in 1819 and inspired the reading populace with his enchanting voluminous book *Moby Dick* (1851) and fell into oblivion but was posthumously honoured as the epic writer of America. The first revival of Herman Melville took place at the turn of the centennial year of his birth anniversary in 1919, when the world was ravaged by the pandemic called Spanish Flu which tolled about 50 million lives worldwide. The accidental revival of Herman Melville occurred again in the bicentennial year of his birth anniversary in 2019, when the world has been gripped with yet another pandemic namely COVID 19 which has cost about two million lives across the world.

It might intrigue the reader as why the revival of the writings of Herman Melville takes place when the humanity is faced with invincible challenges. A probe into the answer takes us to the literary world of Herman Melville who introduced his credentials in *Moby Dick* as "A whaleship was my Yale College and my Harvard" (Melville 93). The literary world of Melville is packed with life like characters who are with wander lust and adventurous spirit; exploring the unknown and savouring the freedom and are no longer under the shadow of any captivity. For instance, the crew of the ship *Pequod* in *Moby Dick* is allegorically suggestive of the new world order, as transnational characters with skills are valued than race, colour and religion. They are cosmopolitan characters joined together in a ship, which is identical of today's world to combat a single foe.

American literary world marvels at the mettle of human beings, who venture to tame the untamed natural world which is antagonistic in many literary canons. One of the notable traits of American literature is that the profound efforts put in by the protagonists in their feat to win in their desperate endeavour are more praiseworthy than the question of success or failure. When Santiago in Ernest Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea* (1951) affirms, "Man can be destroyed but not defeated" (Hemingway 98), Ernest Hemingway encapsulates the indomitable will of human beings. When Captain Ahab in *Moby Dick* asserts his will and yells in the Chapter titled "The Quarter Deck" as, "I would strike the sun if it insulted me. For could the sun do that, then could I do the other" (136) the American spirit of conquering the insurmountable is traced. Of the multifarious American writers, Herman Melville occupies a prominent place in visualizing the unfathomable world with unforeseen challenges and invincible foes.

Heroism predominates the nautical fiction and it certainly entails a 'will to succeed.' The pages of such fiction are soiled red with the sufferings and toil of the sailors in countering the foreseen and unforeseen enemies that are massive when compared to the ship or the boat. The target could be hefty as in *Old Man and the Sea* and *Moby Dick*. In spite of the enormous size of the whale or the fish, the protagonists affirmed their will to meet their enemy and tame it fearlessly. This will to succeed even risking life in facing danger and loosing life as a success rather than being a captive to the slavish memories as Captain Ahab does in *Moby Dick* is fore grounded in the work. This will to succeed even when encountering the uncertain and the invincible is the fuel that propels the 'American Dream.' When the American billionaire investor Warren Buffet in his annual virtual meeting during the time of pandemic affirmed that American "magic" prevailed before and would do again, he chronicled the crises that America went through and how they tied over them with fearless and determined mind.

The chronicles of the land, self-experience and the society may lay indelible mark in the writings of an author and Melville was not free from such influences. Melville's sequels like *Typee* (1846) and *Omoo* (1847) take their characters and settings from his own whaling expeditions in the South Pacific islands and his short span of life with the natives in the Marquesas Islands and the life as a beach comber after his escapade from the Typee valley. But his magnum opus *Moby Dick* is the recreation of the inspirational narrative *The Wreck of the Whaleship Essex* by Owen Chase which depicts the ill-fated November 20, 1820 when an enraged sperm whale in the Pacific dismantled the whaling ship named *Essex*. Fascinated by the breathtaking account of whaling expeditions in the Pacific, Melville relied history to fashion his narrative. A close observation of Captain George Pollard Jr., the 29-year-old captain of the whal-

ing ship *Essex* had an indelible inspiration for his creation of Ahab. After his return to Nantucket he captained a second whaling ship named *Two Brothers* which also wrecked on a coral reef after two years. Thus, he was branded an unlucky and ill-fated captain like Melville's Captain Ahab. The notable Marxist critic Lois Tyson remarks, "Like all cultural manifestations, a novel is a product of socioeconomic and hence ideological conditions of the time and place in which it was written, whether or not the author intended it so" (Tyson 66). The influence which shapes the characters and the situation of literature which are termed as socioeconomic factors, historical sense or knowledge of tradition are the various manifestations of archetypes which spring from the collective unconscious which Carl G. Jung laid forth.

The past, which is shrouded in the psyche of every individual, may be evoked with the suggestion of related incidents and characters which are analogous to the world of archetypes. What abounds this repository of literature is the bountiful depository of archetypes. Carl G. Jung in his *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (1959) speaks of archetypes as,

"The Contents of the collective unconscious, on the other hand, are known as archetypes" (Jung 21). Archetypes are thus defined as the recurring patterns or images which are shared across generations. Carl G. Jung delved deep into the realm of archetypes and came out with the concept of 'Collective Unconscious' which explicates the structures of the unconscious mind. He further argued that collective unconscious is teeming with instincts and archetypes like the 'Great Mother' and 'the Terrible Mother,' 'the Wise Old Man,' 'Three of Life,' 'the Shadow' and the like. He affirmed that the collective unconscious has remarkable influence on the lives of individuals, who decode them in relation to their experience.

Explicating the 'Collective Unconscious,' Jung in his book *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (1933) remarks:

When in the course of our development we grew out of many-sided contradictions and achieve a unified personality, we experience something like a complicated growing – together of the psyche. Since the human body is built up inheritance out of a number of Mendelian units, it does not seem altogether out of the question that the human psyche is similarly put together. (170)

The primordial image of man's struggle to comprehend the world in which one lives has been the foundation of archetypal reading of literature. The fear of the external world and the insecurity of one's existence have been the ever-evolving literary concepts in it. If the animal world, inclusive of human beings, is the world of literature, then undoubtedly it contains the shreds of conflict, coexistence and struggle for dominion. These primordial images and situations across time get evolved into recurring images irrespective of the spatiotemporal differences. Thus, the mortal combats in the world of literature and mythologies stand as testimonies to the recurring situations dormant in the psyche of human beings.

Wanderers and hunters are the two seminal archetypal characters who have occupied prominent place in the nautical fiction. These archetypal characters fascinated Herman Melville greatly so much so that he fashioned his nautical works in such a manner that they occupied the center stage in them. It is suggestive of the way *Moby Dick* opens with the reckoning of Ishmael about his decision to leave the land for the sea and he declares that, "having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little

and see the watery part of the world" (3). The trait of hunting is apparent in *Moby Dick* when Starbuck proclaims as, "I am here in this critical ocean to kill whales for my living, and not to be killed by them for theirs; and that hundreds of men had been so killed Starbuck well knew" (96). But many a time the roles get reversed as the hunter becomes the prey and vice versa. In the pandemic-stricken world, the reversal of roles has occurred, but the hunt is on. The predator and the prey in the hunter archetype assume their guise in accordance with culture and technology. Archetypal hunter duos like Grendel and Beowulf in *Beowulf*; Saint George and the Dragon in the myth of St. George; Medusa and Perseus in Greek mythology are rooted in both literary and religious circles. Thus, the epic battles between the rivals, which are recorded in the annals of literature, are recurring across the centuries. But the manifestation of the hunter duo in the current scenario is obviously Corona virus and everyman. Thus, a stepping out of literature to social events reminds us of the presence of archetypes in various guises across time and space.

Analyzing the archetypal cycle drawn by Conor Neill, the Psychologist, in his blog titled 'Understanding Personality: The 12 Jungian Archetypes' borrowing the twelve archetypal characters identified by Carl. G. Jung, Ishmael the narrator in *Moby Dick* who is the alter ego of Melville himself typifies the 'explorer' who thirsts for freedom which culminates in the desire for paradise. A short perusal of Melville's principal characters corresponds to the explorer archetype. In *Moby Dick* both Ishmael and Captain Ahab are the prototypes of explorer. In *Typee* Tomo embodies the explorer and in *Omoo* too the protagonist is an explorer wandering from island to island. Thus, Melville's characterization is akin to the mythical character Ulysses in Greek mythology whom the popular English poet Alfred Lord Tennyson immortalizes in his poem 'Ulysses' as, "I cannot

rest from travel: I will drink/ Life to the lees" (Tennyson 1). Tennyson's lines remind us of what Ishmael proclaims in the 'Loomings' in *Moby Dick* as, "If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, sometime or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the ocean with me" (3). Ishmael could not resist from travelling to unknown lands which he vividly voices forth in the chapter called 'Loomings' as, "but as for me, I am tormented with an everlasting itch for things remote. I love to sail forbidden seas, and land on barbarous coasts" (7).

Carl G. Jung who justified the character archetypes with the principle of 'Collective Unconscious' opined that there are four cardinal orientations these character archetypes are seeking to realize. Ahab who is a hero, explorer, ruler and a lover in Narcissistic way actualizes to provide a structure to the world by annihilating the white whale. He also leaves a mark in the world as he is a hero archetype. Since he is an explorer archetype, he undertakes a spiritual journey. In the same way as he is a lover who is connected to others particularly to the negro boy Pip. Thus, the Jungian principles are detrimental in analyzing the character traits with their orientations.

As human beings fill the pages with their distinctive archetypal traits, animals occupy equal mythical stature in classical works too. The Leviathan started its mythical flight from the Bible itself in the Book of Genesis. Satan who tempted Eve to disobey God in the Garden of Eden was in the guise of a Serpent. In cunning he was invincible to Adam and Eve. In the Book of Job in the Bible, God vivifies the might of Leviathan as "Any hope of subduing it is false;/ the mere sight of it is overpowering" (The New Revised Standard Version, Job 41: 7). The only slayer of this Leviathan in the words of the prophet Isaiah is Lord, the creator of the Universe. Isaiah prophesies "On that day the LORD with his cruel and great and

strong sword shall punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan than the twisting serpent; and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea" (Isa 27; 1). Melville unwittingly ascribes this mythic stature to the antagonist in *Moby Dick* and denominated it as Leviathan.

In par with the archetype of character is the archetype of situations. John Gardner, an American novelist once remarked that there are only two plots in all of literature: someone goes on a journey and a stranger comes to town. A short perusal of the principal literary works across space and time reminds us of the statement by John Gardner. Journey is the pivotal frame in most of the literary pieces. Whether it is a physical journey or a spiritual journey, the quest is central to them.

The quest in Melville's work is not only for the invincible Leviathan but also for the lost Paradise. Having spent his life on whaling ship as a whaler, his mind as an explorer always longed for the mythical paradise. This quest for the mythical paradise is partly due to the influence of the collective unconscious transferred from generation to generation. In his search for the ideal place is pegged at the South Sea Islands in the Pacific. It is evident in titling his sequels as *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* and *Omoo: A Narrative Adventures in the South Seas*. A panoramic view of literature sheds light on the description of life in South Pacific Islands in the works of British, American and European writers. The South Sea Islands figure in the narrative of the French naval officer Pierrri Lotti titled as *The Marriage of Lotti*. The Island life is again featured in the *South Sea Tales* of the Scottish writer Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson. Rupert Brooke in his poem 'Tiare Tahiti' closes the poem as 'Well this side of Paradise!' James A. Michener and A. Grove Day jointly authored the text *Rascals in Paradise* which dealt volumes of South Sea Islands

as Paradise. It is affirmed when Tommo the central character in the seventh chapter in *Typee* who is Melville himself wonders at looking at the valley as, "Had a glimpse of the gardens of Paradise been revealed to me, I could scarcely have been more ravished with the sight" (30). Captain Ahab in his mythical hunt was to defeat the white whale, which was an incarnation of Satan and regain the lost Paradise.

The incomprehensibility of the sea which is a microcosm of the world is writ large in nautical fiction. When Pip, one of the crew members of *Pequod* fell into the sea and Melville narrated the experience as, "Not drowned entirely, though. Rather carried down alive to wondrous depths, where strange shapes of the unwarped primal world glided to and fro before his passive eyes;" (343). The world in which we inhabit has witnessed multifarious furies and maladies in the turn of centuries and many have been unexpected. The sea is an apt analogy for the unexpected occurring, when Ishmael in *Moby Dick* narrates an evening as:

Towards evening of that day, the *Pequod* was torn of her canvas, and bare -poled was left to fight a Typhoon which had struck her directly ahead. When darkness came on, sky and sea roared and split with the thunder, and blazed with the lightning, that showed the disabled masts fluttering here and there with rags which the fury of the tempest had left for its after sport (411).

In spite of the knowledge that the world is incomprehensible and the elemental forces are more powerful, Captain Ahab acknowledges his will to face it when he declares to the crew as, "let's have fair play here, though we be the weaker side" (413). In his declaration he confesses the inability of man in countering the world which he loves to tame.

A bird's-eye view of the literary development reminds us of the ubiquitous existence of recurring characters and events in literatures across the globe. Their manifestations may vary from region to regions befitting the cultural variations. If literature is the written document of man's experience and visualizations, they obviously have their roots in the society in which we inhabit with all the challenges and their countermeasures. The challenges and mythical battles which human beings waged across centuries haven't ceased to exist, but manifested in multifarious guises. This volley of manifestations throw light on the fact that matrix of the battle will remain the same in the collective unconscious which have witnessed, stored and transferred the mythical battles.

Nomenclature of characters serves the purpose of representing nationality, religion, caste and ethnicity. Melville has mindfully cast his characters to meet the demand for universality. The character formation itself is centered on various socio-mythical taboos and superstitions along with socioeconomic factors. A short perusal at the names used in *Moby Dick* supplements universality. Captain Ahab, alludes to the king of Israel in the Bible; Ishmael, the narrator, connects us with the first son of Abraham but later became an outcaste and became the father of Ishmaelites; Queequeg, the pagan harpooner, rings a note of cannibalistic paganism; the ship *Pequod* alludes to the extinct tribe of America with the same name and the fate of the ship was also identical; *Rachel*, the ship that saves Ishmael at the end, is a Biblical figure for fidelity. The transnational crew under the charismatic leadership of a monomaniac captain in search of a white whale with vengeful mind is suggestive of the pandemic-stricken world in 2020, where every nation is united with one aim – to hunt the Virus without being hunted down. Melville propounds a unified way to tackle the antagonist in Chapter 94 titled as "A Squeeze of Hand" in *Moby Dick* with

a universal fraternity. He uses Ishmael as his spokesperson, when Ishmael is thrilled with squeezing sperm from the whale blubber and remarks:

I found myself unwittingly squeezing my co-labourers' hands in it, mistaking their hands for gentle globules. Such an abounding, affectionate, friendly, loving feeling did this avocation beget; that at last I was continually squeezing their hands, and looking into their eyes sentimentally, as much as to say, — Oh! My dear fellow beings, why should we longer cherish any social acerbities, or know the slightest ill-humour or envy! Come; let us squeeze hands all round ...let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness. (345)

Melville's works are cast in the mould of inconclusiveness, as *Moby Dick* offers a recurring battle which is yet to be waged. The sea which is the microcosm of the world remains as it is and it will tantalize humanity as Ishmael remarks, "and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago" (469) and the Epilogue begins with the words of Job in the Book of Job (Job 1;14-19) as, "and I only am escaped alone to tell thee" (469) suggestive of Ishmael replacing Captain Ahab to continue the quest for the white

whale. The world will continue to offer challenges and tribulations and incessant efforts to overcome all the unexpected and invincible hardships are inherent in the literary world which is a replica of the physical world in which we struggle to survive.

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Return of the Repressed: The Emergence of the Black Female (Womanist) Self in Alice Walker's *Meridian*



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Alice Walker's novels are journeys into the self in which the female protagonists move from degeneration into regeneration by realizing their black female identity and dignity. They are simultaneously a study of double marginalization and the resistance of it by challenging the patriarchal and racial power structures which perpetuated the myths about Black women. *Meridian* narrates the struggles of the protagonist to define herself and search for self-acceptance and self-knowledge with her enlightened views about motherhood and spirituality. It is the spiritual and political biography of the protagonist's transition from victim, black female, daughter, wife and mother to a fully responsible activist. As a *bildungsroman* novel, *Meridian*, deals with many experiences which the protagonist passes through in an effort to find out her identity, and develop herself as a complete being. She fights against society which demands conformity, ignores individual freedom, and emerges as a phoenix with individual autonomy and liberated self.

Keywords: Black Feminism, Womanism, Bildungsroman, Double Marginalization, and Animism.

