



ISSN 0975 - 6302

TERESIAN JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

April - June

2022

Volume XIV

Issue II

Double-blind
Peer Reviewed
International
Quarterly

Listed in:

- § ProQuest
- § International Scientific Indexing (ISI)
- § ResearchBib (Academic Resource Index)
- § International Institute of Organized Research (I2OR)
- § J-Gate
- § Ulrichsweb & Ulrich's Periodicals Directory

Contents

06-12	Outlines of a Poetics of Polity: The Case of the Scandalous Scandal Narrative	Samson Thomas
13-20	Yeats, Tagore, and Internationalism: An Evaluation	Sarmila Paul
21-26	Things Fall Apart in Karachi: The Politics of Identity and Agency in Kamila Shamsie's <i>Broken Verses</i>	Seetha Vijayakumar
27-32	Transnational Turn in Partition Memories: A Study of the Sindhi Migration	Dilna Raju
33-39	Ritualising Invisibility, Reifying Spaces: A Psychosocial Mapping of Ralph Ellison's <i>Invisible Man</i>	Silja Roy
40-47	The Multicultural Mouse: A Critical Analysis of Race, Body, and Gender in Select Disney Movies	Sreelakshmi Renjith
48-54	Food in the Literary Text: A Reading of Jahnvi Barua's <i>Undertow</i>	Meena Sharma
55-65	The Regressive Progress of the Third Sex in India into an 'Injured Identity': A Spectacle of Anachronism in Development	Pavithra Nandan Menon
66-70	The Utopian World of Women in Rokeya Sakawat Hossain's <i>Sultana's Dream</i>	Henrieta Huda
71-76	Women and Disability: Representation of Double Marginalization in Mahesh Dattani's <i>Tara</i>	Madhumita Kundu and Prasenjit Panda
77-83	Narcotic Assemblages and Gender Roles in <i>Narcopolis</i>	Anusree R.S.
84-90	The 'Asli' and the 'Nakli': Tussle for Authenticity Amongst Hijra (Transgender) Spaces in Contemporary India	Leena Sharma and Atanu Bhattacharya
91-96	'Self-Other' Dichotomy in Caste Milieu	Teddy C. Anthappai
97-103	Translating Brecht's <i>The Good Woman of Setzuan</i> : Epic Theatre and the Socio-cultural Semiotics of Translation	Anjana Sankar S.

Dr. Celine E. (Sr.Vinitha)
Professor Emeritus and Manager
St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam

Dr. Preeti Kumar
Editor - Teresian Journal of English Studies
Head - Department of English and
Centre for Research
St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam

Dr. Lizzy Mathew
Principal
St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam

Dr. D. Radhakrishnan Nair
Consultant Editor
Teresian Journal of English Studies
Formerly Director - M.G. University
Research Centre in English

Editorial Board

Dr. Jane Chapman Vigil
Associate Professor, Department of English
Metropolitan State University of Denver
Student Success Building
890 Auraria Pkwy #310, P. O. Box 173362
Postal Code: 802173362, Denver, CO 80204, United States
Phone: +1 303-615-1256
Email: chapman@msudenver.edu

Dr. Chitra Panikkar
Professor-Department of English
Bangalore University
Jnana Bharathi, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560056
Ph: 080-22961631, Cell: 9448375856
Email: chitrapanikkar2000@gmail.com

Dr. Priya K. Nair
Assistant Professor
Research Guide - Department of English
and Centre for Research
St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam
Park Avenue Road, Cochin-11, Kerala, India
Cell: 9495027525
Email: priyamknbr@gmail.com

Dr. Kaustav Bakshi
Associate Professor
Department of English
Centre for Advanced Studies, Jadavpur University
Kolkata 700032, India
Phone: +91 33 2414 6681
Email: kaustav.bakshi@gmail.com

Dr. Renee S. Ruderman
Associate Professor of English, Sigma Tau Delta Faculty
Co-Advisor
Metropolitan State University of Denver
890 Auraria Pkwy #310, P. O. Box 173362
Denver, CO 80204, United States
Phone: +1 303-615-1271
Email: rudermar@msudenver.edu

Dr. K.M. Krishnan
Professor and Director
School of Letters
Mahatma Gandhi University
Priyadarsini Hills, Kottayam-686560
Kerala, India
Phone: 91-481-2731041
Email: schooloflettersdirector121@gmail.com

Dr. Shima Mathew
Associate Professor of English
T.M. Jacob Memorial Government College
Manimalakkunnu
Koothattukulam
Kerala, India
Cell: 9496343906
Email: shimasushan@gmail.com

Dr. Krishnan Unni P.
Senior Associate Professor
Department of English
Deshbandhu College
Kalkaji, University of Delhi
New Delhi-110019, India
Cell: 9650644525
Email: apskup@yahoo.co.in

Dr. Rajesh V. Nair
Assistant Professor in English
School of Letters, Mahatma Gandhi
University, Priyadarsini Hills P.O.
Kottayam, Kerala, India
Cell: 9495738712
Email: rajeshletters1@gmail.com

Dr. Rimika Singhvi
Associate Professor and Head
Department of English
The IIS University
Jaipur, Rajasthan, India
Cell: 9783307195
Email: rimika.singhvi@iisuniv.ac.in

Dr. James R. Aubrey
Professor-Department of English
Metropolitan State University of
Denver, 890 Auraria Pkwy #310, P. O.
Box 173362, Denver, CO 80204, United
States, Phone: +1 303-615-1272
Email: aubreyj@msudenver.edu

In the rush to get back to normal, use this time to decide which parts of normal are worth rushing back to. — Dave Hollis

Editorial



The past editorial ruminated on the world ridden by the pandemic and the role of literature in forging hope for humanity. While the pandemic still rages across the world, we have, to a large extent, learnt to live with its vexations and revert to our modes of living. And in this again, literature becomes that place where, to quote Rushdie, one goes “to explore the highest and lowest places in human society and in the human spirit . . . to find not absolute truth but the truth of the tale, of the imagination and of the heart.” Literature provides us with havens of possibilities from which to reassess our lives and reorient our thinking.

Academic research engages literature to decipher, interpret, and critique the various cultural, philosophical, political and institutional structures from within the textual framework. The purpose is not to demolish or displace conventional reading but to discover moments of self-contradictions in the text. Such an interrogative temperament as fostered by contemporary academicians helps us develop and propagate a critical and analytical mode of inquiry, all the more imperative as we live in a world that posits the danger of being controlled by political absolutes.

This edition of *TJES* explores a wide range of areas including film, partition memories, disability studies, transnationalism, psychosocial spaces, gender and third sex identities. The articles focus on the notion of identity from the perspective of gender, transnational, and disabled bodies. The attempt to decode scandal narratives within the framework of a visual space is indeed a very interesting observation that reveals institutionalized values of contemporary Indian society and it highlights the need for “a new poetics of polity.” Animation movies have been a site of contestation for years. Though it takes us to a fantasy world it simultaneously takes an implicit inquiry into issues like gender, race, ethnic, moral, and cultural values. In this edition, Disney princess are subject to analytical study along the lines of race, body, and gender. Interestingly these Disney heroines were created during the epoch of ‘Disney Renaissance,’ the period in which Disney claimed to correct their princesses created on Anglo-centric standards and introduced heroines from various indigenous communities around the world. This exploration of identity, societal structure, race, gender, and space extensively decodes the hegemonic semiotic codes that constantly operate within the existing normative system.

As we journey through the uncertainties of present times, as normal change, it is the certitude of that enquiry that debates and deconstructs the tensions and ambiguities of current knowledge systems which holds hope for the future. This edition of *TJES* is another contribution to rethinking and revising the normative and a rescripted journey towards hope.

Dr. Preeti Kumar

Editorial Assistant:

Mr. Johnson E.V.

Assistant Editor:

Ms. Niveda Sebastian

Editorial Committee:

Dr. C.S. Biju

Dr. Vincent B. Netto

Outlines of a Poetics of Polity: The Case of the Scandalous Scandal Narrative

Dr. Samson Thomas*

Abstract

The paper outlines a new poetics of polity, one driven by a cognitive-affective/visceral approach. It advocates a holistic method to decode scandal narratives and other socio-cultural products, on the assumption that these products, and their reception, are important sources of a critical understanding of social configurations, group affinities and disaffection, in a word, polity. It uses *Jai Bhim*, a Tamil film on the custodial death of a subaltern and the controversy surrounding the film, as an illustrative example to present the case. It contends that the film, and the controversy could be mapped together to reveal the institutionalised values of contemporary Indian society, and trace out group configuration within the social network. This new poetics of polity is inspired by the desire for a pluralistic society, and the hope of its realization through the negotiation of difference, informed by an understanding of experience in the different strata of a society.

Keywords: *Scandal, Social Order, Moral Values, Transgression, Violence, Audience, Poetics, and Polity.*

*Dr. Samson Thomas, Professor, Dean of Academics, Head, Department of English Literature
School of Literary Studies, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad-500007
Email: tsamson@efluniversity.ac.in

Scandal, Eric De Dampierre suggested, is a test of transgressed values that allows the community concerned to determine whether or not it has become indifferent to these values. This is how scandal institutionalizes something, either through a collective reaffirmation of the transgressed values—and therefore their reinforcement—or conversely, a collective demonstration of their obsolescence (11).

The values of the group are clearly asserted in gossip and scandal, since a man or woman is always run down for failing to live up to these values. But the struggles to fulfil those values by individuals and cliques are also restrained because the methods of achieving them are defined by gossip and scandal: and they themselves punish any excess. For they control disputation by allowing each individual or clique to fight fellow-members of the larger group with an acceptable, socially instituted customary weapon, which blows back on excessively explosive users (309).

A major talking-point in the Indian film circles and the Tamil society at large in recent times is the newly released Tamil film *Jai Bhim*. The film is the grim tale of torture and custodial death of a poor man hailing from the extreme margins of contemporary Indian society. The surprisingly rousing reception the film has received, despite dealing with a not-so-glamorous subject as the custodial death of an “*anawim*” (Eagleton 277), the legal sanction against the perpetrators of the heinous act, and the subsequent controversy surrounding the film, which reminds one of the adventure of Alice Goffman’s book *On the Run: Fugitive Life in An American City* (Singal), offer fresh insights on our understanding of scandal, seen as a socio-cultural product.

At the micro-level, the film, which is inspired by real-life incidents, is the search of a helpless sub-

altern for closure, a woman whose husband disappears after being taken into police custody for an alleged theft. At the meso-level, it is an artistic portrayal of what Philip Selznick calls the organizational ‘character’ (qtd. in Sherman xviii), with the organization, in this case, being the Indian police force. At the macro-level, the film is a moving commentary on the immanent power-relations in contemporary Indian society, which lie below the threshold of collective consciousness. The release of the dubbed version of the film in the Hindi-speaking states, and in other South Indian regions lend legitimacy to the generalization of the response of the Tamil public to the incident, which took place in 1993 in a specific location in Tamil Nadu, as a pan-Indian experience.

Behind the impressive box-office performance of the film is the collective reaffirmation of transgressed value, and the rejection of the feudal practice that determines individual worth on the basis of caste. This rejection is at once the endorsement of the values enshrined in the Constitution of India: justice, liberty and equality. The titular reference to one of the architects of the Indian Constitution, Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, suggests the artistic intention to remind the audience of the institutionalization of these three core values. As Eric de Dampierre explains, the institutionalization of certain values brought to the fore by a scandal or their out datedness, is one of the major effects of any scandal (de Blic and Lemieux 11).

The bone-chilling killing of a subaltern, a character that muddles the empirical/fictional boundaries, in police custody evoked public outcry. Audience-response on the social media, with *YouTube* in the lead, suggests that the torture and killing of an innocent man was viewed as more than the dereliction of duty by a handful of inhuman cops. The elaborate depiction of custodial

violence and other inhuman acts, be it the stripping of the accused's sister in front him, or the use of chilli-powder to check if the victim is alive, violence cleverly configured (Abel xiii) to elicit collective outrage against it, was seen as the transgression of the core values mentioned above. The elaborate portrayal of the judicial processes, and the judicial sanctions the transgressors are ultimately confronted with, make *Jai Bhim* a scandal-narrative. It shows the intention and has the potential to bring the immanent collective values to the level of consciousness. The audience-response indicates the successful materialization of this potential.

The incidents portrayed in *Jai Bhim* amount to a scandal, not just in the secular sense of the term, but in a religious (Judeo-Christian) sense, too. If, going by both the functionalists and the pragmatic anthropologists' gloss on scandal, the torture and custodial death, and the happenings surrounding the incident across the perpetrator-victim divide make the power relations transparent, besides affirming a few immanent core values that have been institutionalised (de Blic and Lemieux 26), the selfish, unjust act of a cop that destroys the lives of a few helpless individuals, and brings shame to the system, fits the definition of a sinful, less upright deed that presents many with an occasion for a downfall. In the spiritual sense too, the incident is a scandal, insofar as it is an obstacle placed on the spiritual path of fellow-human beings (Aquinas).

At the core of the collective values evoked by the film is the moral order. This order has been created by the division of the human realm into acceptable and unacceptable, approved and forbidden, sacred and profane zones (Durkheim 58). This moral order works at two levels: the lower/external, and the higher/internal levels. At the lower/external level, morality is perceived as duty/responsibility; at the higher/internal level,

it becomes the desire for the good and the noble (Durkheim 59). The central axiom of this moral order, it is safe to assume, is 'thou shalt not kill.' In fact, Within Emmanuel Levinas' ethical philosophy, this is the foundation of all human communities. The violent extinction of an innocent life is a transgression of the inviolable norm that holds human life sacred. The act thus threatens to breach the very boundaries of civilized existence. Transgression of the moral order is sanctioned against, and in the case of scandal, the sanction is public outcry, which is often followed by corrective and/or punitive measures. For Peter Poiana, this public outcry is powered by the sense of indignation, shame and concern (29).

Even a cursory glance at the recorded audience response to *Jai Bhim* on the mass and social media suggests an overwhelming sense of indignation, concern and shame. The snapshot of the collective sense of shame for being part of a malfunctioning system that allowed the jurisprudential processes (marked by rules of evidence, fair trial, and proportionate punishment) to be bypassed in favour of scapegoating the marginalised through guilt-by-association, is evident in the offer of monthly financial assistance to the victim, reportedly made by a little-known police officer from Egmore Chennai, India ("Anbumani" 22: 28).

When the torture and custodial death of an innocent man is revealed to the public, the heinous act is transformed into an event, in the Alan Badiouian sense of the term (Badiou 69)—it resonates with multiple meanings. In specific terms, it re-traces the boundaries of human society that the killing transgresses. Scandal-as-event is the warning signpost against trespassing, one that at once demarcates the boundaries of the moral zone.

The film portrays the trial as a ritual (Steele 38) that sanctions the expressive punishment to the

transgressors, and the judgement as the speech act, that both declares the boundaries of civilized behaviour, and enacts the exclusion of the offenders. Through this, it channels the call for retribution against the so-called guardians of the weak and the defenceless, now turned tormentors, into a call for the affirmation of faith in oneself and in the institutions of the state. The film brings to light a crisis of confidence even as it highlights its resolution by being faithful to the real-life incidents, but it does not stop with that. It urges viewers to have faith in themselves, and in the system and its institutionalised values, while it alerts them to the need for equipping themselves to deal any abuse of power.

It would be a fair assessment to claim that *Jai Bhim* distinguishes itself from *Visaranai*, *Pariyerum Perumal*, *Asuran*, *Karnan*, and other lesser-known films on caste oppression that constitute an emerging sub-genre in Tamil cinema, by carefully avoiding espousal of an anti-establishment position. Contrarily, it affirms faith in the social order. It goes to the extent of presenting the institution as an entity with self-correcting potential. It does this through its unhesitating acknowledgement of the contribution of the few good men within the police force. This message is delivered at the cost of making the lawyer, a larger-than-life, lone-wolf, giant-slayer, a Tamil Thornton, a trap that actor-star Surya has been praised for avoiding. The movie ends on a positive note, with a house for Mrs. Sengeni, and more importantly, with a usable, bureaucratically valid identity for herself and her children. The film also envisages a few ways of bringing the subaltern within what Judith Butler famously called “frame” (211), frame being the configuration that determines who one recognises as ones fellow-human beings. Advocate Chandru pleads for the allocation of a piece of land at the centre of the village to entitle his client to a ration card and a voter Identity card, so the persona non grata

could gain bureaucratic recognition. The habeas corpus is the poignant beginning of the subject-reclaiming process. Education is the next big step that the film invites the oppressed to take.

Yet another interesting feature of the film is its nuanced counter-narrative to the othering process, prevalent in a caste society. The major counter-narrative trait is the portrayal of the protagonist Rajakkannu’s life as a “grievable life,” to borrow Judith Butler’s term (109). It challenges the dominant community’s practised ways of recognising fellow-beings, human and non-human, as the inferior other. It portrays the snake and rat catcher whom the mainstream ignores during some moments, and finds despicable at others, in a radically different light. *Jai Bhim*’s Rajakkannu is a complete human being: a loving husband, a caring father, a thorough professional who performs the perilous duty of snake-catching with verve and élan, a generous man who does not charge any fee for a risky task few can perform, an honest, righteous individual who hands the piece of jewellery he finds to its owner, and a compassionate soul who intuitively occupies the posthuman space, evident from the way he frees the snake he has just caught, admonishing the creature for straying into the dangerous human habitat. In spite of its counter-narrative nuances, *Jai Bhim* is, first and foremost, Rene Girard’s demystified narrative (Girard 31), one that exposes the paradigm of violence and scapegoating, tracing the origin of these to the caste society, and the society’s restrictive frame of reference.

In an ironic twist, the ‘demystified narrative’ that was lauded for its imaginative recreation of a scandal, was itself being seen as scandalous by a section of the audience. *Jai Bhim* was accused of misrepresenting facts in the name of artistic freedom, under the flimsy pretext of telling a compelling story. The scandal, it was claimed, in-

volves directing the shame and indignation of the public towards a particular community, by exploiting the audience's diminished state of consciousness due to the shocking violence and indifference brilliantly portrayed in the film. The film, it was claimed, undermines social harmony, a belief which enjoys the status of an axiom in contemporary society. The film was accused of misrepresenting the caste identity of the offending police officer by featuring a revered symbol of a particular community in the backdrop. The other bone of contention is the choice of a name for a minor character in the film. The name of the character is different from that of the individual in the real incident, which the character supposedly represents, and the chosen name was claimed to be highly reminiscent of the party and the caste. It was alleged that these needless, perhaps even mischievous inclusions in the script and the *mise en scene* are highly provocative, since they readily remind the audience of the tension between two sections of the Tamil society. The detractors claimed that the intention was to stereotype a particular community as habitual aggressors against a certain, weaker section of the contemporary Tamil society. The apprehension that,

since the public is expected to know who the protagonists are and which deeds are committed, the need for justification disappears, thus paving the way for a communally shared spontaneous explosion of anger. (36)

This is mentioned in Poiana's paraphrase of Jean Paul Sartre in his 1948 work, *The Emotions: Outline of a Theory*.

The television and social media debates on this issue readily endorsed the need to maintain the delicate caste equilibrium of the contemporary society, even as they articulated, in the same breath, the view that prison narratives that lend

voice to the silent victims of an ill-balanced system need to be imagined, created, and presented in a manner that ensures participation of audiences across all sections of the contemporary society.

Interestingly, the accusation that the film stereotypes a particular community as traditional offenders, with the usual suspects taken from the lower strata of the society, highlights another crucial aspect or layer of scandal. Scandal is not just 'normal,' but common to all societies like murder or suicide; it does not merely furnish the object of historical, sociological, and anthropological inquiry. It is the proverbial glue that, together with gossip, holds a group together. Max Gluckman, an eminent anthropologist finds the Greek term that translates into English as scandal-monger, finds scandal and gossip useful cohesive social devices. Gluckman claims that scandal has a twofold function:

for scandal is only virtuous if its aim be to demonstrate some kind of social unity. Scandal when directed by members of a group against another group is unifying in another and an obvious, way-it asserts the superiority of the scandalizing group. (314)

The accusation of slander through deliberate acts of commission and omission, levelled against the makers of *Jai Bhim* neatly plays the role Gluckman assigns to scandal. The outcry against the film by the members of a particular community ranging from provocation of violence against the lead actor to the less scandalous call to tender an open apology to the offended community, demonstrates, at bottom, the discursive efforts to reinforce the unity of that community. The clamour for sanction against the outsider is in fact a call to assert the group's unity, and its position within the social order, if Gluckman's criteria for identification of the positive role of scandal are brought

to bear on this controversy. Gluckman would view the vociferous protests against the film as a rhetorical strategy to reinforce the identity of the complaining group, and the clamouring as part of the group's efforts to sensitize its members to the challenges coming from outside.

The controversy surrounding the film, treated as a narrative, and studied together with the film narrative, has the potential to explain the agonies and ecstasies of people occupying the different strata of the Tamil society, and by legitimate generalization, the contemporary Indian society. A student of society who is willing to drop the cynical attitude that the protest against the film is founded on Girard's 'mimetic rivalry' (384), triggered by the mimetic desire for the Chief Ministerial chair, now occupied by another person and party, might see the scandal surrounding the film in a totally new light. To this student, the film and the negative response it evoked among a particular group would be the twin-narratives that reveal the processes of identity construction, the tensions and animosities between individuals and sections of the contemporary society, and the way these are worked into contemporary social order. In fact, it could open the doors to a new poetics of polity.

This new poetics proposed here uses a cognitive-affective/visceral approach to the discursive/performative practices of individuals to sustain their position within their groups, and society at large. These practices, it is assumed, centre around a range of inter and intra group phenomena and epiphenomena, ranging from saving one's face, to more serious ones like the threat of exclusion and marginalization. The practices, it is assumed, often take diverse discursive forms: gossip, backbiting, scandal, self-referential and generic narratives, real or imaginary accounts of the groups and their members, as well as off-the-cuff responses to these incidents and texts. These

are just a few items in a fairly long list. Scandal, as well as the branding of these narratives as scandalous or provocative thoughts/acts, to name just a few, are grist to the mill of the poetics proposed in the paper.

The new poetics of polity proposed here is an interdisciplinary endeavour that combines the insights and methods of cultural and religious anthropology with the theoretical tools of literary and cultural studies, is to borrow W.H. Auden's memorable work, a kind of a

... rendezvous between two accomplices who, in spite of themselves/cannot resist meeting to remind the other (do both, at bottom, desire truth?) of that half of/ their secret which he would most like to forget. (Auden)

This new poetics is defined by its efforts to create an ethos of genuine (not boutique) pluralism, wherein differences are negotiated, based on a deep understanding of positions in a network of relations. It thus has the potential to contribute to the outlines of a progressive, pluralistic society, an interpretation with the view to bring about social change. The importance of such a poetics in today's society, riven as it is by ideologies and self-interests of different hues cannot be overstated.

Works Cited and Consulted

Abel, Marco. *Violent Affect: Literature, Cinema, and Critique after Representation*. U of Nebraska P, 2008.

"Anbumani vs Surya." *Youtube*, uploaded by Nakkheeran TV, 11 Nov. 2021, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=KM__AU21qU&ab_channel=Nakkheeran TV](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KM__AU21qU&ab_channel=Nakkheeran+TV).

Aquinas, St. Thomas. "Summa Theologiae." *New Advent*, www.newadvent.org/summa/

- Auden, W.H. "Horae Canonicae: Immo-latus Vicerit." 1976, vladivostok.com/Accessed speaking_in_tongues/auden 9eng.htm. Accessed 12 Sept. 2021.
- Badiou, Alan. *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*. Stanford U P, 2003.
- Butler, Judith. *Frames of War, When is Life Grievable?* Verso, 2009.
- deBlic, Damien and Cyril Lemieux. "The Scandal as Test: Elements of Pragmatic Sociology." Translated by JPD Systems, *Politix*, vol. 71, no. 3, 2005, pp. 9-38, www.cairn-int.info/article-E_POX_071_0009—the-scandal-as-test.htm#no12. Accessed 25 Nov. 2021.
- Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Free P, 1995.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*. Blackwell, 2003.
- Girard, Rene. *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*. Translated by Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer, Stanford UP, 1987.
- . "Interview: René Girard." *Diacritics*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 31-54. JSTOR, doi:www.jstor.org/stable/464818. Accessed 25 Nov. 2021.
- Gluckman, Max. "Papers in Honour of Melville J. Herskovits: Gossip and Scandal." *Current Anthropology*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1963, pp. 307-16. JSTOR, doi: www.jstor.org/stable/2739 613. Accessed 28 October 2021.
- Jacobsson, Kerstin and Erik Löfmarck. "A Sociology of Scandal and Moral Transgression: The Swedish 'Nannygate' Scandal." *Acta Sociologica*, vol 51, no. 3, Sep. 2008, pp. 203-16. JSTOR, doi:www.jstor.org/stable/20460055. Accessed 23 Oct. 2021.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis, Duquesne U P, 1969.
- Poiana, Peter. "The Discursive and Narrative Foundations of Scandal." *Cultural Critique*, no. 76, Fall 2010, pp. 28-48.
- Sherman, Lawrence, W. *Scandal and Reform: Controlling Police Corruption*. U of California P, 1978.
- Singal, Jesse. "3 Lingerin Questions from the Alice Goffman Controversy." *The Cut*, 16 Jan. 2016, www.thecut.com/2016/01/3-lingerin-questions-about-alice-goffman.html. Accessed 15 Nov. 2021.
- Steele, John. "A Seal Pressed in the Hot Wax of Vengeance: A Girardian Understanding of Expressive Punishment." *Journal of Law and Religion*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2001, pp. 35-68. JSTOR, doi:www.jstor.org.epluniversity.remo texs.in/stable/pdf/1051507.pdf?ab_segments=0/basic_search_gsv2/control &refreqid=excelsior:91b1067c31b0854305 d5f8a5684477b7. Accessed 2 Nov. 2021.



Yeats, Tagore, and Internationalism: An Evaluation

Dr. Sarmila Paul*

Abstract

One is bound to note the influence of Indian philosophy on Yeats's work while analyzing his formative years and major influences that shaped his poetic career. Incidentally, Tagore's works too were enriched by continual engagement with the Western ideas and traditions. Both these international poets exemplify the ways in which the British Empire facilitated the growth of cosmopolitanism as a result of interactions among different cultures. However, while Tagore pens a novel *Gora* with a hero of Irish linkage and gives vent to his sadness at the brutality of the Boer War by composing poems on it in 1899, Yeats intriguingly remains silent on the issues pertaining to the Indian Independence movement. This paper thus aims at exploring this contrast at a deeper level, for both these Nobel laureates, who were actively involved and later disillusioned about their countries' national movements and espoused repeatedly the need for a tolerant, pluralistic, secular, and modern nation, had repeatedly interacted with each other over a period of time and had influenced each other's thought and works. For the juxtaposition of the absorbing silence of Yeats on the Indian National Movement and the act of selecting a protagonist of Irish linkage for his novel by Tagore might shed new light on our understanding of the ways in which the Empire shaped our understanding of cosmopolitan culturalism.

Keywords: *Nationalism, Decolonization, Empire, Revolution, and Cosmopolitanism.*

*Dr. Sarmila Paul, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Rani Birla Girls' College
38, Shakespeare Sarani Road, Elgin, Kolkata-700017, West Bengal, India,
Email: sarmilapaulrbgc@gmail.com

William Butler Yeats, when asked about his message for India, famously said, "Let 100,000 men of one side meet the other. That is my message to India, insistence on the antinomy." (Hone 459). After saying this, "he strode swiftly across the room, took up Sato's sword, and unsheathed it dramatically and shouted, 'Conflict, more conflict'" (459). Vargas, in his essay, labels such an extreme reaction from a person, who was described by Rabindranath Tagore as "someone capable of comprehending the world through the un-trammelled power of his soul" (Dutta and Andrews 217), as not surprising. Yeats' aforementioned reaction was during the time period immediately following the publication of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), which contains both the "Easter 1916" and "Meditations" poems (Vargas 2). Vargas further cites the convincing arguments of Mair Pitt that one can discern the influence of Tagore's *Gitanjali* "LIII" poem, which contains images and wording that will become evocative in Yeats's two poems, especially in "Easter 1916" famous "a terrible beauty is born" line: "thy sword, O lord of thunder, is wrought with uttermost beauty, terrible to behold or think of" (22).

Besides Vargas, a number of eminent literary critics have repeatedly delineated Yeats's and Tagore's influence on one another's thoughts and works. The two poets—of whom the former's return to the ancient poetic tradition of Ireland was applauded by the latter as beneficial for the "national awakening" of Ireland (Williams 69), while the latter's poetry was regarded by the former as being decisive for a "new Renaissance" that had "been born in" India — had "many common interests and ideas," the most readily agreed upon one being nationalism (71).

Said, in his essay "Yeats and Decolonization," identifies 'nationalism' as

a word ... [which] still serves quite adequately to identify the mobilizing force that coalesced into resistance against an alien and occupying empire on the part of peoples possessing a common history, religion, and language." (Said 81)

Identifying nationalism as a "deeply problematic ideological, as well as sociopolitical, enterprise" (81), Said clubs Tagore and Yeats together with "great nationalist artists of decolonization and revolutionary nationalism," such as "Senghor, Neruda, Vallejo, Césaire, Faiz, Darwish," (81) and owes his analytical debt to them for providing him and his fellow critics with the critical perspective which enables them to question the cultural assumptions of European imperialism. He further adds that

... despite Yeats' obvious and, I would say, settled presence in Ireland, in British culture and literature, in European modernism, he does present another fascinating aspect: that of the indisputably great national poet who during a period of anti-imperialist resistance articulates the experiences, the aspirations, and the restorative vision of a people suffering under the domination of an offshore power. (69)

McCormack, on the other hand, criticizes Yeats's early biographers for "missing Yeats's well-publicized German honour in February 1934" (as the author of *The Countess Cathleen*, he received the Goethe Plakette from the Oberbürgermeister of Frankfurt)" (McCormack 134) and further draws our attention to Yeats's refusal to sign a petition started by English poets against the Reichstag Fire tribunal proceedings (March, 1933) and also to his acceptance of the Nazi plaque as "centered on his indifference to draconian limitations of civil liberties by a regime (Nazi Party led regime) less than six weeks in power" (137). McCormack mentions Freyer, as the only biographer who is

not “concerned to show the poet [Yeats] to have been a liberal-minded conservative constitutionalist in politics”(137). He further cites the works of Ellmann who mentions “Yeats’s later flirtations with aristocracy, and even fascism” as if “paraphrasing without citing George Orwell’s forthright declaration in 1942, that the Irish poet had reached fascism ‘by the aristocratic route’” (137).

Thus, one is bound to be intrigued by the mere juxtaposition of the acts of acceptance of a Nazi plaque by Yeats and the renouncing of the Knighthood, bestowed upon him by the British government, by Tagore after the Amritsar Massacre in 1919. Literary critics have repeatedly delineated the similarities between the two poets’ formulations about nationalism and universal pluralism. One needs to delve deeper to cultivate a richer understanding of Yeats’s and Tagore’s respective approaches towards nationalism in order to find answer to such contrasting actions by two contemporary litterateurs, who influenced deeply each other’s thoughts, actions, and literary works.

