



ISSN 0975 - 6302

TERESIAN JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

April-June

2023

Volume XV

Issue II

Double-blind
Peer Reviewed
International
Quarterly

Listed in:

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

ST. TERESA'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), INDIA

Contents

06-15	Shikari and His Passion to Kill: Tiger Hunting in the Narratives of Colonial Masters	Chitralkha Biswas
16-25	Imperial Pretensions and the Myth of Englishness in Kazuo Ishiguro's <i>The Remains of the Day</i>	Gurudev Meher
26-43	Sainthood, Folklore, and African Slaves: Kappiri Cult in Kerala, India	P. K. Sreekumar and Anjana Menon
44-50	Racial Residues in Children's Literature: A Postcolonial Reading of <i>The Jungle Book</i>	Sony Augustine
51-55	Politicized Gender Position in <i>The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story</i>	Archana S. K.
56-63	A Reading of Zofia Kossak's <i>Blessed are the Meek: Understanding Ethical Choices and Sustainable Peace</i>	Teresa J. Heloise and Pius T. K.
64-71	The Presentation of Female Sexuality in Vikas Sharma's <i>Love's Not Time's Fool</i>	Kavita Arya
72-76	Re-defining Femininity: A Study of the Mini Screen Femininity	Rafseena M.
77-86	Building Individuality in the Afghan Public Space: A Study of Atia Abawi's <i>The Secret Sky</i>	Maya Venugopal

Chief Patrons

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

Dr. Alphonsa Vijaya Joseph
Principal
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. 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
Phone: 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
Phone: 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@jadavpuruniversity.in

Dr. Gayatri Thanu Pillai
Postdoctoral Fellow
National University of Singapore
21 Lower Kent Ridge Road
Singapore-119077
Phone: +65 9002 4462
Email: ellgtp@nus.edu.sg

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
Phone: 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
Phone: 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
Phone: 9495738712
Email: rajeshletters1@gmail.com

Dr. Rimika Singhvi
Associate Professor and Head
Department of English
The IIS University
Jaipur, Rajasthan, India
Phone: 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

Editorial



Our age has come to be an era marked by sectarian violence and societal shifts. Simultaneously, globalization has profoundly influenced cultural dynamics, leading to hybrid and fractured identities and transnational cultural flow. At this time, understanding and analysing culture, global and local, has become an immediate imperative. To navigate the intricacies of rapidly changing and radicalised world, cultural studies plays a vital role in fostering inclusivity and promoting societal progress. Through ethnographic studies, qualitative analysis, and cross cultural comparisons, researchers can shed light on the rich tapestry of traditions, customs, beliefs, and practices that define different societies and ages to challenge stereotypes and prejudices. Our contributors have examined the complexities of cultural representations in media, literature, and popular culture, also examining power dynamics within societies. The study of cultural phenomena such as gender, race, class, and sexuality; the negotiations of identity within fluid contexts of globalization and the straitjacket of identity politics; and the impact of technology and digital media all have direct relevance to the world today. As we continue to navigate the complexities of the twenty first century, our work continues to be increasingly relevant.

Dr. Preeti Kumar

Editorial Assistant:	Editorial Committee:	Editorial Committee:
Mr. Johnson E.V.	Dr. Niveda Sebastian	Ms. Lissy Jose
	Dr. C.S. Biju	Ms. Tessa Fani Jose
	Dr. Vincent B. Netto	Ms. Lakshmipriya P. Santhosh
Associate Editors:	Dr. Maria Theresa Chakunny	Ms. Elizabeth Maria
Dr. Tania Mary Vivera	Dr. Jisha John	Ms. Aleena Mariam Jacob
Dr. Jeena Ann Joseph	Ms. Athira Babu	Ms. Harsha Prince

Shikari and His Passion to Kill: Tiger Hunting in the Narratives of Colonial Masters

Chitralkha Biswas*

Abstract

Shikar or hunting narrative has fascinated the human psyche with its sense of uncanny, mystery, and queerness for decades. The exotic narratives of the jungle and stories of man-eating predators have helped to germinate in the minds of the readers not only a sense of wonder, but also portrayed the real picture of the killing of 'big cats,' mainly tigers of considerable numbers by British hunters. Colonial masters have often indulged in narrating animal tales and used their personal experiences of hunting as tools to locate power mechanisms in the empire. The complicated relationship between the hunter and the hunted is interesting as well as dangerous to the extreme. The white men settled in the colony and took control of its wilderness. Readers for generations have been fascinated by the killing and bloodshed carried out by the colonial masters and British officials like Jim Corbett, Kenneth Anderson, F. W. Champion, Henry Shakespear, George B. Schaller, J. E. Carrington-Turner, R. G. Burton, A. A. Dunbar-Brander, Charles Edward Mackintosh Russell, G. P. Sanderson, Fitz William Thomas Pollok, and others. The predator-prey equation has long been lost and the new 'gaming' has made fruitful existence problematic for both humans and tigers alike in the jungle. This paper attempts to bring out in detail the white hunter's personal experiences in the wild jungles of India and endeavours to portray them as ruthless murderers. The text also discusses the human passion towards bloodshed and also brings into the limelight the 'virgin' killing instinct of a hunter.

Keywords: *Shikar, Hunting, Man-Eater, Imperialism, and Conservation.*

*Chitralkha Biswas, PhD Research Scholar, Department of English, Jadavpur University
Kolkata-700032, West Bengal, India, Email: monolekhas@gmail.com

"When a man wants to murder a tiger, he calls it sport; when a tiger wants to murder him, he calls it ferocity."

— George Bernard Shaw

[*Man and Superman* (1902)]

The paper unleashes the vast wilderness of the colonial country and intends to tell a fascinating tale about the 'gentleman' of the Indian jungle, the tiger. The narratives of the jungle have captivated the reader's consciousness with their awe, thrill, cruelty, and they have also incorporated autobiographical tales of hunting expeditions. The genre of *shikar* writing has seldom failed to astonish and amaze the author, listener, reader, and hunter with the diversity of its natural surroundings. The coming up of the nineteenth century, economic growth, and modernization of travel facilities, opened up to the western world the colonial treasures of mother nature for extensive exploitation. The expansion of the British Empire, the establishment of the Railway system, *jhum* cultivation of tribes, the cleaning of pastures for agrarian necessity, the growth of population and World War I, all culminated in the destruction of peace and tranquility of the woodlands by exposing it to the outsiders. The dangerous and unbelievably extravagant hunting expeditions initiated by white sahibs of the Raj, and powerful men of the time took the life of numerous wild animals for enjoyment. Thus, making their count less every year, they fall on the verge of extinction. Several British writers who were themselves hunters in the beginning and later turned to conservation, indulged in discussing the futility of such mass killing and noted their experiences of jungle life in their hunting narratives.

The serenity of the Sundarbans, the largest green mass of Bengal not only fascinates humans with the abundance of its natural beauty but also

thrills the observer with its mangrove forests populated with ferocious Bengal tigers. The area is a refuge not only for wild beasts but home to thousands of poor, deprived people who belong to the lowest economic groups and live life as poachers, fishermen, prawn seed collectors, honey collectors, and wood gatherers. Annu Jala in her book *Forest of Tigers* (2010) portray the real-life struggles of the socially, politically, and economically dominated, exploited inhabitants of this area who suffer daily to keep their body and soul together (31-33). The locals endanger their lives knowing well that they may fall prey to a man-eater in the jungles as both men and women have to be dependent on it for their survival. In order to protect themselves from the predators like crocodiles and tigers, they seek protection and blessing from the forest goddess Bonbibi (Jalais 7). She and her brother Shah Jangali are believed to be the followers and messengers of Allah, send from Mecca to the land of *athherobhatirdesh*, a land of eighteen tides to save the lives of its inhabitants from the bloody clutches of Dokkhin Rai, the demon tiger God. He is known as the lord of the tigers and is a powerful king of the southern forest. Dokkhin Rai is worshipped by locals and believed to take the form of a tiger to punish greedy men for exploiting the forest resources. Another source states that he is the son of Shiva (Basu 146). Being ferocious in nature, he is seen as a threat to the human world and the people of Sunderban take the help of Bonbibi to appease him,

Bipod e poriya bon e jeijon e daak e, Ma boliya Bonbibidoya r maa take ... Uddhariye taro toreyaonaro gun e, Maaer o hujurakotolikhiboekthane ... "Bonbibi Johuranama. [Facing any danger inside the forest, whoever prays to Her, Mother Bonbibi protects them all] (Sen and Mukherjee)

She is the mother goddess and is worshipped by all the jungle dwellers and shrines are erected in the forest and in the locality to keep her connected to the natural habitat. Both deities are worshipped by Muslims and Hindus alike and they are believed as the protectors of human beings from evil forces.

The jungle life has its own laws; the poor and honest are rewarded but the greedy ones are punished by tigers if they fail to abide by them. Modern education makes the religious processes a myth to the modern reader, but the belief system of the inhabitants who face the hurdles daily believe it, as a protective shield for them and the natural resource of the forest. Francois Bernier, a French physician travelled to the forest of Sundarban and described the dangerous encounter of poor humans with man-eaters in his book *Travels in the Mogul Empire A.D. 1656–68* (1914). His travelling experience in boats from 1665 to 1666 was full of interesting and vicious stories about tigers stealthily entering the boat at night and carrying away its victims who “generally happens to be the stoutest and fattest of the party” (443). Such encounters had added to the traveller’s fear of man-eating tigers who were intelligent, ferocious, courageous, and expert killers. In India, especially in Bengal if a man and tiger encounter happens, it always has a bloody ending. An incident of human killing by a Bengal tiger was reported in *Anandabazar Patrika* (a Bengali daily newspaper) on 24th August 2021. In the *Jhila* jungle, a group of fishermen went for crab catching and one of their men was hunted by a man-eater. Thus, humans have become common prey to these carnivores just as deer, chital, porcupine or buffalo.

Amitabha Purakayastha on the editorial page of the same paper opines that Dokkhin Rai is the life insurance of humans and nature. However, a few years back poor inhabitants of

Sundarban in front of the then - governor Gopal Krishna Gandhi protested and claimed that ‘they wanted food, not tigers.’ The forest and the life of humans will be totally destroyed if tigers become extinct. But the fear of losing one’s life so brutally is always disturbing for the inhabitants. Well aware of the productivity and the need for wild beasts in the forests who keep the balance of nature intact by keeping herbivorous animals in check, locals take initiative and form groups to protect the forest from unwanted men and illegal poachers. The romanticized image of the wild animals portrayed by *bhadralok* and tourists coming for entertainment in the jungle from urban areas fail to capture the struggle and daily hardship faced by the underprivileged people of the area.

Hunting expeditions in most cases are not a single initiative but a massive project where royals, British officers, professional hunters, native shikaris, elephants, and beaters work as a whole to turn it into a big game. Jim Corbett states that “Shooting from the back of a well-trained elephant on the grasslands of the Tarai is one of the most pleasant forms of sport I know of” (163). Shikar is not new to the colonial land, royalties, kings, and influential men have taken part in it from days immemorial. Mughal emperors also indulged in hunting and killed tigers for sports. Indian kings or princes like Ramanuj Saran Singh Deo of Sarguja bagged “1100 tigers and over 2000 panthers or leopards in his life-time” (Rangarajan 38). In the book *The Last Tiger: Struggling for Survival* (2006), Valmik Thapar, the Indian naturalist, writer, and conservationist states that tiger instances are found in the Indus Valley Civilization and terracotta figurines of tigers are found in Harappa, “On the seals of Mohenjodaro, dating back 4,500 years, are strange ritualistic depictions of the tiger” (Thapar 1).