Alienation from the Black sexists and the white feminists augmented the emergence of Black Feminism with a mission to give voice to the silenced and to invest the doubly marginalised African American women with dignity. Alice Walker is in the forefront of African American writers who portray the lives of women in a racist, sexist, violent American society. Her novels are journeys into the self in which the female protagonists move from degeneration into regeneration by realizing their black female identity and dignity. Walker's novels are simultaneously a study of double marginalization and the resistance of it by challenging the patriarchal and racial power structures which perpetuated the myths about Black women. Walker, in "From an Interview" in *Gardens*, talks about her mission as a writer thus: "I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival, the survival *whole* of my people. But beyond that, I am committed to exploring the oppressions, insanities, the loyalties and triumphs of black women" (250).

Exposed to exploitation and ill treatment as 'beasts of burden' for centuries, the black women always occupied a marginal position in American society. Walker has taken it as her mission to reinstate and reaffirm the role of black women in culture and history through her writings and activism. While the white male writers and even black male writers have perpetuated the myth of the monolithic black women, Walker has focused on black woman as an individual struggling towards freedom and selfhood by extricating herself from the stereotypes attributed to her.

Meridian (1976) set in the turbulent backdrop of the Civil Rights Movement, gives voice to the doubly oppressed group, African American women, their coming into consciousness, and a subsequent development of self and search for authenticity. A womanist *bildungsroman*, which

covers the events of twenty five years, it tells about the heroine, Meridian Hill's struggles to define herself and search for self-acceptance and self-knowledge. The plot revolves around four main characters, Meridian, Meridian's mother Mrs. Hill, Lynne, the white woman who marries Trueman and Trueman, "the vain, pretentious" (99) opportunist.

Walker tells about *Meridian* thus: "My novel will be about several women who come of age during the 60s and were active (or not active) in the Movement in the South. I am exploring their backgrounds, familial and sibling connection; their marriages, affairs and political persuasions, as they grow toward a future realization (and recognition) of themselves" (Walker, *Gardens* 256). *Meridian* is the spiritual and political biography of a character for which it is named and story of the protagonist's transition from victim to fully responsible activist. This paper briefly examines the trajectory of the protagonist's protest against the patriarchal concepts about motherhood, sexism and spirituality and attainment of liberation through female bonding and return to the roots of the black folk tradition.

In *Meridian*, Walker fights the myth of black motherhood that is supposed to be strong, suffering and sacrificing. Meridian rejects her status of a biological mother by abandoning her child, undergoing abortion and sterilization, and trying to become the mother of the community. Meridian's initial idea of motherhood is learnt from her own mother who marries Mr. Hill, not out of love but out of the desire to please the society. She believes that she has lost her independence to the pressures of motherhood and that "her personal life was over" and that she is "being buried alive, walled away from her own life, brick by brick." (50). Mrs. Hill fails to enlighten her own daughter about the dangers of motherhood, and pretends to be an ideal mother.

Meridian is guilty conscious for having spoiled her mother's happiness and stood in the way of her emerging self. Her love and marriage with Eddie and experience of motherhood at an early age made her also think, "So this is what slavery is like" (69). To fulfill her dreams, she abandons her child and joins Saxon College, not without a sense of guilt for her failure to be like "the standard of motherhood that had gone before" (91). African American mother-women have been traditionally pictured as an archetypal mother figure and as a guardian of Christian moral responsibility. This canonical image was first challenged unsuccessfully by Meridian's mother and later successfully by Meridian. Christian has observed that through Meridian and her mother's experiences Walker examines one of the society's major contradictions about black women.

The primary role to which they have been assigned and for which they are perpetually praised is also paradoxically, the means by which they are cut off from life. Since, in principle, society places motherhood on a pedestal, while, in reality it rejects individual mothers as human beings with needs and desires, mothers must both love their role as they are penalized for it. True for all mothers, this double edged dilemma is heightened for black women because society does not value their children (87).

Abortion and sterilization are her maximum protest and they stand for liberation from both sex and motherhood. She extricates herself from the strictures of society which categorizes her as "obedient daughter," "devoted wife" and "adoring mother" (4). Her protest is against the myth of motherhood which is too much glorified totally ignoring the reality behind it. Morrison in the book *Contemporary Fiction* refers to this aspect thus: "This problematisation of the axiom-

atic status of maternity as the destination of the black women signals one of the key concerns of Walker's fiction. That is, the (re)constitution of black American femininity in relation to the family, to political struggle and Christianity" (210). Motherhood has always been women's weakness and power. The condition of Mem in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* being exploited for her fertility and motherhood can be contrasted with Meridian forsaking the child, undergoing abortion and sterilization to declare her independence.

Black women on her journey to the freedom of the self have to fight the twin evils of sexism and racism. They are doubly marginalised because of the patriarchal attitudes of their own men and the racial discrimination from their sex in the white. Meridian's experiences at Saxon College were painful and productive in her path to success. The black professor Raymonds, with whom she worked as an assistant, proved to be a hypocrite like Trueman, the Civil Rights leader. He supported black people's rights and pretended to be a protector of black women, but in private life he oppressed black women as much as the white men do. Truman's view of women is a good example that tells about the fragmentation among the two sexes in the black community. On the one hand he is a womanizer but on the other hand he demands virginity. He is equally conscious about sexism and racism. He fails to love Meridian because he finds in her all the evils attributed to them like suffering, promiscuity, the lack of freedom etc.

At Saxon College she strives hard to overcome the guilt of being a black woman. The Sojourner tree in the centre of the campus, with its eerie legend of the slave woman, Louvinie whose tongue was buried there, becomes a powerful metaphor. The tree was planted there by Louvinie, a Black slave, who had the extraordinary gift of telling horror stories. At the Saxon

plantation where she was working, she was a favorite of children. A tragedy occurred in her life when the youngest of the Saxon children died of heart failure during one of the story telling sessions. As a punishment her tongue was cut down and later she buried it under a magnolia tree. It is suggestive of an alternative to their definition of black history and language and represents the black oral and musical tradition that has been silenced. It is also a reminder of the brutal slavery in the past. The 'wild child,' an independent young girl, makes a mockery of all the bourgeois values Saxon stands for. She was a young girl of thirteen, who managed to live in the streets without parents, relatives or friends. She became pregnant and was brought to the campus by Meridian and friends. But she escaped from there after one day and got killed in a road accident.

Meridian joins Atlanta Movement with the decision that she would go back to the people, live among them, like civil Rights workers used to do. Later she falls in love with Trueman Held, a leader of the Civil Rights Movement. But Truman gradually abandons her for a white girl Lynne Rabinowitz, to proclaim his equality with the white men. Meanwhile Meridian had conceived from Trueman, but unable to bear motherhood for a second time, aborts the child and undergoes sterilization. The triangle relationship of Trueman, Meridian and Lynne narrates how the forces of racism and sexism operate simultaneously to oppress black women.

Meridian is presented as tortured by various guilt feelings: for having stood in the way of mother's happiness, for being a mother who forsakes her child, more importantly, for being black woman. "The thorns of guilt are woven not only into the fabric of Meridian's life but into the heritage of black people as well. The tree Sojourner amplifies this point. That heritage contains within it the quality of powerlessness as well as strength"

(Christian 83). It was Meridian's understanding of the past and her involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and the decision to use her tradition that helped her to redefine herself in her own terms as a woman and as a mother.

The novel also deals with black /white sexual relations with great skill. African -American masculinity is interrogated in detail in the characters of Truman and Tommy Odds, who try to assert their masculinity through the sexual possession of white women and assault of Black women. The novel's theme that the personal liberation and societal freedom are interrelated is emphasized through the relationship between its major characters and the Civil Rights Movement.

Women empowerment through sisterhood or female bonding to overcome the double oppression is a prevailing theme in all of Walker's novels. *Meridian* narrates the strange relation between Meridian and Lynne. Lynne, is victimized for being white, both by Truman and by Tommy Odds. The latter rapes her and Truman blames her when she tells him about the rape. Now it is Meridian alone who tries to understand her and offers her support and love. She offers to help her as intimately as her sister. Later when their daughter Camara is raped and killed, Lynne and Truman seek Meridian's presence. At the end they attain their target, "fighting tooth and nail against the fragmentation of their selves, by the "double jeopardy" of race and sex, they search for and achieve "wholeness" and a home for themselves and metaphorically for their community" (Ray 65).

Meridian narrates the history of oppression of black women in America. The protagonist is a synthesis of the varied aspects of black Southern heritage. Meridian, guilty of being a black woman begins to examine her black consciousness and her femininity. She starts to reclaim black

women's history and link herself with the great tradition of black women. "It thrilled her to think she belonged to the people who produced Harriet Tubman, the only American woman who led troops to battle" (*Meridian* 106). The Civil Rights Movement and the Sojourner tree represent non-violent resistance, which has the power to transform powerlessness into a powerful weapon. "In volunteering to suffer, the participants of the social revolution confronted the totality of black people's heritage- the strength, the wisdom, and the shame. By insisting that all creation is inhabited by the spirit, the Movement hearkened back not to a western Christian tradition but to a deeper source, the African concept of 'animism'" (Christian 84).

As a *bildungsroman* novel, *Meridian*, deals with a number of experiences which the protagonist passes through in an effort to find out her identity, and develop herself as a complete being. She fights against society which demands conformity and ignores individual freedom, especially for black women. Fighting against odds she emerges as a phoenix with individual autonomy and liberated self. In the essay, "The Self in Bloom: Walker's *Meridian*" Mcdowell observes, "Meridian exemplifies the Emersonian notion that true growth and change can occur only when the individual discovers the "god" or divinity in himself or herself" (169).

American religious tradition, which demands conformity and asks her to be "Obedient daughter," "Devoted wife," and "Adoring mother," is another major obstacle, along with traditions of the cultural traditions, racism, sexism, motherhood etc. that hinders her path to self-discovery. (83). Meridian and her mother are presented as contrasts in their religious beliefs. "Mrs. Hill tells her daughter that, "God separated the sheeps from the goats and the black folk from the white" (83). The mother adheres to the traditional teach-

ings of Christianity blindly whereas, Meridian challenges her mother's blind belief in an escapist religion with the same force she challenges the constraints of marriage and motherhood. The mother is a representative of those black women who consider "Christianity as a comforting myth" and as an "opiate to the black slave" which "dimmed the horror and brutalities of oppression" (Mcdowell 170). She is black motherhood personified and swallows the myth entirely.

Meridian realizes that her search for identity requires retrospection, a move to the South where she anchors her search for black identity to arrive at her own concept of God and spirituality free from the Eurocentric patriarchal religious teachings. Like Shug Avery and Celie in *The Color Purple*, she draws inspiration from the African tradition especially the symbiotic musical and religious traditions and, "instead of the traditional pale Christ with stray lamb there was a tall, broad-shouldered black man" (218).

Simultaneous with the rediscovery of the black musical tradition, there is the rediscovery of the black church, "the most important cultural institution created by Negroes" (178). It is not her mother's church and the church of white Christian tradition she accepts finally. She accepts instead the black church of her slave ancestors- the church of "communal spirit, togetherness, righteous convergence" (219). She comes to the revelation that her identity is linked to the identity of her people. Having perceived the essential oneness with black community she rededicates herself to the liberation of all blacks. Thus, she reaches her own idea of identity free from western tradition and religion.

Meridian summarises her new concept about spirituality, sin and redemption thus: "But that is my value. Besides, all the people who are as alone as I am will one day gather at the river. We

will watch the evening sun go down. And in the darkness maybe we will know the truth" (242). She pardons Truman unconditionally saying, "Whatever you have done, my brother... know I wish to forgive you...love you. It is not the crystal stone of our innocence that circles us not the tooth of our purity that bites bloody our hearts" (242).

She represents the radical views about religion and spirituality upheld by Walker herself. It is spirituality in part a feminist or black feminist spirituality and in part a pre-Christian, African spirituality called animism that makes it possible to view all creations as living and as inhabited by spirit. Spirituality devoid of religion is what the protagonists in *The Color Purple* and *Meridian* reach at finally. The final phase of her eventful life, passing through childhood, self-education and alienation, is a return to the roots. Meridian, a victim of guilty conscience, finally emerges as the leader, or better as a mother, of the black race. Her lonely odyssey in search of the self is completed when she says:

i want to put an end to guilt/i want to put an end to shame/whatever you have done/my sister (my brother)/know I wish to forgive you/love you.... (235)

From defiance she moves to love and compassion and dedicates herself to be social reformer not through violence and physical prowess but through non-violence and moral strength. "Meridian transcends the boundaries of the female gender to embrace more universal concerns about individual autonomy, self reliance and self realization" (Mcdowell 168).

At the end of the novel *Meridian*, the protagonist gradually awakens from her subordinate roles as a black female, daughter, wife and mother to her own self by liberating herself from the in-

stitutions of dominance over women such as family, motherhood, religion and society which have restricted the growth of women. In addition to her own determination and desire for a change there are other factors such as female bonding and atavism to the African musical and religious traditions which prompt the emergence of the self. Simultaneously a political novel and womanist fiction, the novel traces the journey of a Black woman from marginalization into emancipation from the restraints and guilt conscience thrust upon her as a member from a doubly disadvantaged section in the American society. Finally, Meridian emerges as a womanist as envisaged by walker, "committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female" (Walker, *Gardens* xi).

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"Trauma, Blues and Healing(s): Women in search for agency in Gayl Jones's three Novels"



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The women in Gayl Jones's three novels, *Corregidora*, *Eva's Man* and *The Healing*, undergo traumatic existence. Here the blues serve as a narrative and as a coping mechanism. These can indeed be called as blues novels, from the perspective that these are ambiguous with no clear-cut conclusions and the simultaneous existence of happiness and sadness, illusion and reality. The aim of this paper is to show how memory and its preservation by the body leads to trauma and how this is shown through the presence of blues or any form of music in the novels concerned. The history that comes across is not a poeticized, glorified history, or one that only concentrates on the bright and happy elements of the past. For the purpose, trauma and its associated 'symptoms' are identified in the characters in these novels and the manifold ways in which healing encompasses both transgression as well as acceptance. The basic argument therefore is that in writing the novels under discussion, Gayl Jones offers a picture which seems to suggest that memories of slavery, memories of objectification in the long run lead individuals to lead traumatic lives which they try to overcome by indulging in art forms, retaliation or communal work.

Keywords: Trauma, Blues, History, Slavery, and Objectification.

Memory becomes a perpetrator of ensuing trauma in Gayl Jones's three novels- *Corregidora* (1975), *Eva's Man* (1976) and *The Healing* (1998).

What comes across as a unifying aspect in each of the novels is the presence of memory that shapes up their lives, its traumatic repercussions on the body and on the individuals' lives. These can indeed be called as blues novels, from the perspective that these are ambiguous with no clear cut conclusions and the simultaneous existence of happiness and sadness, illusion and reality.

The aim of this paper is to show how memory and its preservation by the body leads to trauma and how this is shown through the presence of blues or any form of music in the novels concerned. The history that comes across is not a poeticized, glorified history, or one that only concentrates on the bright and happy elements of the past. Barring a few instances in Harlan's narration that we have in *The Healing*, the other two books have hardly any happy recalling of the past or a positive memory that goes into the making of their present selves. Their traumatic existences are witness enough of their tragic and paralyzing memories.

The histories that the three novels deal with are lived and recollected or simply recollected, for its relation with memories of others' lives. Whatever be, characters immured in memories and history occupy the bulk of Jones's works, so much so that it threatens their present and future. This is in conformity with Nietzsche's assertion that the very sense of freedom which is the defining principle of human identity shrinks with man's reliance on history. A reimagination of oneself as part of an "unidentifiable historical or cultural chain" (Danta 82), individuals seek to legitimize, in the context of our work, notions of patriarchy and sexual violence. Such justification and legitimiza-

tion, according to Nietzsche is not only illusory but self-defeating too: "For to be part of history is to be subject to preconceived notions. This undermines the creative freedom of man" (82).

The trauma that inflicts an individual due to the influences of history and memory either overwhelms the individual or he/she manages to get out of it. To understand the very nature of trauma, we will look at the trauma theory given by Cathy Caruth in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*. The first symptom of trauma, she cites, is "belatedness" (Caruth 17) of a traumatic encounter, meaning that it is not fully experienced at the time it occurs. This delay in remembering the traumatic moment isolates it from other normal memories, leading to a trajectory of repetition. Flashbacks to the trauma can appear at any time "as an interruption, as something with a disrupting force or impact" suggesting that "it cannot be thought simply as a representation" (115). In addition, "trauma is not locatable in the simple original and violent event in an individual's past but rather in the way its very unassimilated nature- the way it was precisely not known in the first instance- returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4). The characteristic delay of trauma, how it is not experienced at the moment of crisis demonstrates that traumatic events do not fit into the structure and flow of time. Instead, they are discrete moments, frozen or isolated from normal memories. When these moments emerge into consciousness at any time, they bring with them the power of the event.