II

Michael Collins, in his “Rabindranath Tagore and Nationalism: An Interpretation,” argues that Tagore while critically considering ‘nation’ always rendered it to be the nation-state (38). Tagore’s philosophical critique of nationalism was firmly grounded, above all else, in a critical reading of Indian traditions. This is more evident in Tagore’s deployment of his Brahmo inheritance and the ideas of the Upanishads in particular. Collins further states that like Hegel, Tagore, too, “saw World History as the steady unfolding of an idea” (04). It is this complex, sinusoidal analysis of history that allows Tagore the option of not selecting between the dichotomies of nationalism and universalism, but adhering to cosmopolitan nationalism, that is underscored by Louise Blakeney Williams. In fact, sinusoidal theories of

history, contrary to the progressive and teleological civilizing mission of British imperialism, present a non-linear epistemological construct and, to quote Blakeney Williams,

“are very much like the non-Western concepts of the past described by Ashis Nandy, in which time is reversible” and there is “no real disjunction between the past and the present.” (Williams 91)

Blakeney Williams, like Michael Collins, traces the roots of Tagore’s concept of time and history in “traditional Indian philosophies, which also contributed to most literary modernists’ cyclic theories, especially those of Yeats” (72).

Blakeney Williams, who identifies the sinusoidal analysis of history as a trait common to both Tagore and Yeats, also posits a number of identical features that inform the philosophy of universal pluralism shared by the two greatest nationalist poets of two different British colonies. Both of them, determined not to fall into the traps laid by blind mimicking of the latent ideological formulations of imperialism — a salient feature of post-colonial predicament as described by Partha Chatterjee — painstakingly evolved their own response, thus contradicting the former school of nationalism (Williams 72). The ‘postcolonial predicament,’ according to Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, determines that “we cannot escape history” and “decolonization does not entail immediate escape from colonial discourse” (279). Hence, after all the attempts to subvert the discursive formations of ‘orientalism’ both the ex-colonizer and the ex-colonized are defined by the Europeanized construct of this predicament (280).

Blakeney Williams attributes the similarities between the theories of nationalism moulded by the two poets to a numbers of socio-economic and political factors. They shared almost identical social roots, leading roles in the Bengali Renaissance and the Irish Renaissance in the 1880s, ini-

tial zealous participation in their respective nationalistic movements in their native countries—Swadeshi movement and Sinn Feinn respectively, in the 1900s—subsequent disillusionment with the contemporary political leaderships, earning the wrath of the nationalists for complimenting the British, and so forth. Tagore was subjected to virulent criticism after the publication of his *The Home and the World* in 1915 and *Nationalism* in 1918, in which he argued that “the organized selfishness of Nationalism” is the “path of suicide” (Tagore, *Nationalism* 168). Yeats was dubbed as an imperialist who had gone over to the enemy: “a poseur in patriotism” by Sinn Feinn founder Arthur Griffith (Williams 79). They were constantly criticized by the nationalists for their common dislike for simplistic notions about national identity and their open condemnation of the violence caused by the nationalistic movements.

Both Yeats and Tagore had to face similar kinds of criticism in their respective countries by anti-colonial nationalists who tried to stereotype them as “pro-British elitists rather than true nationalist” (Williams 69). Such suspicions can be detected even long after the countries gained back the status of “free states” (70). In this regard the recent controversy, whether Tagore’s “Janaga namana Adhinayaka,” India’s national anthem, was an eulogy paying homage to George V. during his visit to India in 1911, becomes relevant since it helps in understanding that even after clearly denouncing the exchange of power in the name of nationalism in his book *Nationalism*, Tagore still is misconstrued and often accorded a pro-British status and even has been called a British puppet by Markandey Katju, retired Judge of Supreme Court of India. Blakeney Williams has pointed out that “Ashis Nandy argues that Tagore ‘rejected the idea of nationalism,’ while Stephen Regan writes that ‘the nationalist sentiments Yeats espouses are essentially those of déclassé Irish Protestantism’” (Williams 69).

Interestingly, Yeats was not the only Irish poet to propound the “post-nationalist forms of thinking about decolonization” (Viswanathan 09). Viswanathan in her comparative study titled “Ireland, India, and the Poetics of Internationalism,” has recorded that another Irish poet James Cousins, who immigrated to India leaving aside a flourishing poetic career in 1915, was also one of the “most avid supporters” of Tagore (10). He emphasized on the “selfish” nature of Indian nationalist struggle and was also worried “that the emerging anticolonial sentiment in India was producing a new racialism” (Viswanathan 10). However, Cousins turned out to be a marginalized figure in Irish literary canon after the Easter revolution in 1916 and became active in India to reiterate to the Indian people that “the enemy of Indian nationalism was not internationalism but an alien self-absorption” (Viswanathan 11). It was this movement in the history of Ireland that provoked Yeats to express his disappointment to Lady Gregory in a letter about the intrusion of politics into literature (13). Although both Cousins and Yeats were influenced by the theosophists during some periods of their lives and held almost similar opinions regarding the camouflage of nationalist struggle and the subsequent necessity for cosmopolitanism, the poetry and criticism published by the former in India marks his “engagement with, as well as departure from the romanticist preoccupations of his fellow Irish poets, particularly Yeats and AE” (18). Coincidentally, Tagore was also mocked by his “fellow compatriots” for being “hopelessly romantic and beguiled” when he raised his voice “in India on behalf of the ‘expanding soul of humanity,’ the language of universalism” (Viswanathan 07).

Critics have paid much attention to this similarity of views concerning the narrow perception of nationalism vis-à-vis cosmopolitanism or internationalism between the two poets and also

to their almost similar responses. To be more specific, Tagore and Yeats were criticized more for espousing a novel form of nationalism which differed from the established discourses of nationalism. Their nationalism, one may say, was akin to the spirit of a 'new' form of cosmopolitanism. In fact, the concept of 'new' cosmopolitanism may be pitted against the 'old' cosmopolitanism or universalism of the eighteenth century, "which proposed that national differences be minimized in favor of one uniform enlightened culture" (72) as has been delineated by Blakeney Williams. Hence, they emphasized on the necessity of acknowledging and respecting the variety of traditions and nationalities. For them the choice was not, as Tagore said, between "the colourless vagueness of [universalist] cosmopolitanism" on the one hand and "the fierce self-idolatry of nation-worship" on the other (Williams 71). The point of convergence in their conceptualization of nationalism is that they have repeatedly brought forth the hegemonic nature of the Eurocentric imperialist discourse. They were the forerunners in pointing out that anticolonial nationalists, instead of being guided by proper antagonistic ideals, were following blindly the underlying ideology of imperialism and, therefore, ended up 'mimicking.' Through their own version of a different form of nationalism they pointed out that in reasserting the western formulations—like the discourses of Enlightenment, the progressive metanarrative of history, English assertions of superiority, and the Cartesian dualism between the rational and the spiritual—the nationalists were proposing a social system that may erupt in sectarian violence. The reason behind this 'mimicry' may be comprehended from Said's viewpoint as he comments that "the cultural horizons of nationalism are fatally limited by the common history of colonizer and colonized assumed by the nationalist movement itself" and adds that imperialism after all is a cooperative

venture. Both the master and the slave participate in it, and both grew up in it, albeit unequally (Said 74). Hence, both Tagore and Yeats rejected the unitary sense of national identity because of its homogenizing tendency through suppressing differences. This suppression of differences to project the unitary sense of national identity has been regarded by the two poets as another form of anglicization having inherent violence. This probably justifies their straightway rejection of violent modes of opposition inculcated by the nationalists. Yeats even did not hesitate to put the imperialists and the nationalists using "unworthy instruments of tyranny and violence" for their worthy causes in the same category (Williams 82).

III

In their respective countries, both Tagore and Yeats participated in the awakening of the cultural identity of the nations through their works incorporating ancient myths, folktales, along with their theories of history. Yeats, whose theory was similar to the modernists, discarded the linear narrative of history claiming that progress was a myth. This culminated in his concept of the 'gyre' or the 'Great Wheel' in his 1937 book *A Vision*. Yeats's ideas were almost symmetrical to those of Tagore, who also formulated the concept of 'the great wheel of the world,' may be because the former's views were inspired by traditional Indian philosophy. Their cyclical or 'sinusoidal' vision of history, which incorporated national diversity more effectively than Enlightenment progressive theory, was pitted against the spiral view of history of most of the nationalists (Williams 90). However, Tagore diverged from Yeats in his idea of history which was more ambivalent than the other because of the extent of poverty in India. On the contrary, Said opined that "in such dramatic realities as the Easter 1916 uprising Yeats also saw the breaking of a cycle of endless,

perhaps finally meaningless recurrence" (Said 80). Perhaps the nightmarish vision of the second coming, in the famous poem "The Second Coming," is a premonition that stems from the recognition of failure to resist the "blood-dimmed tide" which is best exemplified through the first few lines:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
 The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
 Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.
 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
 The best lack all convictions, while the worst
 Are full of passionate intensity. (Yeats 1)

Said was also of the opinion that the overlapping of his Irish identity and his English cultural heritage generated a moment of tension in Yeats which he wanted to resolve in terms of an aesthetic and non-political version of history (Said 80). This tension between contradictory cultural affiliations accentuated gradually as Yeats's poetic genius matured over the years. It is reflected in the literary works of different periods of his life, as politics always intervened in his writings through some way or the other. Mohammad Nabi Meimandi has recorded that in his early life he

... took sides in the Irish struggle for independence by writing nationalist poetry and drama, by launching the Irish Literary Revival, and by founding several different literary organizations which, through art, promoted the Irish cause. (Meimandi 07)

Moreover, he was personally acquainted with many of the revolutionaries of 1916 apart from Maud Gonne whom he has immortalized through many of his verses. Said further discerned that,

Yeats's direct association with Parnell and O'Leary, with the Abbey Theatre, with the Easter Uprising brings to his poetry what R.P. Blackmur, borrowing from Jung, calls 'the terrible ambiguity of an immediate experience.' (Said 86)

It was during the last decade of his life that he started flirting with socialism, fascism, and eugenics that often earned him the status of an artist with pro-colonialist political viewpoints. Ellman has been quoted from *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* saying that "To Yeats communism, socialism, fascism and democracy were all myths, for only myths could 'rouse great masses to action'" (Lago 24). Hamid Reza Ghadiri thus pertinently observes that

as a young playwright Yeats was a nationalist who wrote *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, where blood-sacrifice is associated with the glorification and remembrance of Ireland, while in "Meditations in Time of Civil War," written in the last years of Yeats's life, he implies that the deaths of Irish nationalists are no longer glorious. (Ghadiri 06)

Though Yeats is mentioned by critics as a writer who tried to fuse nationalism with symbolist poetics, Davis and Jenkins also argue that one side of Yeats's symbolism inevitably exceeds cultural politics (Ingelbien 184).

IV

Shifting political allegiance, thus, becomes more and more evident if one tries to unravel Yeats's writings that present critics with the challenge

to categorize him either as a pro-colonialist or as a pro-nationalist. On the other hand, no such ambivalence is apparent in the literary works of Tagore. One cannot miss the zeal with which Tagore reacted against the violence of the imperialists and the nationalists alike. Even when James Cousins predicated on the Sanskrit principle of samadarshana or synthetic vision, he “found himself drawn to the larger project of establishing the common foundations of Irish-Indian culture as the first step toward the overthrow of colonial rule in both countries” (Viswanathan 23).

Though these poets from Ireland and India proclaimed almost the same version of cosmopolitanism or internationalism, Tagore and Cousins literally tried to exert them by directly expressing their views about the other country apart from their own. Tagore had firm belief in the East and West being complementary to each other, compared to which Yeats could only believe in their antithetical existence possibly because of the Western stereotype of Eastern mysticism that he himself was affected with. Hence, Yeats’s initial enthusiasm, concluded Mary M. Lago, gave way to his parting from Tagore later on, not only because of his misunderstanding Tagore on the basis of his ‘romantically inaccurate’ conceptions of India, but also because of his own antithetical perspective of the East and the West. To quote Lago, Yeats’s “India was a land of magic and meditation, of unsophisticated saints and spiritual experimentation” which comes very close to what Amaury de Riencourt calls “Europe’s Oriental Renaissance” (Lago 13). In Lago’s opinion “Yeats was trapped by his own magic formula,” (15) while Tagore was able to view the world from the standpoint of a universal man. Almost the same idea has been reiterated by Sirshendu Majumdar when he claims in the introduction of his book *Yeats and Tagore: A Comparative Study of Cross-Cultural Poetry, Nationalist Politics, Hyphenated Margins and the Ascendancy of the Mind* that;

Yeats’s ambivalent cultural position led to much of his confused stance in politics, which he attempted to resolve by constructing exotic schemes of history as demonstrated in *A Vision*. (Majumdar 11)

Recently, especially after Edward Said’s celebrated lecture, critics like Declan Kiberd and David Lloyd, have conferred Yeats the status of the poet of decolonization. Simultaneously another strain of criticism, led by critics like Terry Eagleton, Seamus Deane and others, has been questioning his confused stance in politics claiming that the Irish Literary Revival, led by Yeats, was an outcome “of a militant nationalist project” (Eagleton 301–2). Hence, the juxtaposition of the ideas of nation, culture, community as conceived by Yeats and Tagore makes evident the affinity inherent in their “shared ... poetics of resistance and self-fashioning, transcending spatial and cultural barriers” (Majumdar 11). Irrespective of their initial analogous ideas in favour of political nationalism, Yeats’s disenchantment with the armed revolutionaries led him to his later understanding of Irishness as embedded in political violence whereas Tagore could never reconcile with terrorist extremism of neither the colonial rulers nor the revolutionaries seeking independence from the former. He could transgress the spatial boundaries of his nation in articulating his dissociation from the violent revolutionaries towards a more humane aesthetics in the form of cosmopolitanism. However, Yeats’ and Tagore’s stances become all the more relevant if one pays attention to the fact that even throughout the twentieth century the concept of Internationalism developed out of the inherent ideals of nationalism. In fact, in the twenty-first century India and the world these construct remain mostly debated and constantly discussed since most of the social critics seemed to miss the philosophy behind these two poets’ objections with the westernized narrow conceptualizations of ‘nation’ and fanaticism adapted by the nationalists.

Works Cited

- Breckenridge, Carol and Peter van der Veer. *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*. U of Pennsylvania P, 1993.
- Collins, Michael. "Rabindranath Tagore and Nationalism: An Interpretation." *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics*, 28 Nov. 2008, www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/archiv/8844.pdf.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*. Verso, 1992, pp. 301–02.
- Ghadiri, Hamid R. "Yeats's Ambivalence: An analysis of His Poems." *Nineteen Hundred Nineteen' and 'Meditations in Time of Civil War*, UMEA Universitet, 2015.
- Hone, Joseph. *W. B. Yeats, 1865-1939*. St. Martin P, 1962.
- Ingelbien, Raphael. "Symbolism at the Periphery: Yeats, Maeterlinck, and Cultural Nationalism." *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2005, pp. 183–204.
- Lago, Mary M. "The Parting of the Ways: A Comparative Study of Yeats and Tagore." *Indian Literature*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1963 pp. 1–34.
- Lloyd, David. "The Poetics of Politics: Yeats and the Founding of the State Author(s)." *Qui Parle*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1989, pp. 76–114.
- Majumdar, Sirshendu. *Yeats and Tagore: A Comparative Study of Cross-Cultural Poetry, Nationalist Politics, Hyphenated Margins and the Ascendancy of the Mind*. Academia P, 2013.
- McCormack, W. J. "Yeats's Politics since 1943: Approaches and Reproaches." *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 35, 2005, pp. 131-45.
- Meimandi, Mohammad N. "Just as Strenuous a Nationalist as Ever." *W. B. Yeats and Post-colonialism: Tensions, Ambiguities, and Uncertainties*, U of Birmingham, 2007, p. 07.
- Menon, Narayana. "W. B. Yeats and the Irish Literary Revival." *Indian Literature*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1965, pp. 12–22.
- Said, Edward W. "Yeats and Decolonization." *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*. U of Minnesota, 1990.
- Sluga, Glenda. *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*. U of Pennsylvania, 2013.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. "Poet Yeats." *Rabindranath Tagore: An Anthology*, edited by Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson. St. Martin's P, 1997.
- . *Nationalism*. Macmillan P, 1918.
- Vargas, Victor. "Yoga Postures for the monstrous mob: W. B. Yeats's 'Indic' vision, Anglo Irish occult letters and the Celtic Twilight's 'labours of loss.'" *Otherness: Essays and Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2015, pp. 1–34.
- Viswanathan, Gauri. "Ireland, India, and the Poetics of Internationalism." *Journal of World History*, vol. 15, no.1, 2004, pp. 7–30.
- Williams, Louise B. "Overcoming the 'Contagion of Mimicry': The Cosmopolitan Nationalism and Modernist History of Rabindranath Tagore and W. B. Yeats." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 112, no. 1, 2007, pp. 69–100.
- Yeats, W. B. "The Second Coming." *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*. 1921, pp. 1-8.
- Yigit, Ali. "The Concept of Patriotism and Struggle Against imperialism in the Selected Poems of Mehmet Akif Ersoy and W. B. Yeats." *3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, vol. 18, no. 4, 2012, pp. 121–30.

Things Fall Apart in Karachi: The Politics of Identity and Agency in Kamila Shamsie's *Broken Verses*

Dr. Seetha Vijayakumar*

Abstract

The remarkable novel *Broken Verses* (2005) by British-Pakistani writer Kamila Shamsie weaves together history, memory, politics, and a touching mother-daughter bond in a story set in Karachi. This multifaceted tale follows Aasmaani Inqalab, a 31-year-old girl whose life has been wrecked by the abduction of her mother fourteen years ago. Samina, a feminist activist, has gone missing, along with her lover, a revolutionary known as 'The Poet' throughout the country, who is suspected of being assassinated. Shamsie's engagement with the politics of (counter) depiction of Pakistan/Karachi and Muslim identities are examined in this paper, with an emphasis on the female characters and their identity formation. This analysis of *Broken Verses* will also look at the novel's issues of gender, religion, fundamentalism, and female emancipation.

Keywords: *Identity, Pakistani Women, Karachi, Fundamentalism, and Kamila Shamsie.*

*Dr. Seetha Vijayakumar, Assistant Professor, Department of English, N.S.S. College, Pandalam-689501, Pathanamthitta District, Kerala, India, Email: seetha.august6@gmail.com

How many ways do you have to flatten a woman? But the earth and women continue to rise up -- Kishwar Naheed

Kamila Shamsie is a leading modern Pakistani English fiction writer who has accurately captured the essence of Pakistan's relationship with the rest of the world. Her novels can legitimately be termed socio-cultural documents of an era of optimism and despair in her country, and they are a vital part of her creative personality. In her writings, Kamila Shamsie shows a strong love for her hometown of Karachi. Kamila Shamsie observes:

the place where you grow up and spend your formative years tends to be the one lodged most deeply in your imagination, so for those of us who moved away as adults, Pakistan is still the place we feel the greatest familiarity with and have the greatest interest in. Pakistan remains largely unwritten about in the form of Anglo-phone Fiction. (Shamsie 4)

She follows the path of human emotions and conflicts, which are largely driven by politics. Kamila Shamsie has always seen parallels between history and fiction, particularly in terms of how Pakistan's past informs her works, from partition to the transnational ethnic tensions in Karachi in the 1990s. She is someone who questions if aesthetics should be about precision in representation or about establishing a realm outside of or above politics. In an interview with Cara Cilano, published in *Kunapipi-Journal of Post colonial Writing and Culture*, Shamsie explicates:

Aesthetics is the form I use to convey notions of reality. Here's an idea, now let's find an aesthetic form to translate that into; or let's see how I can discuss these things using language in the best

way I know how to use it. Aesthetics isn't just about prettiness, of course. Ultimately, it's about being able to take whatever your medium is — whether it's clay or language or your own body if you're a dancer — and deploying it with utter precision. Convey what it is you want to convey in a way that will strike other people. (161)

Broken Verses revolves around the lives of three modern and educated women from the upper class, namely Aasmaani Inqalab, the protagonist and narrator of the narrative, Samina Akram, Aasmaani's mother, and a women's rights activist, and Shehnaz Saeed, a famous actress, and Mir Adnan Akbar Khan's mother. Samina is the most self-determined major female character in the narrative, courageously rising and speaking out against Pakistan's traditional customs. She openly lives her life the way she wants it to be lived, disregarding the so-called societal limitations. Samina defies motherhood and wifehood expectations and celebrates her identity as a lover and activist. On the other hand, Aasmaani Inqalab is a young, befuddled narrator who does not quite approve of her mother's emancipated approach to life. The novel depicts a moment in Pakistan's history when the feminist movement and resistance were at their height, and Samina and Aasmaani reflect both its personal and political dimensions. *Broken Verses* dives into Aasmaani's past using flashback methods to expose the reasons for her disenchantment with her culture and herself. Apart from the mother-daughter duo, the narrative also features a diverse voice in the form of Ed, who recently returned from New York post-9/11 and plays the role of an enigmatic messenger. Aasmaani's mundane life is turned upside down when she meets Ed at her new workplace, a television studio. Ed is smitten with her, but Aasmaani flatly refuses his proposal. It is out of this despair that he devises a scheme to

re-create the Poet's style by imitating the encrypted letters that can only be decoded by Aasmaani. She quickly realises that Ed had duped her by replicating the style of encrypted letters.

When she realises the truth, she is completely scared and stunned, and it is at this point that she considers herself and undergoes true change. She can overcome her denial about her mother's suicide. Aasmaani emerges as a strong, independent woman who begins to search for her actual identity, dispels her confusion, and clarifies her life goals. Despite Ed's extensive justifications and frequent declarations of his love for her, Aasmaani demonstrates her tenacity and refuses to forgive him.

Religion and Resistance

By blending history and memory, Kamila Shamsie depicts the violent side of Karachi, going deeper into all that is wrong with the city. She has written about totalitarian regimes, particularly Zia ul Haq's brutality, social stratification, women's laws, hudood the fight for women's rights, and global topics such as the War on Terror, the CIA-ISI nexus, homosexuality, languages as a reconciler in a broken world, and Islamophobia. *Broken Verses* is a thought-provoking work on religion's problem and religious fundamentalism, as well as the fate of those who oppose it. Samina, the protagonist's mother, has long fought against Pakistan's strict, conventional system. *Broken Verses* illustrates the hardship of women under the hudood decree, which was implemented in 1979 as part of the 'Islamisation' process, and provides a profound insight into the political and social life in Pakistan, particularly during General Zia Ul Haq's administration. The story, told through the eyes of a young television journalist named Aasmaani Inqalab who works in Karachi's bustling seaport, follows one's personal experience of Pakistan from the 1970s to

the present in a magnificent way. Shamsie conveys both the promise of Pakistan and the country's contentious political reality in this novel. Since 1979, several Pakistani feminists and women have emerged as a result of their growing resistance to gender inequality and strict religious regulations. The life of Aasmaani's mother, Samina, is the most vivid illustration of how the state crushes rebellious voices.

For example, Samina sees religion as an institution that chains women. She argues about Islamic law and the holy Quran thus:

The laws of the Quran? '.... Maulana Sahib, it embarrasses me profoundly to have to remind a scholar such as you of what is written in the Quran and I don't mean in your translation of it, which I have read with astonishment and wonder; within the Quran itself, as you well know, there are two verses which refer to the apparel of women. Verse thirty-one of Surah – an- Nur and verse fifty-nine of SurahAl-Ahzab. In one, the word khomoorehenna comes from the word khumar rather than a veil. It doesn't specify what is covered or how. And jalabib means a shirt or cloak. If the Almighty had wished to use the word hijab to more precisely indicate a head-covering I'm sure He would have done so... (284)

Samina, a courageous campaigner, and her mother's lover, 'The Poet,' were the lifeblood of their generation's opposition to military tyranny and government excesses. Because of his outspoken resistance to the regime, the poet spent time in prison and exile before being brutally murdered and having his face disfigured by unknown assailants. She travels to the sea and never returns after struggling for two years in a condition of intense melancholy following his strange

death. Whether Samina committed suicide or drowned in the sea by accident remains a mystery until the novel's conclusion.

Mumtaz and Shaheen in their significant work *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?* (1987) record that despite the difference in education, professional skills, and self-awareness between the educated and domesticated women in Pakistan, one common thing is that "(their) life is governed by the same rules of patriarchy which cuts across class and regional differences to create [a] measure of similarity and uniformity" (Mumtaz and Shaheen 23) Under the influence of this patriarchal system, all Pakistani women are weighed and judged against particular roles associated with the feminine gender, with an ideal lady being an incarnation of passivity, self-sacrifice, and patience. The character Samina defies the destructive roles that patriarchal culture has assigned to her. She is an actual character, someone who is thoughtful, critically aware, and capable of taking self-determined action to resuscitate society. With the character of powerful, rebellious Samina, Kamila Shamsie promotes women's independence while deconstructing clichés in Pakistani society.

A Shift from the Political to the Personal

The mental suffering of Aasmaani Inqalab is the story's central theme in *Broken Verses*. The non-linear first-person narrative allows the reader to explore the depths of her thoughts. The novel can be read as a study of a daughter's deep longing for her mother, as Aasmaani herself puts it, "Every prayer of mine for the last fourteen years had been one single word: Mama" (Shamsie 144). Samina and Aasmaani, a mother-daughter combo, are biologically tied but morally separated. They reflect two distinct times in Pakistan's history. If Samina is motivated by 'political' fulfillment, Aasmaani is motivated by 'personal'

fulfillment. Even though Aasmaani is a strong-willed modern woman, she does not identify as a 'feminist,' as her mother did.

Through the character of Samina Akram, Kamila Shamsie has given voice to the resistance story, "of blazing eyes and fiery rhetoric who had crowds chanting her name as though she were a religion" (59). Called "Pakistan's gypsy feminist" (87), Samina was brutally attacked by the regime for voicing her opinion; in the novel, one can see the aftermath of women's political movement against the Hudood Ordinance,

It was all prison and protest and exile and upheaval around me. Strange, how I was almost nostalgic for that. The battle lines were so clearly drawn then with the military and the religious groups firmly allied, neatly bundling together all that the progressive democratic forces fought against. (73)

The relationship between Aasmaani and her mother was designed to show the true nature of feminist discourse in Pakistan. In an interview with Cara Cilano, Kamila Shamsie explains:

I meant that the perceived failure of feminism in Pakistan was one narrative. Aasmaani's failure, at the beginning of the book, grows out of her anger, her resentment, and her feelings of abandonment. So, one of the things she does is to say that her mother's feminism was for nothing. By the end of the book, when she's watching the video Shahnaz sends her, her mother's saying, 'What matters is what the next generation — Aasmaani's generation — thinks of us because history is a rolling process. The seeds of what we have sown now may not bear fruit for many years. (162)

Aasmaani realises that what mattered most was the initial courageous stand taken by women like her mother and that they can't be expected to fix the world. "I'm the kid of it, she realises. They gave it they are all. Now it's up to me to pick it up and move on" (180). At the end of the novel, Aasmaani arrives at this conclusion. Due to her mother's disappearance fourteen years ago, Aasmaani has grown blinded by her sorrow and has become oversensitive. The work should be seen as a story about a daughter's love and longing for her mother. Throughout the story, her discontent with life is evident.

Aasmaani articulates it clearly: "Sometimes I feel like I've spent my whole life missing Mama"(182). Aasmaani finds it hard to release from her mind the memory of her mother, and the mother she painfully remembers is the one who moved in and out of her life, leaving her with her father, her stepmother Beema, and her stepsister Rabia.

Eleven weeks a year. That's all the time I had with my mother from the age nine to twelve. She wasn't there when I got my first period, had my first crush, bought my first music album. (137)

She is distressed by the notion that she was never a reason for her mother to stay or return. Her mother was constantly shared with the people or The Poet, according to her memories. On the one hand, Aasmaani admires her mother's inspirational life, but on the other, she chastises her for failing to fulfil her motherly duties. About Aasmaani, Kamila Shamsie says: "I didn't want Aasmaani to have the grand epiphany and suddenly become the great reformer"(161). Aasmaani, on the other hand, is often questioned about her activist mother's fiery personality and reduced to Samina Akram's daughter. The CEO of STD, the channel where she works says, ". . . your background is CV enough . . . If you have

even a fraction of your mother's fire, the camera will just lick you up" (9-10). To which Aasmaani humorously replies, "I'm entirely anti-flammable, I'm afraid. And I'd like to stay un-licked while at work if that's ok" (10).

Conclusion

The oeuvre of Kamila Shamsie is characterised by a profound feminine sensibility. A traditional third-world lady hegemonized by patriarchal ideology is entirely absorbed by a western liberated free-willed woman in her novel *Broken Verses*. The Postcolonial Woman is not shown as a meek subaltern, but rather as a strong female character. Shamsie seeks to present a new picture to the third-world lady in a society divided along caste, class, and gender lines. *Broken Verses* eloquently depicts the conflict that women face between agency and religious fundamentalism. It tells the story of a damaged city and how things break apart when you accept extremism and orthodoxy too quickly. The tale follows Aasmaani as she faces her anxieties and uncertainties on her way to self-realization and agency. The work masterfully weaves a gripping plot with a bigger reflection on the meaning of poetry, politics, religion, and Pakistan itself. Kamila Shamsie depicts how women are silenced and oppressed in the domestic sphere, as well as their attempts to fight back. *Broken Verses* can be classified as a 'mystery novel' with a significant socio-political message.

Works Cited

Cilano, Cara and Kamila Shamsie. "Interviews." *Kunapipi: Journal of Post colonial Writing and Culture*, vol. 29, no. 1, www.ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://scholar.google.com/&httpsredir=1&acle=1331&context=kunapipi#page=152. Accessed 10 Apr. 2022.

Kishwar Naheed. *The Grass is Like Me*. www.poetrytranslation.org/poets/kishwar-naheed. Accessed 5 May 2022.

Mumtaz, Khawar and Farida Shaheen, editors. *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back*. Vanguard Books, 1987.

Salam, Zia US. "A Voice of Their Own." *The Hindu Literary Review*, weekly edition 3, 7 Sep. 2008.

Shamsie, Kamila. *Broken Verses*. Mariner Books, 2005.

Yaqoob, Munazza and Sofia Hussain. "Changing Images of Pakistani Women in Kamila Shamsie's *Salt and Saffron* and *Broken Verses*." *Journal of Gender and Social Issues*, vo.11, no.2, 2012, www.jgsi.fjwu.edu.pk/jgsi/article/view/169/118. Accessed 9 May 2022.



Transnational Turn in Partition Memories: A Study of the Sindhi Migration

Dilna Raju*

Abstract

Memories of partition have been different for different communities. There were a number of factors which controlled the partition experiences of a particular community. A large part of these memories has become a part of the recorded history of the partition of 1947, and is a crucial component of the national history. Meanwhile, a few memories remained undervalued and overlooked and did not find a space in the mainstream narratives of partition. This paper attempts to throw light on the unacknowledged memories of the Sindh Hindus and Sikhs, who migrated from the Province of Sindh, now in Pakistan. Keeping their uprootal and scattered settlement in perspective, the paper analyses the travel of the Sindh remembrance of culture, beyond the borders. This transnational travel of memories happens in different levels and dismantles the idea of national borders. The paper also examines the significance of Sindh micro narratives, recollected but lacked an institutionalized representation, in the partition memories of India.