The Kalighat pot paintings like 'Man Wrestling Tiger,' artworks of artist Jamini Roy, or in Chau, the tribal dance, the readers come across tiger tales. Bonbibir Pala in the remote villages of Sundarban has fascinated people with wonder and awe.

Tigers are known for their silent and sudden attacks, which leave no chance of survival to their prey. It acts stealthily and even stalks its kill for a considerable time and distance both on land and in water. Tiger grabs humans and animals from behind and breaks the vertebra of the neck thus making the killing quick, within seconds. The sudden increase of death of men at the hands of man-eaters and the killing of the 'king of the jungle' in massive quantities (by poachers/hunters) had led to a threatening and hostile situation for both. Unable to protect themselves from the ferocious clutches of the tigers, natives took the help of sahibs to eradicate them from the locality. The strained situation deteriorated more with the East India Company introducing tiger killing as a game for the British sahibs who came to the empire and even rewarded them for each death. Leopards, panthers, wild dogs, and hyenas were bagged for sport or skin. The huge massacre of wildlife that started in the early nineteenth century lasted till the twentieth. The Government Forest Act 1865, The Indian Forest Act 1878, National Forest Policy 1894, Indian Forest Act 1927, Wildlife Conservation, and The National Forest Policy of 1952 all took to rescuing forests and their animals, though its effectiveness was negligible. The years from 1940 to 1960 took wildlife destruction to its maximum extent. The practice of organised hunting by white officers or royalty for enjoyment and entertainment was prevalent till the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of Independent India in a conference in 1969 banned the export of wild animals' body parts and skin, and made the killing of big cats, a criminal offence. In or-

der to protect and preserve these beautiful animals (mainly tigers) from death and extinction, Guy Mountfort's project 'Back from the Brink' (1978) worked towards the preservation of tigers (tiger project) and initiated the establishment of wildlife sanctuaries for their safe living. K. Sankhala's *Tiger! The Story of the Indian Tiger* (1977), Arjan Singh's *The Legend of the Man-Eater* (1993), M. Krishnan's *Nights and Days: My Book of India's Wildlife* (1986) were books that resulted in the conservation of wild cats, mainly tigers. John Seidensticker's article 'Saving Wild Tigers' (2010) deals with the problems of extinction of the king of the jungle from the forests of Java, Nepal, and India. In order to stop illegal poaching and stop the export of body parts of animals in international markets, contributions, and initiatives were taken by writers and conservationists like Peter Jackson, Ullas Karanth, and Geoffrey Ward.

The British officers and white men who came during the Raj were astonished by the biodiversity of the colony and the exotic natural outgrowth tempted them to indulge in mindless hunting. They visualized the tiger as 'vermin' or 'brute' and their hunting was termed as a 'manly' act and a designated superior sport that issued prestige in the empire. Each of the white men was persuaded to take part in the 'masculine game' and made it an essential criterion for character building and establishing superiority in the minds of brown natives. The guns that killed tigers, man-eaters, and other jungle inhabitants were also a reality check for the colonial people of their helplessness at the hands of their masters. The mass extermination of wild creatures took place in the hands of sahibs and introduced to the readers a new genre with its unique form and aura. The thrill of the hunting or *shikar* narrative captivated the literary audience and the sahibs were branded both as writers and killers at the same time. The dangers of the Indian forests were captured in romantic as well as haunt-

ing ways by authors like Jim Corbett (1875-1955), Kenneth Anderson (1910-74), to name a few. The sahib who was the rescuer of the helpless forest dwellers from the clutches of wild beasts portrayed the killing of tigers as a legitimate and 'noble' undertaking.

The white sahib's attitude towards hunting, mostly their attitude towards the tigers, was shocking. Henry Shakespear who had held a prestigious Bengal army position in the preface of his memoir, *The Wild Sports of India* (1860) initiates the western parents to allow their children to take part in the big game as it would "Keep them out of a thousand temptations and injurious pursuits" (28). Through the noble initiative to rescue the Britishers from going effeminate and useless in the colony, the sahibs wiped thousands of innocent tigers by branding them as man-eaters or for entertainment. John M. MacKenzie in his work *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (1988) gave instances of the poisoning of big cats by sahibs (182). Lt. Col. Fitz William Thomas Pollock had noted down his hunting experiences in *Fifty Year's Reminiscences of India: A Retrospect of Travel, Adventure and Shikar* (1896) which gave details of his cruel killing patterns. Pollock called his tiger a 'brute' and described with ease the horrible killing incident of a tiger who had been busy eating a deer while it breathed its last. He relays,

I put up the rifle, and, aiming for the junction of the head and neck, fired. There was scarcely a movement—the head, perhaps, sank an inch or two lower; then slowly the drops of blood began to ooze down his neck from a small hole at the back of his head. (223)

The way he described his hunt was not only chilling but also heart wrenching. He went on to describe another instance where he felt bored with too much tiger hunting. He revealed, "I

might have killed much more game, but too much slaughter falls upon one" (246). The above narratives gave a glimpse of the sahib's thought process and offered an idea about their negative connotation towards everything Indian. It also expressed their uncontrolled cruelty towards these innocent animals. These hunting initiatives were seldom taken alone and when joined by hunter friends, the expedition became more dramatic, brutal, and bloody. In one such instance, the sahib hunted a tigress with uncountable bullets, "She was dead, pierced by no less than nine bullets" (34-35). This narrates the gruesomeness of the scene.

G. P. Sanderson, hunted man-eaters and he too in the beginning had done it to grab trophies. He explained the reason for such brutality and stated that such killing was profitable for natives as it helped the farmers lighten their burden from old, worn-out cattle (267-68). He also stressed the benefits of tiger shooting for the workaholic sahibs,

The tiger is no unmitigated evil in the land. His pursuit affords excitement and recreation to many a hard-worked official whose life, except for an occasional day in the jungles, would be one of uninterrupted toil. (269)

Sanderson, though feared the extension of tigers through these mass slaughters in future, did not mind stopping its functioning. He too was a cold-blooded murderer and even practised killing tigers by using poison. He experimented and practised with the dose of poison that would kill a prey within seconds (MacKenzie 290-91). Colonel H.G.C. Swayne who was a contemporary of Sanderson made a clear statement,

Personally, I should be content to see all the predatory cats poisoned, for the sake of the natives and stock (Barclay 121).

Neither killing of tigers nor ruthless hunting ever unnerved the white sahibs nor made them repent on the destruction they made of the natural resources in the empire.

R. G. Burton in his work *The Tiger-Hunters* (1936) shows that as a hunter he desired to gain immortality and prestige. He suggested that,

In India, it is men of action, warriors, and hunters, who are remembered and have that immortality defined by Napoleon as the memory we leave behind us in the minds of men. (188-90)

Bullet and Shot in Indian Forest, Plain and Hill: With Hints to Beginners in Indian Shooting (1900) was a renowned work of Charles Edward Mackintosh Russell who united hunting and sports together and branded it as a great pastime for Britishers. He proposed that the killing of animals was an act of cruelty; a form of butchery but never supported its ending (1). Later-day British hunters and narrators like A. A. Dunbar-Brander, Jim Corbett, Randolph C. Morris, and F. W. Champion believed in and worked for wild-life conservation in India. According to F. W. Champion,

The fundamental laws of nature to appreciate the fact that even such maligned beasts as tigers and leopards serve a definite purpose in the communal life of a forest (58-59).

Such positive initiative and willingness to save the tigers and wild animals from the hunters/poachers gave rise to national parks and sanctuaries in various parts of India.

Carrington-Turner, a forest official, travelled widely in the jungles and remote villages and often rescued the lives of the inhabitants from man-eating tigers. *Man-Eaters and Memories* (1959) gave

a detailed description of the flora and fauna as well as shared with the reader the thrill of tiger hunting. He had bagged a considerable number of wild animals and killed ferocious big cats that made a living on villagers' cattle. He narrated with excitement his hunting skills, "Both my bullets found their mark, and to this day his skin and head adorn my verandah" (129-31). Being a sympathetic human being with a good knowledge of the local native life, he felt both pleasure and astonishment when "in colonial India, the British hunters of man-eaters were revered almost like deities by the villagers" (53-58). George B. Schaller's accounts of killing were also worth mentioning, he narrated his killing to the Maharaja of Sarguja,

My total bag of tigers is 1150 (one thousand one hundred and fifty only)... I have never tried to put up my record in papers etc. but as you have asked, I have given you numbers. (226)

In later years, he turned to save the big cats living in Indian jungles and expressed the need for strong laws and conservation processes to stop the bloody massacre. He noted that in the years "1929 to 1939 a total number of 1,074 tigers lost their lives by hunting" (279-80). After a CBI investigation was done in 2005 in the Sariska Tiger Reserve, it was found to be empty of tigers. Dhan Gopal Mukerji who worked in the area of Sunderban exclaims that though the mangroves were breathtakingly beautiful, the hunting of humans by tigers had given the place a bad name (39). Jim Corbett, who in his later years hunted with his camera, believed that only in special conditions, did the tiger turn to human killing. He had a remarkable hunting career of almost thirty-two years. He stated that the tigers were gentlemen and should be rescued from their near extinction.

The Britisher's attitude towards the natives was always biased and wrecked with ambivalence. The orientalist prejudices dominated the sahib writer's psyche and the superior hegemony could be traced in their narratives as well. The Western imagination visualized the virgin empire as an exotic land, full of animals who volunteer to be killed for their entertainment. Most of the authors cum hunters discussed the abundance of natural resources and proclaimed the ways the magical land had become an abode of unmitigated pleasure for them. The killing of tigers, panthers, leopards, birds, deer, and bears, thus became a challenge to these colonial masters. The jungle was under the authority of the British administrators and thus fell prey to its greed and cunning instincts. The craving of the sahibs for the skin of the animals added to the killing, making the big game an unsatiated appetite for glory, power, and authority. The urge for hunting was unleashed and the bags of the hunters were filled with trophies, tiger skins, and horns of innocent kills. Jim Corbett and his contemporaries like Lord Linlithgow and Lord Hailey hunted on foot and also by placing living baits for tigers from *machans*. Tom Innes of Balrampur also helped in the decrease of tigers in considerable numbers in the jungles, he states, "My dear, I shot my hundredth tiger fifteen years ago and then I stopped counting" (Kala 93). Martin Booth points out the ambivalent and contradictory attitude of Corbett in his book *Carpet Sahib* (1986). He even accuses him of duality and opines that

He attacked environmental change for the sake of progress and yet he drained the Terai for crops. He was heavily critical of those who shot for sport and yet he himself continued to organize tiger drives until the Second World War. (159-161)

So, it is clear from the above discussion that the real motives of the hunter and white conservationist projects were always doubtful/questionable.