Memories would implicate mediation, inclusion and exclusion. Thus, its mediating nature, its movement between what appears to be the seamless boundary between past and present needs to be interpreted and analyzed. The association of memory and exclusion would feature forgetting just as inclusion would feature re invention. In both cases there is a difference between what

comes to us as – (a) events of the past and (b) telling a story about the events of the past. Hayden White in *Tropics of Discourse* deals with the narrativization of history. In an attempt to deconstruct the writings of well-known historians, he argues that the entire concept of objectivity that the historians claim is largely a misconception. Since their narration involves structure, it cannot avoid textuality.

The main hypotheses of this study are: (1) trauma is linked with memory in its belatedness, (2) trauma can, in creative pursuits by the individuals concerned supplant the pain by strength, (3) trauma gets transformed into the said form only when one allows the pain to move from individual to communal level, (4) in black lives, trauma finds no better expression than the blues.

The basic argument therefore is that in writing the novels under discussion, Gayl Jones offers a picture which seems to suggest that memories of slavery, memories of objectification in the long run lead individuals to lead traumatic lives which they try to overcome by indulging in art forms, retaliation or communal work.

An understanding of Jones's translation of trauma into art necessitates an understanding of trauma itself and its potential psychological effects. Memories are associated with trauma in the sense that memories which are painful haunt the individual. It may demand the fulfillment of certain things which were not materialized in the past. This however becomes impossible, for memories mean events and recalling of the past. When in the course of time certain memories turn traumatic, the individual may be filled with a desire to go back in time and say all that has been left unsaid, speak up when one was confronted with injustice, hit back when someone hurt him/her. These demands however cannot be fulfilled in the same circumstances of the past, the memo-

ries of which the mind preserves. This inability to fulfill all that is called forth by one's memories disrupts an individual's sense of self. It impedes memory, makes difficult for verbal expressions to articulate. Traumatic memories are frozen in time, thereby hindering an individual's recovery from these. Trauma results either in transformation or violation. Just as memory is transformed by trauma, trauma too is transformed by memory to suspend any other memory. This is shown in narratives through repetition. The entire compilation of memories in the individual's mind is reconstructed and only certain memories have an overwhelming presence and repeat. Trauma often operates between silence and repetition; and this mode of narration is followed by Jones in each of the three novels- *Corregidora*, *Eva's Man* and *The Healing*. To substantiate and validate our point, we will take help of trauma theorist Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*.

"Pain can be a fruitful place of transformation"- This assertion and the idea of pain by Bell Hooks in *Angry Women* anthology will precisely be the approach in our analysis of traumatic memories and recovery or liberation from it in our discussion henceforth.

Each of the novels has an interesting aspect, repetition of dialogues. In all of these the dialogues are repeated or in the interior monologues there is repeated assertion of things, sometimes with a slight variation each time; the repetition suggesting that trauma has got the better of the individual and the variations suggesting that the artist gets the better of trauma. The interior monologues are indications of the difficulty of verbal expressions to articulate and hence resorting to an exchange with the self. The repetition mode can be shown with an example from one of the novels:

“What bothers you?”

“It bothers me because I can’t make generations.”

“What bothers you?”

“It bothers me because I can’t.”

“What bothers you, Ursa?”

“It bothers me because I can’t fuck.”

“What bothers you, Ursa?”

“It bothers me because I can’t feel anything.” (374)

Corregidora is a deviation from traditional slave narratives in that the author does not narrate either real or imaginary events under the real conditions of slavery. While the conditions of slavery are reiterated in the protagonist, Ursa’s memory throughout the book, it is the traumatic effect of the memory that pervades the whole of the book and needs analysis. This trauma comes across in the form of historically ingrained power relations and violence that entraps Ursa within it. This is done through a reanimation of sexual violence experienced by her foremothers during slavery in her own sexual relationships. It becomes impossible for the women to think of their sexual organs in the realm of non procreative sexual expression. In this case the traumatic past hinders the present healthy sexual life of Ursa and consequently turns it traumatic. Ursa, in deviating from her maternal ancestors’ historiography agenda was aware of the extent to which her family’s past, in which she was not directly involved had not allowed her to live her present. Her childhood indeed was no less than a traumatic survival, for the obligation to make generations were impinged on to her very being since then:

“I am Ursa Corregidora. I have tears for eyes. I was made to touch my past at an early age” (361).

But the realization of the trauma is characterized by ‘belatedness.’ Recovering in the hospital in loneliness and dejection memories flock her mind and she can realize the traumatic effect she has undergone since she was a child and compulsions to “make generations” consumed her. The accident in a way aggravates the impact of the memories that has long ago been internalized by her. The belatedness springs from the fact that right when she was narrated of the legacy of slavery, she was not aware of the impact it would have on her. Several years later when she is lying on her bed in the hospital and has faced hysterectomy, her life is reduced to a traumatic existence. It is then that the consequences of trauma come into the narrative - flashbacks and repetitions. There is no one particular moment that is traumatic. Events and incidents collide, and the realization of the way it was not known (to be of a traumatic nature when it first occurred) renders the attribute and consequences of being traumatic to the memories concerned.

Perhaps the right approach to memories in the context of slavery can be attributed to Mutt. The story that he has of his grandfather goes to show that the past must be remembered, but not so intensely as to be relived in an obsessive manner. The blacks’ cultural memory is wholly characterized by its relation to slavery and Mutt’s case is no exception. However he does not let it freeze him in the past in any way and in fact is irritated by Ursa’s obsession with her familial narrative.

Ursa’s inability to carry on a relationship is explained by Tadpole’s question which only goes to show that her mind was already conditioned in a particular way to view men. The disturbance in her relationship and the trauma it leads to in her mind is indicative of the fact that she has been trained to feel about men in a certain way, and this includes the belief that the necessity of a relationship ends with making children. Pleasure

in this sense is obliterated by the mechanical operation of sex. It is important to highlight Tadpole's question that answers itself as to what she feels about men:

"How were you really taught to feel about him?" He asked, looking at me hard.

"How I told you," I said, angry (297).

The word "taught" used by Tadpole answers much of our inquisitiveness regarding Ursa's relationships; for she has been prescribed to think and feel about men in a certain way, the way Great Gram and Gram felt i.e. as "rapists." In the process, she separates her body from desire and the demands of her inherent self remain unfulfilled.

Though not slaved by Corregidora, she is enslaved by the memories of his women and Ursa's mother and this in no way spares her from a living that is no different from a slave and his/her loss of individuality, identity and mental peace. Ursa is no longer Ursa, she is a Corregidora woman and after her hysterectomy old man Corregidora comes to her dreams; where she asserts that she is not his woman but Corregidora asserts his claim over her.

Who are you?

You don't even know your own father?

You not my father. I never was one of your women.

Corregidora's women. Yes, you are (361).

This in a way signifies her loss of right over her own body, her body being dictated by the memories that needs to be recorded to keep alive the family trauma. The consuming nature of the compulsion to carry the family legacy entraps Ursa in a trauma. In other words, necessity to keep the trauma of slavery alive, her present reduces to the same and Ursa is fully aware of this. What

becomes very evident to us is that the memory Ursa preserves within herself is not willful on her part and what is not willful becomes in course of time traumatic, forced on an individual's being. The blues thereby become a very legitimate device of her life which is characterized by ambiguity. It was as if she wanted the world to know what she had lost under the apparent loss of her womb, how Mutt had taken away more than her womb in the assumed "intentional" accident of pushing her down the stairs. Even the accident's motive and intention remains ambiguous till the end, acknowledging the blues feeling.

After her hysterectomy, the book is replete with instances which justify our assertion that traumatic memory operates between silence and repetition. Post hysterectomy, her consciousness is blurred by dreams and continuous flashbacks. These flashbacks centre on Gram's oral tales of familial history, imaginary conversations with Mutt and old slave owner Corregidora asserting his control over her. In these continuous recollections of the past, time and reality gets collapsed which in turn indicates the disrupting force of these memories and their endless impact on Ursa's life. Her imaginary conversations to Mutt show how a recovery from trauma requires the assistance of someone who can listen to the victim/survivor.

Corregidora encompasses within it the transformation of what can be called resistance in one generation to trauma in the subsequent ones. Gram and Great Gram embody the forces of resistance to the disappearance of slavery records. This resistance and the obligation it demands from the next generations turns traumatic for Ursa and Mama for it shapes their understanding of social and personal relations. One more thing to be remembered here is that the memories that are called upon to be retained by the people concerned (here, Mama and Ursa) are

communal memories, for these individual stories are two out of similar stories that happened in the Brazilian plantation during slavery. Gayl Jones again in doing this shows how such memories augur a traumatic existence in the later generations. In doing so, she again speaks for the whole community which suffers because of such compulsions in it. Clearly, Ursa and her mother are representatives of several women who bear the responsibility of continuity as regards resistance which however does not remain so and transform into something traumatic.

In a way Ursa's inability to bear children emerges as a potent force to make her realize the ramifications of her foremother's memories and history of slavery. Jones, in doing this, shows the possibility of recovering from the wounds of the slave past. The moment and memories of slavery turn into a liberating force and rediscovery of the self. Ursa's trauma in internalizing the memories of her foremothers' slave past makes her aware of the disintegration of her own sexual identity. We can connect here with Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and her use of the term *re memory* which can be understood as a healing and liberating process that is different from the traditional understanding of remembering. In *Corregidora* *re memory* becomes a haunting experience to those who remember and are called upon to remember. This aspect of *re memory* is highlighted by the text's emphasis on "making generations" and Ursa's subsequent utterance after the accident:

I lay on my back, feeling as if something more than the womb had been taken out (290).

This trauma is overcome by the realization about the hold memory has had on Ursa. And it is here that the positives of *re memory* come into play. Her hysterectomy situates her in a point from which she begins to think about the traumatic *re memory*. Ursa comes to think of her family his-

tory as "pages of hysteria" that has led to her problems in sexual life and her alienation from her own body. What begins from the underlying trauma is the evaluation of the traumatic *re memory* and the impact it has had on her. This is followed by a question that leads to her self identification:

Even if I still had my womb, even if the first baby had come—what would I have done then? Would I have kept it up? Would I have been like her, or them?

Memories of Corregidora's incest pervade Ursa's consciousness and a sense of shame runs through her veins:

I thought of the girl who had to sleep with her master and mistress. Her father, the master. Her daughter's father. The father of her daughter's daughter. How many generations? She went and got her daughter, womb swollen with the child of her own father. How many generations had to bow to his genital fantasies. (343)

Just as her foremothers bowed down to Corregidora's sexual demands is analogous to Ursa's bowing down to the demands of historical preservation.

In *Corregidora*, Ursa, the narrator, is a blues singer and her performances are a conscious retelling of the conflicts in her mind and the resulting trauma. It is an attempt to tell everyone about Mutt's guilt in her failed relationship, of his being an accomplice to shape her doom in the form of hysterectomy. Her body is incapacitated of having children and the blues is an ample tool in Ursa's hand that can speak and convey all that has been lost, all that she has been deprived of. Ursa's mother does not approve of her singing the blues for it implicitly deals with her sexuality, since these are full of sexual innuendos. Ursa's

mother on the other hand prefers the music of the gospels, a music that seems to have been purged of all sexual connotations and offers a sense of cleansing and forgiveness which Ursa does not seek. This shows the change in thinking from Ursa's mother to Ursa and how they associate the Corregidora familial history to themselves.

Mama previously is the most vehement opponent of Ursa's singing- Songs are devils. It's your own destruction you're singing, The voice is a devil (337). When Ursa tries to justify her position that Gram too liked the blues, Mama can only say that "listening to the blues and singing them ain't the same" (387); thus meaning that acknowledging the difficult experiences of someone else and articulating one's own is not the same. By performing the blues, Ursa shifts her subject position like her mother of a passive listener/recipient to an active storyteller, one who could articulate her personal sufferings.

They call it the devil blues. It rides your back. It devil you. I bit my lip singing. I troubled my mind, took my rocker down the river again. It was as if I wanted them to see what he'd done, hear it. All those blues feelings. That time I asked him to try to understand my feeling ways. That's what I called it. My feeling ways. My voice felt like it was screaming. What do they say about pleasure mixed in the pain? The pleasure somehow greater than the pain. (334)

In a way, this narration by Ursa situates our equation of trauma with blues on firmer grounds. The blues become a mode of expression of black suffering, with the music becoming an outlet for the expression of black agony. It is also important to mention that blues developed as an exclusively black artistic form, though it was later appropri-

ated by the whites too. In the novel, blues become synonymous with Ursa's and her predecessors' failed relationships. Ursa never knew about her father, rather her mother's narration was always about the Corregidora history, until Ursa one day decided to venture into her mother's past. It is only then that the trauma of Ursa's mother comes to us in the guise of her failed relationship. Her mother failed to sustain a healthy relationship once her prime motive in life is fulfilled- that of preserving and continuing memory through childbirth.

The blues, which can be said to be a critical mode of self expression, is something different for Ursa. Her most significant audiences are not the anonymous listeners but Mutt and Mama. We are not provided with the scene in which Ursa relates her private memory to Mama, but in the final pages of the book we are given an account of how she listened to it. Her listening is mentioned to be characterized by quietness - "a quiet kind of listening" (466) that is suggestive of the fact that on already knows or may be one "it's a song they've sung themselves," differing only in "lyrics." The exchange of stories and private memories between Mama and Ursa shows the mutuality of blues, a kind of give and take that exists between the performer and the audience. By exchanging stories about their private selves, Mama and Ursa acknowledge or recognize a private history that can exist outside the realm of totalizing family narrative.

Ursa's imaginary conversations with Mutt show that she needs someone to relate her trauma to. Trauma suppressed within an individual seeks outlet, a confession to someone of what the victim is undergoing. This is preceded by her belief that her mother's relating the circumstances of her failed relationship with her husband may open options or she may recover from her loneliness:

I was thinking now that Mama had gotten it all out, her own memory—at least to me anyway—maybe she and *some man*.... But then, I was thinking, what had I done about my *own* life? (416)

This is the moment of self realization, of the awareness of how she had extricated herself and her body from pleasure. The question posed here of what she had done with her own life is the sense of belatedness we are talking about. Her equation of a woman with womb, which is what she has been “taught” to conceive, in combination with all the tales in the oral history passed down to her now appear to be haunting her mind; making her question the very outcome of the relationship she has ended up in. The dream like conversations with Mutt show a suppressed desire on her part to go back to him, but the thought of Mutt leading to her disability to continue the family imperative again entraps her in the familial perception of men as “rapists” with whom there would be no question of desire and pleasure. This comment also demonstrates that self expression allows for reconciliation with the past and a possible transformation of future dynamics.

Gayl Jones, in an interview with Michael S. Harper says that the relationships between men and women she is dealing with are “blues relationships.” So they’re out of a tradition of “love and trouble.” Ursa’s relationships with the men in her life are indeed a relationship of love and hate. She hates Mutt for what she assumes to be an intentional push in the form of an accident contrived by him to make her lose her womb. Again, she cannot get him out of her mind.

Ursa’s healing starts with her participation in singing the blues. Initially she “sang because it was something I (she) had to do;” for she took it to be the only way that she could give witness to ancestral traumas. The blues becomes a “living

archive,” a form of recollection, a coded history of black injury resulting from historically entrenched power relations. The blues is an expression of the loneliness and rejection, the exclusion and isolation of the Negro and a longing for love and connection. Post her separation with Mutt, the blues provides her with an agency to articulate her personal trauma and separate it from the collective memory. At various points in the novel, she sings the classic blues anthem “Trouble in Mind.” Right after the accident, there is the first instance when she sings “Trouble in mind, I’m blue, but I won’t be won’t be blue always” (328). This is predictive of the healing from the trauma that she will experience in the times to come. Also maintained within the lyrics is the idea that through her singing Ursa will be able to preserve her foremothers’ re memory maintaining remembrance without reinscribing trauma. As black feminist critics have noted, women’s blues music is a discourse that is an articulation of the struggles, both cultural and political directed against the objectification of female sexuality within a patriarchal order. For Ursa, then, performing the blues becomes a mode of healing that assists her in her efforts to reclaim her agency and sexual identity.