Keywords: *Partition, Sindh Culture, Transnational Memories, Borders, and National History.*

*Dilna Raju, Assistant Professor, Department of English (S. F.), St. Albert's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam, Kerala, India, Email: dilnaelizabeth@gmail.com

The partition of British India resulted in the formation of two independent nations, migration of fifteen million people, and the death of untold numbers. When the provinces of Punjab and Bengal were split by the British lawyer Cyril Radcliff, the Muslims of India and the Hindus and Sikhs of Pakistan found themselves in the wrong countries (Shashkevich). They were equally affected by the aftermath of partition as they had to flee their home land, packing only the essentials, believing that they would return soon. The people who trailed to India or Pakistan (East and West) suffered a violent turmoil as many of them died mid-way of age and diseases, while many were killed in religious riots, women were raped and abducted, and none of them had a sight of their home ever again.

Even after seventy years, partition is comprehended as a political incident dividing British India on the grounds of religion, which eventually led to a mass migration, violence and death. The impacts of partition go beyond the recorded history, and the wreckage caused by it, beyond times. Priya Satia, professor of British History, Stanford University acknowledges a different history of partition and its impacts, which are collected as the oral history by 'The partition Archive.' The stories of the real victims of partition help in understanding partition outside the "typical narratives of high-political negotiations between figures like Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Lord Mountbatten" (Shashkevich). Such negotiations failed to explain many of the hows and whys of partition. The archive provides an alternate narrative of partition from the memories of its victims - the people who migrated, leaving behind their homes and valuables. These micro narratives were shaped by their personal experiences of partition which were determined by factors like caste, class, re-

gion, gender etc. So, partition was not merely a geographical displacement, it resulted in an uprootal from a familiar culture created by a collective memory to a new and alien one.

In the movement of people across the newly drawn borders, they carried along the memories of their culture they had left behind. Unlike the rigid borders which divided India and Pakistan, these memories were not confined to the borders of the nations. Ann Rigney in an interview to the NITMES observes these travelling or circulating memories which came across the national borders, often reproduced or altered the celebrated "national memories" as transnational memories (Utrecht University [Humanities UU] 9: 28).

The narratives of partition depicted in movies, books and stories documented it as the largest human migration. The real experiences and memories of people which varied from one another formed the micro narratives of Partition and were overlooked; the memories of the Sindhi-Hindus and Sikhs were one among the many narratives of Partition that went unnoticed in history. The Hindus and Sikhs were forced to migrate from Sindh due to a couple of incidents of violence that took place in Hyderabad (city in Sindh Province). Approximately, 50,000 Hindus and Sikhs had registered for assistance to leave Sindh in the local Congress offices ("Sindhi Voices"). As the Hindus and the Sikhs left the province of Sindh, they carried the memories of their culture to their new settlements in various parts of Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Rajasthan etc. Bombay welcomed the largest number of Sindhi Hindu migrants. Kalyan Camp in Thane district ... was converted into shelters for refugees arriving during 1947-48 ("Sindhi Voices").

In 1967 the language of Sindhi, spoken by the migrants from Sindh was made one among the scheduled languages in the Indian constitution,

in order to acknowledge the language and the people speaking it, as a part of India. But unlike other languages Sindhi is not a language of a particular state. It is spoken by the Sindhi people who are scattered over the north-western parts of the country. The Sindhi language binds the scattered people of Sindh and their memories together. Sindh is famous for its cultural uniqueness shaped by its philosophy of Sufism, poetry and music- the influences of which are found both in Islam and Hinduism. Sufism was deeply rooted in the culture of Sindh, the deity of Jhuley Lal and his Palla (the fish on which he is seated) is worshipped by the Sindh Hindus as a God. While, the Sufi saint and poet Lal Shahbaz Qalandar also known as Jhuley Lal is revered by Sindhi Muslims and Hindus alike. Jhuley Lal is also known as the God of River Indus, and plays a significant role in the cultural expressions of Sindh including its festivals, songs and dances ("Sindhi Voices").

Sapna Bawnani, Bollywood hairstylist and a second-generation Sindh, whose father was a migrant and settled in Bombay attributes this shared culture and philosophical outlook of the Sindh, as a reason for a lesser violent version of Partition in Sindh; while compared to the stories from Punjab. She is also the director of *Sindhusthan*, a film which documented the memories of the Sindh migration. The documentary is about Bawnani's tattooing of her legs with images from Sindh culture and the stories of their exodus. Through tattooing, she converted herself into a museum of Sindh history and culture and thus played a key role in relocating the memories of her lost past. She was using her body as a carrier for the translocation of the memories of her forefathers. The overlooked and lesser-known culture of the Sindhis, found an expression through the tattooed legs. Simultaneous to the visuals, various Sindhis recollecting the fond memories of their lost homes, which is a part of a different

nation today, is heard in the back ground. Bawnani finds these recollections more reliable than the recorded history which outlines the methodological nationalism. She also uses the poetry of famous Sufi poet Sha Abdul Lathif in her documentary. Such references of Sindh culture and art has marked the memories of Sindh and had a huge impact on the Sindh people both in India and Pakistan, as these memories united them in the Sindh consciousness.

Pierre Nora in the preface to the English edition of his *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past* brings forth an expression; lieu de memoire (sites of memory), which can be defined as;

any significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community. (xvii)

The term identified the most obvious and crucial centres of national memory, and reveal the existence of invisible bonds tying the citizens of a nation together (xvii). Such memorial sites contained the spirit of nationalism of a country and with it, united the people within its geographical boundaries. An analysis of the Sindh partition history would reveal the absence of any such sites of memorial heritage to bind the community together. The Sindh partition memories could not find an adequate space in the nationalist history of India. Rather, their lieu de memoire were the oral narratives recollected. Sapna Bawnani through her documentary and tattooing attempted the creation of a site for Sindh memories of partition of their past, exodus and settlements on her legs, which she plans to exhibit after her death. The people of Sindh in India were scattered over a wide area, contrasting to their fellow Sindhis, who stayed back in Paki-

stan. Those Sindhis had the privilege of a province exclusively for them and this offered them a protection of geographical affinity and a close bonding with the people of their own culture. Unlike the citizens of a nation, united by homogenized memories and the spirit of nationalism within the steadfast national borders, the people of Sindh who came to India were united by the memories that travelled with them beyond the geographical borders; this created a heterogeneity in the cultural remembering, thus leading to a transnational turn in their memories.

Different factors in operation during partition determined the plight of the non-Muslim Communities of Sindh; this included caste, gender, class, etc. Many were forced to leave, while a few were compelled to stay. Caste played a major role in the exodus of the Sindh people, as it determined whether people could migrate or they could access relief. "Sindhi Voices from Partition," an attempt of *Partition Museum* to shed light on the long-forgotten Sindhi voices to document the partition narratives records that an Essential Service Ordinance was passed by the government to prevent sweepers from migrating to India. But many of them who chose to migrate were inhabited in places like Regharpura located in New Delhi which was initially set up for sweepers in the Delhi municipality (2019). Such details were collected from the oral narratives of the Sindhi migrants. Those factors in operation were not visible in the annals of the partition history but were recollected by the migrants who were separated from their families, now in Pakistan.

The Sindhis lacked an object or entity in the new lands that worked as a symbolic element of memorial heritage and could unite the scattered community together. It was through individuals that the memories travelled, and were termed as travelling memories. It is an abbreviation that

Astrid Erll used, to signify the fact that, during the production of cultural memory, the people, media, mnemonic forms, etc., are in constant motion. According to her, all cultural memories are in constant motion so as to stay alive and to have an impact on individuals and social formations and this movement of memories across and beyond borders happens through five different dimensions. The first among which is the carriers; "who shared in collective images, narratives of their past, who practiced mnemonic rituals displayed an inherited habitus, and drew on repertoires of explicit and implicit knowledge" (Erll 17). The Sindh people who carried the memories of their unique culture to different parts of India brought in a share of the collective images, rituals and narratives of their past in Sindh and it was through their later generations that these memories travelled further within India and to different directions of the world. Erll points out media as a key dimension for the travel of memory, since the institutionalized history availed very little space for the Sindh memories, most of the transmission/travel of the memories were made possible through the oral narratives. The music and Sufi philosophy of Sindh were preserved through such oral transmissions. Along with the Sindh myths and customs, the narratives and trauma of the violent incidents followed by the partition also found a place in the contents of the cultural memories that crossed the borders and thus adding to the third dimension in the movement of the memories. The travel of mnemonic practices, the fourth dimension are not evidently found in the Sindh scenario, whereas mnemonic forms, which is the fifth dimension included the condensed symbols or icons which were carried from Sindh and this included the philosophy of Sufism and the Sindh deity saint Jhuley Lal, they travelled along with the Sindhis first to India and then to different parts of the world through the different musical adaptations.

The Sindhi memories of their lost homes and culture were dynamic. It was unceasingly in motion since the Sindhis fled from Sindh and settled in the north-western frontiers of India. As they mingled with the natives, their memories became even more dynamic and grew in multiple directions. This growth and travel of memories, through generations found a little space in the recorded history of partition and the cultural history of India. The memories which travelled across the physical and geographical borders decentralized the idea of nation state. This movement of memories across the borders of the nation reinstates Benedict Anderson's concept of nation as imagined political communities. The migrant generation Sindhi Hindus and Sikhs were scattered over a wider area and got into various jobs, predominantly business. During the initial years of their settlement, they found troubles with language and forced their children to learn the local language over their mother tongue Sindhi. With the younger generation Sindhis, spreading over to different parts of the country and some of them went abroad diminished their migrant history. As they moved to different directions of the world, they carried with them the culture of Sindh, as in any diasporic community, the memories were often mixed with that of the natives and were often "stripped of their originality leading to distortion or perversion of memories" (Erl 18).

However, the Sindhi people and the memories of their culture and those of partition that they carried along to different parts of the world have in a way, helped to have an understanding of the narratives of partition from a different perspective. The Sindhis were united in their culture and philosophy before partition, during the partition; they were not victims of its severe brutalities as that with Punjab or Bengal. They were victims but not in complete misery.

More than violence, it was the loss of their homeland, which nurtured their culture for centuries that left a deep and lasting impact on the Sindhis who migrated to India. ("Sindhi Voices")

This special position that the Sindhi community occupied would make their Partition memories more unique and would attribute them with a perspective different from that of the institutionalized history and celebrated nationalism. The homogenized narratives of partition would also take a different turn with the oral narratives and recollections. Such alternative narrations were heterogeneous, it was the recollections of experiences which were different for different individuals and determined by various factors. It is not the denial of the existing national memory and history; rather these memories cross the rigidities of national borders and offer an alternate narrative of the event.

Works Cited

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 1983.
- Erl, A. "Travelling Memory." *Parallax*, vol. 17, no.4, 2011, pp. 4-18. Tandfonline, doi:org/10.1080/13534645.2011.605570.
- Nora, Pierre. "From Lieux de Memoire to Realms of Memory." *Realm of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, English Language Edition, Columbia U P, 1996, pp. xv- xxiv.
- Shashkevich, Alex. *Stanford Scholar Explains the History of India's Partition, its Ongoing Effects Today*. 8 Mar. 2019, www.news.stanford.edu/2019/03/08/partition-1947-continues-haunt-india-pakistan-stanford-scholar-says.

Shetty, Anjali. "Sindhis and Partition: The entire community behaved as one in that moment of trauma." *Hindustan Times*, 14 Aug. 2017, www.hindustantimes.com/pune-news/sindhis-and-partition-the-entire-community-behaved-as-one-in-that-moment-of-trauma/story-HRTJlf3sytPwmnOunlILcI.html

"Sindhi Voices from the partition." *The Partition*

Museum. 16 Aug. 2019, www.theheritage-lab.in/sindhi-voices-partition.

Utrecht University [Humanities UU]. "NITMES – Transnational Memory." *YouTube*, 6 Feb. 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=IeEDIoX67Lo&ab_channel=HumanitiesUUHumanitiesUU.



Ritualising Invisibility, Reifying Spaces: A Psychosocial Mapping of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*

Silja Roy*

Abstract

Space defines one's identity. The spatial angst of the African Americans continues even in the twenty first century. The paper attempts to etch the psychosocial spaces traversed by Ralph Ellison's *invisible man*, which any George Floyd of today's world can relate to. Erik Erikson's 'Theory of Psychosocial Development and the Epigenesis of Identity' helps us to map the mental progression of the protagonist in his struggles to attain a legitimate space and identity in the physical world which deliberately ignores his persona.

Keywords: *Psychosocial Development, Epigenesis, Basic Virtues, Malignancies, and Maladaptations.*

*Silja Roy, Assistant Professor, Department of English, St. Peter's College, Kolenchery-682311, Ernakulam, Kerala, India. She is also a Research Scholar, St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam, Park Avenue Road, Cochin-11, Kerala, India, Email: checkvj@gmail.com

On the terrain of postmodernism, various species of spaces have evolved in a rhizomatic manner: physical spaces, mental spaces, real spaces, imaginary spaces, real and imaginary spaces, cultural spaces, embodied spaces, etc. The spatial dialectics thus evolved to incorporate even the minute relations and experiences of man in terms of space. The present paper attempts to deep map Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* in the eponymous novel, capturing the nuances of the journey through the hero's psyche. 'Space' is a forbidden fruit for the African Americans who are sidelined to their ghettos- which suffocated them like the sepulcher. Their trauma and the spatial angst are sketched effectively in the opening lines of the novel itself.

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fibre and liquids - I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible; understand, simply because people refuse to see me.... When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination - indeed, everything and anything except me. (3)

By denying visibility he is denied not just his legitimate space but his identity as well; thus for the lack of space and identity the invisible man confines himself to the hole: the underground cellar, where we find him first. The novel then progresses by explaining the reasons for his 'hibernation.' Possessing an indelible identity is the first step in the process of reclamation of the legitimate space. Erik Erikson's 'Theory of Psychosocial Development and the Epigenesis of Identity' — which validates the social factors over and above the genetical

ones in the formation of one's identity —helps us to map the psychological spaces traversed by the protagonist to attain a legitimate space and identity in the physical world, which negates his rightful space.

The identity of an individual evolves through various stages—from infancy to youth—influenced by the nurturing factors which are above the genetic ones. Erikson uses the term epigenesis—which means above genetics—to signify the social factors that mould one's identity. According to Erikson, each stage of psychosocial development involves a 'crisis' of two opposing emotional forces—contrary dispositions termed as syntonic and dystonic dispositions: trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity versus role confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation and integrity versus despair. For successfully passing through each crisis the individual needs to achieve a healthy ratio between the contrary dispositions. The successfully balanced outcomes—hope, will-power, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care and wisdom—are the 'basic virtues' of an individual. Any hindrance will result in either 'maladaptation': sensory distortion, impulsivity, ruthlessness, fanaticism, promiscuity; or 'malignancy': withdrawal, compulsion, inhibition, inertia, repudiation—finally leading to identity crisis (222-43).

Invisible Man belonged to a family of slaves in the American South. By the time of his birth, slavery had already been abolished; but the mental slavery continued to gnaw the African Americans. The very knowledge that his grandparents were slaves made him timid. He confessed that at one time, he was ashamed of his lineage (15). It badly affected the formation of his identity. The first stage in his psychosocial

development, 'trust' formation was thus affected. He began to nurture 'mistrust' for others. He was suspicious of everyone he met. "I had some misgivings over the battle royal..., " which was organized by the Whites (17). Even the sight of unfamiliar African Americans—those of his own race—created anxiety in him. This is highlighted in his comment on seeing Lucius Brockway, his African American guide in the paint factory, "...I saw his drawn face.... His manner puzzled me" (207). Brother Jack sensed invisible man's immediate feelings on seeing him, "You don't know who I am and you don't trust me" (293). The failure in developing 'trust' during the first stage of psychosocial development negatively affected his individuality. His parents always feared the power of Whites. Their reaction to the grandfather's advice, "to keep up good fight" prove this. "They thought the old man has gone out of his mind" and were alarmed (16). The fear and the feeling of insecurity of his parents disturbed his psychic development. Instead of developing the 'basic virtue' of 'hope,' it initiated in him a yearning for 'withdrawal' which culminated in his self-inflicted isolation in the underground cellar. "I took to the cellar; I hibernated. I got away from it all" (573). His decision to hibernate was the after-effect of his frustration with the race-torn society and also due to the lack of 'hope.' 'Trust' is the foundation on which one's identity is based, but invisible man lacked such a strong base; hence his identity could not withstand the storm of discrimination.

'Will-power' and 'self-control,' the 'basic virtues' which had to be developed at the toddler stage, failed to strike its roots in invisible man. The protagonist had to suffer the adverse effects of this deficiency, in his later life. In the eviction scene, though he succeeded in rehabilitating the old couple, he showed no 'will-

power' to face the consequences. "It became too much for me. The whole thing had gotten out of hand" (284). Hence he fled like a coward. The accident in the paint factory, which almost took his life, was the result of his lack of 'self-control.' "Something uncoiled in my stomach and I was moving toward him, shouting, more at a black blur that irritated my eyes...." (225). He thus quarrelled with Brockway, and the old man cleverly had his revenge over the protagonist. As an African American invisible man developed 'shame' and 'doubt' instead of 'autonomy.' The black colour always haunted him, and the stigma associated with it made him doubtful about his own identity and status. He felt that being an African American, the others looked upon him as if he were a mule of labour. Even in the Brotherhood, where the African American and the Whites were supposed to be equal, invisible man looked up to the Whites. He found it difficult even to sit among or walk along with them. He grew up dependent on his superiors, without executing his freewill. In the college, there was Dr. Bledsoe; in the factory, there was Brockway; and in the Brotherhood, there was Brother Jack to keep him running. The malignancy of compulsion was the after-effect of the lack of autonomy; as a result, he needed to be compelled to do things which he desired, but lacked the courage to do so. Brother Jack thus had to force him to pursue the job of a spokesman for the public.

The lack of the basis virtues of purpose and direction which had to be developed during the pre-school stage affected the protagonist's identity formation; the adverse effects of which could be seen in his later life. Invisible man, after being expelled from college, did not think for himself or used his intellect to plan for his life ahead. He simply followed the deceitful track drawn by Bledsoe. When he realized the treachery, once again he lost his direction. The

'initiative' which had to be developed during the third stage of psychosocial development was submerged by the background surcharged with racial discrimination; due to the lack of initiative, he always had to depend on his exploiters. He thus played the role of a puppet in the hands of his employers. Inhibition from taking his own decision was the final outcome of his misdirected pre-school life. He confesses, "my problem was that I always tried to go in everyone's way, but my own" (573).

The failure in his life was accelerated by the lack of competence and method—the 'basic virtues' which had to be nurtured in the fourth stage of psychosocial development. The discrimination and unhealthy restrictions during the school age had developed inertia and inferiority in him. It was the lack of method that defeated him in his later life from gaining the upper hand in the Brotherhood; otherwise such a talented person would have succeeded in running the institution to the true welfare of the African American. Lack of industry blocked him from attaining the heights of glory. The defective upbringing during his school days thus eroded his identity. He played the role of a puppet doing what was ordered to him, thinking that it would be the best for his career. He thus laments, "I knew of no other way of living, nor other forms of success available to such as me" (147).

Invisible man's blind obedience to his 'masters' became complete by the time he reached adolescence. The speech he delivered in the graduation ceremony and in the meeting organized by the Whites was about social responsibility and humility of the African Americans—the two things that were inevitable for them to exist in the segregated society. Instead of the basic virtues of fidelity to his own conscience and devotion to his own principles, he followed the

dictates of his exploiters like a fanatic. This is highlighted in his obsession to the ideas of the Brotherhood; but when he realized the organization's treachery he turned out to be a rebel, who repudiated the entire system of the society. His action of looting the electricity emphasized his frustration. "I learned in time though that it is possible to carry on a fight against them without their realizing it" (5). He then faced role confusion. His exploration of the various identities—that he came across during his eventful life—left him confused. His yearning for a leader always misguided him into authoritative clutches and traps. He also misunderstood his grandfather's advice, and it misled him to the ultimate disintegration of his identity.

The basic virtues of love towards a partner and affiliation towards the society failed to be developed in the protagonist; as a result, he suffered exclusivity. The young protagonist could not find a genuine partner to share his emotions. Emma and Sybil were just exploiters of his sexual vigour. Instead of enjoying the bliss of intimacy, isolation choked his life; but this alienation finally helped him to realize his mistakes and assess his true state.

The Eriksonian 'basic virtues' which had to be developed at the various stages of psychosocial development failed to strike its roots in the case of the protagonist. The malignancies which resulted from the excess of dystonic forces—caused by the uncondusive social atmosphere—affected the formation of his identity, the adverse effects of which could be seen in his later life. The failure and confusion he faced in his life were the aftermath of the distorted identity formation.

Ellison integrates several incidents to highlight the intensity of his protagonist's crisis. Wherever he went, he felt out of place. The Battle Royal is

the first incident when the protagonist faced the difficulty, where a group of adolescent Blacks were blindfolded and made to fight each other as a contest; and then they were asked to pick up coins from an electrified rug. The sadistic game was actually conducted for the pleasure of the Whites. "Blindfolded, ... I had no dignity. I stumbled about like a baby..." (22). Invisible man was just one among the bunch of African Americans, who had no separate individuality; but then he was too young to understand the meaning and the need of an identity.

The expulsion from college was the first real incident in the protagonist's life to make him question himself about his identity "I had kept unswervingly to the path placed before me ... had done exactly what I was supposed to do—yet, instead of winning the expected reward, here I was stumbling along..." (146). It hurt him badly and he even protested against it, but his sense of identity and freewill were not strong enough to direct him to a path which would lead him to success. From that point onwards everything that happened in his life undermined his sense of his own identity, as an individual.

The Letter episode shocked him down to his entrails, where he was rejected by all those persons to whom Bledsoe's letters of 'recommendation' were addressed. He discovers to his horror that the letters were actually intended to discredit him. "I ... felt numb and weak, knowing that soon the pain would come and that no matter what happened to me I'd never be the same" (194). Young Emerson offered him the job of personal attendant; but it became clear that he had homosexual leanings. "My head spun. He was addressing me, leaning forward confidentially... touching my knee lightly and quickly removing his hand as I shifted my

position" (186). Invisible man felt himself denigrated to the level of a mere sex toy.

The Factory episode is yet another situation of disillusionment for the protagonist. Lucius Brockaway, who was an African American like the protagonist, threatened him as if he were a dog. His vengeance almost killed the protagonist when he was deliberately given a wrong order, which led to an explosion in the factory. This emphasizes the fact that in a race-torn society there is no hope for a true Brotherhood, even among the African Americans. In the factory hospital the doctor and the nurses seemed to be performing experiments on him as if he were a guinea pig. In a state of semi-consciousness, he was asked again and again who he was and where he had come from. Those questions bewildered him. "... I lay fretting over my identity.... A kind of combat.... Who am I? ... I felt like a clown" (242). He even forgot his name and native place.

The protagonist somehow acquired an identity in the Eviction scene while addressing a crowd of African American people, motivating them to react against the White official's unjustifiable action. The commotion had gone out of control and invisible man tried to escape from the scene to save himself from being arrested; thereby he again lapsed into nothingness. The incident marks a fleeting sense of identity of the protagonist.

Invisible man gained a new name and address by joining the organization called Brotherhood. Brother Jack, the leader said, "This is your new identity.... Start thinking of yourself by that name from this moment" (309). Invisible man soared high on the wings of the Brotherhood. Later the organization itself tried to extinguish his new identity by urging him to act like a brainless machine: without a mind, without

any convictions or principles of his own. He was given stern warning, "You were not hired to think" (469). The Brotherhood wanted him to surrender completely to the collective wisdom of the top leaders unquestioningly. This threatened his individuality. "I'd tried to build my integrity upon the role of Brotherhood and now it had changed to water, air. What was integrity?" (503). He had to efface and obliterate himself and his identity to become a mere cog in the wheel of the Brotherhood.

The protagonist's acquaintance with Rinehart, a man who had multiple personalities, threw open the wide variety of roles that he could assume at the same time. "I could feel some deep change. It was as though my discovery of Rinehart had opened a gulf..." (501). Ellison used Rinehart's case as a symbolic representation of invisible man's problematic situation. Rinehart presented himself as a drug-trafficker, lover, priest, a faith healer and miracle worker. Invisible man felt that one could survive in a segregated society only by assuming different identities.

The most pathetic fact was that even in sexual relationships he failed to have an identity. Sybil once remarked, "You are beautiful, I've always thought so" (520). Emma and Sybil both sought only sexual gratification from him because he was an African American expected to be sexually more vigorous. He had no identity in their eyes, but was just a mechanism to satisfy their sexual cravings. He felt himself to be "a convenient verbal push-button arrangement for the ladies' pleasure" (521).

The nightmare while he was in the manhole represented the climax of his identity-crisis, wherein he was castrated by a group of tormentors—Bledsoe, Norton, Lucius Brockway, Brother Jack, Rinehart, Ras the Exhorter and a few others; symbolizing the complete destruction of his masculinity and the annihilation of

his very being as an individual. Since his existence was not acknowledged by any one, he called himself 'invisible man.' Achieving identity remained a long cherished dream for him, which beckoned him with both its hands far away from the horizon.

In his underground abode he burned his High School Diploma Certificate and other papers, which bore evidence of the various identities imposed on him, so as to gain a genuine identity. During this period of hibernation, he found his own individuality in a better light. He gained a second sight or a third eye which helped him to realize the true meaning of his grandfather's advice. He recognized that diversity ought to be accepted as the abiding truth that "men are different and that all life is divided and that only in division is there true health" (576). He realized that the way to overcome the absurdity of life is to transform the adverse situations into favourable ones by cleverly manipulating them. Thus instead of finding solace in escapist strategies such as prayer, self-inflicted isolation and accommodation in ghettos, the protagonist decided to ritualize his invisibility. His determination echoes the words of the Pan-Africanist civil rights activist W.E.B. Du Bois, that he,

would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world...be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon...without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (3)

Invisible man passes through the various identity statuses—identity diffusion, foreclosure status, moratorium and identity achievement—put forward by James Marcia (22). At first he experienced 'identity diffusion': suffered no crisis and made no commitment to any particu-

lar identity. When he advanced further in his youth, he had 'foreclosure status': made commitment by taking the role of the spokesperson of the Brotherhood without exploring the other possible options. His meeting with Rinehart, a person with multiple identities, initiated him to explore the different identities possible; but failed to make a commitment leading him to 'moratorium.' Finally, after much analysis and ground work in the underground cellar, he progressed to 'identity achievement,' which gave him the necessary courage and confidence to reclaim his space. Invisible man's ultimate decision to ritualise the invisibility which others have trusted upon him as a means to reify his legitimate space was his final blow to the race-torn society.

Works Cited

- Du Bois, W.E.B. "Of Our Spiritual Strivings." *The Souls of Black Folk*. Cosimo, 2007, pp.1-7.
- Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. Penguin Classics, 2001.
- Erikson, Erik H. *Childhood and Society*. Vintage Books, 1995.
- Marcia, James E. "Life Transitions and Stress in the Context of Psychosocial Development." *Handbook of Stressful Transitions across the Lifespan*, edited by T.W. Miller, Springer, 2010, pp.19-34.



The Multicultural Mouse: A Critical Analysis of Race, Body, and Gender in Select Disney Movies

Sreelakshmi Renjith*

Abstract

The 'Disney princesses' brought forth by Walt Disney productions after the mid 90's introduced heroines of colour who are representatives of various ethnic communities around the world. However, these heroines who apparently appear to be a part of an indigenous community were mere extensions of the predominant white heroines. The aim of this paper is to identify the somatic construction of the ethnic heroines portrayed in the movies *Pocahontas* and *The Princess and the Frog* to explore its visualization and conception from a multicultural perspective. It also aims to examine the effect of such stereotypical constructions on child schema, when body is identified from the lens of the dominant western group. Both these heroines were created during the epoch of 'Disney Renaissance,' the period in which Disney claims to correct their princesses created on Anglo-centric standards and introduced heroines from various indigenous communities around the world. However, a critical approach to these movies unveils that instead of presenting a holistic worldview on ethnic heroines, Disney promotes an essentialist approach, doing nothing more than providing unnecessary emphasis on physical beauty and glamour.

Keywords: *Disney, Ethnicity, Gender, Hegemony, Miscegenation, and Stereotypes.*

*Sreelakshmi Renjith, Post graduate Student of English Literature, St. Thomas College (Autonomous), Thrissur - Palghat Road, Keerankulangara, Thrissur-680001, Kerala, India,
Email: sreelakshmirenjith99@gmail.com

The preferences over one's body shape changes from one culture to another. While one culture prefers a full figured body, the other prefers more slender bodies. Such differences in the socio-cultural dimensions are vital in the representation of an ethnic body. Culture plays a dominant role in framing the definitions of beauty. The perfect body envisioned by the west becomes the dream of women all over the world which results in negative perceptions on their own bodies. More often it is our sense of shame that leads to unacceptance of our bodies. This kind of shame is caused by the dominant beauty trends prevalent in the world that relegates all the other beauty standards as inferior. This research paper aims to look at the bodily representation of the heroines portrayed in the movies *Pocahontas* and *The Princess and the Frog* and the extent to which their bodies are stereotyped to present 'eternal feminine' roles.

Racial body and Identity in America

Pocahontas released in 1995 tells the life of a Powhatan woman named Pocahontas who falls in love with an Englishman. The movie presents a romanticized love relationship between a colonist and an indigenous tribal woman. According to historical evidences, Pocahontas was a Native American woman known for her associations with the colonial groups at Virginia. Though the character of Pocahontas is inspired from a historical figure, the plot of the movie is in no way match with her real life. The movie presents Pocahontas as a young free spirited woman in search of her own path. Her dreams and her wanderlust nature perplexes her mind, yearning for an untrodden path.