The death penalty that hunters issue against tigers is cruel to the extreme. Carnivorous animals and predators have fascinated the human psyche for decades. During the famine of 1770, a huge sum of money was given for tiger hunting with special acclamation for cubs (Rangarajan 23). The predator-prey relationship has changed with time and space. Nevertheless, the human passion towards kill, blood, death, and hunting 'big game' has remained an open question, which has never been answered. The hunter-hunted equation could never reach a satisfactory conclusion. Several instances show that tiger flesh and bones are used by people. The reason for humans turning into predators and murderers out of sheer excitement, for enjoyment, and associating the kill with hierarchy, power, prestige, and authority is unforgivable. Naming the killing of tigers, the king of the forest with a status symbol and unmitigated might is dangerous and is also a shaming activity. Killing tigers or hunting them for enjoyment or to save the lives of people from man-eaters has become a controversial topic. Tigers are hunting animals for their dietary necessity. The massive killing that took place for centuries resulted in tiger extinction in many Indian jungles for no valid reason. Today environmentalists necessitate predator conservation as they are like a "Protective umbrella under which all biodiversity thrives" (Karanth 46). The dearth of prey, destruction of forests for human development, old age, and wounds from reckless poachers/hunters have culminated in the making of man-eaters in Indian jungles. The normal diet of a tiger is never a human being but the instance is also present of changing an able-bodied tiger into a human killer in real-life accounts. The time a tiger leaves its natural prey and feasts upon humans it is des-

tioned to be murdered. "The hand of every man is against it and sooner or later it falls victim to a bullet" (Stracey 137). He traced that the death of the big cats could be avoided by taking some simple measures; stopping deforestation, initiating the growth of food in the jungle, stopping the illegal selling of body parts as the selling of body parts on poaching a criminal offence, banning the tribal ritualistic killing of wild animals, arranging permanent income facilities for forest dwellers, and in the end, a sympathetic attitude towards the tigers could change the scenario of the shikar narratives.

The white colonists and British officers were patrons of the empire and worked for the advancement of their racial supremacy. Their contribution to saving the lives of helpless natives on many occasions from the man-eating tigers could never be neglected. In many instances, the sahibs were found to be the only rescuers as the native *shikari's* failed to kill tigers. Even if these colonialists risked their own lives to eradicate the place from man-eaters the question remains about its necessity. The number of tigers who took to human killing was not extensive. Not all big cats (those count up to thousands) that were killed ever attempted to attack humans and mostly lived normal jungle lives. When the sahibs demanded to be attributed as 'heroes' and saviours of the dominated, deprived natives their real motive behind the mass butchery of 'brutes' or 'vermin' remains unanswered. Now the question arises whether the numerous deaths of tigers, leopards, and panthers in the name of fun, sport or game do justice to the picture of the sahibs as 'messiah' acceptable. Or shows nothing but the exploitative nature of the masters who ransacked the colonial jungles. Rescuing human life and killing wild beasts in order to make a wide reputation for a tiger slayer/hunter remain deeply embedded in the pages of the Raj hunting literature narrated by sahibs and royalty alike.

It is appreciable that many sahib hunters in the end turned to conservation and worked to protect wild animals from brutal killing. But the reason for the near extinction of tigers and big cats from Indian jungles is attributed to the mass slaughter practised by British sahibs and native royals who massacred for mere enjoyment. The change of the human psyche from a killer to a saviour is not drastic but comes with time, patience, realization, and kindness. The moment a man understands the fruitlessness and uselessness of killing or hunting innocent animals, he changes to conservation. The passion for revenge on tigers who turn to man-eaters and the instinct to kill them is an easy and common attitude of humans. But changing oneself and working for the cause of wild lives is always appreciable.

The colonial intention had always been exploitation, deprivation, and subjugation of everything native. The wilderness and its animals were not kept outside the grasp of the racially superior sahibs who visited India during the Raj. Skinning of recent kills and making trophies with their leftovers became a brutal passion of the whites which native royals and officials also contributed in large numbers. Jim Corbett himself had organised *shikar* parties for influential Britishers during his stay in the colony. The lust for power, reputation, and authority in the empire culminated in the making of *shikaris* and hunters. The western imperial imagination created the tiger image as brutal and villainous. The powerful animals were termed as a threat to their authority and masculinity. Turning the living animals into fur coats, tiger skin bags, and wrappers for their female sexual partners in the homeland, the sahibs expressed their imperial potency and superior hierarchical authority. The moment these sahibs hunted them or narrated them in the pages of literature, their popularity and portrayal of them as heroic figures were evident. The Eastern religion portrays tigers as powerful, won-

drous, mythical beings and associates them with their rituals and day-to-day lives. Tigers are not only cultural symbols but also have intermixed with the religious system and the psychology of human community. Indian mythology and epics like Ramayana, Mahabharata or Upanishads have shown the scattered presence of the natural world, animals, and forests. Mughal rulers are popular for creating fruit laden gardens, initiating plantations, and rescuing greenery from human exploitation (Sarkar 35). Tigers were seen as deities and worshipped as protectors of humans and also revered/feared for their razor-sharp claws and deathly canines. They are also seen as a symbol of fertility, potency, sexuality, and growth. Seated upon tiger skins, sages, and hermits are seen meditating to gain power and spirituality. With time and the government taking adequate measures to ensure the safe habitation of the tigers they are now protected from hunters/poachers.

Susie Green states that tigers do not stand a chance in front of their killers with automatic guns and modern techniques. The tremendous creative energy of the tiger to ambush its victim turns into a challenge for the imperial masters and thus they targeted the innocent beasts to prove their imperial superiority. They were killed while eating, sleeping, and mating and their innocent cubs were killed for carrying the genes of man-eaters. The paper does not support man-eaters or finance the killing of cattle by tigers intruding in villages staking human lives. Tigers turn to killers for a reason,

Tigers with their jaws fractured, slowly starving to death; tigers with bullets embedded in their flesh creating poisonous and sometimes gangrenous wounds; tigers with lacerated paws – small wonder they became vicious. (Green 21)

Even today news of tigers taking human victims can be read in newspapers. It is a common understanding that the fear of big cats has turned humans into killers for generations. In the present scenario, the predator and the prey equation is erased, sometimes the tiger takes to killing humans and vice versa. Darwin's survival of the fittest and the everyday struggle for survival have made both animals and humans behave brutally towards each other. One fails to speculate when one changes from a predator to a prey and thus makes the forest life both frightening and gruesome. The recent action thriller film *Sherni* (2021) which is directed by Amit V. Masurkar and cast by Vidya Balan (as forest officer) dramatizes the pathetic killing and planned slaughter of a man-eater with two cubs by a native hunter. This proves that though the sahibs have long gone the human passion to kill has remained in the nerves of a *shikari*, making animal habitats as futile and dangerous as in the past.

Works Cited

- Barclay, Edgar. *Big Game Shooting Records*. Witherby, 1932.
- Basu, G. K. *Banglar Laukik Debata*. Dey's Publishing, 2008.
- Bernier, Francois. *Travels in the Mogul Empire A. D. 1656–1668*. Oxford UP, 1914.
- Booth, Martin. *Carpet Sahib: A Life of Jim Corbett*. Constable, 1986.
- Burton, R. G. *The Tiger-Hunters*. Hutchinson, 1936.
- Champion, F. W. *With a Camera in Tiger-land*. Chatto and Windus, 1972.
- Corbett, Jim. *The Temple Tigers and More Man-Eaters of Kumaon*. OUP India, 1989.
- Green, Susie. *Tiger*. Reaktion Books Ltd., 2006.

- Jalais, Annu. "Bonbibi: Bridging Worlds." *Indian Folklore*, 28, 2008.
- . *Forest of Tigers: People, Politics and Environment in the Sundarbans*. Routledge, 2010.
- Kala, Durga Charan. *Jim Corbett of Kumaon*. Ankur Publishing House, 1979.
- Karanth, K. Ullas. *Predators and Prey; Nature Strikes a Balance*. Vigyan Prasar, 2001.
- MacKenzie, John M. *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism*. Manchester UP, 1988.
- Mountfort, Guy. *Back from the Brink: Successes in Wildlife Conservation*. Hutchinson & Co., 1978.
- Mukerji, Dhan Gopal. *Ghond the Hunter*. E.P. Dutton, 1957.
- Pollok, Fitz William Thomas. *Fifty Year's Reminiscences of India: A Retrospect of Travel, Adventure and Shikar*. Edward Arnold, 1896.
- Rangarajan, Mahesh. *India's Wildlife History*. Permanent Black, 2001.
- Russell, Charles Edward Mackintosh. *Bullet and Shot in Indian Forest, Plain and Hill: With Hints to Beginners in Indian Shooting*. W. Thacker and Co., 1900.
- Sanderson, George P. *Thirteen Years among the Wild Beasts of India*. John Grant, 1907.
- Sarkar, J. N. *Mughal Economy*. Naya Prakash, 1987.
- Schaller, George B. *The Deer and the Tiger: A Study of Wildlife in India*. The University of Chicago Press, 1967.
- Sen, Amrita and Jenia Mukherjee. "Bonbibi: A Religion of the Forest in the Sundarbans" *Arcadia*, Summer 2020, no. 22. www.environmentandsociety.org/arcadia/bonbibi-religion-forest-sundarbans. Accessed 26th Feb. 2023.
- Shakespear, Henry. *The Wild Sports of India*. Elder and Co., 1860.
- Stracey, P. D. "The Future of the Tiger." in Valmik Thapar (ed.) *Saving Wild Tigers 1900-2000*. Permanent Black, 2001.
- Thapar, Valmik. *The Last Tiger Struggling for Survival*. Oxford UP, 2006.
- Turner, J. E. Carrington. *Man-Eaters and Memories*. Robert Hale, 1959.



Imperial Pretensions and the Myth of Englishness in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*

Dr. Gurudev Meher*

Abstract

Kazuo Ishiguro in *The Remains of the Day* seeks to represent the cultural travesty of a collapsing Empire. One notices in the novel that the entire story is being narrated by an English butler named Stevens who constantly camouflages his sense of bewilderment by wearing the mask of an imperial Englishness and his utmost professionalism helps in adjusting into a new cultural set up. Stevens' adjusting himself to his new master finds a parallel in England's accommodative strategy of imperial relocation which is grossly apprehensive of its flickering flame of colonial power. This paper explores the manner in which Ishiguro subverts the stereotyping assumptions and attitudes related to the idea of English butlership and English gentleman in *The Remains of the Day* to demonstrate the hollowness of these fixed categories which are indelibly coloured by the individual experience of the national history.

Keywords: *Englishness, Empire, Imperialism, Culture, and Nostalgia.*

*Dr. Gurudev Meher, Associate Professor, Department of English, Ravenshaw University, Cuttack, Odisha-753003, India, Email: gurumeher2008@gmail.com

Ishiguro's ambivalent position allows him a diasporic perspective of transformative transaction with a historical past. His novel *The Remains of the Day* focuses on the retrospective interrogation of a mytho-poetic Britishness which exists in the minds of the people as disillusioned encounters with a melancholic memorialization. By exposing the insignificance of the English tradition, this paper attempts to address and explore the diverse modalities and contours of Englishness as reflected in *The Remains of the Day* which serves as a national allegory of post imperialistic reconfiguration, illustrating the debilitating decadence of the glorious British Empire. It seeks to deconstruct the dominant metaphors of the legacy of Englishness and sustain an emphatic claim for a cosmopolitan inclusivity of fragmented loyalties and affiliations.

The novel *The Remains of the Day* by Ishiguro presents a colonial dialectics of the permanent divide between the Eastern and the Western, the Conqueror and the Conquered, subtly extrapolated into the life of the narrator from the transcultural sensibilities of the author. The entire novel, through a metaphor of journey, seeks to deconstruct the dominant legacy of the myth of Englishness so ostentatiously imposed on the Empire. Stevens, the protagonist of the novel is apprehensive of the twilight existence of its aggrandizing Englishness though he constantly silhouettes the travesty of the English essentialism, resulting from highly multicultural and non-nationalistic presentations. *The Remains of the Day*, in its elitist undercuts conditioned by Steven's wavering loyalty to his master towards the end of the novel, seems to be an advocacy for a wider notion of Englishness which proffers inclusion of many cultural and transcultural possibilities. Steven Connor, in this connection argues:

The purpose of the performance of national identity that is in *The Remains of the Day* is therefore to let in what such a restricted imagining of identity relies on keeping out. It aims to enlarge the possibilities for narrating identity across and between cultures and their alleged essential characteristics and conditions by performing the impossibility of a more constrained, coherent imagination of Englishness. (112)

The study attempts to highlight Ishiguro's preoccupation with the theme of Englishness in which he deliberately seeks to set his protagonist in a globalizing cosmopolitan space, critiquing the exclusive model and the monocultural pattern of Englishness. The Asian diaspora living in Britain are stuck between two modes of culturalites which warrant an important step towards merging a global open society with the diverse localized forms of attachment and belonging. The present paper thus aims to explore this post-imperialist anxiety in Ishiguro's characters to reconfigure their notion of Englishness, questioning its purity and essentiality which points out its proclivities toward multiple attachments and complex affiliations.