However it has to be recognized that the blues is not the only way to heal the self. It takes Ursa to twenty years back where she finally reaches a resolution. The novel’s ambiguous ending is a testimony to our understanding that the process of healing will take some time and will open new avenues. The mode of healing requires for one not to forget the past but rather remember it and use it to negotiate the power dynamics of the present.

Eva’s Man too follows the pattern of belatedness and flashbacks in trauma. Landed up in a prison for the criminally insane, Eva’s mind drifts back to the past. But the realization of the trauma that

had worked on her mind precedes being in the prison. It became clear to her in the five-day affair with Davis in a hotel room, Eva comes to see Davis as a representative of all the men who had objectified her since her childhood. This vague realization gradually hatches up trauma in her mind; for, as she relates later to the psychiatrist, he thought she was "that kind of woman." This has been the perception of all men she has encountered throughout her life. She also says in her hysterical insanity that finally overcomes in the final section of the book:

I wanted to get out of there. He didn't have no right to keep me in there.

He used the room (640).

Trauma, in its extreme of forms and seeking redemption can result in violence of all kinds, murder or suicide. Davis' revelation of his marriage precedes and can be said to propel the climactic act of castration. Being confined to the four walls of the hotel room she feels confined to the domain of an impinging patriarchal sexuality that calls upon the woman to satisfy the man. Eva's trauma arises from her being objectified by the men of a lineage of criminal patriarchy that paid no heed to her age or consent. The confinement within the hotel room and the man using her to his own liking may remind one of Eva's marriage to a man who was many years older to her and who denied her to use a telephone. It has been her history to being deprived of having her way and say in the matter of relationships. In castrating and poisoning Davis, Eva sees it as an attempt to break free from objectification and the trauma it has resulted in. However this cannot be said to be a proper way to overcome the trauma that one has been undergoing. This form of violence is not one that is espoused by the writer and this is evident from her bestowing on Eva an insanity that consumes her and disables her to recover from her current situation. This is in conformity with

our position that trauma and seeking redemption can result in negatives. Here Eva's act of castrating Davis is a kind of retribution that is very legitimate to her. However depriving the phallic fraternity of the phallus, the symbol of power, autonomy and control does no good to her; for the book ends with her babbling incidents that are random in occurrence and are in no way logical to the questions that psychiatrist has put forth. It is on close reading that Eva has in no way healed, trauma refuses to leave her and she collapses under its destructive force.

Eva is, unlike Ursa, the protagonist of *Corregidora*, not literally a blues singer. The characteristics of the blues have to be taken metaphorically that may include Eva's history, relationships and retaliation within its scope. She is, figuratively speaking, a blues singer whose narrative participates in the antecedent African movement of "going public." Eva's history is marked by the requisite blues condition of repeated confrontation with the "thwarted potential of character and relationships." Moving from the performance of the female blues singer at the hotel where she first meets with Davis to the climactic castration scene that puts an end to their five day affair, which Eva describes as an attempt "to make music, hard and deep," *Eva's Man* qualifies as an extended blues performance. The story is characterized by repetitions, love and violence existing on the same plane.

Trauma freezes Eva's life in the past and the ending pages of the novel are a pathetic indication of her disintegrating mind. Memories will continue to haunt her. Her punishing Davis cannot wipe away a lifetime of dark memories. Even though the act can be said to have been ignited by a sense of female solidarity, one she thinks was an act of retribution, her mind is caught up in its own insanity and refuses to recover or talk in a sense that would be termed logical.

The Healing is a different book altogether. Here we have Harlan Jane Eagleton who is a rock star

manager to Joan and is one of the infatuations of Joan's divorced husband. Joan finds Harlan with James (Joan's husband) on bed and though she insists that it no longer matters to her or makes her insecure, for they are now divorced- "I mean when I caught him with you that was nothing to catch him with you." However this is the primary incident that leads to the first healing, i.e. the healing of the self when Joan attacks Harlan with a knife. It is the insecurities of the women concerned and Joan's regular humiliating that turns Harlan's life traumatic. She is constantly disturbed by the fact that James's ex-wife has caught her with him. Joan tells to Schacter that Harlan "can't do a thing for me(her) but my (her) makeup", thus finding a way to humiliate her whenever possible. These instances do not put Harlan's mind at rest and she is continuously unsure of what Joan feels about her. In fact the attack by Joan re affirms and ensures about the jealousy that had been an unseen presence in their professional relationship. In fact, the attack liberates her from a disturbing managerial relationship with a rock star who likes satire, wit, and what she calls as "intelligent music": "intelligent and satirical rock and roll." This is the basis of her criticism of Harlan's criticism of her choices and suggestions and asserting that her former husband would never approve of the choices of those kind. The attack, in all its supernatural features renders Harlan a freedom from these humiliations and hence she can heal the self of complexes characterized by inferiority and subjugation. This also speaks for black domination, not necessarily by whites but blacks too; not necessarily the domination of black women by white women, but by black women too.

Harlan's husband has, as Harlan believes, left her for a Masai healing woman. In surviving the attack, she herself goes on to become a healing woman, thus positing a contention to forces which tended to demean her. She transforms her pain and devotes herself to the whole community, including both the whites and the blacks. Her history then comes to us as one where trauma gets transformed in its every bit into something life changing and liberating.

Through this in depth study we have tried to analyze the role of memories in trauma. It can thus be concluded that when linked with the community, trauma in the blacks, with all its associated pain turns into something meaningful and when not, it engulfs the individual. It depends on the individual's efforts to place pain and trauma in new equations to save oneself from the paralyzing force of memories that are linked to violence and subjugation.

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In Search of Peace and Identity: A Post Colonial Study of Sharon Bala's *The Boat People*



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Sharon Bala's *The Boat People* is a high-stake novel that offers a deeply compassionate lens through which current refugee crisis is viewed. Inspired by real events, with vivid scenes that move between the eerie beauty of northern Sri Lanka and combative refugee hearings in Vancouver, where life and death decisions are made, Sharon Bala's stunning debut is an unforgettable and necessary story of our times. The novel dramatizes the problems of five hundred survivors who escape from Sri Lanka to Canada because they are under extortion and duress in their homeland. All their expectations in seeking a safe haven in Canada crumble as they are subjected to 'Ariadne's thread' like unending trial for obtaining refugee status. They are treated as aliens both in their homeland and in Canada. They undergo massive exploitation and mistreatment under both the governments and their constitution. The present study investigates the challenges they face as they tread along this slippery path to their freedom.

Keywords: *Refugee, Aliens, Immigration, Civil Right, Asylum, and Inclusive Exclusion.*

The refugee crisis has undoubtedly been one of the greatest challenges that the international community has confronted for some time from now. Even though the emphasis in the interim appears to be at the urgent want for the management of the refugee disaster, in the midst of all this plays a vital mission that involves the combination of refugees in the nations in order to end host them. Important to this challenge is the evaluation regarding the relation of the newly arrived populace to neighbourhood labour markets. This paper focuses on the troubles of refugees that wishes to be taken into attention not handiest the structural characteristics of host nations however also the values and ideals of refugees.

Sharon Bala, is a Canadian author dwelling in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Her debut novel, *The Boat People*, gained the 2015 Percy Janes First Novel Award for unpublished manuscripts, and got published by McClelland and Stewart and Doubleday in January 2018. The e-book bame internationally publicized as a part of Penguin Random house's One world.

The ebook was decided on for the 2018 edition of Canada Reads, wherein it becomes defended through Mozhdah Jamalzadah. It additionally won the Harper Lee Prize for prison Fiction, turned into a finalist for the 2018 amazon.ca, First Novel Award, and was shortlisted for the 2015 sparkling Fish Award for emerging Writers and the 2019 Thomas Head Raddall Award.

Bala became the winner of the 2017 journey Prize for her short story "Butter Tea at Starbucks" and was longlisted for the 2017 countrywide magazine Award for fiction for her short tale "Miloslav." Her short fiction has seemed in Hazlitt, Grain, The Dalhousie overview, Riddle Fence, Room, Prism international, Maisonneuve, Joy land, and the new Quarterly, and in an

anthology known as *Racket: New Writing From Newfoundland*. (WIKI 2021)

Sharon Bala's debut novel is an ancient fiction. Given that the event which furnished cognizance for the tale befell lately. It is the tale of a shipment deliver, sporting nearly five hundred refugees, who had been intercepted off the coast of Vancouver Island in August of 2010. One may think a documentary will be the logical preference to inform in this problem. But, the lack of precise records to be had within the public area might have made one of these efforts to provide awareness the usage of this technique, a hard, if not possible undertaking. A few information were intentionally withheld by using the author to defend the ones in search of asylum. by deciding on to inform a tale instead of relate an account, Sharon Bala was able to merge her fictionalized characters with historical and systemic records and did with the intention to superb advantage.

We, as readers, became aware about the tensions which not most effective surrounded the situations of refugee claimants however also visited a few with roles inside the choice-making manner. She accessed feelings, excited intellects and forced the inner conversations. Grace, a central authority employee freshly transferred from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to the Immigration and Refugee Board, observed herself on a private discovery direction. Her own family had been unfairly handled by the Canadian authorities. In the course of global war II, the rights of the character had been sacrificed underneath surroundings of irrational hysteria. Canadian citizens of eastern descent have been forcibly moved to internment camps. Now, as part of a decision-making frame — one that addresses the critical question of who receives to live and who does no longer — Grace laboured in a similar environment of purpose-

fully fermented anxiety where the terms 'criminals' and 'terrorists' have been descriptors typically accessed to explain these Tamil people. The everyday humanitarian processes used to work with refugee claimants in Canada had been suspended. Politically motivated, surprisingly lengthy periods of incarceration were imposed on this group. The parallels among the lives of her mom and grandparents and those of those Tamil refugees are without difficulty obvious. Priya, is an articling scholar motive on pursuing a corporate law profession. As a 2d generation Canadian who only knew a "few phrases" of her father's local language, Tamil, she became pressured to reconcile particular revelations approximately her own family's beyond with the continued struggles of the passengers on the MV sun Sea who sought refuge in Canada. The asylum seekers' testimonies are largely visible thru the eyes of Mahindan, one of the humans on the migrant boat. Insights were received into the hard Tamil villager's lives which had been being led during the duration of violence. Making use of a writing technique which seamlessly cycles, focusing on both beyond and gift studies, the writer, Sharon Bala, confronts her analyzing target audience with the realities of dwelling in surroundings of intense war. She challenges them to come back to terms with those refugees and recognize something about the definition of preference. If someone refused to join the cause what will be the ramifications. past these private testimonies and their associated stages of disquiet, *The Boat* human beings opens yet any other window, one which allows us to peer, in a diploma of detail, the Canadian system designed to research and decide on the legitimacy of those wishing to assert refugee fame. Its miles a complex shape, one which is susceptible to government outreach. those on the MV solar Sea were deliberately denied get right of entry to the well timed listening to strategies and dwelling conditions to be had to different claimants. The

politics of the time prevailed. We, as readers, are supposed to digest this records, learn from it and question the assemble of this quasi-judicial frame which continuously holds person lives in balance. (Quil and Quire 2018)

The novel ends with Mahindan strolling into his admissibility hearing. In spite of more than thirteen failed detention evaluations, he remains carefully hopeful. Charlie and Priya escort Sellian to the hearing wherein he reunites with his father before it starts. Sellian demonstrates his English abilities and his athleticism by means of jogging around before Mahindan, glad along with his infant's development and witnessing how nicely he has adjusted to existence in Canada, he enters the listening to with the voice of his deceased spouse murmuring in his thoughts. "it is time, she whispered. You ought to cross. I'm prepared, Mahindan stated, and stepped over the threshold (388)."

The Boat People appropriates an Agambenian sense whereby the refugees are under unending trials just to make them feel excluded from the society who has no position at all. Surprisingly, five hundred survivors decked on British Colombian Island in Canada have been converted into the homo sacer or sacred men. They bear no rights and the Canadian statecraft has even made them commit suicide when some of them are declared illegal and deported. Before they are assigned the refugee status they lead the life of *zoe*, life equal to the beast. A critic points out the zoological life of the asylum seekers: "Instead, the group is thrown into prison, with government officials and news headlines speculating that hidden among the "boat people" are members of a terrorist militia infamous for suicide attacks (Jamalzadhin). Zamalzadhin's critique on the step taken by Canadian government sharply hints out - the technologies and tactics of domination (Society Must Be Defended 34), the power

processes of the authority over the survivors that has spread onto grassroot to violate the human right of the refugees who turn to be stateless in the democratic regime. Indeed, this attempt is to make them lead bare life of homo sacer. To do so, the Canadian authority is trying to tag the survivors as terrorists. In consort with it, to Farrell, biopolitics - relates to the practice of modern nation states and their regulation of their subjects through an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and control of populations (1). His aim is to bring home the dominating nature of biopolitics that subjugates people as in *The Boat People*; the survivors are subjugated as terrorists. Agamben forwards his thesis of homo sacer who is subjected to bare life through werewolf ban as evidence imbibing idea from Carl Schmitt, the Nazi jurist who deals with how the constitutive political body of people turned into population: a demographical biological entity. By the same token, the Canadian authority to manage demographic data declares Ranga (one of the refugees) like a person as a terrorist affiliating him with the Tamil waging group. Indeed in the sense of Foucault, it is - invasion of humanity by the state (*Birth of Biopolitics* 76). Since ancient times, sovereignty has relied on a continuous state of exception in which bare life is irreducibly indistinguishable from politics. Which Agamben decries as the life of a human being constrained by the politics of a state and by culture is termed as - bare life, - and the state she/he lives in is called - state of exception. Further he elaborates: A state of exception (German: *Ausnah-me-zu-stand*) is a `concept in the legal theory of Carl Schmitt, similar to a state of emergency, but based in the sovereign's ability to transcend the rule of law in the name of the public good. This concept is developed in Giorgio Agamben's book *State of Exception*. It is a state where the sovereign has the power and where law is indefinitely

suspended' without being abrogated. Agamben's stand is that to subjugate the citizens the regime declares the emergency that suspends law which is known as the state of exception. Largely, the regime has the privilege to suspend the law in the name of good governance, which reduces citizens' rights. Further, it legally bans the inborn rights of human beings that are curtailed and innocent people and that are included in politics only to create the state of exception, thereby the civic rights are forbidden. The ban is the recurring order to banish the werewolf launched by the sovereign for the protection of regime and threaten to exile certain lawbreakers from the community as werewolves or bandits. Exiled as a being that is neither entirely human nor beast, the person who has been banned from the city is, like homo sacer, a sacred figure who can be killed without culpability like a wolf, but not sacrificed. In the figure of the werewolf, animal life and political life have merged to the point where they are indistinguishable. As Agamben makes it clear, the ban does not draw a sharp limit between humanity and animality, city and forest, but rather blurs the boundary between such oppositions. He elaborates: The life of the bandit, like that of the sacred man, is not a piece of animal nature without a relation to law and the city. It is rather, a threshold of indistinction and of passage between animal and man, physis and nomos, exclusion and inclusion: the life of the bandit is the life of the loup-garou, the werewolf, who is precisely neither man nor beast, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither (*Homo Sacer* 105). The bandit is outlawed from city life and ruptures the borders between human and animal by narrowing the scope of the sovereign's authority over his being alive. The traumatic narrative of Mahindan evidences it: "The Sinhalese, they hate Tamil. We were treated like animals. They just do not understand life (166)." This story by Mahindan mirrors what has

been done upon the layman in the name of politics. Treating one group as if they are animal, justifying werewolf or the bare life and the threshold of *zoé* and *bios* as explained by Agamben. Back to the novel, Mahindan when he faced the hardship in learning new language and suffers from aphasia he recalls his grandfather as the staff during the colonial era who would speak English but later when Sinhalese overtook the regime, the Tamil were excluded from the statecrafts. Priya narrates. "His grandfather had spoken English. He had gone to London for his studies and worked as a civil servant in Colombo until Sinhala Only Act ended his career... (12)." This archeological exposure of Sri Lankan history acts as a sovereign ban imposed upon the Tamil in their birthplace that caused the retaliation in Kilinochi. The neutral Tamils were doubly marginalized by the waging groups. Mahindan reflects on why he has been interrogated more than a dozen in the detention reviews because the bus that he had repaired carried a bomb. Upon its explosion of the bomb, the innocent foreigners were killed. Mahindan recalls. "If I (Mahindan) had refused, he would have beaten me. If I had refused him again, he would have killed me The cadre would have set fire to our home allowed my wife to burn inside. The things they did to us... you cannot imagine. Sinhalese army, Tamil Tigers . . . we were nothing to them (169)." In fact, Priya graphically illustrates Mahindan's narrative, which mirrors the ground reality of how the laymen in war torn Sri Lanka were under Damocles' Sword. The Tamil civilians were excluded from both sides. They were badly reduced to an instrument. This forceful inclusion by the rebel group helps the survivors to be excluded in Canada. Later, it seemed that Ranga like the refugee claimant are included in the immigration trial to be excluded in Canadian society that caused his suicide. Is it the death or murder? Who is responsible for his