Pocahontas' depiction as a 'tribal version of Eve' underscores the bodily crisis that occurs when female body is perceived from the point of view

of a man. This includes the emphasis laid on their desirability and sexuality that corroborates the expression of female heterosexuality in farcical form. Her lean and tall image has no afflictions with her ethnic background except for her white loin clothes draped in a traditional tribal manner. Here too the daunting effects of feminine thinness is clearly visible. If Pocahontas were to be a beautiful woman then she should have the western feminine qualities of a tall, thin body with lifted cheeks and contoured face. Such kind of representations does not qualify all kinds of bodies worthy of respect and admiration. Also it disapproves the concept of body positivity leading to homogenization of bodies. A more in depth analysis of Pocahontas' appearance reveals that there has been a deliberate effort to make her hyper heterosexual. This is more evident in her comparison with her confidante Nakoma (Putnam 150). Both women are lean and wears short dresses but Pocahontas has extremely large breasts than Nakoma which emphasizes her as the lead character (Putnam 150). While discussing the dubious legacy of the actual Powhatan Princess, Jeffrey Katzenberg, the then chairman of Walt Disney studios remarked that he wanted Pocahontas to be the finest woman ever made (Putnam 150). Clearly Pocahontas' slim and sexy appearance heavily projects the female heterosexual behavior. As Li- Vollmer and LaPoint observes;

By performing gender outside of normative expectations, individuals may therefore drawn into question much more than their gender: In a culture with firmly naturalised constructions of gender, gender transgression may also cast doubt on a person's competence, social acceptance and morality. (Putnam 149)

Some critics have deemed Disney's version of Pocahontas as a strategic attempt to cover the

horrors of colonialism. The brutal treatment meted out to the indigenous by the colonisers was averted under the veil of a romantic relationship between a tribal woman and an English man. According to Mattaponi oral history, the life of Pocahontas was tragic for she was kidnapped and sexually assaulted by the white settlers. Disney's take on the story of Pocahontas invited a lot of criticism from the natives for its inaccurate depiction of history to mask the real face of the colonisers. In one of the scenes, John Smith calls the tribe of Pocahontas as savages and ventures to teach her new things. Such instances of colonial hegemony are normalized in the light of a free-spirited woman and a romantic love relationship. One of the over-arching motifs in the movie is Pocahontas' depiction as an archetype of noble savage. She is the only person from her tribe devoid of xenophobic attitude towards the white settlers which eventually results in her love relationship with John Smith. Her appearance is ironic when juxtaposed with the accounts of Native Americans who adorned themselves with feathers, fringe and beads (Brode 21). Pocahontas is not only measured by her beauty, she's righteous, caring and outspoken (265). To quote Dr. Deidre Almeida;

In *Pocahontas* (1995), Disney co-opted Native American culture, more or less insisting that we can change your history, portray you to look as we want, put your picture on lunch boxes, allow kids to dress up like you for Halloween- and you can't do anything about it. (Brode 264)

The Princess and the Frog, the 49th animated feature film of Disney was released in 2009 in which Disney presented its first black princess. It is intriguing that Disney took more than seventy years to portray a black princess after the establishment of their princess franchise in the early

1930s. The movie was highly appreciated at the time of its release for its creative screenplay and brilliant animation. It also marked the return of Disney to hand drawn animation. For the first time in its history, Disney came up with a trailblazing idea of depicting an ambitious, working woman in pursuit of a new business venture. Her characteristic trait is her commitment to a long cherished dream of opening a new restaurant of her own. Tiana's friends complain that all she does is work. Even Prince Naveen, Tiana's male counterpart, reprimands her saying that she is a "stick in the mud" (Turner 89). Tiana herself admits that she is a workaholic who has no time for dancing and other social gatherings. It is indeed perplexing that Tiana as a woman takes very little screen time for most of the time she is seen as a frog. Tiana in human form is only seen on screen for the first twenty nine minutes and for the rest of the movie she's seen as a frog except for the last three and a half minutes where Tiana and Naveen reappear as humans (Turner 90). Despite the makers' paradigm shift in the identity of their princesses, it is unfortunate revealing that their bodies are still represented in terms of the age old conventions.

An in-depth analysis of Tiana's body reveals that she is in no way match for the African beauty cult. Furthermore it reveals that these Renaissance princesses were mere extensions of the classic heroines with peripheral changes made onto their attitudes and outlook. Miscegenation is yet another reality which has been overlooked by Disney movies. In the book, *After identity: Rethinking Race, Sex and Gender*, Georgia Warnke concluded that racial attribution is a stifling issue as miscegenation was quite rampant in America, especially after the civil war period. She also added that in Virginia, it is possible for a white man to have 24 percent [approx.] of black ancestry (24). Taking it into account, Tiana-Disney's African American princess, portrayed with

chocolate brown skin and Negro curls is a misrepresented figure due to stereotypical conventions. Michael D. Baran, cognitive psychologist remarked that Disney has a long history of stereotyping and how it purports children to look at race and culture from a hegemonic lens.

The Princess and the Frog, which is in fact, a reworking of the German folk tale *Frog Prince*, presents an African heroine who is transformed to a frog as she tries to break the spell cast on the frog prince. Popular culture reveals African race as one among the most vulnerable group, often subjected to intense body shaming and discrimination (Soriso 14). Most of the illustrators perceive that it is almost impossible to depict an African without a flattened nose and grotesquely thickened lips (Klein 81). The culturally conditioned body of a woman of colour is based on her subservience and at last she is given a better name, body and clothes, with her nakedness and waywardness rectified (Klein 44). As Kheli R. Willets observes in his study of African characters, "Disney offers the audience visual illustrations for a virtually endless menu of stereotypes, caricatures and cultural perceptions about African people and Blackness" (15). Unlike the other princess movies, *The Princess and the Frog* depicts Tiana as a frog, a creature which is normally considered unappealing (Laemle 10). This carries within it the notion that it is not problematic for a racial inferior to undergo bogus bodily transformation while the so called 'classic princess' cannot be chosen for such repugnant altercations. This is a kind of racial normativity in terms of Catherine McCormack where,

women of colour are much more likely to experience violence related to sexual racism in our culture and these are issues that are acutely reflected in the history of art and visual culture in denigrating, hypersexualizing and fetishising images. (49)

In *The Princess and the Frog*, Tiana and Charlotte are strikingly contrasting characters both in their demeanor and thought process. While Charlotte represents a classic Princess who is ready to kiss a frog if it turns into a Prince, Tiana is more of a modern Princess who would never kiss a frog be it for anything in this world.

Theorising Bodies

Academic interest in the body and its sociology has grown substantially in recent years, yet understandings of the body continue to be marked by uncertainties (James 22). Bodies are shaped by the world one lives in, which makes them undeniably and indisputably political (James 26). The first cognitive theory on gender was developed by Kohlberg in the year 1966. His theory encapsulates the role of gender in child development and how their understandings on gender influence their behaviour. Although Bem's theory on gender schema is closely related to Kohlberg's in gender development, the theory proposed by Bem provides a more concrete understanding of gender and its influence on child schema. Further research in this field, shows that gender stereotyping follows a specific developmental pattern which can be divided into three distinct phases. The first phase occurs mainly during the infant and preschool age where children begin to learn about gender related traits (Marin and Ruble 68). In the second phase, the acquired gender knowledge is cemented either by rigidity or fashion (68). Thirdly, a phase of relative flexibility comes along with the acquired rigidity (68). Hence one can perceive gender as an emergent idea of social structures, both as a method and result of legitimising the social divisions of society (West and Zimmerman 127). Gender schema theory begins with the observation that the developing child learns the appropriate repertoire from his/her cultural environment (Bem, Implications 355). In the words of Bem;

a schema is a cognitive structure that organizes and guides an individual's perception.... Gender schema construes perception as a constructive process... that prompts a child to regulate his or her behaviour so that it conforms to the culture's definitions of maleness and femaleness (Bem, Implications 355).

In psychology, the process of acquiring sex appropriate personality, behaviour and self-concepts is referred to as 'sex-typing.' Sex typed individuals differ from other individuals not in terms of their masculinity or femininity, but in terms of their self concepts and behaviour that are organised on the basis of their gender (356). Feminist scholars often argue that children become sex-typed because sex happens to be the basis of socialisation in their culture. Bem's second article that claims to introduce gender schema theory to feminist scholars, reinstates that cultural dogmas often treats the child as a passive receiver of social values rather than as an active agent trying to understand and appreciate the world (Bem, Cognitive Account 600). According to Bem,

gender schema theory is a theory of process, not content The process of dividing the world into masculine and feminine on the basis of meanings that a particular culture provides is central to the theory. (Bem, Implications 605)

Thus Gender schema theory insists that children are less likely to become sex typed if the society limits its cognitive network related to sex and temper its persuasion on gender dichotomy (Bem, Cognitive Account 609). In her research, Bem attempts to attenuate possible sex linked correlations by working on the illustration of children's picture books by drawing long hair onto male characters and avoiding pronouns that

implied gender (611). Gender schema theory is proposed with the intention that human behaviour and perceptions should be devoid of gender and one should not drag gender onto unnecessary situations (363). Our masculinity and femininity are self-evident and rarely would we be prompted to assert it. The unnecessary constraints of gender on an individual's behaviour should be eliminated (Bem Implications 363).

These female heroines that purports to represent different cultures underwent strange recollections that serve the interests of the dominant group which makes them totally disparaging to their own culture. The makers of the movie has unwittingly produced tailor-made heroines that neither presents the lived bodily experiences nor the perceived cultural meanings inscribed onto their body. These customized women models that satisfies the whims and fancies of the preeminent group gives a sense that body is an 'object of desire' as one observes a female body through fetishized lens (Garcia 125). The failure of their bodies to define their self and the inability to fall into place, in effect, reflects the acceptance of prejudiced bodies which are neither questioned nor reconstructed, but simply acquiesced out of Anglo-centric racial superiority. Sandra Wallman's 1983 conference 'Teaching about Prejudice' postulates such notions on stereotyping and according to Klein, who encapsulated her discourses;

It is the dichotomy between identity and identification that Wallman explains as being at the root of prejudice.... We are all content in the way we choose to describe ourselves: too often, however it is a view formed by others, dominant others that forms the basis of the stereotype and is therefore likely to be disparaging. For if the dominant group is the norm, and inevitably its members so perceive themselves, then any other

group is deviant - deviant along, a spectrum from exotic and quaint to threatening, or inferior. (Klein 35)

Such representations reflects the interests of the dominant sector that imposes a dominant ideology, based on pejorative stereotypes, which in turn, manifests the construction of ethnic bodies as the absolute 'other.' The specificity of these heroines' bodies lies in the fact that their bodies are not constituted as 'other' through mere subjugation. The way they are depicted as 'other,' happens through objectification. As Dennis Tyler observes;

The Princess and the Frog, however, despite being set in the southern past, issues of race-based social marginalization are muted at best if not outright ignored. Though we are supposed to identify the lack of realism in Tiana's story, the skirting of the realities of historical racism, and the sloppy stereotypical depictions of African American spiritualities deracialise Disney's African American princess to the point where it is difficult to see anything new or different from other Disney princesses other than skin colour. Her race is incidental and plays no significant role in the story. (268)

Body in Popular Culture

Bodily alienation is a part and parcel of social domination (Garcia 115). In case of women, alienation happens mainly due to objectification, especially because of their representation as sexual objects (Garcia 125). In this way, the experience of having a body of their own is denied to women. Their bodies gain a social fortress before they begin to experience them. The realization that their own body belongs to men and his desire leads to alienation. Here, the social body reigns over the lived body of women. While a social

body stands as a deliberate construction, the lived body is deprived of its opportunity to play its part. In Beauvoir's analysis there are four dimensions to a female body - a physiological body, a live body, and accidentally objectified body and a structurally objectified body (143). When women are divided in relation to their own body they cannot consider their body as their own (143). Hence 'body' remains a highly ambiguous entity for women which they are forced to give away to oppression and alienation. Men usually tries to own women's bodies through gaze through which women are made to feel that their body is a "body for others" (145). The other may not be necessarily a body but it could be a mere look or a presence (146).

Keeping in mind the dominant trends and also the needs of the market, Disney is careful while introducing a new female characters to the audience. The perpetuation of the character of a new Princess is attained through various strategic means such as the careful use of language and voice, the physical appearance of the character, the way the character is presented in relation to other characters, the characters' competencies and also the type of role into which the character has been cast (Schwart et. al 189). Ethnic heroines embody a modernized version of cultural identity as their bodies are more or less reconstructed by the influences of westernisation. The cultural specific aspects of femininity, body, womanhood and even sexuality has to be taken into account while presenting an indigenous female body but in these movies the general framework of the heroine's body is largely driven by the changing needs of the market. As Robert Gooding-Williams comments;

American culture lives and breathes by racial representations, relentlessly relying on them to make sense of American history, society, and politics, then Disney

is not going to seriously challenge those tropes of blackness, regardless of their recognition that every little girl, no matter her colour, represents a new marketing opportunity. (Turner 93)

This kind of strategy is, once again, fraught with problems as it never addresses the existing social cultural patterns that shape an indigenous body. Moreover it never explores the rituals, taboos and other traditional beliefs that shape the periphery of a woman's body (Puri 44). In Foucault's perspective, the discipline of female bodies is reinforced not through denial, but by knowledge (Puri 63). Women's bodies are subjected to social norms and regulations and therefore bodily control and bodily afflictions are results of the same phenomenon (63). The transformation that the female body undergoes in fact points to a range of meanings centered on identity, inclusivity and sociality these are further triggered by the changing needs of the economy (James 143).

Since time immemorial, society has taught humanity how culture conditions our body and how it affects our inability to relate to the world. The general storyline of Disney movies gives us opportunities to probe deep into the dominant social representations of race, ethnicity and sexual identity (Barnd 67). Not surprisingly, the film constructs its characters through the social lens of a white male (67). In most of the movies, even where women appear to be the titular character, their depiction is nothing more than objects of male sexual desire (68). The importance attributed to slender bodies and the conviction that women should invest their time and money for making their appearance seem perfect often leads to the oppression of female bodies that culminates in estrangement from bodily potentials.

Works Cited

- Bem, Sandra Lipsitz. "Gender Schema Theory and Its Implications for Child Development: Raising Gender-aschematic Children in a Gender- schematic Society." *Signs*, vol.8, no.4, 1983, pp.598-616. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3173685
- . "Gender Schema Theory: A Cognitive Account of Sex Typing." *Psychological Review*, vol.88, no.4, 1981, pp.354-64. APA PsycNet, www.psycnet.apa.org/record/1981-25685-001.
- Barnd, NatcheeBlu. "White Man's Best Friend: Race and Privilege in Oliver Company." *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability*, edited by Johnson Cheu, McFarland, 2013, pp.67-82.
- Brode, Douglas. *Multiculturalism and the Mouse: Race and Sex in Disney Entertainment*. U of Texas P, 2005.
- Cheu, Johnson, editor. *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability*. McFarland, 2013.
- Garcia, Manon. *We are not born submissive: How Patriarchy shapes Women's Lives*. Princeton UP, 2021.
- James, Kathryn. *Death, Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Adolescent Literature*. Routledge, 2009.
- Klein, Gillian. *Reading into Racism: Bias in Children's Literature and Learning Materials*. Routledge, 1985.
- Laemle, Jessica L. "Trapped in the Mouse House: How Disney Has Portrayed Racism and Sexism in Its Princess Films." *Student Publications*, Fall 2018. *The Cupola*, www.cu-

- pola.gettysburg.edu/student-scholarship/692.
- Martin, Carol Lynn, and Diana Ruble. "Children's Search for Gender Cues: Cognitive Perspectives on Gender Development." *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, vol.13, no.2, 2004, pp.67-70. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/20182912.
- McCormack, Catherine. *Women in the Picture: Women, Art and the Power of Looking*. Icon Books, 2021.
- Puri, Jyoti. *Woman, Body, Desire in Post-Colonial India: Narratives on Gender and Sexuality*. Routledge, 1999.
- Putnam, Amanda. "Mean Ladies: Transgendered Villains in Disney Films." *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability*, edited by Johnson Cheu, McFarland, 2013, pp.147-63.
- Schilling, Vincent. "The True Story of Pocahontas: Historical Myth versus Sad Reality." *Indian Country Today*, 2018. www.indiancountrytoday.com/true-story-pocahontas-historical-myths-versus-sad-reality.
- Schwartz, Karen et al. "Dopey's Legacy: Stereotypical Portrayals of Intellectual Disability in the Classic Animated Films." *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability*, edited by Johnson Cheu, McFarland, 2013, pp.179-95.
- Sorisio, Carolyn. *Fleshing Out America: Race, Gender, and the Politics of the Body in American Literature, 1833-1879*. U of Georgia P, 2002.
- Turner, Sarah E. "Blackness, Bayous and Gumbo: Encoding and Decoding Race in a Colorblind World." *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability*, edited by Johnson Cheu, McFarland, 2013, pp.83-99.
- Tyler, Dennis. "Home is Where the Heart Is: Pixar's up." *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability*, edited by Johnson Cheu, McFarland, 2013, pp. 268-85.
- Warnke, Georgia. *After Identity: Rethinking Race, Sex and Gender*. C U P, 2007.
- West, Candace, and Don H. Zimmerman. "Doing Gender." *Gender and Society*, vol. 1, no.2, Sage Publications, 1987, pp.125-51. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/189945.



Food in the Literary Text: A Reading of Jahnavi Barua's *Undertow*

Dr. Meena Sharma*

Abstract

The paper examines the use of food imagery in Jahnavi Barua's novel *Undertow* (2020). The paper examines the use of food imagery as a metaphor in the novel, which helps convey the fractured relationships and the movement towards reconciliation at the end. As a literary device, food imagery in the novel provides a visual treat for the readers and aids in the development of the plot and characters. Jahnavi Barua uses food imagery to depict different situations, moods, individual traits and, more specifically, human bonds and relationships and understanding of self. Food also brings out the contrast between the ways of life in Bangalore and Gauhati while also highlighting the significance of people who 'cook,' who holds a position of 'power' as preparers of food. Through the use of food imagery, the writer also introduces the unique way of life, eating habits and cuisine of Assam to the readers of the mainland. The paper explores the different ways food imagery is used in the novel, thereby establishing the centrality and importance of food in the novel.

Keywords: *Food Imagery, Metaphor, Self, Culture, and Reconciliation.*

*Dr. Meena Sharma, Assistant Professor (Stage III), Department of English, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh, Assam-786004, India, Email: meena_sharma@dibru.ac.in

The use of food metaphors in literature has gained special attention in recent years leading to a rapid growth in Literary Food Studies, which re-evaluates, rethinks and rediscovers the importance of food and eating in understanding the ways we live and communicate (Farnell 1). The representation, description and depiction of food in literary narratives thus serve “as an indicator of social identity, from region to ethnicity, from class to age or gender” (Hurwitz 90). Food is a fundamental aspect of different civilisations and cultures; a study of the cuisine, eating habits, and cooking practices are integral to any study of the growth and development of human civilization and relationships. Consequently, food imagery in literature and imaginative arts is of considerable importance. Exploring the use of food in literature can help understand different facets of society, culture, relationships and individual characters. Highlighting the importance of food in literature, Kara Keeling and Scott Pollard argue that “if food is fundamental to life and a substance upon which civilisations and cultures have built themselves, then food is also fundamental to the imagination and the imaginary arts”(5). The use of food-related images in literature serves various purposes. At a literal level, the detailed description and depiction of food appeal to the reader’s senses and enhance the realism of the work, thus adding to the sensory images of the text, triggering sight, smell and tastes. As Carolyn Daniel argues, “Food descriptions in fiction, like menus in restaurants and television cookery programs, produce visceral pleasure, a pleasure which notably involves both intellect and material body working in synaesthetic communion”(2). Food-related images may be used in literature to create a specific mood, express emotions, and convey ideas specific to a region, culture and people. It also helps develop the plot and characters by driving the action forward.

Understanding the usage of food can open doors to a deeper understanding of a text, its characters and the cultural contexts. Highlighting the significance of food as a cultural signifier Brad Kessler describes it as “freighted with meaning. Just as in life, food in fiction signifies. It means more than itself. It is symbolic. It opens doors to double and triple meaning” (156).

This paper examines the use of food and its metaphorical implications in the novel *Undertow* by Jahnvi Barua. One of the dominant themes of the novel is the conflicted relationship and final reconciliation between Loya and her grandfather Torun Ram Phukon. Twenty-five years after her mother’s (Rukmini) banishment from the family for marrying an ‘outsider’ Alex, Loya visits Assam and her maternal home, the ‘Yellow House’ in Gauhati. The first meeting between Loya and her grandfather Torun does not start on a pleasant note, and Loya’s discomfiture as an ‘outsider’ to the place and the family is evident at the beginning. Loya’s journey of knowing her mother’s past, family and home coincides with her understanding of ‘self.’ In this journey of reconciliation and healing, the writer uses food imagery to convey different aspects of human relationships and individual characters. The growing relationship between Loya and her grandfather Torun is interspersed with the use of food imagery which enhances the multiple layers of meaning embedded in the text. In the novel, preparing, serving, and consuming food coincides with different moments to indicate the emotions, moods and temperaments of the characters. The use of food metaphors also allows the novelist Jahnvi Barua to introduce the readers to the unique food habits and cuisine of the region. The paper attempts to analyse the function of food and food scenes in the novel.

Discussion

As a cultural signifier, food indicates happiness and contentment, approval and acceptance.

Displeasure and disapproval of Rukmini's decision to marry 'an outsider' is indicated at the beginning of the novel in the absence of any activity/feast in the kitchen of the Yellow House. On the day of Rukmini's wedding, the kitchen is "shut down" and "cold," hinting at the abandonment of Rukmini, who completely loses touch with her family following the marriage (45).

This 'cold kitchen,' however, seems to come back to life when twenty-five years later, Loya, Rukmini's daughter, appears at the Yellow House. The introduction/relationship between Romen and Loya starts with a conversation about food when Torun asks Loya to 'eat something' as is customary in the region. Romen, the cook, rushes to the kitchen and the sounds from the kitchen seem to break the awkwardness and silence between Loya and her grandfather Torun. As Romen moves around in the kitchen "the clink of the metal vessels, and tuneless humming of a popular Hindi film song" (46) indicates the discord between Loya and the members of the Yellow House and also the need to break the silence as Loya comes in search of an answer.

Though the kitchen comes back to life, the friction between Torun and Loya is aptly conveyed by the use of food imagery. Romen, the cook, serves puffed-up fried *puris/lusis*, which signifies the clash of ego between the Torun and Loya and indicates Loya's anger at her grandfather's query about how long she plans to stay in Guwahati. The use of food imagery accentuates the discomfort between the two, but a hint of reconciliation is also evident from the kitchen, which returns to 'life.' Later, when Torun calls his close family friend Romen to inform him about Loya's surprise visit, he specifies her "... big appetite. Polished off ten *lusi*" (49). Food here indicates the literal and figurative hunger of the characters to know more and demand an answer to some difficult questions and accusations. The conversa-

tion/silence between Torun and Loya is interspersed with references to food, which carries the plot forward and acts as a means to hide their discomfiture and conflict. In another instance, food indicates Loya's anger as she thinks her grandfather is responsible for her mother's predicament. Loya's anger at Torun's question of how his daughter Rukmini is doing coincides with the moment when Romen arrives with a tray loaded and filled with sandwiches, sliced cake, "a teapot with a tea cosy and tea cups...it was a feast" (63). The constant reference to Loya's appetite indicates her 'hunger' for her mother's past life and anger at her grandparents for abandoning her mother, Rukmini. At the same time, the references to sandwiches and sliced cake are metaphors for Loya's position. She is indeed sandwiched between her grandfather and her mother. In the Yellow House, Loya and Torun move about like "hungry lions" (66), stalking each other as Loya constantly tries to find out more about her mother's life. Rukmini always evaded any questions about her life in Guwahati, and Loya's enormous appetite figuratively indicates her acute 'hunger' to know what her mother has refused to divulge and "One would think she had been starved by her mother the way she tucked into her food" (67). The emotional deprivation of Loya is depicted in terms of food used as a metaphor to depict family conflicts.

With Loya's arrival in the Yellow House, Romen, the cook, gets increasingly busy and prepares all kinds of rich, fragrant and festive foods which he had stopped cooking since the death of Torun's wife, Usha. Romen's good humour returns and his affair with food and cooking is restored as he puts out "a feast at each meal" (67). Though Loya has no access to Torun's room, Romen allows her to raid his modern and well-equipped kitchen. Loya gradually gets accustomed to life in the Yellow House and begins to open her mind and embrace the city of Guwahati. Physically and

metaphorically away from Bangalore, she begins to watch life unfold in the Yellow House, which helps her gain, a broader perspective on life and relationships. The rhythm of life in the Yellow House is closely related to the detailed description of food and eating in chapter four of the novel. Life in this house starts with the question, "what shall we eat today?" (80). The complexity of the Assamese cuisine fascinates Loya, and the different tastes and flavours seem to teach her the beauty of different experiences/tastes in life. Listening to the conversation between Torun and Romen, Loya gathers the different flavours of the five-course Assamese meal:

The first is an alkaline one to settle the stomach, then a dal with rice and vegetables on the side, after which a rice or meat curry would be served, then a sour curry, called tenga, and finally the sweets and yogurt. The courses were never to be mixed- there could be nothing worse, no breach of etiquette more terrible. It was essential that flavours remained discreet. (81)

The detailed description indicates the centrality of food and eating practices and rituals in different cultures. The food items are based on biological and physiological needs to help in smooth digestion. The description also acts as a window into the Assamese society and culture. Buying fresh vegetables, meat and fish every morning from Uzaan Bazaar indicates a different way of life from the busy metropolis. At the same time, the availability of different types of freshwater fish makes it a favourite food item of the people in the region. The different flavours also indicate Loya's tryst with life, which contains different flavours and textures - alkaline, salty, sour, and sweet.

Loya observes that "through food, bonds were forged" (81). Torun had helped several people

through his good offices, and over the years, these people became family. Food is here used as a metaphor to signify this human bond. As an act of gratitude, these people show their love through food items. The woman who has been supplying fish to the family is ever grateful to Torun for helping her son through the engineering college. She helps prepare the "notoriously difficult pithas" (81) during Bihu after the demise of Torun's wife, Usha. A bond of friendship exists with the people who came to the Yellow House for different reasons. Loya is surprised to see the person from the electricity department with a bag full of vegetables from his kitchen garden as a token of gratitude to Torun, who had helped enrol his daughter in the local nursing college. Torun insists that the man stays for the mid-morning meal of tea. Though the man is reluctant, for Torun, it is "a welcome break from the boredom of an old man's morning" (82). Loya notices an interesting conversation follows "over much sipping of hot tea and munching on spicy potatoes" (82). Food creates a specific mood as Torun and the man leisurely talk about the proposed construction of a dam on the Brahmaputra by the Chinese. Another regular visitor is Saikia, the Postman who never misses a cup of tea with Torun, during which he provides Torun with the "news of the world" (83). It is evident here that food ways, or the modes of feeling, thinking, and behaving about food that are common to a cultural group, binds individuals in a larger social group. In her grandfather's house, Loya partakes of and imbibes this human bond which cuts across class and status.

Loya gradually begins to enjoy of the different flavours of life in this region. As she listens to these conversations over food, she gains an insight into life, culture and, more specifically, human bonding and friendship. The plenitude of food in the Yellow House signifies happiness, comfort, sharing and bonding, and Loya begins to enjoy the mornings:

Amazingly, she found herself warming to the hum of this household-where; the meals were by the clock and bath-times were as respected as unspoken codes of dress. (40)

This detailed description of food in the novel serves as an essential point in Loya's understanding of herself, her grandfather and more specifically, the 'place' her mother belongs to. Food here is tied to the region and the place; the detailed description serves not only to introduce the way of life in the Yellow House but also introduces the reader to the life and culture of Assam.

In the novel, food brings in the contrast between Loya's life in Bangalore and Gauhati. The conflict in relationships is indicated through food and the act of eating. A sharp contrast is drawn between life in Bangalore and Gauhati by referring to the warm, intimate kitchen of the Yellow House "with its gleaming white cabinets hummed with an energy that had been absent in Rukmini's and Loya's small one" (84). The description of the kitchen in both places reiterates the contrasting ways of life in both places. One warm, inviting, full of life, and the other cold, lonely and secluded. Loya's childhood at 'Glenburn,' her father's house, is full of tension as Alex's family never accepted her mother, Rukmini. The tense relationship between Loya and her mother Rukmini is reinforced by food imagery. Rukmini never learnt cooking as her mother Usha took no interest in teaching her this skill/art. After marriage, when she wanted to learn cooking, "Ammachi turned Rukmini firmly back from the immense dim kitchen in Glenburn" (84). Ammachi's refusal to allow Rukmini in the kitchen indicates her non-acceptance of an 'outsider.' The tension, conflict, and unhappiness in Rukmini's married life are conveyed through food imagery. After her divorce from Alex, Rukmini and Loya move to a different house,

"Ashraya," where "food did not seem to matter" (84), indicating Rukmini's detachment and emptiness. Both mother and daughter are left to the mercy of the old lady Muniamma who cooked for them. Though Muniamma is affectionate, her cooking skill is limited to "sambar, and rasam and the usual vegetables with the same masalas" (85). The monotony, boredom and lifelessness of the place is indicated by the food cooked in the house and the fact that no guest was ever invited.

In contrast to Muniamma and the frugal kitchen in Ashraya, Romen in his kitchen at the Yellow House has a different style. He is a meticulous cook who delights in serving good food and is sensitive to people's tastes. When Loya comes to the Yellow House, "For a start, he cooked enormous quantities of food -after all, five people, and now six, ate daily at the Yellow House- and there was an accompanying, often thrilling drama around cooking"(85). Sita, the house help and Ramlal, the gardener, too, get involved and offer to help in the preparation. While Ramlal slaughters the chicken and cleans the fish, Sita does the peeling and chopping. Loya also gets involved and helps Romen with the cake batter or the white sauce. Like the ingredients in food, the different people participate in the preparation "accompanied by much talk and laughter and tuneless whistling from Romen" (85). Romen paid particular attention to cooking one favourite item of the family every day, sometimes fried onion pakoras for Sita; at other times, a tangy chat of potatoes and tamarind juice for Ramlal would bring delight to their eyes. The spiciness and mix of flavours convey the warmth and life in Yellow House. The kitchen is the epicentre in both the houses – Ashraya and The Yellow House. The cold and frugal kitchen in Ashraya depicts loneliness, loss and despair in the city of Bangalore for the migrant Rukmini, who has to adjust to a new way of life, culture and food. The kitchen in The Yellow House represents the warmth, love,

human bonds, and the ability to forgive and move ahead; like food, life is a mixture of different flavours, each distinct, unique, and satisfying in the long run.

By being an integral part of life in the Yellow House and stories around cooking, Loya learns to accept differences, diversity and feel a sense of rootedness in the place. One morning with a smile on his face Romen serves here bowl of custard “the caramel dark and delicious, the way she adored it” (85). Seeing the custard, Loya bursts into tears “In Romen’s abundant, fragrant and welcoming kitchen, Loya wept like a baby into a bowl of caramel custard” (86). The custard’s coating of dark caramel and soft, smooth sweet texture symbolises Loya’s delicate temperament and a feeling of ‘home’ in her grandfather’s place. As M. Stig-Sorenson puts it, “Food is about actions and relationships; it is about giving and receiving, making and unmaking” (122).

Food-related images in the novel create specific moods. Romen also has moments of “black moods” (Barua 88), which is objectified in the food he serves. Romen is infuriated when he receives a letter from his brother, a “Surrendered ULFA” (89), asking for money to start a chicken farm. His disturbance and anger is reflected in his mood and activities He serves burnt toast and a simple breakfast of only bread and fried eggs. The smell of the burnt toast and the mention of ULFA drive the plot forward as Loya questions Torun: “Why does the ULFA want to break away from India” (90). The charred piece of bread and Romen’s inability to redeem the burnt toast by scraping it indicates the upheaval, disturbance and painful memories of people in the region at the backdrop of the ULFA uprising “in the late seventies when certain people were unhappy with the way the Central government was treating the people of Assam” (90). This episode also highlights the role of the cook Romen in the life

of Torun. In “The Bible and Food,” Cynthia Shafer-Elliott observes:

Those who prepare food are often viewed as second-class members of their society; however, it could also be posited that those who prepare food held considerable power and authority over those who consumed it. Those who prepare the food often decide, for instance, who eats, how much they eat, and when. Instead, these food preparers should be viewed as the gatekeepers of the household food and accepted dietary practices, and thus of group membership and identity. (395)

By emphasising the centrality of Romen, the cook in the life of the people in the Yellow House, the novel addresses the importance of preparers of food who hold a significant place of power as they are the ones who cook. In Ashraya, Loya and Rukmini are at the mercy of Munniamma and her limited cooking skills; just as in the Yellow House, it is Romen who cooks for the people and what he serves depends on his mood and state of mind. Those who prepare food play a significant part in conveying the sense of happiness, fulfilment and contentment that is a measure of food and life.