Ishiguro's assertion of himself as a writer of international novels brings out the significance of his involvement in the reformative poetics of post colonial reclamations and engagements, which seeks to stigmatize the opposition between absolutist notions and categories, and challenges the Eurocentric essentialism of the colonial discourses. Dominic Head traces a similar impulse in "the retrospective colonial fiction of the post war era" which carries out the dialectics of immigration outwardly, but inwardly is quite attentive to "the disappearing empire being of particular significance to the ongoing domestic reconstruction of Englishness" (125). Rather than

confining himself with a fixed locality and temporal specificity, Ishiguro traverses national boundaries and linguistic barriers to transmute the post-war trauma and the resulting sense of emotional alienation of cultural disjunction, skillfully into the lives of the protagonists, demonstrating the inward defamiliarization of the supposed uniqueness of the idea of Englishness. As Sean Matthews and Sebastian Groes argue, "Ishiguro never plays the 'identity card' . . . he acts increasingly as a contemporary everyman" ("Introduction" 2-3). In Ishiguro's fictions,

otherness is not a function of identity but rooted in a deeply moral imagination. *The Remains of the Day* deals with British appeasement of the Nazis, but it is also a subtle indictment of the failures of the international community during the interwar period. (2-3)

Ishiguro deliberately strands his narrative into a subtle thread of historical reflexivity to map the complexities and modalities of the wider collective or national responsibilities for this course of events which is infallibly mixed up with private memories and individual involvement under the corrosive impact of a crumbling Empire. Such associative reading of *The Remains of the Day* helps the readers to recover some of the indeterminate elements of historical specificity which the author consciously conceals behind a formal, polished, unoppositional exterior to elucidate the degrees of the protagonist's self-deception, the extent of temporal displacement in the process of self-relocation and the ethical, emotional, and political accountability as Ishiguro rightly points out "a novel isn't some sort of nonfiction, novels are about emotional manipulation" (Iyer 45).

It is highly suggestive that the grand Darlington Hall which is presented as a miniature version of England is consequently bought by an

American which is symbolic of the latter's strengthening hegemony over a densely hierarchical empire. Before submitting himself to his new master, Mr. Farraday, Stevens has served Lord Darlington for a long thirty five years. In these years he develops a strong domicile disposition with Darlington Hall - a genuinely grand old English house and when it is sold to a foreigner, he finds his own identity threatened before a new domesticating front which at once helps dawning in him a realization of his inability of bantering skills. One can only imagine how much it hurts:

I've tried and tried, but whatever I do I find I am far from reaching the standards I once set myself. More and more errors are appearing in my work. Quite trivial in themselves at least so far. But they're of the sort I would never make before, and I know what they signify. Goodness knows, I've tried and tried, but it's no use. I've given what I had to give. I gave it all to Lord Darlington. (225)

This is also no coincidence that the novel begins with the summer of 1956, the time of Suez Crisis which witnesses the gradual declines of England as an Empire in the post imperialist imagination of Englishmen. Christine Berberich rightfully observes:

the British Empire had all but disappeared, and Britain was struggling for her place in the world hierarchy. Ishiguro's novel uses quintessentially English stereotypes, such as gentleman, the butler, and the trope of the country house, in order to reflect on national identity and crucially, a national consciousness. (135)

Stevens' obsessive preoccupation with maintaining professional dignity to the utmost in serving Darlington Hall effectuates a kind of self-erasure on his part, a commodification of the emotional propensities, in the face of a colossal hegemonizing power to which he must contribute and work, in the process of his own subordination. His frequent references to the 'acting' and 'clothing' tropes bring out the inherent drama, as Meera Tamaya remarks, "of rigorous submission of the private self to the demand of the public persona" (48). A similar situational irony can be attended upon the conversation of Mr. Stevens and Miss Kenton regarding the dislocated position of the Chinaman when Miss Kenton warns Stevens against these trivial errors which may have larger significance, to the casual disregard of the minor neglects of the later. Certainly, the positioning and repositioning of the Chinaman has broader implications and ramifications in the differential politics of cultural dissection. Stevens, in a moment of celebratory exhibition of professional dignity, expresses his firm belief upon the inevitable Englishness of butlers, faintly referring to a dialectics of permanent divide between the East and the West:

It is sometimes said that butlers only truly exist in England. Other countries, whatever title is actually used, have only manservants. [...] Continentals are unable to be butlers because they are as a breed incapable of the emotional restraint which only the English race are capable of. [...] In a word, 'dignity' is beyond such persons. We English have an important advantage over foreigners in this respect and it is for this reason that when you think of a great butler, he is bound, almost by definition, to be an Englishman. (43)

Steven Connor, in *The English Novel in History*, identifies a similar Oriental/Occidental antithesis, subtly nourished throughout *The Remains of the Day* and is suspended obliquely to the private and public domain of an Empire:

The fact that the contrast between orderliness and disorderliness is posed in terms of the contrast between the English and the Oriental gently registers the link between domestic space and the global space of Empire. (110)

Stevens seems to inherit his conception of high dignity from his father whose sense of honour consists in affecting a sensibility of elemental Englishness in his butlership:

It is my firm conviction that at the peak of his career at Loughborough House, my father was indeed the embodiment of dignity (34).

The overarching theme of dignity, with a tinge of quintessential Englishness, provides a solid ground for the narrator-protagonist to dismantle the hollowness of the disproportionate display of British essentiality. Stevens, in his quest for identity, must create a shadowed hedge before him behind which he can use the costume of indirectness, unreliability, obliquity, and ambiguity to achieve internal dramatization of external deterritorialization and fragmentation. Ishiguro, in *The Remains of the Day*, provides a dislocated catalogue of historical events through the disfigured chain of personal memory and transforms those deformed items in a broken consciousness of post war nostalgic manipulation. Stevens' frequent repressions of his emotional engagement is symptomatic of the internal turbulence and suppressive reflexivity of cold war situation at one level, at other, it points out a similar configuration of the novelist's life in the globalizing dialectics of summative acculturation:

There is something in my makeup . . . something in my past perhaps there is some wound or something that's never going to heal, that I can just caress at least. And I can only get to that wound by writing. (Shaffer 112)

This displaced transposition and the matrix of regressive deference supply him a stimulus to dismantle the myth of Englishness projected exquisitely into the catastrophic discomfiture of both the servant and the master who are extremely obsessive of their shallow exhibition of imperial Englishness.

Darlington Hall symbolizes Englishness, tradition, and aristocratic propensities. Stevens' nostalgic memorialization of the lost grandeur can be compared with the present status of the estate which is handed over to some Mr. Farraday is suggestive of the growing American influence, much to the dissatisfaction of the protagonist and the diminishing magnificence of Darlington Hall which appears to be under renovation as a large part of the house is now "under wraps" (6). Later in the novel, Mr. Farraday refers to the mansion as a prison, curtailing the freedom of the inmates and stifling their emotions:

You fellows, you're always locked up here in this house all the time I'm away. Why don't you take the car and drive off somewhere for a few days? You look like you could make good use of a break. (4)

Stevens is blessedly content delimiting his engagement within the confinement of Darlington Hall which he confidently identifies as the best model of the picturesque England upholding the bright examples of Englishness. He is boastful of his familiarity with his own native country - its landscapes and its dignitaries, only through a displaced sense of realizing Darlington

Hall and its way of life. He seeks to substitute his sense of alienation and aloofness from the outer world with a feeling of self-conceived greatness which is strongly derived from his supposed contribution to the great affairs of the state:

. . . those of our profession, although we did not see a great deal of the country in the sense of touring the countryside and visiting picturesque sites, did actually see more of England than most, placed as we were in the houses where the greater ladies and gentlemen of the land gathered. (5)

Stevens' cartographies of England primarily involve the aristocratic upper circle of life which represents the essentialist rigidity of English consciousness and the notion of 'dignity.' There are emphatic suggestions in the novel as to how the unruffled elements of the initial situations give way to a nightmarish messiness of centrifugal dispersion later in the narrative with the popping up of graver issues like anti-Semitism, crypto-fascism and a developing mistrust in the butler's loyal service to his master in the course of his mnemonic revival of a so-called glorious past.

Also Stevens' patronizing inclination is manifested in his sudden realization of the unique picturesqueness of the English landscape which draws its force primarily from a pertinent property of delicate restraint which he promptly connects with his sense of dignity, eulogizing on the exemplary but formal demonstrativeness of the English butlers:

What is pertinent is the calmness of that beauty, its sense of restraint. It is as though the land knows of its own beauty, of its own greatness, and feels no need to shout it. In comparison, the sort of sights offered in such places as Africa and America, through undoubt-

edly very exciting, would, I am sure, strike the objective viewer as inferior on account of their unseemly demonstrativeness. (30)

Stevens, in his impressionistic observation and engagement, develops a paternalistic model of imperialist Englishness which reflects the post-war melancholia of a decadent nation in ruin. Throughout his motoring journey Stevens attempts to uphold and re-establish the older order of aristocratic paternalism in his representative enactment of the spirit of Englishness in all its forms and hierarchies, howsoever much meager that contribution may be. A sense of utter transience of old essentializing values attached to the idea of Englishness emerges in the narrative of Stevens which he consciously masquerades beneath a subtle reintroduction of aristocratic values as is internalized in the person of Stevens from Lord Darlington's presupposition. However, the New England he chances to discover poses a great threat to these values and renders his naturalizing task of defending Lord Darlington's affairs almost hollow within.

In subscribing to the views of Lord Darlington who is quite convinced of the complicity of the hierarchical systematization and strong leadership in State affairs:

. . . if your house is on fire, you don't call the household to the drawing room and debate the various options for escape for an hour, do you? It may have all very well once, but the world's a complicated place now. (200)

Stevens seems to legitimize the patronizing attitude of a bygone era and adds unscrupulously to the Empire's disintegration which is still proud of its demeaning dignity he has so circumspectly tried to uphold. Stevens' preoccupation with dignity indicates a wider diplomatic ma-

neuvering in the world politics in which Britain had to continuously struggle to re-actuate its lost magnificence and its chief claim to be the most civilized nation, entrusted with the responsibility to instill the spirit of democracy in others. The value system Stevens espouses finds a parallel in Lord Darlington's well-intentioned defense of the paternalistic model of aristocracy. The master and the servant purportedly merge into one as both are victimized by their false consciousness of re-enacting a form of Englishness which is grossly inappropriate to the occasion. They are equally misled into the servile reworking of the myth of Englishness in their emphatic restatement of the 'idea of dignity' which is conceptualized differently in different contexts of the novel. This version of aristocratic Englishness displayed by Stevens falls into sharp contrast with that of the Harry Smith's which appears to be more democratic in its classless representation of an all-inclusive Englishness:

Dignity isn't just something gentlemen have. Dignity is something every man and woman in this country can strive for and get . . . there is no dignity to be had in being a slave. That's what we fought the war for and that's what we won . . . no matter if you're rich or poor, you're born free so that you can express your opinion freely, and vote in your member of parliament or vote him out. That's what dignity's really about, if you'll excuse me sir. (185-86)

Stevens' reworking of the myth of Englishness drastically fails because the assumption he carries in defense of his master no longer holds ground in the politicization of the spirit of Englishness in the post-war era. Stevens' deliberate fashioning and refashioning of himself as an English gentleman and the prototype of English butler dramatically crumbles into insignificance

at a crucial moment when the ownership of Darlington Hall is transferred to the American, Mr. Farraday which makes him question his own position in relation to the old certainties he seeks to re-establish rather than identifying himself as confirming to these views. Stevens' problem reflects a still deeper post-war disillusionment because of the lack of alternative models which should compensate the loss of initial appeal of the new form of life that emerges. With the change of ownership, Stevens' life too undergoes a similar transformation which is readily noticed in his reluctance to disclose to the guests his previous engagement with Lord Darlington and his grand estate to the much irritation of Mr. Farraday:

I mean to say, Stevens, this is a genuine grand old English home, isn't it? That's what I paid for. And you're a genuine old fashioned English butler, not just some waiter pretending to be one. You're the real thing, aren't you? That's what I paid for, Isn't that what I have? (124)

Farraday's insistence on 'the real thing' designates his desire to possess and exhibit a lost tradition, reliving the glorious past. His words bring out the insignificance of the English tradition which has been commodified as an image of the past, having market value in the process of its preservation.