death? His death signals Canadian impunity, beyond law. He died like the bandit or the werewolf. In addition, his death ruptures the boundary between humanity and animality. From the hellish war front, they made a Herculean attempt to escape in a retrofitted cargo boat to Canada. Finally, upon these refugee claimants, there is more than thirteen detention reviews. This episode evidences the subjugated life that is ripped off from the rightful position in the society which Agamben calls inclusive exclusion.' In line with this notion, Agamben unveils the tyrannical nature of the sovereignty that perpetually violates human rights. The citizens are included in a state mechanism only to be excluded from political rights, which is *bios*. By executing judicial power, the citizens are tagged negatively and are stereotyped who has no value in the society. Tuning with this reductionist state character, the forced removal and incarceration of the displaced people are underscored as follows: [S]ubjecting foreign asylum seekers to the processes established by rule of law is the same as the forced removal and incarceration of law abiding citizens. It's a false equivalence that blights a novel already struggling under the weight of political opinion: Bala vilifies the Canadian Border Services Agency and the draconian immigration laws. (Freeman) Her reading of *The Boat People* also proves the subjectivation of refugee claimants as *homo sacer* who are *persona non grata* and belonging to nowhere. The detention and the lengthy trial upon the survivors highlights Agamben's sovereign ban on the werewolves. Further, denying the refugee status by the Canadian court exemplifies the juridicopolitics of Canada that regards survivors as the object of politics. To Agamben, this form of life is bare life.' The ban merges, to a point of indistinction, *zoé* - the simple fact of living common to all living beings, II and *bios*, - the form or way of living proper to an

individual or group (1). However, bare life' is not simply the sheer fact of living as we understand it through *zoé*, a being alive' that humans share with all other plant and animal life. On the contrary, the bare life of humans is something that has been performatively produced by sovereignty; it is a political concept of life that belongs as much to bios as it does to *zoé*. The ban constitutes the political power of the sovereign, by suspending the law and including bare life in the political realm that also designates who is to be included and who is to be excluded.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, Mahindan and other five hundred Sri Lankan survivors in Canada have stranded between their zoological and biological life. It justifies Agambian notion of homo sacer who is hemmed by inclusive exclusion under the power technology of city/state. The latent character of modern state is to outlaw its denizens by creating the state of exception which the Canadian Government has done in regards to Sri Lankan refugee claimants. The lengthy trial in their case, deportation, and separating Mahindan from his six years son illustrate the fact that biopolitics of the city/ state curbs citizenry rights in the name of managing populations and providing them good governance. Apart from it, the parochial racist attitude of Blair like politician proves the intermingling of life with power politics of the

state in Canada. Finally, granting and not granting asylum in Canada at the cost of refugees' earlier life in Sri Lanka proves to be explicit enmeshing of life with the interest of the state. Largely, the Canadian juridico-politics turns out to tag the refugees as *persona non grata*, who do not have social value like of the bandit in Agamben's homo sacer discourse. Thus the refugees are supersets of Sri Lankan and Canadian politics that subjected them to outlawry.

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The Handmaid's Tale: A Shady Halo of Womanhood



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Handmaid's Tale is a novel set in the 1984 second wave of feminist movement, exploring the possibility of the conservative counter group gaining an upper hand. This meant that the women who had the courage to speak out were subjected to brutal humiliations like being relegated to be a handmaid or sent to inhuman colonies where they had to work till their skin was torn off from their knuckles, cleaning toxic wastes and working in government run brothels called Jezebel's, as delineated in the novel. Offred, the central character and narrator is the essence of a subjugated woman in a patriarchal society. She is represented as a fertile woman in an otherwise polluted environmentally degraded world. Destined forcibly to produce children for the Commanders she is a biblical replica of Rachel and Bilah. She starts detailing her life when she is forced into the house of the third Commander. In a very engaging narrative, which is actually a 'cautionary tale' which enabled one to see a "surprised recognition necessary for readers to see our present selves in a distorting mirror, of what we may be turning into if the current trends are allowed to continue."

Keywords: *Offred, Cautionary Tale, Stage Engineered Rape, Gilead, and Dystopia.*

“It is a political tract deploring nuclear energy and environmental degradation” is what Joyce Johnson from the Washington Post claimed about the Prophet of Dystopia and leading Canadian critic Margaret Atwood’s novel *Handmaid’s Tale*. It re-creates the tale of a dystopia in which a reproductively challenged society is forced to follow a totalitarian theocracy where women are subjected to state engineered rape. Speculative fiction as the author herself terms it, revolves around various themes that challenge yet lay out politics and social sciences in a concrete manner. The *Handmaid’s Tale* which went in for rave reviews won the 1985 Governor General’s award and the first Arthur C. Clarke Award in 1987. It was also nominated for the 1986 Nebula Award and 1986 Booker Prize and the 1987 Prometheus Award. It has been adapted into a film (1990) an Opera (2000) and Television Series (2017).

The novel’s thought-provoking themes such as women’s bodies being used as political instruments, religion as a means to acquire power, voice as a tool of power and sex, sexuality and gender acknowledges the most insidious and violent manifestations of power in western history. In the global scenario of a multicultural world, where women are walled in within and across racial borders, the regressive policy of female subjugation is seen wherever in the world one is. It cuts across cultural and religious barriers, impeding the right of women to participate fully in society. Women are denied human rights from the cradle to the grave. The constraints of a patriarchal society and the halo of motherhood are gnawing problems, which threaten the existence of women as independent entities. When women writers took upon themselves the task of redefining womanhood, they presented a female point of view. They were able to show the women as a product and victim of society.

The novel is set in the 1984 second wave of feminist movement, exploring the possibility of the

conservative counter group gaining an upper hand. This meant that the women who had the courage to speak out were subjected to brutal humiliations like being relegated to be a handmaid or sent to inhuman colonies where they had to work till their skin was torn off from their knuckles cleaning toxic wastes and working in government run brothels called Jezebel’s, as delineated in the novel.

The novel depicts a reproductively challenged society known as the Republic Of Gilead which has categorized women into four different sects, assigning them different names, different clothing and different roles. The severe human rights limitations thrust on them do not allow them to read, write, own property, handle money or have control over their reproductive functions. They are the: Commander’s Wives, Aunts, Handmaids and finally Marthas. Even the clothes they wear depict their roles in society. We see the Commander’s wife in blue, Handmaids in red with white veils around their face, Marthas in green, young unmarried girls in white, widows in black and women of lower rank who handle domestic chores in blue, red and green stripes, etc.

The focus of the novel is on the handmaids and in particular Offred who had her husband and child taken away from her and forced to become a handmaid. Labelled a “wanton woman” when Gilead was established because she had married a man who was divorced. But since all divorces were nullified by the new government Offred was an adulteress. In trying to escape Gilead, she was separated from her husband and daughter. She is part of the first generation of Gilead’s women of pre-Gilead times. Proved fertile, she is considered an important commodity and has been placed as a “handmaid” in the home of “the Commander” and his wife Serena Joy, to bear a child for them (Serena Joy is believed to be infer-

tile). Readers are able to see Offred's resistance of The Republic of Gilead on the inside through her thoughts. The novel starts with Offred's third assignment as handmaid to a Commander. After some time has gone by without Offred becoming pregnant, Serena, the Commander's Wife suggests that Offred have sex with Nick secretly and pass the child off as the Commander's. Serena promises to bring Offred a picture of her daughter if she sleeps with Nick, and Offred is shocked that Serena has always known where her daughter was. The same night that Offred is to sleep with Nick, the Commander secretly takes her out to a club called Jezebel's, where the Commanders mingle with sex workers. Soon after Offred returns from Jezebel's, late at night, Serena arrives and tells Offred to go to Nick's room. Offred and Nick have sex and soon they began to have sexual intercourse together frequently, without anyone's knowledge. It is when she meets Nick that she remembers how to have fun again and what it felt like to be a woman again and not just a sex object. Her shopping trips with Ofglen is also part of the rising action. At home, Serena has found out about Offred's trip to Jezebel's, and she sends her to her room, promising punishment. Offred waits there, and she sees a black van from the Eyes approach. Then Nick comes in and tells her that the Eyes are really Mayday members who have come to save her. Offred leaves with them, over the Commander's futile objections, on her way either to prison or to freedom—she does not know which. The novel closes with an epilogue from 2195, after Gilead has fallen, written in the form of a lecture given by Professor Pieixoto. He explains the formation and customs of Gilead in objective, analytical language. He discusses the significance of Offred's story, which has been found on cassette tapes in Bangor, Maine. Pieixoto suggests that Nick arranged Offred's escape but that her fate after that is unknown. She could have escaped to Canada or England, or she could have been recaptured.

The novel concludes with people being shocked that such a thing could happen "here" and "now." But the scary thing is it could very much take place here and now.

The very name of the novel's protagonist is an indicator that she is of Fred's that is, belonging to Fred. She becomes a mere possession. Upon further dissection of the name, the name can also be read as 'offered,' implying that she is an offering. Like she herself said, the handmaids were nothing but, "two legged wombs to increase Gilead's veining population." Offred does not share the traditional narratives of a hero or in this case, a heroine's journey and rather choses to do nothing about her tragic life.

But in her own way she tries to unearth her real self, hidden beneath conventional layers of tradition, fear, guilt, depression and the complex of worthlessness. In this quest she encounters Nick in whom she sees courage, intelligence and compassion united. The handmaid's voluntary and secret visits to Nick is a portrayal of her desire to feel her passion as a woman where she could fulfil them. She feels like a woman again when she is with Nick and gets a semblance of control back. When she says, "I did not do it for him, but for myself entirely," she is actually finding a voice for herself. The fact that she notices the voyeuristic admiration of other men, is a fact that she likes this power of being desirable as she says, "I enjoy the power. Power of a dog bone. Passive, but there."

Offred, the central character and narrator is the essence of a subjugated woman in a patriarchal society. She is represented as a fertile woman in an otherwise polluted environmentally degraded world. Destined forcibly to produce children for the Commanders she is a biblical replica of Rachel and Bilah. She starts detailing her life when she is forced into the house of the third Commander.

In a very engaging narrative, she intersperses her present with flashbacks of the past including an agonized memory of her failed attempt to be exiled into Canada with her husband and child.

Once she is inducted into the Commander's household, she realises that woman is woman's worst enemy. Serene Joy, a so called Christian media personality and the Commander's Wife becomes an epitome of women's cruelty as she forces Offred to become pregnant at least through Nick in compensation for showing her, her own daughter.

Thus, we see that, *Handmaid's Tale*, is a feminist cacotopian discourse where totalitarian regimes following extreme Christian doctrine like Gilead, reign, is actually an extrapolation of the trends which are already seen in the US and across the world. Looking back, it is actually a 'cautionary tale' which enables one to see a "surprised recognition necessary for readers to see our present selves in a distorting mirror, of what we may be turning into if the current trends are allowed to continue" (McCarthy).

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The Representation of Servant as Surrogate Child in Select Works



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The present paper tries to examine the concept and context of servitude through the lens of the colonial narratives of Flora Annie Steel (1847–1929) and a recent drama film the *The White Tiger* (2021). Continuously camouflaged under the broader umbrella of exploitation, dominance and deprivation the narrative of the characters of domestic help have remained neglected chapters in the annals of history. While imagining one's life without a domestic help as unthinkable, embarrassment occurs when one tries to attribute human qualities to them. Seldom can we truly reciprocate such matters and in many cases remain silent. A deep insight into a helping hand's life gives us access to know them more closely but it is seldom undertaken. In this paper, attempt has been made on one hand to analyze, know and recognize these characters as caregivers, emotional partners, well-wishers and on the other hand, they are portrayed as killers or murderers in these texts. The paper also tries to address the silent voices of such characters and know their viewpoint while giving them an opportunity to change their life and future.

Keywords: *Dominance, Servant, Domestic Labor, Master, and Imperial Jungle.*

To imagine a life without a domestic help is quite arduous though not impossible. The bond between a caregiver and a dependent is difficult to comprehend and understand. The relationship is exclusive, but not in the way shared by lovers, brothers, or kin. Nonetheless, all members are aware of its presence, importance and significance in each other's lives. The presence of such a figure helps to maintain the image of the master intact. The relationship between the master and his help has been represented in literature, sculpture and painting throughout centuries. Édouard Manet's famous work, 'Olympia,' is a painting where a nude woman is shown lying on a bed, in a relaxing position being brought flowers by a help (Fig. 1).



Fig.1: Edouard Manet (1832-1883). Olympia, 1863. Oil on Canvas, 130×190 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Another work that deserves mention is the 'Heads of Six of Hogarth's Servants' done in oil by William Hogarth (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: William Hogarth (1697-1764). Heads of Six of Hogarth's Servants, c.1750-5. Oil on Canvas, 630×755 mm. Tate Britain, London.

'The Milkmaid' or 'The Kitchen Maid' (c. 1657-58) is a painting by the Dutch Baroque artist Johannes Vermeer which depicts the day to day life of a maid (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: Johannes Vermeer (1657-1658). The Milkmaid, c. 1660. Oil on Canvas, 45.5 cm × 41 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

The domestic help we see through centuries are elusive personas who have seldom been given the prospect to have a say or voice of their own. The paintings depict real life in a house where the servant is portrayed as the 'other.' They may be loyal friends, rebellious, failures or even gallant figures but in truth "they appear to be considered rather as machines than as beings of the same order" (Wilson 173). The unquestioned servitude provided by them on one hand is invincible and on the other hand are seen as threats.

In society, discussion about domestic help is seen as an embarrassment and a close association with them with the master raises unwanted questions. A good home and a happy mistress require a dedicated help of a well-trained amiable domestic help. But the inequality or hierarchal difference between the two classes is the ultimate truth of life. The life of the master will not run smoothly without their help yet they are seen as distasteful creatures, in many cases undermined and always kept at a distance. They are believed to be stupid, childlike and ignorant.

The face-to-face exercise of the politics of power made colonial life interesting. Hierarchy, caste problems, class issues dominated the life of both the Indians and white people residing in colonial India. The house thus became an extension of the empire itself where decorum, manners and strict code of conduct kept the behavior of the servants in check. The task of creating a happy environment inside and outside the house is on the shoulders of the master, the domestic help and the 'memsahib.'

They are the iconic figures who through their hard work kept up the desired fantasy of a life with ease and comfort available to the master. The very private life that existed behind the closed doors in a British household was totally controlled by these ubiquitous people. These unnoticed men and women from the lower strata of life worked hard, made appropriate meals, ayah made beds, took care of the memsahib and the child, did everything in exchange for a paltry sum of money. The question of service provider and taker is put under scrutiny as being a labor that dismissed their personhood.

The domestic sphere is not a tranquil space but a political one. The docile bodied servant is a cause of concern in an English household. The place where he works is not his home but it is his master's place. Even though he meticulously cleans or works hard to win the heart of the owner's family he will remain an outsider, an 'other.' Scrutinizing and controlling the body of a servant is tantamount to maintaining a colonial empire. A particular codified rule is set by the memsahibs to rule her small empire i.e., the house. Ideologies of class and race division dominated the discourse of the colonial house and the servant became the representative of everything Indian. Since the prospect to go outside is limited and the incapability to understand the social customs, language, religion, etc. makes the

white mistress dependent on their servants. The close and intimate contact with the mistress makes the servant an ideal representative of the native world.