Food and appetite are linked to mood and relationships in the novel. One food item which binds Romen, Rukmini and Loyais the chanachur, “A mouth-watering mix of boiled chickpeas, horse gram, chopped onions, green chillies, seasoned with masala and lime juice” (Barua 146). This mix represents a mixture of various ingredients that will not dissolve into one another. However, each with its distinct taste, texture, and flavour goes into the making of the chanachur. The channachuris a particular favourite of Rukmini and Romen. Torun is delighted when Loya brings a paper screw of chanachur for him. As Torun

slowly chews the chanachur, here members Rukmini's favourite and the town's best chanachurwala at Dighali Pukhuri. Food triggers his memory, and he narrates to Loya the history of the place Dighali Pukhuri. Symbolically the channachur also acts as a metaphor which indicates a final resolution of all conflicts between Loya and Torun. The channachur "triggers a thought" (150) in Torun, and he offers to show Loya her mother's most intimate collection of musical records. Loya addresses Torun as *Koka* (grandfather in Assamese), indicating a final reconciliation between the two. Food in its various forms carries forward this story of reconciliation, healing, and finding a sense of self, place and rootedness.

Conclusion

Discussing the semiotics of food, Roland Barthes explains,

For what is food? It is not only a collection of products ... It is also, and at the same time, a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviour. (29)

Thus, in the novel *Undertow*, culinary moments are not incidental and have been carefully used by the writer Jahnavi Baruah to indicate diverse connotations. The description of food allows the writer to introduce the eating practices of the region to the people of the mainland; its combination of different flavours serves as a visual treat to the readers, triggering the sense of smell and taste. In terms of the narrative, food helps drive the plot and action forward, and as evident from the discussion at many points, food indicates a 'measure of life.' Barua uses food imagery and metaphors to reveal the personality of the characters and reflect on personal and cultural iden-

tity in the text. Food acts as a potent metaphor in Loya's journey of reconciliation with her grandfather and her understanding of 'self,' place and finding a sense of home.

Works Cited

- Barthes, Roland. "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption." *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, Routledge, 2008, pp. 23-30.
- Barua, Jahnavi. *Undertow*. Penguin Viking, 2020.
- Daniel, Carolyn. *Voracious Children: Who Eats Whom in Children's Literature*. Routledge, 2006.
- Elliott, Cynthia Shafer. "The Bible and Food." *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Food*, edited by Farnell Lorna Piatti and Donna Lee Brien, Routledge, 2018, pp. 393-402.
- Farnell Lorna Piatti and Donna Lee Brien, editors. *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Food*, Routledge, 2018, pp. 1-5.
- Keeling, Kara K, and Scott T. Pollard, editors. "Introduction: Food in Children's Literature." *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature*. Routledge, 2008, pp. 3-21.
- Kessler, Brad. "One Reader's Digest: Toward a Gastronomic Theory of Literature." *The Kenyon Review*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2005, pp. 148-65, www.jstor.org/stable/i404056.
- Louise, Marie, and Stig Sorensen. *Gender Archaeology*. Polity P, 2000.
- Hurwitz, Wendy Leeds. 1993. *Semiotics and Communication: Signs, Codes, Cultures*. Routledge, 1993.



The Regressive Progress of the Third Sex in India into an 'Injured Identity': A Spectacle of Anachronism in Development

Pavithra Nandan Menon*

Abstract

A lot has been written about in the Hindu mythology about men who have transformed into women, women who have transformed into men and the ones who are neither men nor women, an amalgamation of both popularly addressed as the third sex or third gender as they chose to call themselves in India. The question of identity of the Hijras has been much contested always, and consequently, a definition of the same becomes difficult. While religion and myth bestow them with godlike stature, the hypocritical Indian society, since its glorious past, have looked at them with great respect and fear on one side and with condemnation on the other. The degree of condemnation increased as society progressed into a strictly heteronormative one, giving no space to these individuals who are beyond the binaries. This paper aims to trace the journey of the Third sex in India and their regressive progress by using the concept of 'injured identities' by Wendy Brown (1995), by comparing the past and present of the Indian counterpart of the western transgender and show how as society progressed, thinking narrowed; an anachronism in development.

Keywords: *Sexuality, Gender Identities, Third Sex/gender, and India.*

*Ms. Pavithra Nandan Menon, PhD Research Scholar, Comparative Asian Studies Program, NUS Department of South East Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, 10 Kent Ridge Crescent, AS8 #06-01, 119260, Email: pavimenon91@gmail.com, E0321203@u.nus.edu

India is a land of multiple cultures and diversities. It is also a country of contradictions. India is the land of the Kamasutra. Even though it has been considered a sexually diverse society it has tolerated a variety of sexual behaviours and identities since time immemorial (Kalra 121-126). What is considered deviant or queer now was absolutely normal and accepted forms of behaviour then. One such gender identity that has been present since the times of Indian mythologies like Ramayana and Mahabharata is the Hijra. A lot has been written in the Hindu mythology about men who have transformed into women, women who have transformed into men and the ones who are neither men nor women, an amalgamation of both, popularly addressed as the third sex or third gender as they chose to call themselves in India (Pattanaik 4). Hijra is the Urdu word for eunuch or hermaphrodite. Presently, it means a born hermaphrodite who dresses as a female, or more commonly, a born male who undergoes or plans to undergo surgical emasculation and who dons a female garb. They perform the institutionalized third gender role in India.

Defining the Hijras has been a daunting task for most historians, sociologists and anthropologists alike. As the anthropologist, Vinay Lal suggests, they have been described in multiple terms across various scholarly literature as eunuchs, transvestites, homosexuals, bisexuals, hermaphrodites, androgynies, transsexuals, and gynemimetics. To add to this multiplicity of terms, Hijras are also referred to as individuals who are intersexed, emasculated, impotent, transgendered, castrated, effeminate, sexually anomalous or even dysfunctional. Hijras too, distinguish among themselves based on who are born Hijras with hermaphrodite genitals and those who are made Hijras by going through castration, making up the majority. Even though Hijra identity may fit closest to the western Transsexual identities, as many of

them consider themselves to have been born in the wrong body with wrong sex, there are clusters of them, who do not consider themselves as women trapped in men's bodies. They are emasculated men with neither a penis nor testis and no surgically constructed vaginal openings. They dress like women, with makeup and jewelry (Nanda 28). They claim of not belonging to either of the sexes, but to the third sex (Schultz and Lavenda 238). In India they call themselves the 'thrithiya prakriti' or 'thrithiya panthi' which can be translated the third nature or the third sex (Kalra 121-126).

On turning pages back to the history of India, one will find that the Hijra community holds an inevitably significant position, with them being associated religion and mythology. Indian mythology and religion has often foregrounded that Hijras have the power to bless as well as curse people (Suthrell 162). A society like the Indian society, where everyday life has strong connections with religion and mythology, the Hijras, who are so positively represented in these spheres have been honoured traditionally. Due to of their stature as magical powerful entities, Hijras are traditionally invited to auspicious ceremonies like wedding, housewarmings, naming ceremonies, where they perform, grant their blessings in return of a payment that serves as their income, along with other professions like singing dancing joking and beggary on the streets (Suthrell 79).

Hijras have been bestowed with special powers to be able to bless people with good fortune and most importantly, fertility according to the ancient myths. Even though they have been said to hold power to bring riches and rain and hence sanctioned a recognized position in the Indian society, they have been and still continue to suffer from stigmatization, marginalization, abuse, and obloquy in the context if the wider Indian society.

The contradictory nature of the society added to the grievances of these people who are “neither men nor women”(24) according to anthropologist, Serena Nanda.

Hypocrisy of the Hindu society towards them has been witnesses since the past, with their rather equivocal feeling towards them. On one hand their presence is wanted during auspicious occasions like weddings to bless the couple, especially the groom for fertility, for giving birth to babies that too sons and carry on the genes, and also during the birth of a son, to bless the new born. On the other hand, the same society has a constant feeling of distaste towards them. It is considered a bad omen for brides to look at Hijras, for it might make them infertile (Nanda 27).

The presence of sexual ambiguity and a third sex was acknowledged by the traditional Hindu scriptures. In the Hindu scriptures the third sex itself is divided into four namely male eunuchs, testicle voided, hermaphrodites and the non woman or female eunuch (27). All of these categories are capable of having sexual pleasures in the Kamasutra, where sexual diversity is not queer as it is seen today but absolutely normal (31).

Hijras found sanction for their lives in the great epics Ramayana and Mahabharatha. As Hijras described themselves in the ‘All India Hijra Kalyan Sabha,’ a welfare organization set up to make the voice of the Hijras heard in the democratic polity, they are descended from Hinduism from olden times, right from Ramayana. According to this origin myth, Lord Rama prepared to go into exile with his wife, goddess Sita and brother Lakshmana, for fourteen years as decreed by his father. As his subjects followed him to bid farewell to their beloved king, he ordered the men and women of the kingdom of Ayodhya to wipe their tears and return to performing their

duties. But those people, who were neither men nor women, were put in a dilemma as they did not know what to do (27). Hence, they decided to remain there as their Lord hadn’t asked them to leave. As Rama returned to his kingdom, victorious after fourteen years after fighting triumphantly over the monster Ravana, he found a cluster of people, who were neither men nor women, meditating, at the very place he had left them. Moved by this act of exemplary devotion, Rama blessed them. Since then they have been considered auspicious and respected across the country.

In terms of religion, hijras identify themselves with Lord Shiva. There is a myth of how lord Ganesha, the God of auspicious beginnings, who is also the son of Goddess Parvati and Lord Siva is responsible for his mother’s attendant and guardian (Nanda 27). When Shiva attempts to invade the goddesses’ privacy, Lord Ganesh, dutifully tries to chase his father away. This is perfect example of Oedipus triangle in Hindu mythology. After the long fight, Lord Shiva emerges victorious as he beheads Ganesh. Beheading is a displaced form of castration in Hindu mythology. Infuriated by her husband’s act of cruelty towards their son, the goddess successfully pleads him to put back the young gods head upon which, he replaces it with an elephant head (28).

Hijras identify themselves with lord Shiva for his power to take and restore life. Among the other numerous Hindu myths on creation, Lord Shiva is asked by Lord Vishnu and Brahma, two other Hindu deities to create the universe. To prepare for that Lord Shiva remains plunged in a river for thousand years meditating. Meanwhile Brahma is persuaded by Vishnu to create all the Gods and other beings. Siva on returning sees that there is no space left. Hence he breaks his phallus and throws it away saying, his generative organ is no longer of any use. However, as

the phallus breaks and falls in pieces, it bestows fertility over the Earth. The broken phallus of Siva becomes a symbol of 'universal fertility,' even though he himself goes through sexual renunciation, and also loses ability to procreate. This is one myth to which the worship of the 'lingam' or the phallus can be related to. Hijras reflect these features of the lord and hence, even when they themselves are impotent, bestow others with the blessing of fertility.

Hijras consider themselves to be sexual ascetics, after having renounced all the sexual desires, like lord Shiva, though some of them engage in sexual activities with other men and forcibly take up prostitution.

Asexuality is one feature of Hijras that is mentioned in the Hindu mythology which gives them a rather divine footing as it resembles Lord Shiva, a deity who is known for his asexual behaviour despite his role in fertility and union of people. One of the most popular representations of Siva is Ardhanarisvara, or 'the Lord who is half woman.' This feature of lord Shiva makes him the "super god" for the Hijras (Suthrell 204). The representations of this avatar of the deity in painting and sculptures have one half of his body with female breasts, long hair and anklets. Followers of lord Shiva, especially the Ardhanarisvara treat the Hijras with a lot more respect owing to their uncanny resemblance with the god himself (Nanda 32).

In many cultures, especially in the Southern part of India, the Hijras identify themselves to Lord Krishna and Vishnu, for they too display duality in their character. The story is about Lord Vishnu, who changes himself to a girl named Mohini to successfully get hold of the sacred nectar as well as Krishna who takes up his female form to destroy the demon, Araka, are mentioned in the Hindu scriptures. The Hijras have been retelling

this story of Krishna with a lot of pride since a long time. According to this myth, as Lord Krishna returned successfully after defeating the demon in his female guise, he tells his people that more individuals will possess this quality of duality like him and possess his power to make both good and bad happen. Hence they should be respected and accepted (Nanda 20). In the south of India, in states like Tamil Nadu there are religious practices in recognition of the honourable role of Hijras. Anthropologist Serena Nanda (20) explains how the Hijras take up the ritual to identify themselves with lord Krishna to reaffirm this myth. According to a religious myth of the South, a ruler of a Kingdom offers to sacrifice his son in return of victory in a war. However, he has one last wish to see his son get married before he is given away to death. Since no girl is ready to marry a man who is awaiting his death, Lord Krishna takes his female form and marries the son. He soon becomes a widow. This sacrifice brings victory to his father. In festivals, too just like Lord Krishna from the tale, Hijras practice a ritual where they marry and become the widows of the deity Koonthavar (Nanda 20-21).

It is not just the Hindu scriptures, even in the Mughal Empire acknowledged the existence of a third sex. During the Mughal era, the Hijras guarded the harem and was well respected by the Mughal leaders (Nanda 22).

As Rupa Jha mentioned in her BBC report, Hijras are transgendered individuals who live in the space between the "parallel lines" (Jha 21: 35) of the dimorphic, male and female division, who have their own exclusive community culture and existence.

Moving away from the glorious myths and religious scriptures that displayed quintessential features of true progress and modernity by its openness and acceptance, reality is a little different, and filled with ambiguities.

Even though the existence of third sex was accepted and acknowledged, or rather celebrated in the ancient myths and religious scriptures, the ancient Indian society looked down on castration, impotency and eunuchism. On one side where society frowned upon asexuality and impotency, as deviant and lowly, the deity with the very same features was worshipped for fertility. This ambivalence and hypocrisy shows the contradictory nature of society especially in its attitude towards Hijras (Nanda 22).

As years passed, society progressed in almost all spheres. However, the thinking deeply narrowed in India. In a country where sex was celebrated, it evolved into a taboo. Whatever was normal in the past developed into something against the norm. Society regressively progressed from a state of fluidity to rigidity. As India moved towards secularization, modernization and urbanization, which is a kind of westernization, the nations attitude and opinion about the Hijras took a major shift from “a quasi-religious or spiritual respect to a secular opinion of them as crooks, liars, troublemakers and prostitutes” (Suthrell 77-78). With the society following rigid uniform structures of male female behavior, propagated and instilled an average middle class Indian, the celebratory status of the Hijras became history (Lal 119).

During the Colonial rule in India during the 1850s, when the British colonizers discovered a community of transgender eunuch performers, they took legal actions for their surveillance and control under the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) in 1871 (Hinchy 280). The way the British dealt with the transgender colonial subjects has major implications on our understanding of the colonial masculinities (280). The colonizers made an ardent effort to erase the Hijras as a conspicuous socio-cultural category and gender identity in public by laying down strong restrictions on their

feminine cross-dressing and even banning their performances. It shows how rigid where the concept of colonial masculinity and femininity. This had a major impact of gender identities and performance. The 19th century slowly progressed to considering the Hijras habitual sodomites and gender deviants and their performance was considered obscene and their public presence, a moral outrage (Solvyns plate IV). Their presence in public spaces was considered a major bottleneck in the colonial notion of “imperial hygiene” (Bashford 253) for they were thought to bring in diseases. The colonial officials considered the feminine nature of the Hijras as a case of extreme gender deviance, or fallen masculinity (Hinchy 282). Even though Hijras were a marginalized lot, their “obscene” presence in public spaces was considered to be a challenge to the powerful British Raj in India (Couper). With a mission of controlling the spread of certain ‘infections’ and ‘contaminations,’ the British made the registration of the Eunuchs mandatory as they were considered to be contagious physically, morally and sexually to Indian men as well as the public domain (Drummond). They challenged the binary division of gender. The colonial officials still referred to Hijras as ‘men’ and they used this as a tactic to erase hijras as a separate gender category and restore the binary division of gender (Enthoven 228). The Hijra practices of beggary, vagrancy, and alms collecting came to be perceived as crime, and they were grouped as habitual criminals, making them the deviant fringe of the society in every aspect. They claimed that the inter mingling of Hijras violated of gender norms.

The colonial rulers even considered the presence of the Hijras in public space to be obscene while cross dressing in theatre was categorized as innocent. Hijra’s breaking the conventional gender norms and deviant sexual mulishness was accused of making the “innocent” act of cross dressing in theatre obscene (Heath 41–42). Colo-

nial space was perceived to me masculine space, and Hijras were thought of as pollutants because of their deviance. They were considered to be pollutants of both body and space (Heath 2–3). Hijras were considered to sexually infect other people with ‘unnatural’ sexual practices as well as erode the public space and borders between the British ruled area and areas of Indian dominance (Hinchy 280). Colonial leaders also tried to put an end to the traditional professions of the Eunuchs as performers claiming that their obscene moves and attires can lead to sexual deviance (Wise 39). Colonizers considered the Indian men to be weak, immoral and effeminate, that they claimed a Hijra performing can drag the men into immorality and sexual deviance and thus bring out the effeminate nature of Indian audiences (Tyrwhitt). The concept of colonial masculinity was highlighted and utilized to illustrate who the ruler is and who is ruled, in a rather derogatory way for the British the (Tyrwhitt). They tried everything in their power to erase these creatures out of the universe and keep the public space masculine and clean (Levine 308).

The case study by Khan, S.I. et al. , ‘Living on the Extreme Margin: Social Exclusion of the Transgender Population (hijra) in Bangladesh’ portray the marginalization of the Hijras in South Asia. This work opens a window into the lives of the third sex in South Asia, especially in the Former East Bengal, that was a part of the Indian subcontinent before partition. The interviews with Hijras, he discovered show how they are denied the basic rights in almost every sphere of life, be it social, economic, or political. They are denied the basic dignity in life and as the title suggests are pushed to the ‘extreme margins’ of the social ladder (Khan, S.I., et al. 441). The ethnographic interviews conducted throws light on how the society is close minded towards anything that goes against the conventional male female norms.

The ‘social exclusion’ (Mathieson J., et al. 261) of the Hijras start right from their childhood. Though mostly born male, these boys prefer staying at home, dressing up like females by adorning jewelry and makeup and doing chores that are usually exclusively prescribed to the females. This nature becomes more conspicuous during adolescence as the feminine traits start becoming stronger and permanent. Embarrassed of their son who is behaving like an ideal daughter, the parents end up evicting them out of their household in the fear of the disgrace it can bring to their family image. The discrimination starts from the home, where the ‘normal’ child who adheres to the gender roles is given privileges in terms of food, clothing and even parental affection over the boy who as an abnormal feminine growth. Everywhere, including in their schools, the effeminate boys are ridiculed and mistreated and isolated by the teachers and students, for being different, ultimately leading to these young Hijras to drop out from school. Thus the education of the Hijras comes to a standstill and it destroys their career leading to unemployment and poverty which ultimately paves way for beggary and prostitution (Padgaonkar and Hutton 2). This further aggravates their condition making it even more deplorable. Loneliness, abuse, ridiculing, and other forms of harassment become the ultimate company of these young boys. They face major Identity crisis. They set off on a tryst to discover who they are for they do not identify with their body or gender or sex (Padgaonkar and Hutton 3). Some are forced to live a dual life where one side they dress up in their feminine attire when visiting peers and on the other hand stick to the accepted male gestures around family and relatives (Khan, S.I., et al. 442). The constant dilemma that is brought in while trying to analyze who they are wavers their self-confidence and self respect.

These effeminate boys are excluded from all the realms of social life including weddings, family events, funerals of even the closest of friends and family for their presence is considered to be a disgrace. Most Hijras are either ousted from their own households or they leave on their own free will in search of a place where their real self is accepted (Khan, S.I., et al. 442). Even in work places they are abused and rejected for being the unconventional personalities they are, not adhering to the conventional norms of gender dichotomy. This forces them to resort to beggary and prostitution making them vulnerable to Sexually transmitted diseases (Nanda 23). The lack of education, along with social stigmatization plays a major bottleneck in the betterment of their living conditions (Padgaonkar and Hutton 3). Even though they are said to have renounced sexual desires, they take up prostitution where they engage in homoerotic activities which is also frowned upon the society as 'queer' (Nanda 24). Homoerotic activities were not against the norm back in the free thinking pre-modern society, unlike the hetero-normative society today. The Hijras spend their whole life looking out for sustainable relationships. However the rigid heteronormative society and the impotency makes them unbecoming for a lifelong relationship (Padgaonkar and Hutton 3).

What one has today are the fruits of progress one has made (Padgaonkar and Hutton 3). With the absence of loved ones around, especially during old age, Hijras usually suffer from conditions like depression, drug abuse, low self esteem which leads to very risky behaviour (Khan, S.I., et al. 442).

Until the recent past, the Hijras were not even recognized by the state. They are denied of even proper health care as most doctors have are unaware about Hijras and their health issue and also they fear causing fear and inconvenience to other patients (Kalra 125).

This is still continued in the contemporary Indian society till date, steadily weakening the stature of Hijras. Even though a law was passed in 2014 by the Supreme Court of India, identifying them as the 'third sex,' there has been a lot of dissatisfaction among these people who are still victims of major discrimination though they have been granted legal visibility. They are still denied equal rights in terms of employment, right to live and so on as people in general are yet to accept them, and incorporate them into the realms of everyday life (Kalra 125). In India's larger cities this has forced many to rely on begging or prostitution. The effect of this dangerous work and the community's limited access to health and welfare services can be seen in the staggering fact that Hijras are most vulnerable to HIV AIDs in the country (Kalra 125).

Even in popular media like movies and television, Hijras are usually reduced into a mere joke (Padgaonkar and Hutton 3). Looking critically at an Indian regional language movie *Chanthupottu* will throw light on how strong the notions of masculinity and femininity are engraved in the minds of the people. The protagonist in this movie is a man who is dysfunctionally brought up as a girl and he grows up loving to cross dress and teaches dance and music in a local school. Consequently, he is ridiculed by the society and disowned by his family as he is feminine, deviant and abnormal. The story follows how he returns triumphantly as a real man, losing all his feminine traits, dressing up like a man thus fitting into the label of normal acceptable 'masculinity.' Directed by Lal Jose, *Chandupottu* is a Malayalam movie that stood out for its portrayal of an effeminate male as the lead role.

The director of the movie has very well chosen the name Radha Krishnan the name for the character displays both male and female traits. For Radha is a female name and she is one of the epic

lovers of Lord Krishna, who is the masculine lover. The villain in the story, Kumaran is perceived as a real man in the story as he goes out to fishing with the other men. People in the village blamed Radha when they were unable to catch any fish for the day as a eunuch bring bad luck. However as the movie progresses, and he comes back giving away all his feminine traits, he is addressed as Krishna and not as Radha. As he is now a real man, people consider him their good luck charm. Symbolically the day he returns to the village as a man, the fisher men too return from the sea with fishing boats full of fish they caught for the day. Clearly, being effeminate was seen not just as a disgrace but also as bad luck for the people around. This mentality is reflected in the way people treat Hijras in the Indian society today.

The main twist in the story happens when Radha falls in love with Malu, the village belle, who the Villain Kumaran also desires. The love triangle between a girl, the 'real man' and the eunuch of the village turns even more ugly when Malu gets pregnant with Radha's baby, an effeminate man's baby. The whole village is shaken by the fact that an effeminate man can have sexual desires for a girl and also, that he isn't impotent. They had identified him as a woman stuck in a man's body. However, Radha is expelled from his village by Kumaran During this time he befriend Freddie, who instead of calling him Radha, calls him Krishnan. This in the movie is seen has his first real step towards manhood. Freddie mentors Radha to Transform into Krishnan, and gets him to be like a real man by instilling in him the masculine traits. From a man who used to cross dress, he becomes a real man, dressed according to the accepted gender norms. When he returns to the village as Krishnan, he wins his fight with Kumaran, proving that he is a real man. When Krishnan discovers that, Malu has given birth to a boy, he vows to bring him up like a boy and

raise a real man. This scene clearly translates the inner frustration of being the 'other; one who is not accepted by the society. This movie too is silently anchored by a patriarchal heteronormative values though this was the first ever movie to have an effeminate character in a serious role.

All these identity constructions are merely regulatory ideas of the modern world, as Butler explains modern notions of identity as made up regulatory ideals or "regulatory fictions" as Donna Harraway (183) calls it that puts down idealized and reified norms which people are expected to live up to. According to Butler, performativity is not a singular act,

for it is always the reiteration of a norm or a set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition. (12)

Thus categories such as male and female, straight or gay, young or old are not biological facts, but categories which we create and recite through performance (Harris 162). These types of regulatory ideals are thus created, sustained or undermined through performance, or to be more exact performativity. Repeating of the regulatory fictions over time has made it a norm that is popularly accepted and thus superior. Butler says how linking a gender onto a body, is not merely a biological act, but a performative act that has been reacted so many times that it becomes a norm. Thus performative acts are the one domain in which "discourse acts as power" (Butler 225). Society also has multiple gender categories that are more fluid, or in between, not fitting into the Male/female gender division of the West (Rautman and Talalay 2). Hijras of India, who perform the institutionalized third gender role, are perfect examples of these 'other' categories. They go through ritual castration and are defined

by their impotency and not the absence of sexual organs (Nanda 23).

Society has progressed backwards in terms of recognizing identities by overlooking the peace that was normal in the past and legitimizing modern inequalities. For this purpose, this paper uses the concept of injured identities by Wendy Brown. Her book *States of Injury*, a critique and history of the late modernity describes the state of the third gender.

She argues that if the injured parties depend on the state adopt retributions and to ban discriminatory behaviours, or to explicitly validate their existence and importance, then, they have categorized the injured party's status as a 'vulnerable person,' and planted that injured identity in the structure of the State (Brown 165). To lean on the state for empowerment or laying down the definition of freedom this would backfire negatively by bringing in the opposite effect. She wants to stop justifying the state. In a way, depending on the state to institutionalize the Hijras, have labelled them as vulnerable, further pushing them down to the margins of the society. Deviants to the socially constructed norms are usually not accepted and thus they are left with no choice but to try fight for a place in the society and in the modern times, legal acceptance from the state. This further pushes them down to the stature of vulnerable "injured identity" (Brown 50). Hijras, as they are deviant from the popular binary gender constructs, being neither man nor women have to go through this trauma in the present day. Even though the law (The Rights of Transgender Persons bill in 2014) accepts Hijras as the legitimate third sex, not all transgender people feel comfortable being referred to as the third sex. Many prefer to be classed simply by the gender they have chosen, as women or men or none (Pattanaik 19).

The question whether the society has really progressed, after many having to fight for acceptance of something that was natural and accepted in the rather progressive yesteryears, leading them to construct fictional ideals for survival. Progress is when each and everyone has complete autonomy over one's own body, to choose one's gender and sexuality without being judged. Progress will truly happen when there is a new consciousness among people as Anzaldua (169) calls it. In her work she talks about the existence of a fifth, cosmic race, other than the four existing races of the world. By the convergence of multiple genetic streams, a new mestiza consciousness takes birth that has to struggle through borders of the physical racial, and cultural. She describes herself as a Mexican, tribal lesbian woman, placing herself as the epicenter of 'intersectionality' (Crenshaw 1241). Living in a constant state of ambiguity especially in terms of one's own identity is very difficult. Anzaldua says one should overcome the border for liberation, but shouldn't make it a way of life. An ideal Mestiza should be able to.

She says the new consciousness called the "mestiza consciousness" (113) should be flexible enough to embrace multiplicities and have a vision beyond the age old dualistic thinking, so that, a collective consciousness can be created, a culture that would speak to everyone equally. This new consciousness will bring about solidarity and help put an end to all atrocities.

Works Cited and Consulted

- "Agents of identity: Performative Practice at the Etton Causeway enclosure." *Semantic Scholar*, 2005.
- Anzaldua, G. "La frontera." *Borderlands*, 1987.
- Brown, W. *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. vol. 6, Princeton UP, 1995.

- Bashford, Alison. *Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism and Public Health*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Butler, J. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. Taylor and Francis, 2011.
- . *Gender trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 2011.
- Chandupottu. Directed by Lal Jose, performance by Dileep, Gopika, Indrajith, Lal, 2005.
- Couper, G. "Letter from Secretary, NWP, to NWP Member, Legislative Council." 12 Feb. 1861, BL/ IOR/P/235/33.
- Crenshaw, K. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Colour." *Stanford Law Review*, 1991, pp.1241-99.
- Drummond, R. "Letter from Commissioner Allahabad, to Secretary, NWP." 9 Aug. 1865, BL/ IOR/P/ 438/61.
- Enthoven, R.E. *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay*. D.K. Publishers Distributors, 1997.
- Haraway, D. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Simian, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Routledge, 1991, pp. 183-202.
- Harris, O. *Perfomative Practice: Identity and Agency at the Causewayed Enclosures of Windmill Hill and Eton*. 2003.
- Heath, Deana. *Purifying Empire: Obscenity and the Politics of Moral Regulation in Britain, India and Australia*. C U P, 2010.
- Hinchy, J. "Obscenity, Moral Contagion and Masculinity: Hijras in Public Space in Colonial North India." *Asian Studies Review*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2014, pp. 274-94.
- Jha, Rupa. "The Hijras of India." *BBC News Audio*, 22 Feb. 2007.
- Kalra, G. "Hijras: The Unique Transgender Culture of India." *International Journal of Culture and Mental Health*, vol. 5, no.2, 2012, pp.121-26.
- Khan, S.I. et. al. "Living on the Extreme Margin: Social Exclusion of the Transgender Population (hijra) in Bangladesh." *Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition*, 2009, pp. 441-51.
- Lal, V. "Not This, Not That: The Hijras of India and the Cultural Politics of Sexuality." *Social Text*, no. 61, 1999, pp.119-40.
- Levine, Philippa. *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire*. Routledge, 2003.
- Mathieson, J. et. al. "Social Exclusion Meaning, Measurement and Experience and Links to Health Inequalities." *A Review of Literature*, 2008.
- Nanda, S. *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India*. Wadsworth Publishing, 1990.
- O'Flaherty, W.D. *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts*. U of Chicago P, 1982.
- Padgaonkar, P. and Hutton, D. "Shining a Spotlight on the Marginalized: Tejal Shah's Photographic Representation of the Hijra Community in India." *TCNJ Journal of Student Scholarship*, vol. XVII, spring 2015.
- Pattanaik, D. *Shikhandi and Others Tales They Don't Tell You*. 2015.
- Rautman, A.E. and Talalay, L.E. "Introduction: Diverse Approaches to the Study of Gen-

der in Archaeology." *Reading the Body*,
edited by A.E. Rautman, U of Pennsylvan-
ia P, 2000, pp. 1-12.

Solvyns, Balthazar. *Les Hindoos*. 1812, Metro
Politan Museum of Art, America.