The novel's open-ended inconclusiveness points out to the incomplete, fragmented, traditional image of Englishness amongst which Stevens has to meditate the real meaning of his life, questioning his past services and loyalties, restructuring his old ideals and sensibilities when he discovers 'evening' as the best part of the day: "I should adopt a more positive outlook and try to make the best of what remains of my day"

(257). In this epiphanic moment of self-realization, Stevens reconnects his own 'remains'- the twilight years of his existence with that of the Empire which is in utter dissolution, fast replacing the old order and attitude with new and redemptive ones, yet nostalgic of its lost magnitude of imperial Englishness. Stevens' epiphany becomes an impeccable claim for the construction and reconstitution of a wider cultural perspective which can be built best upon the very remnant of the Empire's past, an all-inclusive Englishness which should ever-contextualizing itself in "an open framework, continually in the making," seeking to "accommodate other worlds, other vocabularies, other memory" (Chambers 47-50) in a densely globalizing world. Stevens' entire life has thus been reduced to this few moments of true personal meditation in which he is allowed a glimpse of the real meaning of human life when he asserts, "in bantering lies the key to human warmth" (259) which at once transforms him from an analyst to an enthusiast.

With regard to the cultural situatedness of the novel *The Remains of the Day*, Lawrence Graver writes:

... it is remarkable too, that as we read along in this strikingly original novel, we continue to think not only about the old butler, but about his country, its politics and culture. (56)

Ishiguro's ambivalent position in this "stuck on the margins" (Vorda 68) dialectics renders Stevens' homeless mind as Barry Lewis suggests, a "perfect representative of the century's displacement" (7) and locates the novel "in the transitional moments of history, when one set of values is replaced by another" (144). Ishiguro seems to work on more universal themes which may project a greater view of cultural inclusivity in contrast to the narrow reductionist view of an essentialist Englishness, because,

all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic. (Said XXV)

Ishiguro uses *The Remains of the Day* as a tool to explore this “imperial pretensions of a fading British empire” (Lewis 14). Stevens discovers it problematic to find that the appearance of trivial errors in his work points out to a decline in his powers as irreversible as that of his father’s. He realizes that he has wasted all his energy in service to Darlington Hall in pursuit of an eluding, mythopoetic Englishness which leads him to maintain a polished imperial version of the language that he seeks to uphold. As Barry Lewis rightfully observes:

... if *The Remains of the Day* is seen as an allegory of the decline of the British Empire, then it can be interpreted both pessimistically and optimistically. Stevens’ failure is a fable in the passing of a certain conception of Englishness; but it is a death many would not wish to mourn. (Lewis 100)

The novel attacks the pretensions of the twilighting British Empire as Ishiguro believes, “Britain is not the center of the universe” (Vorda 71); he seems to have evolved a universal model of cultural presentation, transcending the general, exclusive notion of Englishness or Japaneseness.

Stevens’ defense of the Lord Darlington’s complicity with the Nazi is an attempt to revitalize a paternalistic model of Englishness in the disrupted moments of a post-war era. England, in this transferential displacement is equated with the wealthy visitors to Darlington Hall that Stevens has to attend to, before the war. His preconceived picture of England, however, is de-

rived from a particular class of the English society described in the third volume of Mrs. Jane Symon’s *The Wonder of England* which was written during the 1930s and who herself used to be a frequent visitor to the country house. He feels that Mrs. Symon’s book will still be useful as “I don’t imagine German bombs have altered our country side so significantly” (11). The prospective vision of his journey is thus mediated through the cartographies of England supplied by Mrs. Symon’s version of a wonderful England:

I had not looked through those volumes for many years, until these recent developments led me to get down from the shelf the Devon and Cornwall volume once more. I studied all over again those marvelous descriptions and illustrations and you can perhaps understand my growing excitement at the notion that I might now actually undertake a motoring trip myself around that same part of the country. (12)

Moreover, Stevens’ circuitous journey which reflects his circumlocutory pronouncements demonstrates his vain attempts to build up a particularly confined representation of England. His anticipated wonder of visiting the West Country is thus informed by an attempt to project a rehearsal of these values. The views of England and English landscape which he has envisioned in his mind do not exist in reality to which he must supplement to compensate the loss, with his usual, elaborate mannerism. The greatness which Stevens finds in the landscape is immediately transferred in his consciousness to a feeling of national pride that is coupled similarly with an unmistakable ‘restraint’ which does confirm to a definite model of Englishness. Meera Tamaya argues that,

this self effacement is bred in the bone from generation to generation; even as the British class system has survived largely intact through the centuries. (48)

The novel *The Remains of the Day*, in this context, represents a rigid world order which Ishiguro wants to subvert in the framework of Steven's oblique narrative:

Ishiguro is unique among post-colonial writers because unlike Rushdie, for example, who writes at such unwieldy length and with much obstructive polemics about the consequences of history, Ishiguro uses that consummately economical and British literary form – the novel of manners – to deconstruct British society and its imperial history ... thus heralding the end of Britain's long reign as the world's foremost colonial power. Not so coincidentally, on that particular day, the narrator/protagonist of the novel, Stevens, the quintessential English butler, sets out a journey across England and, in the process, recovers the tragic truth of his past, a truth inextricably bound up with the history of his country. (Tamaya 45)

In this sense, *The Remains of the Day* presents a "concern with place and displacement" which Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin describe as a "special postcolonial crisis of identity . . . with the development or recovery of an effective relationship between self and place" (*The Empire* 8). Stevens, in this context, is not actually displaced geographically from a specific locality of cultivation, but indeed he experiences an uprooted sense of homelessness, being alienated in his own cultural configuration at a moment of great socio-cultural transition. The novel also projects explicit "concern with the myths of identity and authenticity" which Stevens, with his

exquisite control over language, so rigorously masquerades as critiquing an "imperial education system" which with its essentialist imposition "installs a 'standard' version of the metropolitan language as the norm, and marginalizes all variants as impurities" (Ashcroft, et al. 7-9).

The confluence of the historical and personal thus adds to the complexity of the discourse which reveals simultaneously a multi-layered pattern of acceptance and denial, manifestation, and concealment which become the informing qualities of the butler's individuality and identity. It not only provides clues to the human motives and identities in the contextual negotiation of personality, but also discovers the larger structures of historical relationship with a nation that is grossly nostalgic of its pretentious imperial power. Relocating the novel in its historicity thus exposes the myth of Britain as an imperial power through the collapse of the protagonist/narrator's confident reconstruction of the world he inhabits.

Works Cited

- Ashcroft, Bill, et al. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Berberich, Christine. "The Image of the English Gentleman in Twentieth century Literature: Englishness and Nostalgia." Aldershot, Hampshire, England Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007.
- Chambers, Iain. *Border Dialogues: Journey in Postmodernity*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Connor, Steven. *The English Novel in History, 1950-1995*. London New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Graver, Lawrence. "What the Butler Saw." *The New York Times*. 8 Oct. 1989. Web. 01 June 2017.

- Head, Dominic. *The Cambridge introduction to modern British fiction: 1950-2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 2003.
- Ishiguro, Kazuo. *The Remains of the Day*. New York: Vintage, 1989.
- Iyer, Pico. "Connoisseur of Memory." *Time Magazine*, 14 Feb. 1994, pp. 41-45.
- Lewis, Barry. *Kazuo Ishiguro*. Manchester: Manchester U Press, 2000.
- Matthews, Sean and Sebastian Groes. "Introduction." *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary Critical Perspective*. Ed. Sean Matthews and Sebastian Groes. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009, pp. 1-8.
- Said, Edward W. "Introduction. *Culture and Imperialism*." New York: Vintage, 1994, i-xxxi.
- Shaffer, B. W. *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*. Raleigh: U of South Carolina, 1998.
- Tamaya, Meera. "Ishiguro's 'Remains of the Day: The Empire Strikes Back.'" *Modern Language Studies*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1992, pp. 45-56.
- Vorda, Allan and Kim Herzinger. "An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro." *Conversations with Kazuo Ishiguro*, Ed. Brian W. Shaffer and Cynthia F. Wong. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008, pp. 66-88.



Sainthood, Folklore, and African Slaves: Kappiri Cult in Kerala, India

P. K. Sreekumar* and Anjana Menon**

Abstract

The present paper introduces and historicises the popular folk deity named *Kappiri Muthappan* who is mainly found in the subaltern neighbourhoods of Cochin in Kerala (India), both as a stand alone divine principle and as an idea that derives meaning relationally as part of larger religious discourses. After describing the general traits of folk deities and saints and the way in which they produce new spaces and frontiers of faith for the subaltern, the paper documents the manifestations of the said deity. Subsequently, attempts are made to understand *Kappiri Muthappan* as a concept, the roots of which are entangled with the African slaves brought to Cochin during the Portuguese period, to trace their lives during the subsequent Dutch and the British periods, and to conceptualise folk deities, along with saints, as creating and inhabiting spaces that resist the overarching narratives and hegemonic structures of power produced and perpetuated by formalised belief systems.

Keywords: *Kappiri Muthappan, Folklore, Slavery, African, Portuguese, and Dutch.*

*Prof. P. K. Sreekumar, Associate Professor of English, Maharaja's College, Park Avenue Road, Opp. Subhash Bose Park, Marine Drive, Cochin-682011, Ernakulam, Kerala, India,
Email: sreekumarptm@gmail.com

*Anjana Menon, Doctoral Scholar in History, Maharaja's College, Park Avenue Road, Opp. Subhash Bose Park, Marine Drive, Cochin-682011, Ernakulam, Kerala, India,
Email: anjanaabhinavmenon@gmail.com

Sainthood and Folklore

Most conceptual underpinnings of sainthood intersect at multiple points with those of folklore: both these categories principally exist as/through popular and dynamic narratives which are communally, culturally, contingently, and contextually created. While all folklore is orally transmitted, the converse need not necessarily be true (Bascom 285); there are corpora of songs, anecdotes, and tales which cannot be fitted into the spectrum of folklore by any stretch of imagination despite their being orally transmitted. In order to clarify this subtle yet crucial differentiation, we can conceptualise folklore—the views, visions, and vibes of the people as,

that portion of a group's culture and belief that does not derive from formal, institutionalized forces, indeed that frequently exists despite such forces. (Jansen 45)

The inbuilt tendency of folklore to occupy spaces exterior to formalised power structures and hegemonic grids is observable in sainthood too. Space, in this context, is understood both as a precondition and as a result of social superstructures, something that cannot be treated as an a priori condition of political institutions and the state that presides over them (Lefebvre 85). Saints of all creeds inhabit a liminal state, resisting interdictions and defying normative stipulations and giving birth to flexible, syncretic, and inclusive spaces. Predictably the emergent spaces are ambivalent and hybrid, reflecting political realities which are not in accord with the discourses prompted through official channels (Dempsey 83). These spaces are neither mediated by nor filtered through the sieves of dogmatic belief systems, but are characterised by organic and spontaneous emotional experiences felt by people as collectives.