The colonial home deconstructs the role of a human being to create an ideal image of the servant class. These native people are portrayed as child-like and vulnerable creatures who on one hand are rewarded for their faithfulness and on the other hand flogged for misbehaviour. Colonial literature makes reference to the childish behaviours of the domestic help repeatedly in their narratives. Julia Maitland states, "They are like babies in their ways: fancy my great fat ayah, forty years old, amusing herself with puffing the wind in and out of my air-cushion till she has broken the screw!" (L5). The role of women as care givers like the dais or ayahs who took the role of surrogate mothers to fragile European children are also seen with jealousy and contempt. Martha Marry Sherwood shares her experience, "It is touching to see the European babe hanging on the breast of the black woman, and testifying towards her all the tenderness which is due to its mother" (406). Fear of contamination and building of an inferior native quality in the baby that is in constant contact with the ayah is a common concern seen in the memsahibs' narrative (Steel 166-67). Even the author Flora Annie Steel, a memsahib who stayed in India for twenty-two years finally asks for the help of a native surrogate mother for the complete care of her baby without relying on white nannies. According to her, an experienced woman (preferably an 'ayah') is needed than the original mother for the betterment of the British kids. In describing her own experiences while staying in the empire, Steel praises her ayah Fazli in her autobiography, "A better servant never existed" (53). The class antagonism and the social stigma associated with the term 'servant' can never be erased. But their whole hearted labour in caring for a white child,

faithfulness during the time of the Mutiny of 1857 can also never be denied.

Exploitation, forced labour, deprivation, sexual exploitation, social and cultural domination is a part and parcel of the life of this class of people. The absence of worth or dignity as human beings on one hand and the attitude of codifying them as children are the two sides of a servant's life. In Julia Maitland's writing she shows positive attitude about "the custom to punish the servants for every misdemeanor just as if they were children" (L8). Steel (1847 – 1929) in her guiding manual, *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook Giving the Duties of Mistress and Servants: The General Management of the House and Practical Recipes for Cooking in all its Branches* (1909) states, "The Indian servant is a child in everything save age, and should be treated as a child; that is to say, kindly, but with the greatest firmness" (Steel 2-3). According to Constance Frederica Gordon Cumming the helping hand's "are a curious race. So strange a mixture of childishness and cunning, delighted by the simplest pleasures" (152-53). So, we can easily speculate that the core structure of imbalance exists in every sphere of a servant's existence.

Western women who tried to become the face of global feminism and epitome of superb humanity in many cases fail to judge her own servant. Challenging their lives in the colonial setup these women re-design the classic relationship between a master and a servant to keep their white women's burden intact. The servants have no words of their own and are mostly represented as side actors and their silence gives the master opportunity to cast them as they think appropriate. The marginalized is incorporated in the white people's lives but is always considered as threats or as outsiders. So, it is true that the servant character is always marked by political and social ambivalence. The servants' voices are

mutated in the pages of history and have minimal relation to the house or its inmates. This study, without replacing the traditional identity of a servant attempts to reconstruct, question and identify the sociability of the servant in Flora Annie Steel's colonial narratives and the recently released Netflix drama film *The White Tiger*. Although the two authors, Steel and Aravind Adiga belong to two different time frames, space and their personal identities are also not alike both talk about these marginalized people and their life of struggle. Whether these problematic figures come out as winners or suffer the same doomed future is the primary question asked in this paper.

Ramin Bahrani, the Iranian American film maker's love for the down trodden deprived underdogs comes through his lens in the Netflix film *The White Tiger* (2021). Disorienting oneself from the status quo and imagining a world where a servant can come out as a winner, a white tiger in midst of fools and jackals in the human jungle is the story discussed here. Aravind Adiga's Booker Prize winning 2008 novel acts as a backbone for Adarsh Gourav's fantastic role in the film with well-known faces like Priyanka Chopra, Rajkumar Rao, etc. The journey of Balram, the anti-hero who belongs to the lower caste is highlighted in the film. His struggle through the dark chapters of life, amidst poverty, deprivation and stress, and his ultimate winning is what mesmerizes the audience. Coming from the rural village of Laxmangar where the cows are the only well-fed creatures Balram, the self-made man becomes an entrepreneur and earns power and prestige as a popular name in the growing business world. The protagonist narrates the story of his life as he writes a letter to the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and wishes to be acquainted with his business project in creating a global economy for India. Balram has come from nowhere, a bildungsroman hero, having a police complaint and war-

rant issued against him for killing his master, gives the readers an insight into a very private life of his own. Being a brilliant student and fluent in English in his school Balram impresses his teacher and gains the nick name 'white tiger' but fails to continue his studies and joins a tea seller as a child labour to earn the extra income to keep the body and soul together of his family. After years of working as a menial labour, he desires to become the driver of the Stork's (landlord) son Ashok, the chota sahib and convinces his grandmother to give him a loan to acquire a driving license in exchange of the lion's share of his future income. As the film progresses, he is hired by the landlord's family as a driver and we see Balram continuously demean and belittles himself doing all kinds of odd jobs from oil massaging the calves of the stork, showing dog like obedience, cleaning the rugs of the family in exchange of a very small amount of money. His whole hearted and self-less servitude towards his master and the family bewilders the mind of the audiences and raises questions. The thought of poor people, 'Men with big bellies and men with small bellies' (a dialogue in the film) is what inspires and initiates Balram to be happy with his small life and sharing his night in the apartment garage with other servants like him while his master enjoying in luxury.

The years of rigid caste system, poor upbringing, inbred inferiority complex, uselessness of the lives of the marginalized/economically challenged like Balram gives rise to a character like him. His anger and charged attitude towards his master Ashok comes to a height when the landlord and his elder son, the mangoes (nicknamed) tries to make a killer out of him. The lady sahib, Pinky runs over a girl child in the road in the middle of the night and leaves her to die. She and her husband were dead drunk and Balram dressed like a maharaja in the back seat has nothing to do with the accident. His repeated warn-

ing and request to drive carefully is totally neglected by them and results to a horrible accident. In the beginning of the film, Pinky and Ashok seem to be different (with their European education) from the rest of the family but questions arise how far they can go to keep their liberal image intact. In time of crisis the question of compassion, humanity erases and the insults Balram faces in the hands of the master's family is unimaginable. The morning after the death of the girl is interesting as it shows the true color of the master as Ashok's brother manages and convinces Balram and makes him sign a paper making him guilty of the murder with no fault of his own. The contrasting attitude of the master in dressing him as a king (the night of the accident) and the next day dehumanizing his servant existence brings out the reality of the master's actual narrative and thought process. Balram reaches the elevator after signing the paper and his silent crying; impuissance touches very deeply the nerve of the audiences. The behaviour of the master remains polite and caring as long they can exploit the servant for their own good. Balram becomes a scape goat and neither Pinky nor her husband Ashok comes to rescue him in the time of crisis. Pinky leaves the suffocating Indian life and moves abroad and we see that Balram's attitude towards his master totally changes. He starts exploiting his master and, in a way, shows his hidden anger through these abrupt steps. Psychologically and emotionally Balram is worn out and a violent move is expected from him.

The film brings into limelight the worst experiences and inhuman attitude faced by the marginalized, mainly domestic help, drivers or cooks in the hands of the upper-class people like Ashok. In the end, Balram succumbs to outward violence and he kills Ashok which is nothing but a sign of protest and resistance against years of exploitation done towards the servants. It is not

a single incident or an exceptional behaviour of the master which resulted in such an outburst of emotion. It is Balram who refuses to accept the fate designed by others. The ability of a white tiger to win over the whole jungle or come out as a victor from all odds is what attracts the viewer to the plot. Gaining a lot of money, power and prestige even by sacrificing the lives of his family members is seen profitable to Balram. He fled the scene and makes a new life and resurrects himself as a master who is caring towards his domestic help. His social, economic position changes as he takes position in the chair of the master and wins the rat race of life being a white tiger.

The movie punctures the image of a good master and brings in the reality of life. Balram, the halwai by birth is torn down between multiple images of an obedient servant in the beginning, sly crooked driver and conspiracy maker in the middle of the movie and a businessman in the end who cares for his employees. This life changing opportunity is a rare gift to people like Balram. Questions arise about the authenticity of such an imagination and readers are confused to believe in such a dream. Bong Joon-ho's 'Parasite' (2019) and 'Sorry We Missed You,' (2019) by Ken Loach are the films which portray such characters from a different light and in a way that confuses the audiences morally and psychologically. The society judges and tries to keep their behaviour in check to make a relaxing life available for the master. But the film *The White Tiger* gives opportunity to Balram to break through the chains that have kept them subordinate, under the supremacy of the privileged class. The master can fully enjoy his role when the helping hand is present to take care of the unprivileged part. The existence of Ashok and Pinky becomes endangered and questionable when Balram decides to be exceptional. The India where the characters like the halwai lives is seen suffocating un-

der the burdens of rigid caste system, chains of bondages of servitude and an impoverished baseless existence. All one can do is to change oneself into a white tiger to make life worth living. Balram's ultimate wish to flee his present life and enjoy freedom and authority is the only key to his success. Thus, we see the clean, slick, ponytailed, moustached Balram as a new leaf on the growing tree of global economy of the country. His cunning, time judgment, adaptability, fatalistic power of wit has given him a unique ability which is not present to most people coming from his background. Balram is an interesting character as he gives a glimpse of both satire, comedy and tragedy at one go. Thus, the typical antihero with a tragic flaw in him gets an easy access to our lives.

'Salt Duty' in the short story collection the *Mercy of the Lord* (1914) by Flora Annie Steel weaves the story of Iman Khan and his selfless service to his late master's Eurasian family. He is a devoted person taking care of the children of the family with special attention to the eldest daughter Elfida Norma. Iman Khan is concerned about the future of the daughter of the house and after lots of plotting and planning arranges her marriage with a true sahib. He acts both as a father figure to Elfida as well as takes the task of a nanny/ayah by unsexing himself to keep her life protected. His constant duty towards the family gives him nothing in return. After the marriage we see Elfida leaves the place to start a new life with her husband without showing any gratefulness towards Iman Khan. She is not at all worried nor does the author give any voice to the old man in the narrative. He is used for giving settlement to the life of the white people in the story. What happens to the old Iman Khan after the marriage is not shared with the readers. He remains as a silent figure in the dark, neglected, deprived whose service to the master is the only important and recognizable factor in the story. But he

does not reciprocate or question his own fate and adjusts himself within the narrative. Without his support Elfida's future could never have been changed.

The "Doll Maker" in the story collection *The Guardianship of God* (1903) is the story of the Langford family, their children and the doll maker, an old bearer in the family. Premoo, the old domestic help is seen making dolls for the white sahib's child to present it as a token of love in the coming Christmas. The boy who is sent to England has been a part of the old servant's life. In his younger days he had been one of the best bearers of the white sahibs but old age has turned him into a lame old coolie and gatherer of leaves. The doll with long-limbs and hair of wool is the best creation of Premoo and he presents it as a Christmas gift to Mrs. Langford. The utter ugliness of the doll creates a weird sensation in the mother's heart whose parlor is empty of her child. The doll makes the parents realize the true essence of life, parenthood and ultimately Christmas, the reason of a happy occasion in one's life. The master plans to send the doll to their child and eventually packs it up. The story ends with the sahib and memsahib going out to send the present to England and the old Premoo gathering the weathered brown leaves in his basket. The story shows us the emotion and human feelings of the servant towards his master and the white man's inhumanity. The doll maker's comic creation is at first neglected by all but in the end, we see it takes importance but the man who has made it remains silent, unheard and neglected. The narrative takes care of him as an important figure as long he provides happiness to his master. His troublesome work of doll making in his old age is not an easy task. But in Christmas time too he gets nothing in return of his self-sacrificing attitude. He remains confined in his own downtrodden, poor and uncared life and the author is unconcerned about him. The attachment

he has shown to his master's family is not reciprocated in return. Premoo in the end remains happy with his own duty of servitude which makes him a better human being than his master.

Balram as a narrator in the twenty-first century mirrors his own growth, maturation with the evolving India. But question arises about the characters like Iman Khan and Premoo who are part of the colonial narrative written by a memsahib residing in India during the late eighteenth century. The question is whether the plight of a domestic help remains the same throughout centuries? The answer is yes, the care and labour has become specialized, stylized and scientific but the core has remained the same. The regular story of coercion, domination and exploitation of Balram, Iman Khan, Premoo will continue its existence as long as the difference between the 'master' and the 'servant' exist. The emotional labor of Premoo to satisfy the master psychologically or the element of personalization present in the service of Iman Khan is not recognized, welcomed or acknowledged by the master. In such a situation, Balram is the kind who can survive and challenge the system of labour. When his brothers have kept silent, he brings back the voice of the downtrodden and gazes back into the master.

The ironic grim punch line of the film gets its ultimate speck of truth when the servant takes the seat of a master. It seems that Balram is the one solely responsible for his flight upwards from the gutters of his past life. The author and the film maker are also responsible in giving him the opportunity to grow and flourish which is absent in Steel's narratives. The opportunity, space for freedom or a voice of their own is not shared by the memsahib. She is rigid about her British identity and attitude towards her characters in the stories. So, we see that to bring change one must

question and contradict the age-old customs, rules, etc. which Iman or Premoo could not deliver. Like a white tiger in the jungle of misfortune it is Balram who comes out as a winner but he is all alone. The vitality, energy and happiness we see in the face of Balram is absent in the life of the present business icon. He has gained his grip on life, his dream to be rich is fulfilled but he has lost a lot to achieve it. Mostly the assumed death of all his family members, killing his master in cold blood, calculative steps for growth has changed everything inside Balram. He has become a plaything without any human heart. So, it is clear that the dream of change could be granted but costs huge in its fulfillment. A child like servant when he/she refuses to remain in the cradle of domination is not accepted by society. But change is inevitable. So, we see Balram who acts like a machine without any emotional touch or vitality left in him. He has become a good entrepreneur and lost his humanity in the process. To conclude, we can assume that change in life is possible but one should be careful about its consequence. In the end, a domestic help can never take the role of a master; neither the society nor the people residing in it will grant permission for such a change.

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Figures

Fig. 1:

Official website of Musee d’Orsay, Paris, www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/search.html?no_cache=1&zoom=1&tx_damzoom_pi1%5BshowUid%5D=4042. Accessed 15 March 2021.

Fig. 2:

Official website of Tate Britain, London, www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hogarth-heads-of-six-of-hogarth-servants-n01374. Accessed 15 March 2021.

Fig. 3:

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The Role of Culture Industry: Changing Youth Equations and Gender Positions in Select Bollywood Movies



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Gender roles are always neglected in entertainment industry as the popular vibe is considered to be the mantra in the Culture Industry where profit is the ultimate end point. Movies are one among the most acknowledged popular culture art forms which play a vital role in the ideological manipulation on the human rational judgement and film industry is a recognized form of culture industry in any nation and in India, it is Bollywood. Bollywood has always manipulated in constructing the gender stereotypes of the nation and one such prominent ideology is the undoubted dominance of males. But it could create monotony in the thematic structure and there is no doubt that it forced Culture Industry in creating a novel one. This paper seeks to identify the role of Culture Industry in altering gender roles by analyzing the movies, *Queen* and *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*. There is a clear case of an inversion of the prevalent power structures and making the new ones wherein the marginalized demographic groups are deliberately uplifted and their voice is made heard through which a new social order is under the process of construction. Though the culture industry is not directly concerned on the emancipation of the 'under-privileged' directly, they are unknowingly contributing much to the country in the inversion of gender stereotypes prevalent in the culture. This paper seeks to thrust on: the changing gender roles in India by analysing the select works; the role of Culture Industry in emancipation of the marginalised gender, and Culture Industry as the 'base' structure which is controlling the superstructures of the nation.

Keywords: Culture Industry, Bollywood, Ideology, and Gender Stereotypes.

Gender roles are always a much-neglected area of critical analysis in entertainment industry wherein the popular vibe is considered to be the hymn. This is a grave issue as the common man is unaware of the fact that they are being manipulated, as the transition from one dominant ideology to the other is something not easily visible. Culture Industry has always considered the profit as the ultimate aim and they hardly have any didactic purpose rather they try to create a new value system through which a novelty is introduced in the society so that a new cultural product can be introduced in the market economy.

Movies are one among the most acknowledged popular culture art forms which play a vital role in the ideological manipulation on the human rational judgement. We know that the visual media have a greater impact on the cognitive level of human beings than any other one of its kind. Visual effect along with an entertainment value will add its effect. Naturally, movies play a major role in setting the new cultural trends in a society. Bollywood, the leading film industry of India, has a widespread influence all over the nation and to some extent it acts as the trendsetter for other cinema industries of the multi-cultural, multi-lingual nation. The movies in India have always manipulated in constructing the gender stereotypes of the nation. A nation which always celebrated the undoubted denomination of males was in fact constructed or popularised by the mass media development. The same formula had been depicted in all its permutation combinations for more than a century and the viewers started to feel monotony in the themes of the art works produced. As we know that the culture Industry is something which cannot take its minute risk in the profit it makes. They will find out an immediate solution to manipulate the minds of the people so that a new ideological framework is produced and it will slowly enter the minds of

its consumers. This paper seeks to identify the changing gender roles in the Bollywood movies by analysing two successful movies, *Queen* and *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*.