Suthrell, Charlotte. *Unzipping Gender: Sex, Cross-
Dressing, and Culture*. Berg, 2004.

Tyrwhitt, E. "Letter from Inspector-General of
Police, NWP, to Secretary, NWP." 26 June,
1824, BL/IOR/P/ 96.



The Utopian World of Women in Rokeya Sakawat Hossain's *Sultana's Dream*

Dr. Henrieta Huda*

Abstract

Women has always been neglected and ignored by the patriarchal society. They are considered to be inferior, meek and submissive. Their identity is framed by the society and as such they are forced to fit into a particular set pattern. In other words they are stereotyped. This stereotyping of women has continued throughout centuries. However, women have recognized their true worth and raised voices against all forms of oppressions. They have gathered enough courage to discard all norms and conventions framed to imprison them in body and spirit. Many feminist writers have dwelled seriously on the issue of women oppression and created awareness to fight against such oppression. This paper discusses Rokeya Sakawat Hossain, a pioneering Bengali Muslim feminist and educationalist who focused mainly on women's superior qualities through which they can create a niche for themselves in the patriarchal society. This particular aspect of Rokeya Hossain is treated through an analysis of her famous narrative, "Sultana's Dream," a short story; a heart touching narrative. This narrative is considered to be a feminist utopian narrative, which throws light on Rokeya's brand of feminism and her intellectual musings (vii). This narrative offers a challenge to the so called patriarchal views regarding women's inferior intellectuality. Rokeya presents the anti-stereotypical role of women in her narratives. Her women characters are not the transgressive or rebellious one but one who challenges patriarchal society through their intelligence and united by a common goal of educating their fellow mates. It is only through education that women can prove themselves equal to men. In "Sultana's Dream" the writer shows the intellectuality of her female characters.

Keywords: *Patriarchy, Feminist, Anti-Stereotyped, Oppression, and Utopia.*

*Dr. Henrieta Huda, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Dibrugarh Hanumanbax Surajmall Kanoi College (DHSK College), K.C. Gogoi Path, Dibrugarh, Assam-786001, India,
Email: hudahenrieta@gmail.com.

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain was born in 1880 in an orthodox Zamindari family. In those days girls were not allowed to go to school. Women's education was something beyond acceptance by the society. However, Rokeya was fortunate enough to have received education from her elder brother Ibrahim Saber and sister Karimunnessa. They secretly taught her to read and write in English and Bengali. Later at the age of sixteen, she was married off to Khan Bahadur Syed Sakhawat Hossain, forty years her senior. Her husband was a Deputy Magistrate in Bhagalpur, Bihar. Though she became a widow after thirteen years, her husband during his lifetime has always been a constant source of support to her. He had always encouraged her in her literary pursuit. When she showed him her short story, he was stunned reading "Sultana's Dream" and persuaded her to publish it in the Indian Ladies' Magazine. Thus, "Sultana's Dream" was published in 1905 and had been a famous and extraordinary work from the pen of a woman.

In an era where education was solely meant for boys and science and technology was thought to be totally out of women's knowledge and understanding, Rokeya had shown through her narrative that women's intellect is no less than men. In the narrative she created a utopian country called Ladyland. This country was mainly governed by women and every success in Ladyland was due to women's education. Rokeya wanted to prove that given proper education women can excel men in every field. In the narrative women are shown to be quiet familiar with the world of science and technology and are better than their male counterparts in managing administrative and military affairs.

The story begins with the narrator Sultana, lounging in a chair and musing on the condition of Indian women. In that trance like state she encountered a lady whom she addressed as Sister Sara.

Sister Sara requested her to accompany her and have a look at the garden. Sultana agreed and went away with Sister Sara to have a look at her garden. She was surprised that it was broad daylight and the streets were crowded but there was not a single man on the streets. Some of the passers-by passed comments on Sultana in a language which she didn't understand. When she asked Sister Sara what they said, she was told that they called her 'mannish.' Sultana was surprised to know that the word 'mannish' meant someone who is 'shy and timid like men' (Hossain 3). Sultana wondered why the words 'shy' and 'timid' were associated with men. However, she realized that she was not in the company of her old friend Sister Sara but a stranger. She immediately apologized for roaming in the streets unveiled. However, the stranger told her that she need not worry because she will never come across any men. The stranger then introduced her to the place as Ladyland- a place 'free from sin and harm, "virtue herself reigns here" (4).

The story then goes on to introduce the reader to this utopian country Ladyland where everything was managed by women. It presented a totally contrasting picture of the real existing society. Ladyland was devoid of all patriarchal norms and conventions. Here the men were shut indoors, "their proper places" (4), the Zenana. Sultana took the stranger to be Sister Sara and constantly called her by that name. Rokeya, through this dream of Sultana portrayed a different picture of a society where women had the upper hand. She placed her arguments against the male dominated society very strongly. In Ladyland, men were considered to be insane, a constant source of terror and mischief. Hence, their proper place was in the Zenana. In the real world it is women who are forced to be in the Zenana and the so called 'untrained men' are out of doors. Sultana explained to Sister Sara that in her land and country women had no power or voices in the man-

agement of social affairs because they were thought to be weak and helpless.

We have no hand or voice in the management of our social affairs. In India man is the lord and master. He has taken to himself all powers and privileges and shut up the women in the zenana. (5)

In Sultana's land men are considered to be stronger than women, Sister Sara explained to Sultana that,

A lion is stronger than man, but it does not enable him to dominate the human race. You have neglected the duty you owe to yourselves and you have lost your natural rights by shutting your eyes to your own interests. (5)

She further stated that men are not capable of doing anything; they should be caught and put into the zenana.

In order to make Sultana understand that the world of politics, business and commerce can very well run without men, Sister Sara took her to her house. Sultana was surprised to find that the women in Ladyland managed their work as well as their household chores. They even managed to take out time from their busy schedule to do embroidery works. Whereas in the world of Sultana men work for seven hours daily but still fail to take out time to get engaged in other manual works. This was because these men waste their time in smoking and talking. Sultana was quite astonished to learn that the people of Ladyland had never suffered from any epidemic disease or mosquito bites and no one died in youth except by accident which was very rare.

The most surprising thing Sultana saw in Ladyland was the use of solar heat to cook food. The country seemed to be quite advanced in science and technology. When the Queen inherited the throne, thirty years ago, she passed a decree

that all women in her country should be educated. As such many school for girls were founded and supported by the government. Education spread far and wide in the country. Moreover, early marriage was totally prohibited. Girls were not allowed to marry until the age of twenty-one. However, it is to be noted that prior to the shift of responsibilities; women were strictly kept in purdah. Yet the purdah system never created a barrier to the women of Ladyland. The Queen established two universities for girls where boys were not admitted. One of the universities invented a wonderful balloon through which water could be drawn from the atmosphere:

One of these invented a wonderful balloon, to which they attached a number of pipes. By means of this captive balloon which they managed to keep afloat above the cloud-land, they could draw as much water from the atmosphere as they pleased. As the water was incessantly being drawn by the university people no cloud gathered and the ingenious Lady Principal stopped rain and storm thereby. (8)

This particular aspect threw light on the modern concept of education and marriage imbibed in the thought process of the women folk in Ladyland. Introducing such a modern concept in her story was really outstanding. It is really astonishing that such modern concept should pour out from the pen of a woman who never went to school. Such new and innovative concept proves the fact that women are not intellectually inferior to men.

The other university too invented "an instrument by which they could collect as much sun-heat as they wanted. And they kept the heat stored up to be distributed among others as required" (8). This innovative works were criticized by the men

folk. To them these were nothing but “a sentimental nightmare” (8). At that time they were criticized and thought to be intellectually and physically weak. Their inventions were considered to be futile and of no benefit to the country.

Suddenly one day the country was attacked by a neighbouring country on account of some political issues. The military officers of the Queen at once got ready to face the enemy. But the enemy was strong and though their men fought bravely, it was getting difficult for them to win and the foreign army was advancing towards their country. When physical strength could not save the country the Queen held a meeting with the wise ladies of her country to discuss how to save their country.

Some proposed to fight like soldiers; others objected and said that women were not trained to fight with swords and guns, nor were they accustomed to fighting with any weapons. A third party regretfully remarked that they were hopelessly weak of body. (10)

The Queen suggested that if they cannot save their country for lack of physical strength, they can at least do so by using their brain. Then the Principal of one of the universities came up with a plan but before that she requested the Queen to ask her men to retire to the zanana for the sake of purdah. Already wounded and tired the men took the order as a boon when all the men entered the zenana, the

Lady Principal with her two thousand students marched to the battle field, and arriving there directed all the rays of the concentrated sunlight and heat towards the enemy. (10)

The enemy could not bear the heat and light and ran away. Thus the country was saved and no one ever tried to invade their country.

After this incident the ‘Mardana’ system was established in their country. The men were not allowed to come out of the zenana and with the passage of time they too got accustomed to the purdah system. It is to be noted that with the establishment of the ‘Mardana’ system there has been no more crime or sin and hence the country never needed any policeman or magistrate. Law and order prevailed in the country and it was very well managed by the ladies.

Sultana was astonished to find out that they cultivated their land through the means of electricity. Every form of modern technology that we use today was used by this utopian country of the author. Further, Sultana was told that they had no religion; their religion was based on love and truth. If a person lied he or she was not given death punishment but was asked to leave the country forever. Later Sultana was introduced to the queen, Her Royal Highness. She had a very pleasant time with the Queen who told her more about the country. In the process of conversation the Queen said that,

she had no objection to permitting her subjects to trade with other countries. ‘But, she continued.’ No trade was possible with countries where women were kept in zenanas and so unable to come and trade with us. Men, we find are rather of lower morals and so we do not like dealing with them. (14)

The Queen further added that they never fight for ‘a piece of diamond’ nor do they envy any ruler for their prosperity. They give more importance to knowledge, ‘the most precious gem’ to be found only in nature. Sultana was very delighted to encounter such a lovely country. Suddenly Sultana realized that she was in her bedroom “still lounging in her easy-chair” (14). Thus the story ended with Sultana returning to reality and her real existence.

Through this story the author Rokeya had tried to bring home certain important facts which should be imbued in our society to make the world a better place to live. The utopian world she had described in her story is not an impossibility. If the men of our country supports women and help them to pursue education then things would certainly turn out to be better. Given a chance women can excel in every field of knowledge and work. The story was written in 1905. It was an era when women were kept within the four walls of her house. She was thought to be merely a plaything without any brain. Everything was dominated by men and women were forced to lead a life of submission. All knowledge belonged to the domain of men and women never ever got a chance to show their Excellencies. But Rokeya through her story had tried to make the so called patriarchs of her society understand and acknowledge the qualities of women. She had shown that scientific knowledge is not restricted to the domain of men. Women, too, have a brain that can create wonders and mere physical strength should not be the only criteria to judge women's worth. This point could be justified by referring to Rokeya herself who being a woman could write about the technological innovative designs used by the women of Ladyland. Such wonderful knowledge related to the world of science and technology was penned down by a women who herself received very limited education. The scientific development we witness in the twenty-first century was discussed by Rokeya in the early nineteenth century. Instead of focusing on the weaknesses of women she concentrated more on their superior qualities of intelligence. Women might be physically weaker than men but they are equal to men in terms of intellectuality.

Moreover, through her story Rokeya wants to prove the fact that women are better administra-

tor then men. Ladyland governed by women is free from all sorts of crime and sin. The men folk are kept in the zenana and thus peace prevails in Ladyland. Women can manage everything and this is a hard fact. It cannot be denied. But patriarchy will never acknowledge or accept this fact. The utopian world is desired but can never exist in reality and so Rokeya used the dream allegory to express her views and concerns of women's superior intellectuality. In the real world women are never allowed to take an upper hand. It is the desire of every woman to show her potentialities; to prove that she too can think and act. The story really fills the reader with awe and admiration for the women in Ladyland. It presents a reciprocal picture of the real society. For instance, in real world the women are asked to be in purdah but in Ladyland it is the men folk who are kept in purdah. And keeping men in purdah has been beneficial for the country. However, this cannot be expected in the real world of patriarchy. Rokeya does not want to overturn the whole system of our society and it is not even possible to do so. What she wanted was an equal status for women of her society.

Works Cited and Consulted

- Code, Lorraine. *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*. Routledge, 2013.
- Hossain Rokeya, Sakhawat. *Sultana's Dream and Padmarag*. Translated by Barnita Bagchi, Penguin Books, 2005.
- Tong, Rosemarie. *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*. Westview P 2009.
- Waugh, Patricia. *An Oxford Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*. OUP, 2006.



Women and Disability: Representation of Double Marginalization in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*

Madhumita Kundu* and Dr. Prasenjit Panda**

Abstract

Tara, a drama by Mahesh Dattani, is about gender discrimination in society. The purpose of this paper is to analyze and explain how Dattani portrayed the issue of alienation of women in the drama. The play emphasizes how an Indian family favours a male child over a female child through the touching narrative of conjoined twins, Chandan and Tara. Discrimination based on gender is immoral and unjust, according to Dattani, who emphasizes the complexity and multidimensionality of the issue. The drama illustrates the insidiousness and profound embeddedness of patriarchal beliefs in the collective psyche of society. Women imbibe these values as a result of socialization that make them more prone to exploitation and discrimination. Women serve as an instrument to maintain the patriarchal norms. In the drama, Tara's mother Bharati, ruins her daughter's life and suffers from remorse because of her monstrous deed. Chandan and Tara both are physically challenged but as a girl, she faces double marginalization. Dattani also highlights society's insensitive behaviour towards persons with disability.

Keywords: *Gender, Disability, Marginalization, Patriarchal Structure, and Conjoined Twins.*

*Madhumita Kundu, Research Scholar, Department of English and Foreign Languages,
Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh-495009, India,
Email: madhumitakundu.prl@gmail.com

**Dr. Prasenjit Panda, Assistant Professor, Department of English and Foreign Language,
Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, C.G, Koni, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh-495009, India,
Email: amarratpohalo@gmail.com

The term Indian film refers to a wide notion that encompasses all of India's culture and myths. Drama in India has a long history dating back to the Vedic period with Bharat Muni's *Natyashastra*. British and western theatrical patrons established Indian English drama in India. Indian English drama, both before and after independence, was notable for its quality and number. Despite the fact that Indian English theatre was merely a parody of British dramatists, it elicited genuine emotions and cultural ideas. As a result, a few dramatists such as Girish Karnad, Manjula Padmanabhan and Mahesh Dattani, hit milestone of success in Indian theatre with promising futures in both Indian and international theatre. Mahesh Dattani made a significant appearance in the field of drama when Indian English play was striving for subsistence and recognition. The accomplishment of the Sahitya Academy Award in 1998 for his play *Final Solutions* reinforced his cause even more. Before Dattani's rise to prominence on the theatre, Indian English drama was limited to various stages of emulation and adaptation. His plays became diversified in themes, subjects, skill, design, craft, form and styles as a result of his exploration, research and creativity with the existing core of the plays. Indian English drama, which was on the edge of extinction, has been nurtured in a wholesome manner under his canopy. His plays have received critical recognition both in India and overseas. "At last, we have playwright who gives sixty million English speaking Indians an identity," Alyque Padamsee said of him ("The Utterly Urban").

Tara (1990) by Mahesh Dattani deals with societal problems, in part, through addressing pertinent queries of how gender and disabled identities interact in an Indian environment. *Tara* is the narrative of conjoined twins Tara and Chandan who were clinically parted from each other as

infants, resulting in Tara's physique being weaker and her death as a youngster.

Tara, Dattani's third play, was written in 1990 and it was the most frequently produced drama. It was once known as 'Twinkle Tara.' Although it is a story about teenagers, the concerns are grave. It is staged in various places, including academic institutions, private groups. In New Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai, *Tara* was a breakout hit. In the play *Tara*, Dattani addresses the issues related gender and disability and becomes the voice for all the disadvantaged communities.

Dattani is thought to have chosen artistic style to depict the present urban India's ongoing effort to define himself in domestic, Societal and cultural arenas. Almost all of Mahesh Dattani's plays, including *Tara* are about this battle. The play depicts the challenges, successes, and disappointments of an Indian family with traumatized children and their survival. It highlights traditional Indian stereotypes, which always prioritized a boy over a girl. Tara is Dattani's perfect character who has been extensively praised and presented in a variety of ways. According to some reviewers, Dattani attempted to portray the feminine nature of oneself in this play, which must always peace with a system that prefers male in a society that is also governed by men.

The play *Tara* shows injustice of society towards women. It is also about the unjustness to men, particularly Chandan. It begins with Chandan transforming into Dan to free himself of the remorse of killing his sister. Despite the fact that the young child Chandan had nothing to do with Tara's sad demise, he is burdened by the inhumanity of his mother and grandfather. According to some critics, this play also refers to the agony of forceful division and its enduring bad repercussions which manifest in recurrent communal violence and uncertainty in our concepts

of modernization and our views on the social reality of Indian family and community.

As reported by some experts, the play depicts the deep cracks and contradiction that one has learnt to accept, with almost all identification indicators- gender, religion, language, class, culture and sexuality - serving as barriers to one's self-realization. Some argue that Dattani will not overlook that the drama is about one's perceptions of normalcy and disability as well as gender. Despite the fact that the play is about the causes of specific characters and the formation of gender identity. Some critics believe it is also about family as a battleground. Relationships are complex, familism is a farce built on sacrifices and adjustment, and middle-class morality is a ruse, according to Dattani.

There are a variety of ways to approach *Tara*, but no one can refute that the central issue is how Indians differentiate between female and male offspring. Discrimination against women and female feticide have a shameful history in India. It's about science's objective barbarity and the bizarre application to which it might be put. It can be categorized as a quest for one's true self or as a reflection of one's family bonds. The researcher would like to consider it in the context of forced unity. Everyone strives for a stable life, but no one is stable.

The drama begins with a scenario that takes place in London. Chandan recounts his early childhood experiences with Tara, while also exposing society's age-old patriarchal attitude that favors a male child over a female child. Erin Mee, a theatre director explains the theme of *Tara*:

Tara is about the emotional separation that develops between two Siamese twins after their grandfather and mother tries to influence their physical separation to prefer the male (Chandan) over the girl

(Tara). Tara, a spirited young girl who is denied the same possibilities as her brother Chandan (despite the fact that she is sharper), gradually rots away and dies. Chandan leaves to London and strives to live without a past reality in order to conceal his grief over his sister Tara's demise. (319)

Dattani dismantles the gender binary of man versus woman. Man is supercilious to woman in this paradigm. Dattani appears to refute this concept claiming that femininity and masculinity are innate aspects of a person's identity. In Indian tradition the idea of *Ardhanarishwar* validates this view point. Therefore, discrimination based on gender is undesirable and immoral. The Siamese twins Chandan and Tara symbolize two faces of a self-feminine and masculine. It signifies that man and woman are equal in the eyes of humanity. The unlawful operation represents the split of feminine and masculine in the drama. The preference for Chandan indicates a man's dominant position than women. Tara properly comments:

And me. Maybe we still are. Like we've always been. Inseparable. The way we started in life. Two lives and one body, in one comfortable womb. Till we were forced out... And separated. (325)

Tara, according to Dattani, is a drama about the gendered self and it appears to suggest that differentiation based on gender eventually causes calamity to humanity. The Patel family's gender prejudiced choice has caused problems for both Tara and Chandan. Patriarchy is shown to be prevalent multi-dimensional and firmly ingrained in the social system in the play. It has become imprinted in our collective conscience. The predilection for male child is not just associated with economic considerations. Culture, so-

ciety, religion and other variables also play an important role in this decision. The Patel family is stable both politically and financially in the drama *Tara*. As family is a social establishment, it is meant to cater affection, concern, love and comfort to its members. Tara is not a financial strain on the family. Despite this, the family prefers Chandan during operation that demonstrates the multi-layered character of patriarchy in the social structure. Asha Chaudhuri comments:

Tara is enthralling in that it makes use of a rather unlikely 'freak' case to lay bare the injustices the conventional Indian family meted out to the girl child, a play that comments on a society that treats the children who share the womb differently. And as always, the stereotype comes in a friendly garb, covering the ugly truths. The Patels, on the face of it look like the ideal parents that special children like Tara and Chandan need to survive-indeed they have survived because of their dedicated parents. But there are more things that need to be revealed. (Chaudhuri 38)

Stereotypical gender roles perform a significant part in the social formation of gender. Females and males are allocated different duties, which they are expected to fulfil in their daily lives. The duties that are expected to be undertaken by men are regarded crucial. Males are given a higher stature than females because of the excellence of their roles. In the play, Dattani addresses this problem when Patel invites Chandan to help him with his trade while expecting Tara to stay at home. One of the major causes of gender discrimination is sex-based division of work. Tara utters, "Not at all. The men in the house were deciding on whether they are going to go hunting while the women looked after the cave" (Dattani 328). Female and male are supposed to continue their allocated duties solely in patriar-

chal standard. Taking on another person's gender role may bring humiliation. Through the roles of Chandan and Tara, Dattani aims to dismantle this division of duties in the drama. Chandan is fascinated by what are regarded as feminine duties. Chandan tells, "I haven't decided yet (looks at Patel). I might stay back in the cave and do my jigsaw puzzle" (328). Chandan aspires to be an author, and Tara appears to be more interested in pursuing a job similar to her dad's. Patel gets enraged and blames his wife of "turning him (Chandan) into a sissy-teaching him to knit!" (350). Both female and male get influenced by this distribution of labour. It also places a strain on men, limiting their abilities and interests.

Women, ironically, perform a vital part in continuing discrimination towards women in patriarchal system. During surgical procedure, Bharati, a woman, prefers the male infant in the play. It demonstrates that in patriarchal structure, male-biased values are firmly internalized by female psyche as a result of social upbringing. Therefore, women in this system, becomes an instrument used against other women in a destructive manner. Patel uncovers the truth about his judgment in regard to surgery:

A scan showed that a major part of the blood supply to the third leg was provided by the girl. Your mother asked for a reconfirmation. The result was the same. The chances were better that the leg would survive ... on the girl. Your grandfather and mother had a private meeting with Dr. Thakkar. I wasn't asked to come. That same evening your mother told me of her decision. Everything will be done as planned. Except - I couldn't believe what she told me that they would risk giving both legs to the boy. May be I had protested more strongly! (378)

Bharati is filled with guilt after the failure of the operation since she has ruined her daughter Tara's life. She makes effort to get rid of her wrong decision by lavishing Tara with extreme care, love and attention. Bharati says, "Yes. I plan for her happiness. I mean to give her all the love and affection which I can give. It's what she ... deserves. Love can make up for a lot" (349). Her guilt is causing her emotional turmoil. Arguments between Patel and Bharati are also on the rise, causing domestic stress. Bharati tries to reduce her remorse by accusing Patel and showing that she values Tara much more than her father. She also pays off Roopa to become Tara's best friend. Her guilt is making her insane. Bharati's struggle and grief reveal how women are affected by patriarchal attitudes and ideals. Tara is started and mentally shattered when she knows the truth about her mother's discrimination.

Dattani's depiction of physical impairment advocates the belief that these disabilities replace the textual narration as a common aspect of portrayal and a symbolic technique. These discourses focus on the symbolic power of disability rather than on the social and political implications of impairment. On the contrary, disability makes it easier for the playwrights to incorporate issues of marginalization into the play. The concept of disability dissipates in *Tara*, allowing sympathy to move to other causes. As a result of its ubiquity, disabled individuals have been marginalized, and primary core factors of difference have taken on a more universal approach. The portrayal of disability by Dattani is also advocated by Sharon Snyder and Davis Mitchel who have titled this *Narrative Prosthesis*. It is mentioned that:

disability has an unusual literary history.
Between the social marginality of people

with disabilities and their corresponding representational milieus, disability undergoes a different representational fate. While racial, sexual and ethnic criticisms have often founded their critiques upon a pervasive absence of their images in the dominant culture's literature ... images of disabled people abound in history. (52)

The reality of disability in India, which is distinguished by a multifaceted amalgamation of class, gender, and caste issues, is frequently overlooked in Western disability studies. The key to driving disability studies and research toward an understanding of the pluralities that characterize the experience of disability in India is feminism, with its emphasis on much oppression (Ghai 53). Furthermore, studies and associated discourse on disabled women's lived experiences in India are still in their infancy.

In the extrapolation of the available statistics, they have indicated that disabled women are marginalized much more than the disabled men. Disability legislation also adopts a gendered approach, with the result that out of twenty-eight chapters outlining various issues, not a single one addresses the problems of disabled women. This approach reflects the general attitude toward disabled women in India in general. In Hindi the phrase, 'Women with disabilities' (Ek to ladki oopar se aapahij) means, 'one a girl, and that too disabled.' This intermingling of disablement and gender marks the reality of a woman with disability in India (Ghai 53).

Chandan and Tara both are physically handicapped. Both feel alienated as a result of this, but Tara is twice discriminated as a girl. External appearance is regarded more than intellect or internal beauty in patriarchal society. Dattani reveals the hypocrisy of society by exposing how society differentiates between two disabled

people based on their gender. The hypocrisy is displayed when her mother remarks:

It's all right while she is young. It's all very cute and comfortable when she makes witty remarks. But let her grow up. Yes, Chandan. The world will tolerate you. The world will accept you-but not her! Oh, the pain she is going to feel when she sees herself at eighteen or twenty. Thirty is unthinkable. And what about forty and fifty! Oh God! (Dattani 348-49)

Tara's survival is doubtful from the moment she is born. Accepting Tara as normal will be impossible once she reaches adulthood. Tara is a passionate and clever young lady. The other girls frequently labelled Tara as monstrous. She defies the social structure by using the same instrument that level her as such. When Tara initially joins Prema and Rupa, she understands they really wish to look her prosthetic leg. The social fabric of the established order is disrupted when Tara displays her prosthetic leg to the girls. Tara does not hide or cover up her impairment; instead, she embraces it. The image of Tara and her prosthetic leg has a lot of power, and her move set a new law of the being, over and against the girls attempt to tear herself down into its pieces.

In the play *Tara*, Dattani has expertly addressed the issues related to disability, gender, self-identity and family. The drama has been a worldwide success and is one of his well-known works.

Dattani effectively focuses on numerous themes related to gender stereotyping by using the unique theme of conjoined twins. He portrays a harsh truth of society without being preachy, and he touches on a number of topics with compassion. In a different manner, this drama brilliantly portrays the predicament of underprivileged women in patriarchal society.

Works Cited

- Chaudhuri, A. K. *Mahesh Dattani: An Introduction*. CUP, 2005.
- Dattani, M. *Collected Plays*. Penguin, 2000.
- Ghai, A. "Disabled Women: An Excluded Agenda of Indian Feminism." *Hypatia*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2002, pp. 49-66.
- Mee, Erin B. "A Note on the Play." *Collected Plays*, Penguin, 2000.
- Mitchell, D.T., and Snyder, S.L. *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*. CUP, 2000.
- "The Utterly Urbane Autobiography of Mahesh Dattani And How do you Break a leg?" *Explocity*, 17 May 2022, bangalore.explocity.com/articles/the-utterly-urbane-autobiography-of-mahesh-dattani-and-how-do-you-break-a-leg/#:~:text=Staff%20Reporter&text=The%20famous%20Alyque%20Padamsee%20said,bilingual%20skin%3B%20multilingual%2C%20even.



Narcotic Assemblages and Gender Roles in *Narcopolis*

Dr. Anusree R.S.*

Abstract

Focusing on the theories of addiction by Deleuze and Guattari, this article tries to find out the role of gender in forming and maintaining the narcotic assemblages in the novel *Narcopolis*. There are different arguments about addiction as it forms contexts of interactional processes; on the one hand the drugs and alcohol are capable of producing desires, but on the other hand it reduces human life to mere addiction. This article ponders over the life of Dimple, the eunuch who connects to everyone and transforms herself to a better human. As she evolves biologically and emotionally, she finds it very difficult to be a part of the patriarchal narcotic assemblages around her. This article brings forth the differences between the rigidity of men's narcotic assemblages and the 'becomings' of Dimple. As Deleuze points out, this paper also concludes that the best intoxication is abstinence.

Keywords: *Addiction, Narcotic Assemblages, becoming, and Gender roles.*

*Dr. Anusree R.S., Assistant Professor, Department of English, The Zamorin's Guruvayurappan College, Kozhikode-673014, Kerala, India, Email: anusreekozhikode@gmail.com

An addict, if you don't mind me saying so, is like a saint. What is a saint but someone who has cut himself off, voluntarily, voluntarily, from the world's traffic and currency?

---Jeet Thayil, *Narcopolis*.

Narcopolis marks new ways of seeing, feeling and perceiving the darker side of India. By subverting the traditional concepts, the novel celebrates drugs, sex, death, perversion, addiction, love, and God. The damned generation who lost their souls in the broken metropolis in *Narcopolis* charts how desires affect human life and produces narcotic assemblages. This paper moves along with a trajectory of thought that the addiction of alcohol and drugs enables the flow of desire by forming machinic assemblages. The article also investigates whether social acceptance and gender roles play a role in the formation of assemblages. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the assemblage is "complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities, and territories that come together for varying periods of time to ideally create new ways of functioning" (Livesey 18). In the novel, narcotic machinic assemblages are formed through desires around the opium den of Rashid. The central character in the novel, Dimple is a eunuch who runs the brothel and opium den together and makes connections with people. Though she was the link of forming the narcotic assemblages, she fails to retain the connections and takes refuge in a rehab centre at the end of the novel. The narcotic connections which lead to assemblages show how desires act as the driving force behind the formation of assemblages in *Narcopolis* and how it affects lives differently. The paper tries to analyse how *Narcopolis* portrays the formation of narcotic assemblages in Mumbai through desiring machines.

Machine, from a Deleuzian perspective, works

everywhere, functioning smoothly at times, at other times in fits and starts. It breathes, it heats, and it eats. It shifts and fucks ... machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections. (Deleuze and Guattari 8)

In other words, Deleuze and Guattari explain this notion with the famous example of how when a mother breast feeds her child, breast connects with the mouth of the child and facilitates the flow of desire as milk (*Anti-Oedipus* 1). Gilles Deleuze perceives human beings as social and cultural creatures in his materialist philosophy. He also understands them as desiring machines, which connect with the material realities through organs. Here smoking pipe and Dimple connects everyone to the Opium Den through opium and sex. The narcotic assemblage around her includes Mr. Lee, Dom, Rumi, Rashid, Newton Xavier, and many others.

Mr. Lee is a Chinese drug dealer, whose father was a drug addict, who was born and brought up in poverty, was abducted twice by the opponents and lost his wife in the mess. He comes to Bombay and makes a deep relationship with Dimple and finally bequeaths Dimple his opium pipes, eventually taking her to an opium den run by a man called Rashid. Mr. Lee settles in Bombay because somehow Bombay and Dimple have made a strong influence on that man. Dimple builds a strong relationship with Rashid; she acts as a sex partner to him and prepares pipe for his customers. Rashid, Rumi, Dom, Salim and all the characters except Dimple find happiness in their soporific assemblage. On all occasions, her lovers and sex partners fail to understand her. Dimple defines herself as "dreams that travel

from one person to another." "We return, but only if you love us" (Thayil 160). Rashid often made violent sex with her.