This sense of ambivalence and hybridity manifests in socio-political spheres as an individual's ability/necessity to straddle two apparently opposite fields of action, usually the spiritual and the material. The state and experience of seamlessly and simultaneously belonging to two domains—an ontological duality—gets articulated in human discourses as the tension between personal and social spaces that determine individual identities: folklore bridges such spaces and offers one a fleeting glimpse of what it means and takes to being human and in effect works as a veiled algorithm which not only solves metaphysical conundrums of duality that permeate our life but also scaffolds us in day-to-day situations.

The inbuilt urge of folklore to constantly evolve (both structurally and thematically) and to negotiate new social conditions and modalities is identifiable in the contours of sainthood too. The subtext of the argument that human beings of all ages re-interpret such figures as martyrs, teachers, and saints in ways that resonate with one's own specific crises (Hoskote 82) is close to the overall orientation of folklore: with scant reference to historical time and space, the people—the folk—dynamically choose individuals and events, and reweave them so as to serve contemporary requirements which evidently did not exist in the past. And when such figures and traditional storehouses of wisdom, consolation, and support are exhausted, one creates saints by transfiguring known personalities from many fields (Hoskote 83). Thus, in India one has not only a temple where Mahatma Gandhi is worshipped¹ but also a shrine where the presiding deity is a motorcycle².

Saints are locked with devotees in a dyadic and dialectical relation which is slippery and almost impossible to precisely locate. Similarly, a saint is subjected to historical adversities but

transcends them—is outside them—in his tenacious striving towards perfection (Hoskote 83-84). In other words, a saint is part of humanity, but is above it; he is familiar and foreign at the same time. As a discourse sainthood has its discursive relations neither inside nor outside it, but at the limit of the discourse so that these determine the network of relations that configure the discourse (Foucault 50-51). Arguably what endears saints to multitudes with diverse cultural and political backgrounds is this amphibious humanity: saints may have achieved divine elements through perseverance and pain, but they are still human beings. Mirroring the way in which folklore is made up of “myths, legends, tales, proverbs, riddles, the texts of ballads and other songs” (Bascom 11), the imago and persona of a saint get delineated through repetitive retellings of his miracles and intercessory acts through these very same narrative formats. By simultaneously embracing humanity and negating its limitations, saints and folk-heroes empathize with the toiling masses of all sorts.

Against these organising principles of sainthood and defining features of folklore, the present paper, by focusing on the cult of a folk deity named *Kappiri Muthappan* found in the historically significant towns of Mattancheri and Fort Cochin in Kerala, a) generally discusses the structural and performative features of folk deities and saints b) introduces and historicises Muthappan c) describes his variants and cultic practices d) explores the possibility of African slaves imported by the Portuguese having been deified e) documents the extent to which Muthappan preserves the vestiges of gods who were degraded, demonised, and demoted in the modernisation of Kerala, f) conceptualises Muthappan as a floating divinity who subverts the overarching and hegemonic narratives endorsed and entrenched by sacerdotal discourses, and g) sees him as historically constru-

cted but crucially does not consider it as signifying a specific historical individual or event; on the contrary, the attempt is to understand him as a constantly mutating discursive regime heavily informed by shifting social sensibilities and aspirations.

As elsewhere, religions and denominations in Kerala have churned out totalising and exclusivist narratives about their origin and theogony. But there are—have always been—gods belonging to folklore who do not fit into these official frameworks; tales of such deities are not sanitized narratives which iron out or erase differences and contradictions, but they problematize and subvert “officialdom’s tendency toward abstract, one-dimensional resolutions” (Dempsey 79). Most of the time such figures occupy a liminal and ambiguous space, simultaneously complementing and subverting established theologies and cosmologies. Inherently shifting and dynamic, they maintain a dialectical relation with organised religions, producing a social space which subsumes produced things and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity, permitting fresh actions to occur, while suggesting and preventing some others (Lefebvre 73). What emerges in the process is a non-physical locus of piety and devotion, which is neither quantifiable nor geographically bounded.

Sacred Space of Folk deities and Saints

Folk deities are gods or goddesses who are widely venerated by the masses, often defying the interdictions of organised religions and belief systems. Such deities, invariably, bear unmistakable folk colourations and indigenous associations, and are located in the flexible frontiers of faith which are identifiable with social spaces organically structured by and saturated with localized concerns. Notably a social space is primarily produced to be lived in by people in

specific contexts (Lefebvre 143). These deities belong to and qualitatively condition loci characterised by syncretic and symbiotic inter-connections. This does not mean that folk deities and official gods occupy hermetically sealed spaces. Most of the time, their boundaries are porous and unstable, often necessitated by mechanisms of statecraft and prospective or retrospective invention of lineages and traditions. Thus, Susan Bayly discusses how gods and goddesses have travelled to new territories giving birth to “complex networks of inter-regional devotion and pilgrimage” (Bayly 39) in South India. She also demonstrates the complex ways in which Brahminical temples have allowed the gods of powerful warrior groups within the precincts of the vegetarian gods, though the martial predators and their gods were perceived as coming from a world of danger and potential defilement (Bayly 43). The phenomenon of external gods being adapted or assimilated into dominant religious cultures, at times in transfigured forms are found in almost all civilisations. In pagan systems this was a common enough occurrence: gods would often be merged and amalgamated, or the gods of one locality would be accepted as identical with the gods of another people (Armstrong, *A History* 29). In short, despite glaring differences in their positioning, canonical gods and folk deities partake of the same ontological realm.

Saints offer a reinterpretation, often radical, to the otherwise rigorous monotheism preached by Christianity and Islam. Saints, like folk deities, are more accessible and empathetic, and occasionally familiar to the devotees either directly or through communal memories. St. George, for example, is characterised by a sense of familiarity and accessibility; most of his devotees can understand and perhaps even realistically emulate him (Dempsey 47-48). In the context of South India, such figures have

resonated better with the prevailing ideas of piety and have created organic and culturally embedded sectarian traditions within Christianity and Islam (Bayly 54-55). While these traditions may have deviated from the rigour of scriptural injunctions, they have effectively percolated into the social interstices of Kerala and other parts of South India.

Found all over the world, folk deities wield power within limited geographical territories and cater for the spiritual aspirations of small populaces. In most cases their jurisdiction is limited to villages, and on rare occasions to specific castes or communities. In India, formal gods like Vishnu and Siva and the religion connected with them are based on philosophic reflections on the universe as a whole; in contradistinction, folk and village deities are purely local, symbolising only the facts of rural life and have no relation to the universe; their worship is the religion of people whose thoughts do not travel beyond their own immediate surroundings and personal needs (Whitefield 17, 141). In this respect folk deities are more meaningfully understood as part of paganism which was territorially delimited with its gods holding sway over equally limited demographics (Armstrong, *A History* 24). This compact system based on familiar and intimate membership (without an external reference group) naturally tends to cultivate greater social bonding and is intertwined with micro level political units. According to William Christian, it is at the local level that the formation of identity through ties between communities and their sacred figures is most strikingly pronounced (53). This demonstrates, at least implies, how the village for long in the past functioned as an autonomous and autotelic polity organised along uneasy caste affiliations and mutual relations. As G.S. Ghurye summarises it, the key aspects of caste and society viz., cooperation and interdependence mani-

fested in the village and all its castes and professional/occupational groups were represented in its administrative bodies (23-24). Again, it is within the confines of given villages that the relations between caste groups are fully operational. Folk deities, in short, body forth all the nuances of social life within limited territorial units and capture subtle realities which tend to be overlooked in larger schemata. By occupying social spaces which interpenetrate and superimpose on one another (Lefebvre 87), these deities achieve greater reach and impact.

Gods and Goddesses worshipped in the sacred groves scattered across India also typify the case of territorially circumscribed gods. What engenders and endears folk deities is the empathetic intimacy that they display for the day-to-day experiences and concerns of the common people. They never vanish into aloof sky gods. More importantly, they exist without the sanctimonious mediation of priests and intercessors. Naturally, their attributes and attitudes are shaped not by theological cerebrations or metaphysical perceptions. On the contrary, folk deities dynamically reflect the immediate concerns and aspirations of their devotees. So is the case of saints. However, the cults of saints do more than simply mirror devotees' lifestyles and beliefs; they provide forums whereby devotees potentially carve for themselves a place within their many worlds—religious, communal, and global (Dempsey 4). In other words, folk deities and saints are a theological salve that enables their followers to negotiate the harshness and meaninglessness of life—absurdity—and helps them navigate the real and/or perceived perils of the world and help them find meaning, perhaps a teleology, in the apparent chaos and contradictions of human existence. In this way sainthood, like myth, is a narrative which is not about opting out of life but about living it more intensely and insightfully

(Armstrong, *A Short History* 2) in such a way that the act of living invests human beings with a sense of meaning and belonging.

Kappiri Muthappan: Visions and Versions

Kappiri Muthappan (hereafter KM) is a popular tutelary deity mainly found in the towns of Fort Cochin and Mattancheri in the district of Ernakulam in Kerala. These bustling towns abounding in boutiques and tumbledown buildings are the locations where the Portuguese reached in 1500, followed by the Dutch (1663) and the British (1795) in the succeeding centuries. Kappiri means an African or someone with African origins. Muthappan is an honorific term which denotes awe and affection. Many saints and ancestral gods in Kerala are reverentially and affectionately addressed as Muthappan. Anthropomorphic in attributes and trans-religious in orientation, KM attracts people both from the immediate environs and from other places. In the wayside *taras* (shrines or platforms) dedicated to KM in Fort Cochin and Mattancheri, he is the presiding deity and is worshipped as a god in his own right. These *taras* have neither gilded roofs nor other paraphernalia; offertory chests are conspicuous by their absence.

1. The most outstanding trait of KM, as he is worshipped in these towns, is his unrefined character and familiar nature which common people and the proletariat easily identify with. It needs to be pointed out at this juncture that, unlike in the case of theistic deities; there are neither paintings nor effigies of KM in existence in these locations. Descriptions of his physiognomy, physique, complexion, clothes, and food are orally transmitted and are inherently amorphous; people differently imagine his features and disposition as responses to changing socio-political conditions and generate descriptive isotopes largely determined by factors such

as caste, class, and gender. If one pieces the currently available descriptions of KM together, one gets the picture of an African male wearing a coat, smoking cigars, eating *puttu* (steamed rice cake), loaves of bread, fish, meat, egg, and *kadala* (cooked chickpea), consuming alcoholic beverages and toddy. He also prefers tobacco and *panparag*, a packed blend of tobacco and spices which was launched in the market as late as in 1973. It is clear that in appearance and diet he starkly contrasts with vegetarian 'high' gods, but is closely aligned with the common people.

2. There are a few temples in the coastal belt of the adjacent district of Trichur where KM is installed as a subsidiary deity. Unlike in Cochin, he is worshipped in the form of a diminutive, ebony figure wearing gold chains which reach as far as his ankles in these shrines. An inverted cross mark on the idol's chest and long decorated sticks leaned against the wall of the sanctum complete the picture.