Queen is a 2013 movie starring Kangana Ranaut which narrates the growth of a dependent girl to an independent woman following unpredicted events that happened in her life. It is a comedy-drama film directed by Vikas Bahl and produced by Anurag Kashyap, Vikramaditya Motwane, and Madhu Mantena. The film stars Kangana Ranaut in the lead role, with Lisa Haydon and Rajkummar Rao playing supporting roles. Rani, an under-confident Punjabi girl from New Delhi embarks on her honeymoon to Paris and Amsterdam by herself after her fiancé calls off their wedding.

The 2011 release movie *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, directed by Zoya Akhtar, talks about the road trip story of three childhood friends in Spain as a bachelor party trip of one among the characters. The movie narrates the life changing decisions taken by the characters through which it ends in a positive note.

Seemingly two innocent movies which tell the story of liberated individuals is actually a strong political statement from the part of the culture industry in setting a new value system in the country. There is a clear case of an inversion of the prevalent power structures and making the new ones in terms of gender roles. In other words, the so called marginalised demographic groups are deliberately uplifted and their voice is made heard through which a new social order is under the process of construction with a strict monitoring of Culture Industry. Though the culture industry is not directly concerned on the emancipation of the 'underprivileged' directly, there is no doubt that they have contributed much to the country in inverting the gender stereotypes prevalent in the culture.

This paper seeks to find out:

- √ Changing gender roles in India by analysing the select works.
- √ Role of Culture Industry in emancipation of the marginalised gender.
- √ Culture Industry as the 'base' structure which is controlling the superstructures of the nation.

The term "culture industry" was coined by the critical theorists Theodor Adorno (1903–1969) and Max Horkheimer (1895–1973), and was presented as critical vocabulary in the chapter "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," of the book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), wherein they proposed that popular culture is akin to a factory producing standardized cultural goods: films, radio programs, magazines etc., that are used to manipulate mass society into passivity (Wikipedia). Consumption of the easy pleasures of popular culture, made available by the mass communications media, renders people docile and content, no matter how difficult their economic circumstances. The inherent danger of the culture industry is the cultivation of false psychological needs that can only be met and satisfied by the products of capitalism; thus, Adorno and Horkheimer especially perceived mass-produced culture as dangerous to the more technically and intellectually difficult high arts.

The popular movie industry in any country plays a major role in the cultivation of the false psychological needs of the people. The definition of a financially successful movie is equivalent to the acceptance of the propagated ideology by the majority. When we analyse the pattern of thematic structures of Indian movies, we can find out that a novel dogma circulates within the country for almost a decade, which

means every new way of thought emerges at the beginning of a decade. Indian film industry is dominated by the males and quite naturally the value systems and the agenda of the same had always been male-centred and their sensibilities and view of the world were highlighted or problematized. For example, till the end of the last decade, the definition of womanhood was defined by the role of woman in spreading happiness in a social structure by making the men in their life happy and their aspirations were defined and planned by the men and it seemed that women were competing each other to do the same. An ambitious or an independent woman were equivalent to a witch and the aim of the dominant ideology was to make her "realise" her "wrong doings" as the "hero," who is always a male, can never go wrong. As Virginia Woolf had said:

When, however, one reads of a witch being ducked, of a woman possessed by devils, of a wise woman selling herbs, or even of a very remarkable man who had a mother, then I think we are on the track of a lost novelist, a suppressed poet, of some mute and inglorious Jane Austen, some Emily Bronte who dashed her brains out on the moor or mopped and mowed about the highways crazed with the torture that her gift had put her to. (Jacob and Jisha 43)

The definition of a 'sanskari' woman was the one who was submissive to the norms and regulations set by the patriarchy. The mass media owned by the culture industry was the carrier of the same throughout the nation. The trend of highlighting the male superiority began to subside from the representations in the cultural artefacts towards the beginning of the second decade of the century. The popular notion that 'men are always right' started to get questioned

wherein the versions of women started to get highlighted. The movie *Queen* is a perfect example which shows the growth of a dependent woman to an independent one by depicting each stage of her growth in a subtle and convincing manner.

The movie begins with the 'mehndi' ceremony of the protagonist, Rani Mehra wherein the audience get to know about the storyline from her aside. Quite contrary to the popular romanticised version of mehndi ceremony shown in popular movies so far, there is a realistic representation of the same wherein the whims and fancies of the people involved in the same are characterized. From this scene we get to see a typical middle-class Indian bride who is a little bit apprehensive of her upcoming life and seems that her ultimate aim in life is to impress her husband, Vijay who is London educated and thus becomes the most eligible groom by Indian middle-class standard. The happy-tears in the eyes of the parents when their daughter is getting married is also shown quite convincingly so that an average Indian can identify themselves with. Then the turning point in the plot happens wherein the groom calls off the marriage because the bride is "not modern" or in other words she is not up to the mark of the perfect foreign educated man. The events followed are quite dramatic but there is a difference from the movies till then wherein such a traumatic situation is handled quite intelligently where the stand of the characters is natural and everyone is empathetic towards the bride's feeling. The twist happened in the plot when Rani decides to go for her pre-planned honeymoon on her own. This is quite contrary to the earlier generation movies wherein such a situation will be handled in an entirely different perspective where the family will find out an eligible person who understands the worth of a 'sanskari' girl.

The solo travel was a path breaking affair as far as the character is concerned which helped understand her unique strengths. This is the point where the culture industry starts to manipulate the audience wherein the new age philosophy is introduced. It seems and, in a way, it is an awakening call for the women of the nation by making them understand the real happiness of being independent. But the profit which the Culture Industry makes as a result of this is tremendous. The industries which develop as result of this ideology are tourism and beauty industry. Beauty industry had always been a prosperous industry throughout the world but here the perspective changed in the favour of the women. To be more precise, earlier women in India used to make themselves beautiful according to the preference of men but now they are doing it for themselves. Unlike the earlier narratives, the story is narrated from the women's perspective and thus it helps the women of the nation to think in their perspective and in fact they learn to 'live of their own.'

Travelling alone has become commonplace, with more than half (59%) of agents polled noting that they've seen more of their clients are travelling by themselves now compared to 10 years ago. This trend can be attributed to travellers' life changes, as 43% of agents polled reported that the majority of clients travelling alone are doing so because they are now widowed or divorced (Bond 2019).

The above statistics is an international study which was conducted among the women around the world. In this globalised economy, every phenomenon is controlled by the capitalists. In other words, it is the Culture Industry which is controlling the life style and atti-

tude of the people by manipulating their psyche. In contemporary Indian scenario, every global phenomenon is easily adapted by the Indians- thanks to the world of entertainment!

The marginalisation of Rani in the first part of the movie is the representation of the ideological prison constructed for every woman in the country. The very comment of Rani that, "Girls are not allowed to burp in India," itself shows the intensity of the situation. Only during her solo travel, she realised the diversity of the world, then only could she rewind how much a captive she was by analysing an occasion where Vijay is refusing Rani to go for work and the audience themselves are convinced about the abnormality of a very normal social condition. The trip can be said to be her life changing event which made her realise her passion and pursue her dreams by convincing the audience that the new ideological frame work is best of the age- where women are superior in every aspect in the society. The increase in the rate of independent women who make their own decision to pursue their dream in itself is a testimony to the fact that the attitude of Indian society is changing.

The more I travel across the country and interview people from all walks of life, the more convinced I am that a monumental change is under way. The role of women in Indian society has been evolving over many years, but the pace of change has accelerated noticeably. Over the next decade, it will vastly improve the lives of millions and have profound economic and investment effects. (Dutta)

Unlike the movie *Queen*, *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* is not a female centred movie, but it is a clear story of the camaraderie between three friends who could identify themselves in a road trip they together underwent. But at the same time, we can see the reversal of female roles through the char-

acters Laila, played by Katrina Kaif and Natasha, played by Kalki Koechlin. Laila is a fun loving, liberated female who clearly has an idea about her purpose of life whereas Natasha is a typical stereotyped female who is very possessive about her lover/fiancé. The character Arjun, played by Hrithik Roshan is in the traditional sense the real patriarch who has a notion that whatever he does is right and the women's role in his life should be to make it easier. But, quite contrary to the point of views propagated in the earlier generation movies, here in the movie he is portrayed as wrong and making him realise the 'real' essence of life by proving his ideology wrong. There is no doubt that he is replaced by the heroine, Laila. The movie centres around Laila's philosophy which is travel the world, enjoy every moment in your life etc. This type of thought was something which was a real taboo in the previous generation and highlighting her view of the world was quite unthinkable. Throughout the movie we can see that Laila is manipulating the ideology of other male characters. The very character Laila herself is an inversion of the female gender roles prevalent in the country so far. She is the one who is doing untraditional jobs (diving instructor), travelling more places and in short, her philosophy of life, 'carpe diem,' which apparently becomes the title of the movie.

The very philosophy propagated in *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, itself is a revolutionary thought in India as it does not go with the age-old notions of good and bad. As mentioned elsewhere, the two prominent female characters are Laila and Natasha. Laila, undoubtedly is portrayed as the virtue and the reality of the generation whereas Natasha is depicted as traditional, outdated and boring. But, when we analyse Natasha's character closely, quite surprisingly she is the traditional 'sankari' wife who is ready to make compromises in her life for becoming a perfect wife. She is ready to forget her dreams and aspirations so that

she can devote herself completely to become a home-maker. She is degraded as non-progressive and hence ditched by her fiancé. But nowhere do the audience feel sympathetic towards Natasha but at the same time feels that she is not someone who is having an appropriate behavioural pattern. The calling off of the marriage by her fiancé itself is counted as the apt decision and the paradox of the situation is explicit when we consider it with the movie *Queen*.

When we analyse both the movies another prominent issue that get noticed is the celebration of youth. In other words, it is the representation of a consumerist culture wherein youth have the spending power. According to the Marxist theory, the cultural forms reflect the social conditions existing in a particular society and also believe that all the conflicts that is prevailing there is represented in it. Such cultural forms and themes influence the readers because these appear to be convincing, realistic and therefore appeal to them. But the reality is that the social conditions are not a natural outcome of the developmental scenario in the society. In other words, it is a planned manipulation of the Culture Industry so that they could sell their products quite successfully. The very concept of innovation or novelty itself is the mask through which their selfish motive is not exposed in public.

In both the movies under consideration the young women are empowered or they are the representation for emancipation of their gender. They are actually being uplifted so that there is a gradual reversal of the gender roles wherein more space is given to the females of the nation. In other words, new gender politics are introduced to the mass culture through which innovative definitions of power are put forth. Through the 'new women' in media, the culture industry is actually gaining profits. The reasons for the culture industry noticing the women of the nation may

be varied. There is an increase in the spending power for women as there is a rate of increase in the education for them and so do the employment rate. Culture industry reads it as possibility of oozing out the wealth from both the genders. So naturally through the cultural artefacts, which is already in their control, will try to emancipate the marginalised gender and apparently it is women in India at the moment, probably it will change in the coming years. Another important value that both these movies propagate is the universal brotherhood. Mostly the culture Industry's agenda for the same might be introducing the variety to the world so that they can widen the trade prospects and through which they can open up the possibilities of new business.

The term culture industry itself was coined in a derogatory sense and its representations in history were always negative. It is branded as selfish, without any human values and most apparently cunning. It is manipulative and sells its cheap stuff saying that it is harmless. These all allegations might be true and might have done negative to many emerging cultures, but, in Indian scenario at least in the contemporary period Culture Industry's role in promoting the marginalised class and gender cannot be ignored. Though the paper only seeks to find out how it has positively contributed to the upliftment of women in India, there are a large number of movies which are addressing other social issues as well. Though in the select movies, Culture Industry is not intentionally doing anything for the social reformation, but there is no doubt it has contributed in a positive way as far as women or at least urban women of the nation. The features of the 'new women' of the nation are independent, bold, confident, ambitious and self-reliant. In fact, one or two decades back, these traits were not even considered feminine or morally right. This trend will surely lead to the emancipation

of another marginalised segment in the society in the coming future.

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Searching for 'Essence' in the Metafictional World of Gita Mehta: A Phenomenological Reading of *A River Sutra*



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A b s t r a c t

Gita Mehta in her *A River Sutra* focuses on the rich heritage of Indian culture and other related aspects with utmost care and sincerity. Mehta shows the current cultural and religious practices which are contrary to the Indian sensibility. She does not advocate any particular religion but rather gives more attention to spirituality and humanity. Like a postmodern writer, she fuses the grand narratives into one single narrative and gives a carnivalesque presentation of life. Here all the characters come to the bank of Narmada. River Narmada plays a great role in the novel to make the lives of the characters more meaningful. Most importantly the novel mixes tradition with contemporary, life and death, love and hate, region and spirituality.

Keywords: Tradition, Culture, and Postmodernism.

Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra* may be called as a postmodern metafiction where she deliberately and with dramatic precision has fused the ancient histories with myth, popular beliefs and practices to represent a broader view of Secular India. *A River Sutra* is a collection of interconnected stories, primitive beliefs, religious practices and pilgrimage which are deeply associated with the river Narmada, sharing the rich culture of India and trying to weave them with her flowing water since centuries. In this novel, Mehta uses the Narmada as a focal point of her narrative i.e. "sutra" and the nameless narrator as the Sutra Dhar." The relation between Sutra (Narmada) and the Sutradhar (Nameless Narrator) is metaphorically presented here. If Narmada is traditional knowledge, then Sutradhar is the contemporary knowledge. By blending ancient and contemporary knowledge along with the ecological myths, Mehta creates a perfect postmodern pastiche where efforts to find out any particular order would be a travesty. The narrator plays a great role here as he connects the stories of a Sufi Muslim Teacher, a Hindu Devotee, a Hindu Monk, and a Jain Monk. He also narrates about each and every religious practice and beliefs. What is most important in his narratives is the use of myth and ancient tradition which celebrates the amalgamation of ancient knowledge with the contemporary reason. *A River Sutra* gives a roadmap as to how we should revive our cultural heritage without staining it with our disbelief. Narmada is not merely a river. She is rather presented as a primordial image or collective unconscious which controls the consciousness of every human being. Narmada is where people understand the silver lining between the world of Maya and the world of Nirvana. All the characters of the novella are either searching the meaning of life or taking a journey to unlearn the knowledge which has imprisoned them. They feel cleansed by the waters of River Narmada.