He didn't have complaints, but she did, though she had no one to tell them to. He had an aversion to touch, to any kind of friendly touching, and cuddling was out of the question. He didn't like to be seen with her in public. He took too long to come. Sometimes, when they were fucking, she thought of a story she'd read in which the plague arrived to a town in Europe. (228)

Dom is another person who comes to Rashid's den to see Dimple. He smoked there and read books to her, but when Dimple begs Dom to take her with him; it is he who takes her to Safer, a rehab centre. In the beginning of the novel, Dom finds Dimple and he describes the experience:

I smoked at her station even if other pipes were free, and we talked the way smokers talk, horizontally, with long pauses, our words so soft they sounded like the incomprehensible phrases spoken by small children. (1)

Here the people were running after the different types of drugs which make soporific effects in brain and mind. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, every actual body has a limited set of traits, habits, movements and affects along with a virtual dimension. Human body is a breakdown of organs which have connections, potentials, traits, and movements. It forms 'becomings' in conjunctions with other bodies. Everything mingles in this becomings, passages, and migrations. In *Narcopolis*, the becoming evolves as a part of the use of drugs.

Drugs play a vital role in the novel. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, drugs appear as agents of

becoming as they develop modification in pace and proximities of the people. On the one hand drug addiction alters realities, speed of perception, and sometimes enables the creative process and removes inhibitions in the addicts, but on the other hand drugs form rigid segmentations in their life.

Drug addicts may be considered as precursors or experimenters who tirelessly blaze new paths of life, but their cautiousness lacks the foundation for caution. (Lyotard, thousand 285)

The characters in *Narcopolis* are searching for an effect from drugs and alcohol. They are doing it not because it is available but because it affects their body and the effect culminates in a state of 'has been.' Dimple, Mr. Lee, Newton Xavier, Rashid, Rumi, Dom Ullis, and almost all other characters in the novel smoke, drink and use drugs. Sometimes it is opium or drugs that link them together by eliminating the barriers of class, gender, religious, and language. Jeet Thayyil compares addicts to saints. In *Narcopolis*, drugs form a segmentarity of addiction to opium, heroin, and garad. But Thayyil celebrates it:

The saint talks to flowers, a daffodil, say, and he sees the yellow of it. He receives its scent through his eyes. Yes, he thinks, you are my muse, I take heart from your stubbornness, a drop of water, a dab of sunshine, and there you are with your gorgeous blooms. He enjoys flowers but he worships trees. He wants to be the banyan's slave. He wants to think of time the way a tree does, a decade as nothing more than some slight addition to his girth. He connives with birds, and gets his daily news from the sound the wind makes in the leaves. When he's hungry he stands in the forest waiting for the fall of a mango. His ambition is the opposite

of ambition. Most of all, like all addicts, he wants to obliterate time. He wants to die, or, at the very least, to not live. (Thayil 53)

Even though the addicts are celebrated as saints, it is clear that they are confined in the world of hallucinations and wrong sensory perceptions. Even in the last page of the novel, we see how the “drug addicts continually fall back into what they wanted to escape” (Lyotard, Thousand 285).

Narcopolis begins and ends with a hallucinatory writing which internalizes the delirium. But women and eunuchs do not belong to this delirium of drugs and sex as “they confuse sex and spirit” (Thayil 19) or in other words they don't separate it. According to Dimple, women have evolved biologically and emotionally than men. She, being a eunuch stands between men and women or she is the one who is becoming woman from man. At one point she says,

Woman and man are words other people use, not me. I'm not sure what I am. Some days I'm neither, or I'm nothing. On other days I feel I'm both. But men and women are so different, how can one person be both? Isn't that what you're thinking? Well I'm both and I've learned some things. (19)

Dimple does not resemble to men physically or mentally because she does not like the way men separate their human and dog natures. Just like a woman, Dimple also confuses her life with opium and she faces difficulties in separating her spirit from sex when she meets new customers in her brothel.

Throughout her life Dimple was sodomized by the desires of man. Abject poverty and other problems persuaded Dimple's mother to sell her eight year old boy to a brothel from where he

undergoes a brutal castration. That pain tortures Dimple throughout her life and as a result, she seeks relief in opium and drugs. She thinks that for Rashid “she could not bear children or cook; all she could provide was sex and conversation” (190). Rashid gave her aburkha and named her Zeenat. She wonders at the men who designed such a garment which limits the ‘tools’ of a woman and she thinks: “How much they must have feared their own desire” (187).

Dimple works in a brothel and is often raped by her customers. And it is of course not for her pleasure because the very thought of such experiences irritates her, especially towards the end of the novel. She asks: “Isn't it true that the main goal of sexual act for a man is the discharging of semen into a suitable receptacle, or even an unsuitable one if nothing else is available?” (19). Sex and opium never give freedom and liberation to Dimple; she was forcefully castrated and named twice by the patriarchal world. She wants to win admiration and recognition as a human being which makes her learn language and literature. She reads many books and converses about philosophy and several other topics with the narrator, Dom. Dimple is addicted to life, love, literature and drugs; or in other words, she is overlapped by different types of addictions and desires which endows her with the potency of becoming.

Narcopolis is a novel of desire in which life in its entirety is a flux or becoming and what is left is neither a future nor a past, but an extended present. At one point, Dimple says:

the main thing nobody mentions is the comfort of it, how good it is to be slave to something, the regularity and habit of addiction, the fact that it's an antidote to loneliness and the way it becomes your family. (277)

These words testify to the desire to be loved and the urge to get into a family. They also point to the fact that she suppressed her desires in the habit of addiction. Desires rule her life, but she accepts all the injustice as her fate. Even though she studies and reads books, she believes that she can only do sex and that it is her job. In the world of that narcotic metropolitan city, the only hopeful one who does not fit into the narcotic assemblage is Dimple, the eunuch.

Dimple is the only one who is capable of loving everyone. She says to Rashid: "I am beloved" ... and you, dear friend, you're beloved too" (345). Dimple loves everyone and love transforms her to a better human being always. But at the same time, Rumi, whose addiction is violence, lives like a frustrated married man. Patriarchy plays an important role in the novel as it produces many male victims; for example, Salim is a sex slave who is sodomized by his boss. He kills his boss, but is later caught by the police for some robbery and the police report says that he committed suicide in custody. It becomes quite clear that most of the narcotic assemblages around the Den are fundamentally patriarchal. The difference between Dimple and other men is that Dimple connects to everyone and love transcends the segmentarity of addiction, and therefore she does not fit in to the narcotic assemblages around her.

In opium houses or Khanas in *Narcopolis*, the people form assemblages in the evenings and nights and they smoke, use drugs like heroin, charas, cocaine, and brown sugar. According to Deleuze, the reality is a product of desire which is the active force that makes connections and investments within the body and between the bodies. In fact, Dimple and many other characters use drugs to make a parallel reality to their painful life. For them, addiction is not a way to freedom, but an escape from the reality. For Deleuze and Guattari, "drinking and doing drugs

involves a process of becoming that has neither a beginning nor an end. Everything is in a milieu" (Lyotard, Thousand 359-460). The novel does not bring about any kind of becoming through drug addiction, but the hallucinatory experiences create a false impression of becoming to the author and characters by altering their bodies, senses and desires.

As Thayyil puts it, "Indians don't care for past, only care for now. They are too busy thinking of food to think about tomorrow" (Thayil 65). The people in slum are too busy to think about future and many of them are struggling to get food and finally escape to a world of drugs. The novel is described as the story told by a pipe. Opium pipes have a significant role in the novel. The people consume opium, use pipes, smoke drugs and they are living in slums but the energy that flows from these habits interpret the whole world in the perspective of how an addict feels and finds the connections around them. Thus the characters in the novel are not liberated but reduced to opium, drugs and their mode of addicted life.

In *Narcopolis*, opium house builds assemblages as it connects pipe to mouth and makes them desiring machines like breast and mouth in *Anti-Oedipus* (1). But these narcotic assemblages are patriarchal as they are created for the pleasures of men. Therefore, these formations have either strategic or rigid structures. These assemblages exploit Dimple and many other women and therefore, we cannot call them Deleuzian assemblages in the strict sense. Desiring machines are binary and one machine is always coupled with another machine for the productive synthesis to occur through a flow. "Desire constantly couples continuous flows and partial objects that are by nature fragmentary and fragmented" (Deleuze and Guattari 5). Every machine is connected to another machine and facilitates a change, flight or movement within the assemblage and it is

called 'becoming.' But destructive addiction here does not bring a creative becoming in the life of addicts. In that sense, this novel puts forward two types of assemblages: the first one is men's narcotic assemblages which do not produce any productive becoming and the second one is women's/third gender's assemblages which is becoming continuously.

At one point, the novel depicts the inner conflict of the addicts by portraying how they love and hate garad at the same time.

At first she continued to smoke opium, using garad only occasionally, but very soon – she was surprised how soon – she was smoking only garad. She made the pipe for customers and she lost interest in smoking it herself. Suddenly it seemed as if everybody had switched to powder, the customers, the pipemen, even Rashid, who hated it but smoked all the same. Then Salim brought her maal from a new source. It had a new name, Chemical. (Thayil 281)

Though they are convinced about the side effects of drugs, most of the characters, especially Dimple, continue using different chemicals which show their inability to free themselves from the addictions. In short, the novel marks how the hazy world of Bombay changes to Mumbai with the arrival of garad, heroin by pulling back opium. After the arrival of garad heroin and other chemicals in Bombay, the opium houses went into a decline and some of them started selling the drugs which contaminated the city. Rumi and Dom go to Shakoor's den for garad because it is cheaper than Rashid's. Rumi explains what he feels when he snorted up a line of smoke. He thought: "If pain is the thing shared by all living creatures, then I'm no longer human or animal or vegetable; I am unplugged from the tick of

metabolism; I am mineral" (219). All the characters in the novel have a strong affair with drugs and they believe that it gives shape and meaning to their life. Dimple is also addicted to opium just like any other men or women in the Den, but she is also addicted to her life. Rashid was running the best opium den during that period but later his business collapsed when he becomes unable to compete with newer, harder drugs like brown sugar, heroin, and other chemicals. In the final scene, we see Rashid's son runs the den like a business. To make it successful, Jamal changes the den to a club and thus the unattractiveness of the den is removed as it is appropriated to the new economic, political situations of modern life.

In conclusion, *Narcopolis*, couched in an opiate writing style, is narrating the story from different perspectives. It characterizes different people's lives that are addicted to opium, drugs, brown sugar, cocaine, charas, garadheroin and sex. They use it for the sedative effects and they want to put themselves in a group of people or rather assemblage. Addiction in the novel does not invoke any 'becoming' or a 'flux' but it is not productive like an active life force and creates connections. As Deleuze says, the addicts lack the fundamental awareness that causes the arousal of an empty body which incapable of making intensities. In other words, an addict who is caught up in the drug addiction is incapable of making connections, or if he makes any connections, he fails to maintain it. The male characters in the novel form an assemblage from the ground of patriarchy for their pleasure. Here Dimple is "more evolved biologically and emotionally, that's well known and it's obvious" (19). She goes beyond the segmentations of addiction through her love and desires of life. Though she is interested in literature and books, she doesn't get the admiration and recognition as a human being. Being a eunuch, she lives a very unhappy life at

the end of her life while the males are still forming patriarchal assemblages in Bombay. Thus it is clear that gender roles are important in forming assemblages and connections between human beings.

Works Cited

Deleuze, G. and Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen Lane, Viking P, 1977.

Easthope Antony and McGowan Kate. *A Critical and Cultural Reader*. University of Toronto Press, 2004.

Livesey, Graham. "Assemblage." *The Deleuze Dictionary*, edited by Adrian Parr, Edinburgh University Press, 2010.

Lyotard, Jean-Francoise. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester U. P., 1983.

---. *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* Minuit, 1991.

---. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi, Continuum, 2004.

Thayil, Jeet. *Narcopolis*. Penguin Books, 2012.



The 'Asli' and the 'Nakli': Tussle for Authenticity amongst Hijra (Transgender) Spaces in Contemporary India

Leena Sharma* and Dr. Atanu Bhattacharya**

Abstract

The transgender/transsexual community of Hijras in India exhibits an elaborate form of internal social stratification that divides various inhabitants of a Hijra Gharana. The permanent and temporary members (Murats) of the Gharanas often are involved in tussles that turn bloody. The existence of a Hijra Gharana in a social setting distinct from the erstwhile Royal courts after Independence contribute to a dynamics of Space-Symbolization and authenticity of bodies that are part of these Spaces. While Daad Gurus and Gurus present themselves as integral components in and amongst a Gharana, there are often rules and regulations that make temporary members of Gharana, holders of more power as contrasted with the permanent members. This paper (based on primary field-work) documents and examines this dichotomy of identity-politics among the members of Hijra Gharanas often leading to problems in the proper disposal of law and order, thus confusing the local public and administration regarding the true status of a Hijra body. This contradiction, interestingly instilled by the Hijra Gharanas themselves, involves various techniques contributing to the sustenance of Hijras in the society.

Keywords: *Hijra Authenticity, Space Symbolization, Conflict, Gender Violence, and Street Politics.*

* Leena Sharma, Ph.D. Scholar, Centre for Comparative Literature and Translation Studies, Central University of Gujarat, Email: leenasharmacug@gmail.com

** Dr. Atanu Bhattacharya, Professor, Centre for English Studies, Central University of Gujarat, Sector-29, Gandhinagar-382030, Gujarat, India, Email: atanu@cug.ac.in

The range of gender self-perceptions and sexual relationships has long been discussed in religious, philosophical, cultural and academic writings, and are now recognized as important aspects of Indian political-cultural discourse. The knowledge about sexualities that go beyond the binary in such debates, however, is often lacking. This is especially true when it comes to Hijra identities in India. Even if they are difficult to address, sensitive issues including conduct, belonging, and violence are central for persons of the Hijra community in India, who are discriminated against based on physical attributes of their body, often leading to a questioning of their 'authenticity.' Interestingly, these distinctions are mediated and judged by the regulations of Hijra Gharanas leading to further tussles based on the aspects of belongingness and modes of physical attributes of a Hijra body. Local street politics quite regularly becomes the ground for deciding such identities, highlighting them either as true (asli) or false (nakli). "South Asian local politics has a rich repertoire of 'spatially-oriented performances'" (Tilly 151), and one argues that an exploration of such dichotomies within a performance space (that Hijras engage in), can contribute to a better understanding of contemporary processes of 'symbolization of space' (Jaoul).

The question one might begin with is: How do local engagements of the Hijras, including their various physical identities, become a problematic issue based on their affiliation status with a local form of administration (Hijra Gharana)? The answer to this question can often be found in the debate that revolves around the tentative demarcation of 'true' and 'false' identities that are ascribed to the Hijras by the prominent/permanent authorities of the local Hijra Gharanas. These labels though are often indicative of social biases that are practiced in the Hijra Gharanas. In order to bring this debate into focus, an aspect that has

been seldom addressed in research so far, and this article posits that the nature of instituting and mobilization within Hijra Gharanas is central to any such discussion. This mobilization, specifically in terms of Hijras, is entwined with Mughal and colonial influences. This article further explores Hijra Gharan space - and time-dependent perspectives of different sexualities in Hijra Gharanas and attempts to provide an original stand point for research models related to this Indian feature of transgender/transsexual Hijras.

Hijra Gharanas: Then and Now

Hijras (transgender/transsexual community) in India were criminalized under part II of Criminal Tribes Act, 1871, during the colonial era in NWP&O (North Western Province and Oudh), but the same law did not apply to the royal court Hijras called the Khwajasarais. However, as the law was often used in a discriminatory fashion, loosely grouped Hijras who did not have royal affiliation, would escape to regional boundaries where the law would not apply. The Royal Hijras (Khwajasarais), on the other hand, often worked on the model of Guru-Chela parampara, master-novice tradition (Hinchy 1).

Primary research in the Royal and Colonial archives in Bikaner Archives, Udaipur and Jaipur, Rajasthan brought out the fact that the Hijras that were criminalized under CTA Part II would decamp either to the Princely States or to the Union territories (Nagar Nigam Heritage Reports). During the post-Independence period, under the Congress government across such provinces, which over saw the merger of the native states into the Union of India, the Khwajasarais or Nadars of the courts were left in the care of the rulers of the provincial lands as found in the reports from the Royal Palace, Jaipur and Oral Narratives of Old Nadars.

It was largely through the twin processes of the reorganization of the states as well as the re-

constitution of the traditional forms of Hijra existence that the Gharana structure was introduced once the regional States acquired freedom from the British administration. The question of authenticity amongst Hijras too did not arise until post-Independence, when the residence of Hijras shifted from the royal walled cities to newly formed spaces where they accommodated themselves. In some cases, for instance, Paswaan's Haveli in Gogunda, Udaipur and Hijra Haveli in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, the Hijras found their new homes in lands bestowed upon them by the previous rulers. Apart from these, at other places Hijras who were relieved of their court duties were provided with monetary help to acquire new accommodation. Royal Hijras would be the commanding authorities of such enterprises as this social condition was based on a continual existential/behavioural/social aspect of 'discipleship lineages that linked generations of gurus (teachers) and Chelas (disciples)' of the Hijras (Hinchy 1). Loose group Hijras, who were not affiliated with the Gharanas of the Royal Court were kept as chelas (disciples) and lesser members (drum-players, singers and dancers) of the Gharana.

The contemporary Hijra Gharanas that exist today work on a similar hierarchical model that resemble a pyramid like structure, with levels of seniority, as explained below:

Nayak -Guru of all the Gurus in a District, exercising power over various Gharanas that come under that district followed by Paradaad Guru who is Great Grand Master, of either the Nayak or the Guru. Daad Guru (Grand Master: Master of Master) is followed by Guru (Master). Chela (Disciple) and Navasi (Disciple's disciple) are the ends of this pyramid.

A Hijra Gharana is a place where people who identify as the third gender live together in a home without their biological family. Their sus-

tenance is based on begging in the markets and from residents of a village, city, or a neighbourhood (Basti). The people in the Basti are called Jajmaan in Hijra Farsi. Hijras abide by the community's local laws and restrictions that prohibit them from entering other Gharanas' space for soliciting alms. This helps them to maintain clear demarcations among themselves regarding the areas in which they are permitted to earn. However, despite the fact that such regulations bind the Gharanas to prevent disputes inside the community (particularly those involving Hijras), disputes with other Hijras and Bhaand-Behrapiyas sometimes occur.

Contemporary Hijra Gharanas act as the local political bastions, implementing the common rule in adherence to safeguarding and managing local boundaries that the bodies affiliated with these Gharanas have to abide by. This stabilized zone encompassed by the borders of locally hegemonized power of the Gharana caters to hassle free economic sustenance of various Hijra groups.

Hijra Bodies and the Question of Authenticity

There are two types of bodies (Murats) in a Hijra Gharana. Akwa Murat (non-castrated bodies) and Nirvana Murat (castrated bodies), also called as Chhibri Murat in Hijra Farsi. Both the bodies are important to the Gharana and have affiliations to the Gharana, that is, they have either temporary (as in case of Akwa Murats) or permanent (Nirvana Murats) residence in the Gharana. Akwa Murats have no permanent affiliation to any Gharana. They can travel freely and no rules of the Gharana apply to them. Akwa Murats have a greater stake in the Hijra Gharanas than the Nirvana Murats, for they have a body, which is not castrated and is whole. They are summoned for all the auspicious rites in the Gharanas and other Hijra spaces. They are prayed to every morning

along with the Goddess Bahuchara Mata (an important mother goddess for the Hijras), to keep the entire group safe while going out for asking alms. When Hijras set out in the Basti to collect alms the first step on the threshold of a house or a shop is that of an Akwa Murat. The guru and other permanent chelas stay behind this body.

As and when these Akwa Murats stay in the Gharana, they earn and get a second half of the share of what is collected from the Basti. In addition, they are temporary members of a Gharana and are lured by gurus to get castrated in their name for in order to have an increased workforce and a stronger network to collect alms from the area under their jurisdiction.

The fieldwork conducted showed that there are continuous disputes amongst Hijras relating to the permanent Nirvana Murats, who sometimes rebel against the main Gharana by forming a group of their own and earning in the main Gharana's jurisdictional area. Such disputes often lead to violence and are sometimes settled within the strictures of the Gharana itself.

The castrated bodies of the Nirvana Murats have an upper hand in the social space for they are known to the Jajmaan (people of the Basti). Moreover, as they are castrated they keep some non-castrated bodies as workforce under them (and also for the local ritual as mentioned above that Hijras perform). It often so happens that rebel Hijras (Hijras of Kher-Galla, as they are called) get into a tussle with the Hijras of the main Hijra Gharana. During the fieldwork, it was found through police and judicial proceedings of cases that these tussles are quite frequently the result of claiming the actual state of bodies and associated repercussions when such bodies are exposed to the public as either Asli or Nakli. The non-castrated Hijras, when working with the Hijra Gharanas, are protected by the gurus and other permanent chelas, while when these Akwa bod-

ies work with the rebel Hijras, the Gharana members showcase Hijras of this same attribute as not a true (Asli) Hijra.

The major problem in this tussle is that the people of the society who engage with these hijras have a presumption that a Hijra body is deformed since birth and is often seen as a sexual without being aware of the various gradations of the bodies within a Gharana. The social appellation for Hijras is often 'maa pet ke kinnar' (Hijra since birth). Hence, when such a tussle occurs all the castrated bodies lift their skirts up to show that they are the 'true' ones, being castrated, while the non-castrated Hijras though accepted within the Gharana as a whole body, are often seen as the 'false' ones. The society, thus, decides whether a Hijra is 'true' or 'false,' based on the nature of mutilated genitals, which are assumed to have been acquired since birth.

Hence, one may see that the nature of the 'true' or 'false' is often spatially constrained depending on whether the Hijras belong to the Gharana or that of Kher-Galla (the rebels who contest the Gharana). Secondly, the contest is based on whether a body is associated with a Hijra Gharana or not. To evade this Hijras of Kher-Galla often resort to preparing fake visiting cards and maintaining their relationships with the Jajmaan. If time arises, they keep showcasing their genitals in the market spaces to make people aware of their 'true' status. Thirdly, the nature of contestation is also embedded in a struggle for economic space where the nature of 'true' and 'false' plays an important role in determining who gets alms from the Jajmaan.

Area Demarcations in Hijra Gharanas

The aspect of territorial extension to which the Hijras who were not affiliated to the Royal Courts were subject to during the British administration results in ruckus amongst the contemporary Hijra

Gharanas. These bodies emerge as bodies of Kher-Galla (ruckus creators), asking for alms in spaces, which are already some Gharana's property.

Each Hijra Gharana has a marked area, wherein they ask for alms and these areas are decided over in Hijra Sammelans (meetings that are held periodically). It is important to note that Hijras have designated regions where they solicit alms, and these areas are chosen for specific Gharanas. Jurisdiction over lands is distributed based on the personal willingness of a Guru or Nayak of a Gharana. During the fieldwork, Zoya, a Hijra from Mount Abu Gharana claimed,

My guru is the Nayak of Abu Road. She is also the Nayak of Himmat nagar and Modasa in Gujarat. This is so because one can sell some areas to another guru who can make money in a larger region. The Nayak in Gujarat sold these areas, as the land under her jurisdiction was too large for a guru. In some cases, the gurus also position several of their Nirvana Chelas in such areas. (Zoya 118)

Territorial Extension, Identity Politics and Ruckus

It is thus evident that the Asli and Nakli status of a body, which is obviously mediated by being a chela to a guru and not by the castrated condition of a body, is what causes all the commotion. These two claims highlight a divergent trait among Hijras. Castrated and non-castrated bodies mostly cause the conflict between Asli and Nakli Kinnar, as well as whether or not a body is linked with a Gharana. As it involves soliciting alms in areas that are under the purview of a specific Gharana, this issue is undoubtedly one of territory. Asli-Nakli's struggle is to win the society's unwavering backing and support, which

is unaware of their true physical appearances. As a result, it also serves as a contributing cause to the public's confusion over what exactly a 'false' Hijra is.

This public representation of the body can be termed as 'heterotopic' as an "effectively enacted Utopia" (Foucault 3) materializing into the space, where the performance of the body itself is seen as categorized within the binaries of 'true' and 'false.' The resultant tension that arises between the two factions is a struggle for dominance. Various Hijra groups launch violent offensives by punishing the group that seems weak in front of the society, by beating the members of that group and cutting their hair off as a form of punishment.

Hijra groups have long fought over land. It is common law in Hijra Gharanas, to possess a precinct of land that is subject to the authority of a Guru or a Nayak of a certain Gharana. However, the Gurus also reached this position of commanding their Chelas in Royal settings during the British Raj. Even though it is unclear how they obtained this status outside of the Gharanas, it is nevertheless evident from earlier writings and primary records from the palaces that the Hijras had comparable hierarchical systems based on the guru-chela hierarchical pattern, rather than the strongholds that they have today. Recently, these competitions have increased in vigour in terms of power over specific areas, because of economic gains and associated advantages.

Conclusion

The article describes how spaces are claimed based on sheer presence of a group that has translated people's religious beliefs in that community (Hijra) into an economic gain and associated repercussions such as workplace ruckus.

Case studies carried out in these regions of confrontation bring out this aspect of power play amongst various members of Hijra Gharanas. In addition, they also portray how both 'asli' and 'nakli' members are engaged in street dominant politics with local settlement techniques. Even if the true and false bodies exist, it is interesting to note that they exist because of the existence of Gharanas that came into being post-Independence. Bloody feuds and sometimes even murders occur, between members contesting over land and economic sustenance. The members of a Hijra Gharana have all left their homes and the only way to sustain themselves is through earning from the Basti. Hence, rules are made by the local Hijra Panchayats and majority of such tussles are solved at these Panchayats themselves. The entire debate of asli and nakli focusses upon the local subjectivities struggling for symbolic control of spaces. The juncture between territories and subjectivities, addressed by Appadurai and Jaoul, in terms of Dalit studies, brings Hijra local politics in sync with notions of de-territorialization and reterritorialization of spaces, which are already in the strategic control of the state. The struggle for authenticity manifests in terms of the categories of asli and nakli, as these territorialized subjectivities.

Footnotes

¹ Hijras have a set of vocabulary that they use amongst themselves, which they call Hijra Farsi. Some researchers viz. Singh 1982, Hall 1992, Nanda 1990, Awan and Sheeraz 2011, have termed it as a language in itself, but in the course of the fieldwork conducted for this study, it emerged as a supplement for a language and not one in itself.

²Bhaands are local performers. Males dressed as females during religious fairs et cetera and performing staged acts. Fieldwork in Rajasthan

brought out the correlation of Bhaands and Hijras, viz. men travelling on motorbikes in respective Hijra Gharana areas and asking for alms from the Basti, under the pretense of being Hijras themselves. This factor induces an economical setback for the Hijras. Firstly, as the amount that the Hijras demand from the Jajmaan is higher and Bhaands take whatever the people offer. Secondly, as the Jajmaan has already paid the Bhaands, they refuse to offer anything to the actual Hijras, when they turn up. To be on good terms with the people of the Basti, the Hijras have to stay put, without earning from such Jajmaan.

Works Cited

- Appadurai, Arjun. *The Production of Locality. Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. U of Minnesota P, 1996.
- Awan, Muhammad Safeer., and Sheeraz, Muhammad. "Queer but Language: A Sociolinguistic Study of Farsi." *Semantics Scholar*, www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_1_No_10_August_2011/17.pdf. Accessed July 9, 2022.
- Bai, Karishma. "Area Demarcations of Gharanas." *Conversations*. Udaipur, 2019. Hard Drive.
- Foucault, Michael. "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité*, March 1967.
- Hall, Kira. "Hijra/Hijrin: Language and Gender Identity." Berkeley, 1995.
- Hinchy, Jessica. *Governing Gender and Sexuality in Colonial India: The Hijra, c. 1850-1900*. C U P, 2019.
- Jaoul, Nicolas. "The making of a political stronghold: A Dalit neighbourhood's exit from the Hindu Nationalist riot system."

- Research Gate, 2012, 10. 1177/1466138111 432023. Nanda, Serena. *Neither Man Nor Woman: The Hijras of India*. Wadsworth Publishing, 1999.
- Kali Bai vs. Karishma Bai. No. 0209. ACJM Court, Udaipur. 08 August 2018. Document. Singh, Govind. *Hijron ka sansaar*. Anupam Books, 1982.
- Karishma Bai vs. Kali Bai. No. 0234. ACJM, Udaipur. 14 December 2018. Document. Zoya. "Discussion on Bosies in Hijra Gharanas." *Conversations*, Udaipur, 2019.



'Self-Other' Dichotomy in Caste Milieu

Dr. Teddy C. Anthappai*

Abstract

The dichotomy between self and other could be seen in all conceivable spheres of life. Wherever human beings are involved in social interactions, hierarchies of relations are erected and gradually made normative. Ideologies are furtively woven into the fabric of these structures which, in course of time, would appear normal and natural. Various social institutions such as religion and politics reinforce them and they come to remain prescriptive and proscriptive. Subsequently, dominance of the 'self' over the 'other' gets institutionalized in different domains of human life. As self assumes superiority over the other, it leads to the repression of the other, depriving it of even the natural rights people are innately endowed with.

Keywords: *Self, Other, Objectification, and Exclusion.*

* Dr. Teddy C. Anthappai, Assistant Professor of English, St. Berchmans College (Autonomous)
Changanacherry, Kerala, India, Email: tedthomask@gmail.com

Different sections of people in the name of gender, race, caste, and class were relegated to the lower rungs of social hierarchy and pushed to the peripheries of culture and history in various communities. The respective structures are sustained by various discourses that sustain the dominance of the 'self' whose extensions appear as man, master, white, upper caste, rich and colonizer. The 'other' has been portrayed, over the ages, by different names such as woman, slave, black, Dalit, poor and aborigine. The distance between self and other is methodically maintained, in different institutions, with the aid of written and unwritten religious and/or political doctrines and various normative measures.

In patriarchal structures women are marginalized and men affirm their self-assumed superiority by suppressing the 'second Sex' under the pretext of protecting them, pointing their vulnerability, from various possible hazards. In feudal societies, the divide between the rich and the poor is meticulously maintained without leaving any space for the latter to climb up the social ladder. In colonial structure, the natives are sidelined and degraded by the white masters who colonized not only their lands but their minds as well. Even in the post-colonial societies, the new native masters, ubiquitous in African and Latin American countries, suppress their own people leaving the cue that the 'otherisation' can arise not only from external but from internal forces as well. In India, the upper castes occupy the centre of the religious and political spheres where Dalits are deemed the outcaste and outsider.

Dalit as the Other

Self in the Indian social setting invariably implies dominant upper caste male who dominates diverse domains such as politics, economics, arts, the media, and scholarship. In caste ridden soci-

ety, upper caste male is the subject and Dalit – both men and women - is the object or the other. To be the other is to be the non-subject, the non-person and the non-agent. They have been objectified in relation to those with supposed superior powers who occupy the higher echelons of social hierarchy by virtue of their religiously granted right to wield power over those in the lower rungs. The latter are not viewed as autonomous subjects with powers of self-determination and self-governance with the result that the condescending castes look down upon them, as beings bereft of any inherent worth or merit. Caste system has thus spawned a mass of objectified or 'otherised' Dalits who are treated as if they are lesser humans.