3. KM assumes a strange and unique shape in Edamuttam, a village located nearly five kilometres from the sea in Trichur. In an unpretentious shrine which lacks the grandeur of mainstream temples, he is worshipped as Mahaveerapathalakappiri, literally 'the Great Heroic Kappiri of the Nether World.' Legend has it that he was specially begotten by Lord Vishnu to annihilate a mighty *asura* (demon) who was terrorising all the three worlds by means of powers he had acquired through rigorous asceticism. Since the demon had obtained eighteen different powers in the form of boons, Kappiri had to take as many incarnations. Each incarnation has its own domain of intervention. Thus, while *pisachu* (demon, devil) Kappiri protects people from evil spells and demonic possession, *nayattu* (hunter) Kappiri is something like a patron saint to fishermen. Interestingly one incarnation is named Jinn Kappiri

after genies, the magical spirits of Arabic folklore and Islamic mythology.

Mahaveerapathalakappiri is conflictingly imagined as a special creation of Vishnu, as a god whose idol appeared on its own (*swayambhu*) and as the final incarnation of Vishnu. It should be remembered that according to widely accepted *puranic* traditions the last incarnation of Vishnu is Kalki who is yet to reach the earth. Adding more dimensions to KM's delineation, his priest (who is not a Brahmin, but a local man familiar to the devotees) wears a thick bracelet shaped like a conch around his wrist, brandishes a ceremonial sword and experiences ecstatic possessions which are a blend of *séance* and oracularly at regular intervals. During the frenzied trance, he is a revelator babbling in barely intelligible tongues and simmering with divine wrath, a medium for the dictates and wishes of Mahaveerapathalakappiri. He convulses, wriggles, pants, lurches about, kicks up the heaps of powder (turmeric, kunkum) kept nearby and wallows in the resultant admixture. It is by pouring water onto his head and holding him down that the temple assistant and witnessing devotees bring the priest back to normalcy.

Once the frantic phase is over, the priest sacrificially slaughters a rooster, consumes liquor, and sprinkles it on devotees in an act of benediction. The shrine is open to everyone and persons from different castes gather to seek blessings of the possessed priest. While Mahaveerapathalakappiri, as we have already seen, is imagined as a male related to Lord Vishnu at more than one level, the actions of the priest and the resultant ambience bear a striking resemblance to *Mudiyettu*, an elaborate ritualistic dance-drama performed in Devi temples in Kerala and vividly documented by Sarah Caldwell (2000). It is not difficult to understand that what happens in the case of Mahaveerapathalakappiris to the

re-interpretation of a folk deity as a healer-cum-calamity manager within a framework of legitimising narratives borrowed and coalesced from different sources; this accounts for the contradictions in his origin narratives. Kappiri avatar is a palimpsest, the layers of which are difficult to retrieve and restore. What Corrine G. Dempsey says about saints holds true for the space occupied by and role/s played by KM:

When viewing saints in their cross-cultural capacity as calamity managers. . . institutional preferences fade into the background. In such instances, dualistically oriented prescriptions are eclipsed by or replaced with notions of materially accessible sacred powers. Furthermore, such powers, as portrayed locally, are more often ambivalent than they are benign. As such rigid distinctions between good and evil, spirituality and materiality, become less recognisable, and perhaps even arbitrary.... (Dempsey 88)

Unlike in other Kappiri shrines and *taras*, what renders this manifestation of KM unique is the intermediate role of the priest who is also a healer. During spells of possession and oratory, he mixes his own personality as an individual with the role of a divinely inspired healer. A choice surfaces here. When an individual plays the role of a divinely inspired healer, he may bring to it personal qualities which keep the pre-existent forms of divine healing more or less intact; alternatively, he may enhance charismatic attributes through his unique qualities (Romano 1152). In the case of KM at Edamuttam, the priest is a passive conduit or channel of the cultic god. He is generally available and accessible; the healing role is performed without overt display of fear, doubt or diffidence; he also acknowledges the omniscient presence of god as the

ultimate source of health and well-being, confirming to the patterns of divine-healing observed in other cultural contexts (Romano 1153).

4. KM is not exclusive to Cochin or Kerala. There is a relatively famous shrine dedicated to 'Khapri' in the coastal town of Karwar in Karnataka where the presiding deity is an African elder-cum- holy man. The locals call him *Khapri devaru*, literally 'the African or Negro God.' It is believed that he, after escaping from the Portuguese who were controlling the neighbouring territory of Goa, came to Karwar. As a man of significant supernatural powers, he guarded the village, healed the sick, and guided the fishermen; after his death, the villagers cremated him and later installed a small memorial stone at his grave to honour him, which later evolved into a proper site of worship. Today, devotees make votive offerings such as candles, incense sticks, and flowers as well as other unusual offerings including *fen* (a local alcoholic beverage), cigars and cigarettes to appease him³ exactly as in the case of KM. The elevated status enjoyed by; Khapri devaru is neither unique nor illogical within the conceptual world of folklore. It is a fairly common practice in folk communities to deify an outstanding healer after his death into a guiding spirit and to religiously propitiate him through offerings of material objects (Romano 1157-58).

5. Right within Kerala there is a little-known figure that resembles KM in certain respects. It is an English officer named Captain Pole, a successful hunter during his lifetime. He was mortally wounded in battle between the British East India Company and the princely state of Travancore in 1809; a few years after his death lower caste members began to worship him, not because they feared his spirit, but they hoped it might drive away the wild animals from that part

of the country. Brandy, arrack, and cheroots, which suited his fiery tastes and appetites, were the main offerings; however, such practices were later discontinued when wild beasts ceased to be a threat as a result of extensive clearings of forests (Day 284; Bayly 34). This episode demonstrates how folk deities exist in linear historical time and are subject to external forces: Captain Pole posthumously attracted a following when his skills as a hunter were badly wanted by the people, but the cult, so to say, fizzled out as soon as the threat disappeared. The dynamic and need-based existence of folk deities is evident here.

Shrinking Sacred Space

Although there were a large number of public Kappiri *taras* in Fort Cochin and Mattancheri in the past, only a handful remain now. One possible reason behind the shrinking sacred space of KM is the systematic and largely successful attempts of all organised religions in Kerala to 'cleanse' their belief systems and sanctifying myths of 'external accretions.' In the decades around 1900, consequential social reforms were initiated in Kerala in which many of the traditional deities, who were disparaged as 'evil' and 'barbarian,' were replaced with more 'civilised' and pleasing gods. Caste-based reform organisations of the era, generally speaking, encouraged their adherents to disown 'evil' gods who were appeased by the offerings of arrack, toddy, and blood sacrifice, and to worship soft and mellowed gods in their stead. While the gesture can be understood as essential in achieving better social standing, wider political acceptance, and upward mobility during a period of structural transitions, in effect it evicted the folk deities worshipped by the lower social strata from their own shrines and placed the subaltern devotees in the presence of inaccessible gods and at the mercy condescending Brahmin priests. In such a drive gods like KM who do not

belong to the canonical pantheons of established religions are very likely to be erased or downgraded as evil spirits.

Thankfully, unlike most of these 'evil' gods, KM did not fall into oblivion completely. Owing to many reasons he has remained indelibly burned onto the collective memory and public imagination of a few populous pockets of Cochin inhabited by socially and economically backward people. As a rule, most of his devotees hail from the lower rungs of our complex social/caste ladder. KM, in short, is subaltern. There are many families which venerate KM as part of their lares and penates or in buildings within their precincts. The exact number of such shrines and devotees is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain as many devotees do not wish to publicly reveal their faith though it is rooted and unwavering. In fact, many devotees on condition of anonymity vouchsafe their having had epiphanies of KM and enjoyed the fruits of his direct blessing. One has to remember that epiphanies can be achieved without fanfare as far as folk deities and paganism is concerned (Armstrong, *A History* 23). More importantly a larger number of people have incurred KM's wrath for improperly or insufficiently propitiating him. This is typical of folk deities because they are not virtue personified but our own projections with all human follies and foibles. In other words, KM is a conflicting and fractured divine principle which simultaneously belongs to everyone and does not belong to anyone, a floating signifier which does not snugly fit into the totalising narratives of any structure, and a confabulated narrative which negotiates the contradictions and incongruities of everyday life.

Origin Narratives

KM is conceived of in multiple ways both in terms of origin and operation. In one tradition,

he is a representative of (or an individual among) the African slaves—*Kaffirs* or Negroes—whom the Portuguese brought to Cochin and entrusted with the perilous task of guarding their wealth when they were decisively defeated by the Dutch in 1663. By far this seems to be the most widely accepted genealogy of KM. The local historian K.L. Bernard records that immediately before their surrender to the Dutch, the rich among the Portuguese made niches in their thick walls, tied up slaves in them, placed their treasures beneath the slaves and made them promise that the treasures would be kept safe till their descendants came to claim them; the niches were then plastered up with mortar. The Kaffirs, who were callously killed, began to be venerated as harmless guardians of treasure as time marched on. The natives offer food and arrack or toddy for the Kappiri believing that someday the spirit would leave the place so that they can have a portion of the Portuguese treasure (Bernard 56). It is noteworthy that during the Portuguese period in Cochin (1500-1663), the term Kaffir came to be used synonymously with slaves (Pinto 97), and thus, any slave would be understood as a Negro by later generations.

In a slightly different version, the fleeing Portuguese Casados and wealthy Toepasses⁴ of Cochin dug a deep pit on the ground, sacrificially killed an African slave and buried the wealth along with the corpse. Though there are no historical records showing the Portuguese ever buried their wealth in 1663 or in any other year with the intention of reclaiming it later, there is one interesting episode recorded by Correa. It, however, is not about the Portuguese fleeing Cochin in a hurry after their defeat but about the Portuguese governor Dom Duarte de Menezes who was arrested and sent home by Vasco da Gama in his last visit to Cochin in 1524. Correa records that fearing da Gama would confiscate his possessions, Duarte contrived to get all his

wealth buried at a point on the beach outside the town (420-21). But the wealth was later retrieved and logically there is no scope for narratives which are usually engendered by putatively buried or lost treasure. One thinks this incident is still important because it might have gone into making up later imaginings of KM as a guardian of treasure.

According to a second tradition, KM had been an African who was sacrificed by the Portuguese to placate the elements when their fleet ran into tempestuous weather once; this able-bodied African was beheaded and his corpse thrown into the sea as a result of which the rough sea calmed down and the passengers reached shore safe. As a token of everlasting gratitude, the Portuguese began to remember the sacrificed African before eating, just like saying prayers before food. A third tradition holds that KM is a benevolent protective spirit (who has nothing to do with historical events, let alone foreign invaders) worshipped with votive candles, a family god and an anthropomorphic deity empathising with the toiling folk. In yet another tradition, a variant of the last, KM is imagined as a creature akin to guardian spirits in Western angelology. Finally, there are people who consider KM an impish spirit, who are best kept appeased lest he should cause serious troubles for humans.

Given the dynamic nature of popular imagination and the proliferation of origin narratives, KM can be logically classified and understood as a folk deity. Generally speaking, events and persona in folklore are adjustive and transformative. Being inherently fissiparous, such deities give their devotees the chance to impute recursive origins, malleable avatars, and recurrent chivalric or redemptive deeds to them. Such deities also help the devotees revivify saggy practices through vicarious restitution of rights

and privileges which the group of devotees really or imaginatively enjoyed in the past. It is a defining feature of folklore to have different versions of the same object or belief; more accurately, the object or belief is the synergistic aggregate of all versions. No version is right or wrong, and one does not have superiority over another; no object has a pre-discursive existence. As Michel Foucault would have it, discourse is not a linear configuration of previously established objects; nor is it the majestically unfolding manifestation of thinking, knowing, and speaking subject that emanates from an a priori origin (Foucault 28, 47, 61).