River Narmada is not seen mere a river but is presented as an enigmatic figure who has witnessed the history of the Aryan invasion of India and how Narmada have been taking away the sin of the people for centuries and purges the mind from earthly thoughts. Narmada is the symbol of history, myth and the cultural memory. River Narmada also defies the binary relationship between nature and culture. It creates a harmony, a symphony of music by weaving all the contradictions existing in human life and nature. Hence, Narmada becomes that origin of life force and the meaning of life. In postmodern context, critics may argue that Narmada is playing the role of a grand-narrative which controls the meaning, but if one reads it philosophically, he/she can find that Narmada plays the role of a platform where the process of simulacrum is stopped for awhile to provide space for realizing the "real truth". It plays a great role in deciding the fate of every individual who comes close to it. Narmada is mysteriously enchanting:

It is said that Shiva, Creator and Destroyer of Worlds, was in an ascetic trance so tenuous that rivulets of perspiration began flowing from his body down the hills. The stream took on the form of a woman-the most dangerous of her kind: beautiful virgin innocently tempting even ascetics to pursue her, inflaming their lust by appearing at one moment as a lightly dancing girl, at another as a romantic dreamer, at yet another as a seductress loose limbed with the lassitude of desire. Her inventive variations so amused Shiva that he named her Narmada, the Delightful One, blessing her with the words "You shall be forever holly, forever inexhaustible." Then he gave her in marriage to the ocean, Lord of Rivers, most lustrous of all her suitors. (5-6)

The narrator denounces the worldly life and its material exuberance and comes to this Bungalow as a caretaker but as the narration moves on, we realize that the whole world comes before him to reveal the true meaning of life. He meditates like Shiva facing his face towards Narmada:

In the silence of the ebbing night I sometimes think I can hear the river's heartbeat pulsing under the ground before she reveals herself at last to the anchorites of Shiva deep in meditation around the holy tank at Amarkantak. I imagine the ascetics sitting in the darkness like myself, their naked bodies smeared in ash, their matted hair wound on top of their heads in imitation of their Ascetic god, witnessing the river's birth as they chant: "Shiva-o-ham, Shiva-o-ham, I that am Shiva, Shiva am I."(3)

Mehta beautifully unravels the complex thought of the narrator. On one hand he is worshipping Narmada as a Goddess and on the other hand he adores Narmada as a beautiful virgin:

Below the terrace the water was still dark, appearing motionless in shadows like a woman indolently stretching her limbs as she oiled herself with scented oils, her long black hair loosened, her eyes outlined in collyrium. I watched the water slowly redden, catching reflections from the rose colors of dawn, and imagined the river as a woman painting her palms and the soles of her feet with vermilion as she prepares to meet her lover. (90)

Though the narrator denounces the world but his Bungalow becomes the meeting point of different shades of religion and life. His choice to live in the secluded place gives him the opportunity to flee from the consumer oriented materialistic world. He chooses to be with nature and its hu-

mane element. He thinks that the bank of Narmada will provide him with a spiritual space. But as the story progresses he finds among the different shades of life and its experiences a very different perception of life and spirituality. As Professor Shankar points out to the narrator "you have chosen the wrong place to flee the world, my friend," ... too many lives converge on these banks" (173). The narrator does not seem to understand Professor Shankar's words. It's not the spiritualism which matters to Professor Shankar rather he wishes to understand the reconciliation of religion and cosmic universalism with the help of intellectual tradition of rationalism. E. Galle explains how Mehta presents her view on this issue:

Confronting with the Indian doctrine of Samkhya...Professor Shankar's humanistic position is an opportunity for Gita Mehta to extend her meditating action among the various doctrines that share her country, and also between Indian and non-Indian philosophies. Shankar's atheism may appear to Western readers as borrowed from their own thought system, even as homage to their superior intellect. Gita Mehta suggests that is it in fact a resurfacing of ancient Indian institutions. (27)

In Mehta's world, religion does not have any value if it is devoid of humane qualities. She emphasizes that only by understanding mysteries of life one can appreciate spiritualism in its truest sense. Being too religious, does not guarantee one to have all the spiritual knowledge. The first tale is about a wealthy businessman Ashok who renounces the world and accepts the life of a monk. His renunciation involves a pomp and show in front of forty thousand people, which even outsmarts the procession which occurred at the time of Mahavira's renunciation. Before he

leaves the place he says to the narrator, "I have loved just one thing in my life" (14) which remains as a mystery to the narrator as he fails to understand it. When he asks Tariq Mia the meaning of the words spoken by the monk, Tariq Mia replies that "The human heart, little brother. Its secrets; the human heart has only one secret. The capacity to love" (32). The theme of renunciation is not a new subject in Indian Literature. But here in a River Sutra, Mehta makes us understand the true meaning of renunciation. There are two ways to reach the God or one can attain Enlightenment-one is *Karma* and the other one is *Dharma*. Both the ways are interrelated to each other. One can't get spiritual enlightenment if he/she accepts any one between the two. A true Sadhu is who controls the feelings and reason rather than rejecting. It is the knowledge of humility which leads the way towards Nirvana. As Tariq Mia says, "How can you say that you have given up the world when you know so little of it" (50).

In the second story unveils the story of a music teacher Mohan and his student Imrat. Imrat has no eyesight but is gifted with a rare talent of music and beautiful voice. Mohan wishes to fulfill his unfulfilled desire to be a great musician through Imrat. But the tragedy happens when a "great Sahib" slits his throat. Master Mohan considers himself as the reason for this murder and he could not find any solace even on the banks of Narmada. So he commits suicide. Master Mohan and Imrat are not the different individuals here. If Master Mohan is the body, then Imrat is the soul. So when the boy gets killed, Master Mohan loses his soul. In other words, Mohan does not find essence of his existence. His music loses the very soul which he desires most. Mohan's death gives him the freedom from his barrenness and also an opportunity to meet his soul. Tariq Mia explained the death of the master thus: "Perhaps he could not exist without loving someone as he had loved the blind child. I don't know the answer little brother. It is only a story about the human heart" (60).

The third story is of Nitin Bose and his love story with an indigenous woman Rima. Nitin Bose is a young disciplined man who wants to be a manager of the tea estate and reads Hindu Philosophy from the Puranas and Vedas. But soon after, he becomes greedy, insensitive and alcoholic. It seems that his loneliness does not have any escape. He is haunted by his erotic dreams and becomes a prey to the power of desire.

. . . the head bearer [. . .] dragged me into the bedroom and somehow undressed me and pushed me through the mosquito net where I lay in a stupor of stale whisky fumes . . . I felt a softness press against my shoulder. Stretching out my hand, I grasped the swelling firmness of a woman's breast. But the petals of a flower garland intruded between my lips and her flesh, a girdle chain between my thigh and her smooth hip, an anklet between my hand and her slender foot. Maddened by the fragile barrier of her ornaments, I crushed her in my embrace. Her body encircled mine like a flowering creeper grips a tree. She made a sound between a sigh and a laugh, her breath moist against my ear. Then a low voice asked, "Why did you not send for me earlier?"

. . . even though her small teeth pierced my skin again and again like the sudden striking of a snake, and I heard the hissing of her pleasure against my throat. (80-81)

When he learns that she is sleeping with a lowly woman, a sense of disgust fills both his heart and soul. He decides to go back to Calcutta. Knowing this, Rima trapped his soul in the split halves of the coconut shells during a lunar eclipse. He starts behaving fanatically. Since he has offended the snake goddess, he must do penance and his soul will be cured by the water of Holy Narmada.

So Nitin Bose comes to the bank of Narmada and performs the rituals of the tribes and gets cured. This incident may have caused a kind of eerie feeling among the modern readers because of their scientific temper. Mehta here presents the sexual relationship between the tribal woman and Nitin Bose metaphorically. The tribal woman symbolizes Nature and Nitin Bose represents the modern materialistic man who exploits the body of Nature. Mehta beautifully destroys the binary relationship between the knowledge of Upanishad and the tribal indigenous knowledge. Despite having the knowledge of Upanishad Nitin does not get the meaning of life (salvation here) until he accepts the indigenous knowledge. So here again Mehta establishes an alternative structure of knowledge by decentering the traditional knowledge system with the oral tradition of knowledge. Next is the tale of a courtesan and her daughter who lives in the Haveli. Rahul Singh, the bandit kidnapped her daughter. Initially she tried to escape but gradually she falls in love with Rahul Singh. "He was a strange man, you see. So generous he did not know he was generous and yet always hesitant to ask anything of others... not until I conceived did my husband truly believe I loved him." (119) But the romantic tale ends abruptly. Rahul Singh gets killed in an encounter with police and the girl commits suicide by drowning herself in the Narmada to purify all her sins. She knew that she would never be accepted by the society because of her relationship with a criminal like Rahul Singh.

The next tale describes a young musician who is on a pilgrimage to the Narmada along with her father to wash away her love. The young musician explains that her father was a famous raga player whose skills and talent were known throughout the place where they lived. A young man wanted to learn the secret of ragas and became her father's apprentice. He had promised to marry the daughter of the musician to secure

the musician's patronage. But once his learning got completed he refused to marry his daughter. Since the young man's rejection, the daughter did not touch the sitar nor did she enter her father's music room. Her father decided to cure the inner soul of his daughter by the waters of Narmada. We are not sure that the waters of Narmada would cure her or not. But it is sure that on the banks of Narmada, amidst the natural beauty and serenity, she might get something which would heal her soul. It is not her ugliness which pains her, but it is the rejection that pains her more. So she must return to Nature- the ultimate source of knowledge and spiritual enlightenment. She should realize that her love for the man is not the love which her father wants her to achieve. Love is an idea, which can be attained only by losing it. At the end of the story she gets back her love for music and Nature.

He says that I must mediate on the waters of the Narmada, the symbol of Shiva's penance, until I have cured myself of my attachment to what has passed and can become again the ragini to every raga... I must understand that I am the bride of music, not of a musician. (145)

The last story is about a Naga Baba who survives the winter in the Himalayas, the heat of the desert. It was nine days before the Sivaratri, the ascetic walks up to a crematorium to meditate without food or water. On the night of Sivaratri, the fast is broken by begging food from the untouchable or the profane. Naga Baba rescued a girl from the house of a prostitute and took her to Amarkantak. Naga Baba considers all human beings as equals. By rescuing the girl and begging food from the untouchables, Naga Baba justifies his social enlightenment. He names her as Uma and is declared as the daughter of Narmada. Naga Baba knows that the path of enlightenment

and self realization are not easy. So he tries every possible way to make her know the reality of death and rebirth. She becomes the minstrel who goes from place to place singing songs in praise of Narmada. Later on we find that Naga Baba is Professor V.V. Shankar, a foremost archeological figure of the country who has been working on Narmada. He is more interested in exploring the superstitions and religious practices in the name of Narmada. In his words:

Rubbish, I love this river. But worship is too strong a word. I'm afraid I only care for the river's immortality, not its holiness . . . I mean immortality in its most literal sense . . . thousands of years ago the sage Vyasa dictated the *Mahabharata* on this river bank. Then in our own century this region provided the setting for Kipling's *Jungle Book*. In between countless other men have left their mark on the river . . . For instance, *Kalidasa*. His poem *The Cloud Messenger* and his great play *Shakuntala* both describe the hills behind this rest house... Mere mythology! A waste of time! If anything is sacred about this river, it is the individual experiences of the human beings who have lived here. This river is an unbroken record of the human race. That is why I am here. Now tell me why you [the nameless narrator] are here (170-173).

Mehta does not leave the reader any space for relaxing as she has woven the incidents in such a complex way. She through the tale of Naga Baba mixes the past with the present, myth with the reality only to make us understand the core issue of the novel i.e. the unpredictability of heart and the secret of heart. All the characters in the novel dwell in a self created maze of confusion and perplexity until they come to the bank of Narmada. Like the River mixes with the ocean,

all the characters find their meaning of life by accepting and assimilating themselves in the broader philosophy of life.

We have discussed the six tales and how they are connected with the river Narmada. Each and every story is a signifier, searching for its signified. Like Derrida's deferred signified, here in River Sutra, each and every story gets its deferred meaning in the bank of Narmada but never attain the final meaning. Narmada is a sign which is illusive. Every one interprets Narmada in his/her own way and that's makes Narmada even more complex and enigmatic figure. However, Narmada is omnipresent in the background and is believed to have healing powers. The river is known for its immortality. As in the words of Professor Shankar: "What we are seeing today is the same river that was seen by the people who lived here a hundred thousand years ago. To me such a sustained record of human presence in the same place- that is immortality" (170). Apart from its religious relationship, the river Narmada and its surrounding have soothed many diseased hearts. Here the caretaker is healed by nature: "To dispel my morbid thoughts I admire the red blossoms shaken from the flame trees by climbing monkeys. Or I pause between the branches rooted in the soil around an immense banyan tree like pillars in the ancient temple to watch birds guarding their nets from the squirrels streaking through the flat leaves" (28). Narmada is called a whore as it belongs to everyone. Everyone takes Narmada as his/her own way towards salvation. Asit Chandmal says: "These are stories of obsession and renunciation, desperation and destruction, desire and death. Above all these are stories of sexual, sensual and spiritual longings and love. A worthy offering to the holiest of Hindu rivers." (30-31)

Mehta does not only bring out the exotic culture and heritage of India but she also shows her con-

cern towards the nature. Like in the Courtesan's story, Shahbag was a city surrounded by the natural beauty and Holy Narmada. Even the Muslim Nawab honored the river's holiness. The Courtesan speaks of rowing to "lake places under a star-filled sky. Of gossamer nets hanging over beds strewn with jasmine blossoms. Pearl scattered on the sheets. Arched doorways opening onto balconies below which the water lapped softly against the stone foundations" (108). But as the time passes by, the modern industrialization and growing capitalism rob its beauty.

Where there used to be gardens now we have factories. Our gracious old buildings have been torn down to be replaced concrete boxes named after politicians. The woods that once ringed the city have been cut down for the shantytowns of labour colonies. Even the boulevards around our haveli have been overrun so that our view is now only of a bazaar, and we must keep the windows to the west closed because of the smell from the open gutter. (108)

Unlike the modern age where man is literally stealing the beauties of nature by his overpowering greed for money and power, in the pre-Aryan time, nature is worshipped, respected and taken care of like a family member. The philosophy of their life was based on the "profound respect for nature and the interdependence of all life" (100). But when the Aryan came to this land, they put their version of truth above the truth of nature. It was a conflict between instinct and reason. Nitin Bose becomes mad because he fails to understand the primitive knowledge protected by Nature. The character like Chagla is very significant here as he represents the aboriginal knowledge about nature which is beyond apprehensible to the rational mind of the narrator or Dr. Mitra As Chagla says:

The goddess is just the principle of life. She is every illusion that is inspiring love. That is why she is greater than all the gods combined. Call her what you will, but she is what a mother is feeling for a child. A man for a woman. A starving man for food. Human beings for God. And Mr. Bose did not show her respect so he is being punished. (92)

Nitin Bose is a masculine character in truest sense as he uses both the nature and the woman for his own pleasure. When he rejects both, he is cursed and forced to come back to the tribal village to purify his sin. Even in the story of the Courtesan the subjugation of women is very evident. She says:

The city is owned by men who believe every human being has a price, and a full purse is power. Trained as scholars, artists, musicians, dancers, we are only women to them, our true function to heave on a mattress and be recompensed by some tawdry necklace flashing its vulgarity on a crushed pillow. (108)

Ecofeminists relate the subjugation of nature with that of women in society. The relationship between nature and women is not a weakness for women rather they realize it as strength. So in the story, the daughter of the Courtesan is not accepted by the society as she is the wife of Rahul Singh, a bandit. The daughter surrenders herself in the water of Narmada to purify all her sins and make her pure. Thus, the Narmada gives her the freedom she dreams for. Narmada both physically and spiritually dominates the lives of the people around her. It's a perennial source of life and spiritual knowledge. It's a gateway towards Nirvana, peace, freedom and enlightenment. All the characters in the novel realize that desire is the principle of life and to love humanity is the meaning of one's existence.

Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra* is indeed a collage of different layers of life and its varied experiences. Mehta uses Narmada as a central thread and weaves all the stories into one beautiful garland. Ontological study of life is beautifully explained here. Not a single discourse is highlighted here. In Husserlian phenomenological way we can say that all the stories are just like the pre conceived ideas which we generally attach to our life and we never think beyond it. Mehta following the tradition of Husserl brackets all the preconceived ideas and advises us to see life as a naked form of idea. The binary structure between love and hate, belief and superstition, written and oral knowledge is put under Derridian erasure. Therefore, it becomes tough for the caretaker to understand the intricacies of life as he believes in the fixed meaning of life whereas Naga Baba does not have any desire to give meaning to the life as he believes in flux and fluidity where no truth is existed. Almost every story is mingled with deep knowledge about life and ironically, more the characters try to decipher meaning from their life, they end with despair and nothingness. For example, the Jain Monk denounces the wealthy life only to understand spirituality in seclusion is like that of the Caretaker. But do they get meaning of their life? The answer is revealed by the Naga Baba alias Professor Shankar. He understands spirituality by celebrating humanity and not by blindly following the "religion" attached to river Narmada. In other words, every characters in the novella, searches for the Truth following their preconceived ideas but they fail to find any truth until they realize that truth is not a destination rather than a process. By denouncing or by accepting life, one cannot get the meaning of truth unless he/she undones the knowledge he/she is having. The archetypal myth of Shiva is all pervasive throughout the novella. The marriage of desire and reason, attachment and detachment, love and hate, tradition and

contemporary makes a life complete. A Sadhu is the one who practices these principles and Shiva is a great example of that. That is why at the end of the novel the caretaker decides to go back to the previous world to understand life yet again.

Sitting on the terrace, meditating in the darkness before dawn, I admitted to myself that I envied the archeologists for still belonging to a world I had given up. I did not want to sit with the old Mullah of a small village that seemed frozen in time, untouched by the events of a larger world. With some alarm I realized I was becoming accustomed to that other rhythm the archeologists had bought into the rest house, the rhythm of my previous life (270).

Mehta not only creates a collage of various incidents but also fuses cultural memories in this novel that has given her space to show the beautiful picture of India. These six stories are like the different beads of a single garland. These stories are our pre- conceived knowledge about life. To get the essence of life, one has to go back to its being i.e. the root of existence to erase the burden of knowledge. Narmada is the naked form of idea, the source of life and that's why everyone in the novel takes a backward journey to Narmada for salvation, assimilation and to be one with Narmada.

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