The Hindu scriptures put forward an essentialist approach as regards the origin of the four varnas and the avarnas, and they accentuate the notion that the upper castes are essentially superior by virtue of their higher status in caste system and the low castes are essentially inferior on account of their place outside the system. This essentialist approach, legitimized by the scriptures and carried on in various social institutions, is advantageous to the privileged castes and is highly detrimental to the underprivileged outcastes. The ancient Dharma Sastras imposed a series of social, political and economic restrictions on Dalits, curbing their physical mobility and curtailing their material progress. Boundaries are drawn around them which they can only transgress at the risk of banishment and punishment. As a result, they long lived a life full of physical degradation, insults and personal and social humiliation (Ahmad 129). For ages, the Sastras have been peddling a complacent justification of the caste system through the belief in karma and sins of the previous births (Sarangi 199). They have been taught the philosophy of *Gita* to work selflessly - nishkama karma - and

not to make any demand for their hard work (Bhatt 199).

Scriptural authority was invoked to identify and 'otherise' the Dalits as polluted and thereby untouchable on account of the polluting jobs they are asked to perform. There has been an implicit assumption that they are a people without a proper self which is, in fact, mandatory for a life of higher consciousness. Just as the much-celebrated European Enlightenment primarily envisaged the white male in its design, the Upanishadic motif of Brahman-Âtman union, was mainly meant for those born high. The identification of self or âtman with the Brahman, the ideal realization to be achieved by everyone following the Hindu dharma, does not, it seems, apply to Dalits. The upper castes, by the pursuance of their varnasramadharmas, could attain the supreme state while the low caste avarnas were conveniently excluded from the whole project.

The upper castes seem to adopt a double standard with regard to their own identity and that of the Dalits. While they uphold a spiritualistic and idealistic approach in their own life, they endorse a materialistic and mechanistic approach regarding the lives of Dalits. In their scheme, Dalits are considered mere material mass, bereft of any faculties such as mind and/or soul. In other words, there is an implicit assumption that they are a people without a proper self, necessary for higher functions in life. They are regarded as mere objects that people use and reuse in a utilitarian society. Their marginal life, with its defined space and the assigned jobs, are relegated to inferior status and required only for its material utility. They are treated as material mass, bereft of any interior value and condemned to lead a mere bodily life, which human beings share in common with animals. They are assumed as people having just the 'bare life' (zoe) not a higher

form of life (bios), to use the terms borrowed from Aristotle and used by Giorgio Agamben, the Italian political philosopher and theorist in his much-acclaimed work *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1).

Dalits are the 'other' of upper caste Hindus who are positioned as the centre in the caste system. They are supposedly part of Hindu society and yet apart or otherised from it. A clearly ascribed inferiority is inscribed in that apartness. They are included in it and at the same time excluded from it thanks to their low caste birth. Their inclusion is for bearing the brunt of its most abominable evils and their exclusion is from the advantages and rights enjoyed by every other people in the caste system. They are in a state of in-betweenness, neither inside nor outside. They inhabit a space of indistinction that gives them an ambivalent existence. They are a modern instance of homo sacer, a figure in the ancient Roman law who is banished from society and suffers an inclusive exclusion, as they are condemned by the religious law that has spawned their discrimination in different socio-political institutions.

All those born into Dalit castes have to undergo a process of otherisation effected by several caste taboos and injunctions which are to be scrupulously observed by Dalits that would eventually construct and pronounce them as untouchables. Each one born Dalit has to pass through this humiliating and dehumanizing process whereby Dalits are destined to remain in their wretched state for ever without any notable change happening in their outcaste lot. Their otherisation begins from their very birth, grows in the caste-ridden society and lasts up to their death. They are, as they live out their peripheral existence, constructed as the binary opposite of the privileged upper castes. They are constructed at the social and individual levels as the other which

has its ramifications in terms of the stigma stuck on them and the shame borne by them.

There is, imposed on Dalits, a negative 'other-identity' which has a bearing throughout their marginal existence, wherever they go and whatever they do. The sacred religious texts, customs, practices and punishments confirm the continuance of such a negative other-identity. This other-identity gets crystallized and it is like a label stuck deep on them. There cannot be any effacement of this stigma however hard they strive to erase it. They cannot extricate themselves from the dilemmatic existence as they are caught in its labyrinth. To keep them always in their otherised position, all possibilities of improvement and advancement are denied to them. Every door to progress and development is shut before them. Moreover, their unique experiences get trivialized and their distinct expressions are put to naught. All these have resulted in an epistemic violence meted out to their native systems that are tagged insignificant and irrelevant by those who are the so-called custodians of knowledge and wielders of authority.

The varied socio-cultural structures, constructed by the upper castes, have made it almost impossible for Dalits to come up from their lowly position and make it to the top rung of the hierarchy. They are invariably pinned down to their native villages where they toil and moil, and are forced to do all tedious and so-called menial jobs to earn the bare necessities of life. In the process, they do not have time or resources at their disposal for any noble endeavours. They are assigned first polluting jobs that define them as unclean, and then they are called untouchables. In spite of all these degrading and humiliating circumstances, even if some among them strive to make a change in their abject state of affairs every now, and then their other-identity is evoked as they are ad-

dressed by their caste name which carries shame and humiliation. Their caste follows them everywhere reminding others of their negative identity. Luxman Mane recalls how his stay in the US on a Ford Fellowship turned out to be a distressing experience on account of the high caste airs of some who put to naught his hard-won honour. A Brahmin there, when he came to know of Mane's caste, treated him very badly. Mane says, "He invited me for a lunch but when he learned of the nature of my book and consequently my caste, he refused to entertain me. Even away from India my caste pursued me" (9).

Self-Other Dialogic Relation

As we have seen, in the casteist society, the upper caste evidently occupies the site of the self and the Dalit has to fill in the void set aside for the other. The former assumes the position of the subject and the latter has to take the stance of the object. But, in fact, for the upkeep of the caste system Dalits are indispensable and without them it cannot be properly functional. Devoid of their presence to do all menial jobs which are considered polluting to the upper castes, the whole societal system would be in jeopardy. Without them, the system would lose all its so-called sanctity, and purity and the ensuing apparent order and balance. The upper castes are able to devote themselves for the 'higher functions' and 'superior ends' of life because the Dalits take care of all filthy jobs which, unfairly, cast them into untouchability.

Dalits are neither people to be used as objects nor endured as fellow beings but are vital part of the society. According to Friedman, to have true and authentic existence, people, irrespective of caste and creed, have to encounter others and build meaningful relations with them without any objectification of each other (62). Following the argument, the upper castes, if they alienate and *oth-*

erwise Dalits, tend to lose their authentic existence and essential humanity. According to Martin Buber, the philosophical anthropologist, such a life is not full or complete but divided within and riddled with an inner contradiction. When Dalits are viewed as objects, authentic existence of upper castes is in question, and it turns out to be a life sacrificed for convenience or institutions but not one lived authentically and meaningfully. In fact, it is the presence and acceptance of Dalits that provides wholeness to the upper casteself.

When Dalits are exploited and marginalized, the oppressor gets some momentary benefit but never rises beyond the temporariness of his being. His schemes of exploitation will eventually end in futility and degrade his person. It is not, in fact, the Dalit who is degraded but the upper caste who will never reach the realization of his real self but instead he will be living out a false self. To be true to one's real self, one cannot ignore others for they are essential to complement and complete his being. So, the ultimate sufferer or the loser is the one who neglects or degrades the other.

It is only in responsive relations that one can have any real gain. As Dalits silently and passively accept all objectification as they are helpless and powerless, there is no reciprocation in the act which merely passes partial and one-sided. Dalits perform their menial duties not with their whole being but reluctantly as it is not freely chosen but forced upon them. Friedman says, "In order to act with the whole being one must suspend all partial actions" (59). Upper caste must get out of caste boundaries, meet Dalits and enter into a meaningful dialogic relation with them. Only in an atmosphere of freedom and mutuality, upper caste-Dalit alliance would take place and anything that lacks them is just pretentious and artificial. It would only be born out of a realization

that Dalits are not a group to be stigmatized and oppressed but taken as part of self, not the other. All are essentially needed to have a fuller and wholesome self. To conclude, upper castes are to be complemented and completed by the Dalits and vice versa.

Conclusion

Dalit selfhood and identity have thus been systematically subordinated, diminished, belittled or outright denied. Dalits have realized that a radical reconstruction of Dalit identity is the need of the hour which would impact their social and political life. Dalit identity would signify a negation and affirmation at the same time: negation of an ascriptive identity and affirmation of a positive identity. Conventional low caste identity was constructed and represented scripturally from an essential upper caste/savarna point of view. The new Dalit identity is neither a mere caste consciousness nor a divisive ideology. It signifies a transformation from being outcaste to non-caste and from being object to subject.

Dalit identity emerged out of an awareness that they are not a mere appendage of the upper castes but different and distinct from them. When the realization dawned, they began to oppose the various negative images of self, ascribed onto them by caste Hindus. It has marked a definite move from non-existence to existence, from invisibility to visibility and from immobility to mobility. It also indicates the formation of a distinct and unique Dalit identity and portends the advent of a Dalit Renaissance that would end the practice of many social evils, hitherto fastidiously followed, against the Dalit populace.

Works Cited

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford UP, 1988.

Ahmad, Imtiaz and Shashi Bhushan Upadhyay, editors. *Dalit Assertion in Society, Literature and History*. Orient Black Swan, 2010.

Bhatt, Vandana. "Dalit Literature in India." *Writing as Resistance: Literature of Emancipation*, Ed. Jaydeep Sarangi. GNOSIS, 2011, pp. 117-139.

Friedman, Maurice S. Martin Buber. *The Life of Dia*

logue. The University of Chicago, 1955. April 15, 2012, <dreamgate.com/pomo/lucid_lee.htm>.

Mane, Laxman. *Upara: An Outsider*. Translated by A. K. Kamat, Sahitya Akademi, 1997.

Sarangi, Jaydeep. *Writing as Resistance: Literature of Emancipation*. GNOSIS, 2011.



Translating Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan*: Epic Theatre and the Socio-cultural Semiotics of Translation

Dr. Anjana Sankar S.*

Abstract

This paper attempts to analyze the difficulties encountered while attempting to translate Brecht's play *The Good Woman of Setzuan* from English to Malayalam. The translation was attempted from an English Translation of the original German play which in itself could be problematic, unlike translating from the original German text. The whole experience was like being twice moved from reality, to borrow Plato's famous allegation against poetry. This study is the outcome of a brief talk delivered to Mahatma Gandhi University Malayalam postgraduate students who have this translation as a prescribed text in their Translation paper.

Keywords: *Alienation, Epic Theatre, Aristotelian Theatre, Catharsis Setzuan, and Ostranenie Alienation Effect.*

* Dr. Anjana Sankar S., Associate Professor, Sree Sankara College, Sankar Nagar, Mattoor, Kalady P.O., Ernakulam-683574, Kerala, India, Email: anjana.rajiv@gmail.com

Brecht wrote the play *The Good Woman of Setzuan* between 1938 and 1943 when he was in exile. It was a period of wandering, when he spent time in Scandinavia between the years 1933 to 1941 and then in Denmark. Later he shifted to the United States in 1941 and stayed there until 1947, where he started working in some movies, and all these brought him into direct contact with the greedy capitalist system. At the same time, his books were burnt and citizenship withdrawn in Germany and the net result was that he was totally cut off from German theatre and social life. Yet ironically enough some of his best plays were written during this period. Many of his theoretical essays and dialogues, as well as several of his poems were collected and published as *Svendborger Gedichte* in 1939. An incomplete novel centering around a scholar researching a biography of Caesar, several years after his assassination, saw the light of the day during this period. Most famous among his plays were written during this period of exile including *Mutter Courage and Ihre Kinder* published in 1941 and later translated as *Mother Courage and her Children*, is a chronicle play set against the Thirty Years War. *Leben des Galilei* was published in 1943 and translated as *The Life of Galileo* and *Der gute Mensch von Setzuan* in 1943 was translated as *The Good Woman of Setzuan* which is a parable play set in China.

Critics have drawn attention to the fact that it is a parable of a young woman who is torn apart by several considerations that include goodness, money, greed and power. The trial of choosing between obligation and reality, love, and practicality, and finally between her own needs and those of her friends and neighbours, tears her apart. Three Gods descend on the earth from the heavens to prove that there are still good people on earth. They visit Setzuan where Wong, the water seller, awaits them though it is not known

how he comes to know of their arrival. Since the Gods are planning to stay overnight, Wong goes about asking everyone in the city to put them up at night, but no one is willing except Shen Te who is a young prostitute in the town. Though she is awaiting a gentleman - client on that night, she gives up her chance to earn some money, and invites the Gods to her home. The Gods appreciate her goodness of mind, and in return, they give her a thousand silver dollars as a gift in the morning, and leave the town, feeling joyful that they could find a good person in the world.

Shen Te buys a tobacco shop with this money, but she never has a moment's peace of mind as she is surrounded by friends and relatives, asking her for a loan of her money. These people include those who have never even bothered to talk to her before, but she finds it difficult to say no to them. She is finally forced to devise a plan to protect herself, whereby she dons the garb of a cruel male cousin, Shui Ta. Despite being the same person, Shen Te in Shui Ta's disguise, is totally unlike her original self and never allows anyone to fool 'him.' Shen Te falls in love with Yang Sun, an unemployed pilot, but he is just after her money, like the other characters in the play such as the family of eight, Mrs. Mi Tzu, the Carpenter and Mrs. Shin. Although Shen Te knows that he does not love her, she decides to marry him. However, Yang Sun decides not to marry her because she does not give him the money he wants. After this event, she learns that she is pregnant, and still she pretends to be Shui Ta for a long time. She buys a tobacco factory and becomes the king of tobacco to provide a good future to her baby. On the other hand, her long absence creates a suspicion among the people who are fed up with the cruel male cousin. They go to court to learn what has happened to good Shen Te, and the three Gods appear as judges. Shui Ta confesses that he is actually Shen Te and everyone leaves. The three Gods are relieved to learn that

the good person is still alive, but there is something wrong because as Shen Te, she commits some crimes such as causing the old couple to lose their shop.

Shen Te: I'm telling you I'm the bad man who committed all those crimes!

First God: (using – or failing to use – his ear trumpet) The good woman who did all those good deeds?

Shen Te: Yes, but the bad man too!

First God: (as if something had dawned) Unfortunate coincidences! Heartless neighbours!

Third God: (shouting in his ear) But how is she to continue?

First God: Continue? Well, she's a strong, healthy girl...

Second God: You didn't hear what she said!

First God: I heard every word! She is confused, that's all! (138)

Then the gods leave her with the advice not to disguise so often and suggest keeping on being good, without offering any specific suggestions or advice regarding how to continue her life. It is as though the Gods themselves are at a loss in such a society. It adds to an unconventional ending where nothing is actually resolved. The general impression one gains after reading the play is that, the severe constraints placed by the contemporary society on an individual is such that, it is impossible for an individual to be entirely good. Brecht's suggestion seems to be that in a world where absolute, unalloyed goodness seems impossible, the sheer pursuit of goodness in itself is much more significant than actually achieving goodness.

Translating such a work that negated all absolutes, that was originally written in German, based on its English translation, posed many challenges in itself. Another difficulty encountered was the multiplicity of translated texts available whose title varied from *The Good Person of Szechwan* and *The Good Soul of Szechuan* and *The Good Woman of Setzuan*. Eric Bentley, the famous theatre critic, playwright, editor and translator, has pointed out in his introduction to his translation of the play, how Brecht was 'forever changing what he wrote. This fact explains one or two things that might otherwise appear anomalous. For example, 'Sezuan' was a city in the manuscript, though late it would be identified as 'Szechwan,' which is a province (12-13).

It was finally decided to follow the title woman in order to help in comprehending the play better especially since the Chinese setting and names, a deliberate ploy adopted to attain Alienation effect, would otherwise add to the confusion. Brecht felt that the best way to show his reaction against the system and to provoke the audience into taking action against it is by following the conventions of the epic theatre. The term epic theatre, first used by Erwin Piscator during the 1920s and 30s to introduce a new theatre form, was borrowed by Brecht and adapted to suit his purpose of consciousness rising in the society. Piscator has defined epic theatre as "drama containing episodic scenes fashioned after Shakespeare, with each scene, a kind of mini-play of its own" (170).

Unlike the single perspective found in Aristotelian theatre, the epic theatre views the same incident from multiple perspectives, with each episode having no direct connection with the earlier episodes. Since each episode has an individual existence of its own, unconnected with the other ones, the audience is called upon to exercise their reason and not feelings. Thus, the au-

audience attains a critical insight in the epic theatre as a result of the distancing between the play and the audience. Brecht suggests the use of interruptions to accomplish this effect throughout the play. Some stage prompts such as songs, lighting, costumes or mask are used to achieve this effect. To exemplify, the play can suddenly be interrupted by a song, or the setting of twentieth century can be played by eighteenth century's customs. There can be posters or tables which give information about the plot of the play. Thanks to this, the audience can stop identifying himself with the character and think about the course of the play (Willet 159).

Walter Benjamin has pointed out that the audience use their reasoning faculty and not feelings in epic theatre, which induces in them, the feeling of revolt against the system including politics, economy, urging them to arrive at their own decision, after witnessing the enacting of the play. Brecht negates Aristotle who believes in the effect of catharsis and reiterates that the audience after watching the events unfolding on the stage identify themselves with the actors. Possessed by the illusion of reality, they are carried away and end up mistaking the make-believe world for the real one and that they are the actors or characters on the stage, thus killing the urge for action and the will to protest against the injustice prevailing in the greedy, corrupt and avaricious capitalist society.

Brecht firmly believed that drama should awaken the audience and urge them into action. This helps the audience question the system and gives the strength to change it. In order to activate the audience, he uses certain techniques of alienation based on distance between the audience and the play in epic theatre (Akçeşme 95). *The Good Woman of Setzuan* by Brecht employs such techniques in order to highlight the injustice against the lower class and also to emphasise class dis-

tinction in the play. The entire play is a critique of the capitalist society and the spectator is made to realize how money, capitalism and corruption go hand in hand in a society where immorality is accepted. Brecht employs techniques such as giving a distant setting, the communication between the actor and the audience and the use of songs and verses in order to break the illusion. Thus, the techniques of epic theatre in the play *The Good Woman of Setzuan* employed by Brecht in order to break the automatized perceptions of the audience and show them a different world, thus inducing them to revolt against the capitalist system, make the job of the translator all the more challenging.

Negating Aristotle's dictum of causality in theatre, Brecht instead highlights the isolation of specific moments that are of special significance and can be analysed on stage. Brecht strongly opposed the theory that theatre should elicit empathy or 'feeling into' (denoted by the German term *Einführung*), believing it to be outdated, countering it with the concept of *Ostranenie*, a term borrowed from Victor Shklovsky, which aims at an estrangement, a defamiliarization of the object of art. However, when *Ostranenie* is meant to "distend and distort the relationship between the signifier and the signified" (170), which Brecht finds unacceptable, he created his own version of this technique called 'Verfremdungseffekt' – the alienation effect- that upholds an undistorted, realistic image. This enables the audience to face the unknown as lucid observers with a historical and ideological awareness.

The essence of Brecht's theory of drama is found in his most important theoretical work on theatre, *A Little Organum for the Theatre*. Published in 1949, this work discusses his major theories, and reiterates that the Aristotelian premise regarding drama, that the audience should be made

to believe that what they are witnessing is happening here and now, should be negated. Instead, the theatre should follow the epic poet's art whereby the audience is made aware that what he watches on the stage is just an account of past events and that it should be watched with critical detachment. Brecht could foresee that if the audience really felt the emotions of the ancient heroes like Oedipus or Lear, and identified with their reactions, then the Marxist idea that human nature is not constant but the result of changing historical conditions, would automatically be invalidated.

Brecht emphasizes that "if empathy makes something ordinary of a special event, alienation [estrangement] makes something special of an ordinary one" (Krasner 170). This is true of Shen Tee specially, as her occupation alienates her from the rest of the characters, trying to do well. Her intention to stay true to the morals she believes in, does not shift during the course of the play; however, a transformation occurs when she adopts the persona of Shui Tai. Throughout the course of the play, Shen Teh and her cousin Shui Tai are seen as distinct characters. Shen Teh is compassionate and even vulnerable as she lets people take advantage of her. Shui Tai on the other hand comes across as rather unemotional and not easily swayed by the troubles of others.

Apart from singular characters, the alienation effect is closely linked with the narrative structure of the play. The elements of poetry and song intertwined in the narrative add a degree of complexity and non-linearity to the play which often pose challenges to the translator. Krasner has observed that Brecht's work is "by design junctive, deliberately lurching from one scene to another. It is meant to replicate the circus" (171). In between every scene or two, Brecht writes an interlude. These interludes are either solely focused on Shen Teh, or on a conversation between Wang and the Gods. The interludes serve as a needed

break to re-contextualize the story from the eyes of Shen Teh or the opening character, Wang.

All acts of translation are seen as an attempt to mediate between cultures, texts and nationalities. With a very limited knowledge of the language, culture and ethos of the social milieu depicted in the source text, any attempt to recapture it in translation in the target language could become very challenging. The use of climatic conditions peculiar to the colder snowy regions, denoted in verses like "see the smoke float / into the ever colder coldness" (87) is one such instance. The experience of 'ever colder coldness' is totally alien to the larger majority of Indians who live in the sweltering heat and humidity of the tropical region. Again, the accusation levelled by the husband that the brother's wife is 'frigid,' poses similar problem for it denotes the extreme frozen condition in the west for which an equivalent Malayalam word cannot be traced, the most potent ones being the vernacular equivalents of 'numb' (maravicha) or 'frozen' (tanuthuranja) both of which are inadequate as substitutes for 'frigid' which denotes the sexual frigidity of the wife under discussion.

Another difficulty encountered was in connection with the words denoting kinship. Though it remains a fact that Indian languages have more words denoting blood relatives, the word 'cousin' occurring in the English translation of Brecht's play, is an English word that has no satisfactory equivalent in Malayalam. Hence it had to be substituted with *bandhu*, the Malayalam equivalent of 'relative.' A very distant relation to the original 'cousin.' Yet the general feeling was that it would serve the purpose far better than retaining the English word 'cousin' in transliteration in Malayalam.

A similar occasion that demanded the translator's discretion was the use of 'Mr.' attached with the

names of certain characters while addressing them, where the original 'Mr' found in the English version is retained as such without substituting it with the Malayalam equivalent 'Sri' for it was felt that the original Mr. would go better with the following Chinese name and add to the flow of the dialogue. Moreover, the alienation effect could be heightened through the alien form of 'Mr' than the native 'Sri.' The greatest challenge faced by the translator while translating a play is with regard to the manner of retaining the flow of conversation in a natural manner without losing the purpose and vision of the playwright. At the beginning of the play, there is a reference to "the little lifeboat" that "is swiftly sent down" to which "too many men too greedily / hold on to it as they drown"(89). The English word lifeboat is translated as 'jeevithanauka' which has a metaphoric meaning as well in the target language. The translation assumes unexplored philosophical levels of meaning.

Translating proverbs from the source language to the target language often poses challenges. "It's not for a handful of rice, but for love"(90) is translated in the sense 'it's not a full stomach that matters but love' (niravayarallakaryam, snehamaanu). To retain the racy, conversational style of the language in the translated version of the proverb is often tests the ingenuity of the translator. In this instance Girish Karnad, who wrote his plays in his mother tongue Kannada and later translated them into English, calls it the language of his adulthood, in which he trained himself to write. He answers a question regarding what he kept in mind while translating drama, form, language and emotion thus; "besides the theme and form, one must also convey the dramatic effect by controlling the way language is used. The play must be performable. The translation must possess the qualities innate to

performance" (Karnad 219) and in the same interview he emphasises that, the one area he found problematic in translation is rhetoric.

The observations made by Taqi Ali Mirza in a Translation Workshop organized by the Sahitya Akademi in March and April 1993 is very relevant in the personal experience of translating Brecht;

...while the translation of poetry allows the translator certain freedom, and the manipulation of the linguistic resources of the target language, such freedom is not available to the translator of drama or fiction, where greater loyalty to the SL language is essential. The difficulty is more pronounced in the translation of dialogue, whether in drama or fiction. Since drama is all dialogue, its translation poses myriad problems. (Mirza 161)

Works Cited

- Akçeşme, B. "Epic theater as a means of feminist theatre in Caryl Churchill's mad forest." *Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 2019, pp.93-106. dergipark.gov.tr/download/article-file/219484
- Benjamin, W. *What is Epic Theatre?* Illuminations, Schocken New York, 1969.
- Brecht, Bertolt. "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre." *Theater in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology*, edited by David Krasner, Blackwell Publishing, 2008, pp.171-73.
- . "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction." *Theater in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology*, edited by David Krasner, Blackwell Publishing, 2008, pp.173-178.
- Brecht, Bertolt and Eric Bentley. *The Good Woman of Setzuan*. Grove Press, 1966.

Karnad, Girish. "The Gesture of Language; Girish Karnad in Conversation with Tutun Mukherjee." *Translation: From Periphery to Centre stage*, edited by Tutun Mukherjee, Prestige Books, 1998, pp. 218- 20.

Mirza, Taqi Ali. "Translating Dialogue: Some Sug

gestions." *Translation: From Periphery to Centre Stage*, edited by Tutun Mukherjee, Prestige Books, 1998, pp. 161-63.

Willet, John. *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht: A Study from Eight Aspects*. Methuen, 1959.



Aims and Scope

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam publishes *Teresian Journal of English Studies (TJES)*. It is a double-blind peer reviewed international journal. It is published as a quarterly. It is designed for the academic and research community all over the world interested in English Language, Literature, and Cultural Studies. The journal expects cooperation from academicians and researchers in the subject areas. The journal looks for papers conceptually sound at once methodologically rigorous. The journal format is reader friendly. The academia and the researchers will have an easy access to the website of the journal.

The Research Paper (Article) should accompany the following separately:

- ◆ An abstract (about 100 words), a brief biographical sketch of above 100 words for authors describing designation, affiliation, specialization, number of books and articles published in the referee journals, membership on editorial boards and companies etc.
- ◆ The declaration to the effect that the work is original and it has not been published earlier shall be sent.
- ◆ Tables, charts and graphs should be typed in separate sheets. They should be numbered as Table 1, Graph 1 etc.
- ◆ References / Work Cited used should be listed at the end of the text.
- ◆ Editors reserve the right to modify and improve the manuscripts to meet the Journal's standards of presentation and style.
- ◆ Editors have full right to accept or reject an article for publication. Editorial decisions will be communicated with in a period of four weeks of the receipt of the manuscripts.
- ◆ All footnotes will be appended at the end of the article as a separate page. The typo script should use smaller size fonts.
- ◆ An Author/Co-author shall submit only one article at a time for consideration of publication in the Journal. The author/co-author can send another article only on hearing from the editor whether it is accepted / rejected.
- ◆ The author getting one article published in the Journal has to wait for a year to get another published.

The submission of Research Paper (Article) must be in the form of an attachment with a covering letter to be sent as e-mail.

**The Journal abides by the
The Best Practices Guidelines of the
COPE (COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS)
for Authors, Peer Reviewers, and Editors.**

Ethical Guidelines for Authors

The Author shall present an accurate and complete account of the research performed. The corresponding author must have obtained the approval of all other authors for each submission. The material in the submission shall be original. The material based on prior work, including that of the same author/s shall be properly subjected to proper citation.

Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers

The Peer reviewer shall review manuscripts for which they have the subject expertise required to carry out a proper assessment. Peer reviewers shall respect the confidentiality of peer review and shall not reveal any details of the manuscript under review and of its review. Peer reviewers shall be objective and constructive in their reviews.

Ethical Guidelines for the Editor

The Editor shall actively seek the views of authors, readers, reviewers, and editorial advisory board members about ways of improving the journal's success. The Editor shall support initiatives to educate researchers about publication ethics. The Editor shall provide clear advice to reviewers. The Editor shall require reviewers to disclose any potential competing interests, if any, before agreeing to review a submission.

© *Teresian Journal of English Studies*, Department of English and Centre for Research,
St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam, Park Avenue Road, Cochin-682011, Kerala, India.

Ph: 91-484-2351870, Fax: 91-484-2381312, Website: <www.teresas.ac.in>

Email: editor.tjes@teresas.ac.in / teresianjournals@gmail.com

Journal Website: www.tjes.teresas.ac.in

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without the written consent of the publisher. St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam and *Teresian Journal of English Studies* assume no responsibility for the view expressed or information furnished by the authors. Edited and published by the Editor for and on behalf of St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam, Cochin-682011, Kerala, India and printed at Green Offset Printing Press, 43/609B, Maria Tower, Powathil Road, Ayyappankavu, Cochin-682018, Ernakulam, Kerala, India.

Submit your article to: editor.tjes@teresas.ac.in / teresianjournals@gmail.com

FORM IV

Statement about ownership and other particulars about newspaper (*Teresian Journal of English Studies*) to be published in the month of February.

Place of publication : St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam
Park Avenue Road, Cochin-682011

Periodicity of its publication : Quarterly

Printer's Name : Dr. Lizzy Mathew

Nationality : Indian

Address : St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam
Park Avenue Road, Cochin-682011

Publisher's Name : Dr. Lizzy Mathew

Nationality : Indian

Address : St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam
Park Avenue Road, Cochin-682011

Editor's Name : Dr. Preeti Kumar

Nationality : Indian

Address : St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam
Park Avenue Road, Cochin-682011

Owner's Name : St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam
Park Avenue Road, Cochin-682011

I, Principal, St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Thursday, June 30, 2022.

Principal
St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam
Printer and Publisher

Subscription Procedure:

Subscription can be done by visiting www.tjes.teresas.ac.in choosing a suitable plan and paying online.

Subscription Rates:

1 Year	Rs. 3000/-	(\$ 150)
2 Years	Rs. 5400/-	(\$ 270)
Per Issue	Rs. 750/-	(\$ 40)

Reg. No. KERENG/2009/37091

Printed and Published by Dr. Lizzy Mathew, Principal on behalf of St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam and printed at Green Offset Printing Press, 43/609B, Maria Tower, Powathil Road, Ayyappankavu, Cochin-682018, Kerala and published at St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam, Park Avenue Road, Cochin-11, Kerala. Editor - Dr. Preeti Kumar.



St. Teresa's College established in 1925, affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University, now St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) since 2014, has been evaluated and accredited at A++ by NAAC in the fourth cycle in September 2019 and, is one of the best among colleges in India. Turning women into individuals in their own right, individuals who by actualizing their potential, command and earn respect, is the noble task the institution embraces. This vision is an embodiment of the ideals of the Foundress of the college, Mother Teresa of St. Rose of Lima, a far-sighted educationalist who understood the need for educating women. Led by the Congregation of the Carmelite Sisters of St. Teresa (CSST), the College has undertaken this mission with zeal.

Submit your article to:
editor.tjes@teresas.ac.in,
teresianjournals@gmail.com

Journal website:
www.tjes.teresas.ac.in



St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam
Park Avenue Road, Cochin-682011, Kerala, India.

Tel: 0484-2351870, Fax: 0484-2381312

Email: principal@teresas.ac.in

Website: www.teresas.ac.in



ISSN 0975-6302