As far as the believer is concerned what really counts is the efficacy of a god, ritual, or religion in making life more meaningful and less crisis-ridden, not its historicity or philosophical profundity:

effectiveness rather than philosophical or historical demonstration has always been the hallmark of a successful religion. (Armstrong, *A History* 43)

However, an attempt to trace the historical origins and evolution of folk beliefs enables the observer to decipher the layers and structures that are enfolded within the complex construction of folklore. The study of folk beliefs equips us to evolve perceptive insights not only into the contents and details of culture, but also helps us grasp archaic customs which are not in practice any longer (Bascom 284). The next section understands KM as an entity imported by the Portuguese and assimilated into the indigenous cultural structures in the ensuing period.

Africans and Slaves

In India, the presence of Africans is traceable prior to the Portuguese who reached the

littoral towns of Kerala in 1498. As Ibn Battuta (27; 29; 205; 234), K.G. Jayne (20), Joseph E. Harris (14) and Ann M. Pescatello (27-29) testify, slaves of diverse ethnic stocks and from geographic areas including Africa had reached much before the Portuguese era. The Portuguese embarked on an active and profitable slave trade in India right from the beginning of the fifteenth century, and their slaves included both Africans and other people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds (Pinto 10, 33). Of these, some African slaves escaped captivity from the Portuguese capital of Goa and have lived by maintaining their indigenous cultural practices intact so far. Known as Siddis, they are found in many areas of Gujarat, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh today.⁵ Though Shihan de Silva Jayasuria (709) and D. K. Bhattacharya (2) hint that Siddis are, at least were, present in Kerala, there is no African presence here comparable to that of Karnataka or Gujarat.

However, one would like to briefly mention two possibilities in this context before moving on. Edgar Thurston records the belief that Paniyans (a tribal group in Kerala) have an African origin and that their ancestors reached Malabar following a shipwreck near the land in the past. He does not consider this belief very tenable but records a curious practice:

The Nayar Janmis (landlords) say that, when surprised in the act of some mischief or alarmed, the Paniyan calls out 'Ippi. . . Ippi' as he runs away, and they believe this to have been the name of the country whence they came originally; but they are ignorant as to where Ippimala, as they call it, is situated. Kapiri (Africa or the Cape?) is also sometimes suggested as their original habitat, but only by those who have had the remarks of Europeans

communicated to them. The Paniyan himself, though he occasionally puts forward one or other of the above places as the home of his forefathers, has no fixed tradition bearing on their arrival in Malabar, beyond one to the effect that they were brought from a far country (57-58)

J.D. Munro suggests that Kadars (another tribal group) found in the hilly terrains of Kerala are a stout dark race with African features, and are supposed to be descendants of Portuguese slaves who took refuge on the mountain ranges of Kerala (14). Normally these highlanders were unlikely to have had a direct bearing on KM or any of the deities discussed earlier who are associated with coastal regions. However, when one considers the fact that Cochin had been for long the most important seaport in Kerala from where commodities like spices from the hills would be transported to international markets, it is logical to assume that stories of people with African origin and features reached the coastal areas through traders and middlemen who frequented the places. Trade links during the Dutch period in Kerala, for example, stretched not only to nearby settlements but also to the mountainous hinterland (Van Rossum, et al. 11). Thus, though neither Paniyans nor Kadars came to the shores of Cochin, the stories of their (supposed) escape, protest and resistance might have reached the coastal areas, just like a tradition migrates from one place to another though its agents and originating circumstances remain stationary in one place. It will be remembered at this juncture that resistance to hegemonic powers often informs folk deities; such figures naturally emotionally, and intellectually appeal to people who face discrimination and oppression. Historically the worship of village deities has maintained a silent protest, however feeble it be, on behalf of religious and social equality; the absence

of priestly caste and songs that wistfully reminisce a better past are traits of such worship (Whitefield 154).

The possible inflow of Africans as domestics has a pan-Kerala possibility. In the northern parts of Kerala, a portion of the domestic slaves were persons, or their offspring, from Abyssinia (Ethiopia) who had come over with the elite Muslims from West Asia (Baber 20). It is instructive to note that the rites and rituals presently witnessed at Kappiri *taras* strikingly resemble the customs followed by former slaves, especially the lowest among them, in worshipping their gods who were represented by rude stones, logs of wood, or pottery and placed on a pedestal or stool some of which are enclosed within walls; and for particular ceremonies they would sacrifice fowls, and make offerings of meat, rice, cocoa-nuts, honey, and alcoholic beverages (Baber 29-30; Pinto 62). The process at play is clear: while mainstream religions have abandoned such practices altogether, they have managed to remain alive though folk deities in their own spaces.

African Slaves and Vestiges in Cochin

Given that Portugal in the 16th century had an unusually high population of slaves (Pearson 6), it is probable that these slaves accompanied their white masters in the capacity of servants to overseas territories including Cochin. In addition, there are fragmentary references showing that the Portuguese actually picked up men from African shores and brought them as slaves to Malabar. *The Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama to India, 1497-1499* mentions that the Portuguese sailors captured the blacks, whom they encountered along the African shores (Anonymous 56). Portuguese explorers obtained African slaves through capture, coercion, and cajolement, and they would be sent to different parts of the Portuguese empire (Pinto 12-13). For the most part, the slaves were from Mozambique,

although the Portuguese also seized African slaves when they defeated the Muscat Arabs in Diu in 1670 (Harris 98). Almost from the beginning of their overseas explorations, the Portuguese had the habit of hunting down slaves and bringing them home whenever possible; in point of fact, the import of slaves was a justification of the maritime adventures of Prince Henry, the Navigator (Jayne 19).

There are references to an African who rendered loyal and exemplary services to the Portuguese contingent in Malabar (Correa 359-63). Bishop Joseph of St. Mary (Sebastiani), the Apostolic Commissary for Malabar, is recorded as lamenting the loss of slaves—apparently African—following the Dutch conquest of Cochin in 1663 (Diaz 121). Diaz also specifically mentions a wealthy widowed lady of Cochin who had an enormous slave-household (19). Contemporary records left behind by high-ranking VOC officials also testify that the Portuguese possessed a large number of slaves, all of who were handed over to the Victorious Dutch in 1663 (Galletti 14-15). Once a few Portuguese from Cochin accused the Dutch of harbouring some runaway African slaves—both men and women—in a ship bound for Batavia (Poonnen 106). Though the ensuing search disproved the allegation, the incident points to the presence of Africans and Cochin, and more importantly to their inclination to escape coerced labour. In a nutshell, as Cochin was ruled by the Portuguese from 1500 to 1663, and it remained their capital in India till 1529, the tradition which holds that African slaves were deployed in Portuguese Cochin is not historically improbable.

There are a few geographical and linguistic remnants which point to the existence of African presence in Cochin. One is a place named *Thuruth* (Island) in Fort Cochin; formally it was known as *Kappirithuruth* (Kappiri Island). Another, and

more crucial, is the diffusion and assimilation of the Portuguese term *Cafre* (or *Kafri*) into all South Indian languages and some North Indian tongues. *Cafre* generally signified a Negro who was not converted to Islam and *Cafrinho* meant a young male Negro. Revealingly, almost all the places where the Portuguese settled in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have assimilated this term into their vocabulary with minor variations. In the final years of the fifteenth century *Cafre* was assimilated as *Kappiri* into Malayalam, Tamil, and Telugu, as *Kaphri* into Kannada, as *Kapri* into Tulu, and as *Khaphri* into Konkani (Dalgado 64). This strengthens the argument that Africans were brought to various parts of India including Cochin and that they were conspicuously present in those places. As already mentioned, following the Portuguese defeat at the hands of the Dutch, the slaves owned by the vanquished were also handed over to the victors as part of the peace treaty. Interestingly Africans would attain more visibility and respect under the subsequent Dutch period.

African Slaves during the Dutch and British Period

Under the Dutch, more specifically under the Dutch free traders, Cochin positively and rapidly emerged as the principal feeder region of enslaved persons under the VOC, and thus, evolved into an emporium of extensive slave trade and export. Given that VOC “acted not only as merchant, but also as warrior, sovereign and agriculturalist in varying ways” (Van Rossum, et al. 7), it was incumbent on the company to regulate slavery using its administrative machines. That the Dutch East India Company (VOC) would issue 300-400 permits every year for the export of slavery signals the incidence of this trade (Van Rossum, et al. 3). However, the Dutch did not use Cochin as a transit warehouse for their human cargo brought in from other

places including Africa; neither are there records showing that they sold off the Africans handed over by the Portuguese. Available evidence shows that they purchased slaves from among the indigenous population and exported them to far-flung places with the active involvement of sellers or middlemen, most of who were VOC employees and Malayalis in such a way that Cochin practically became a thriving hub of human trade interspersed by litigations and occasional release of captured slaves.

One thing that stands out during this period is the abundance of slaves in Cochin and other parts of Kerala. But for the periodic scourge of smallpox, there was nothing to hinder one from legally and easily obtaining slaves, and the VOC owned both agrestic and domestic slaves (Galletti 77). Most of these persons were slaves by birth whereas others were sold into slavery following huge debts; some others were relegated to slave status after losing their caste for violating community conventions. Slaves of all categories were purchased in bulk with scant regard for their provenance so much so that often churches in Cochin would be used as warehouses to keep slaves safe (Day 171). When Fra Paolino Bartolommeo writes that in Cochin there is everywhere houses inhabited by great number of male and female slaves who are guilty of the most scandalous transactions (Bartolommeo 133), he is pointing to the profusion and visibility of slaves during the Dutch period. In 1694, for instance the Company owned 1273 slaves who were purchased for forty to sixty dollars per head; they received wages (overseer 1 dollar a month, ordinary male slaves half a dollar, etc.) besides their keep and clothes, and could buy their freedom (Galletti 77). In 1741-42, the VOC got eighty one guilders, or Dutch dollars, as taxes on salvers exported from the Malabar Coast (Galletti 71). The good profit from slave trade encouraged the Dutch to sustain it. When the British (who had

taken the northern part of Kerala in 1792) requested the Dutch in Cochin to stop slave trafficking, "they declined, stating that they realized large sums of money by it" (Day 183-84).

Slaves were widely employed as domestics in this period. In Fort Cochin there were as many as 1275 slaves in 1760; in 1790, the number marginally increased to 1299 (Singh 93-96). The total number of people in households those days was 2040 and 2317 respectively. Both high-ranking officials and middle-income households possessed a high number of slaves (Singh 100). In such a context chances are high that the Africans, now owned by the Dutch residents of Cochin and redundant as a labour group because the supply of slaves was abundant, became servants of wealthy households, or were bought by royal houses and landlords and were gradually assimilated into the local cultural milieu. For instance, Whitehouse vividly describes how a Dutchman was served by two Caffres and four little Negroes (Whitehouse 24). The differentiation between Caffres and Negroes is noteworthy. It seems Whitehouse had assimilated the 18th and 19th century belief that Caffres were different from and superior to "true Negroes" and that probably they had a non-African provenance (Arndt 2-3).

Even more official and authentic are the records which show that the king of Cochin, Sakthan Thampuran (1751-1805), had the habit of regularly buying African boys and girls, and horses for them to ride. He purchased Negro children named Screeper in 1793, Subali in 1796, Joan and Prasista in 1799 and Naseeba in 1801; in an unspecified year, he went to the extent of purchasing six African children named Nubi, Imbarakahn, Mathuvan, Naseef, Sankuri, and Warums (Menon 500-501). The average price of a juvenile African slave was rupees 150. Con-

sidering that his regnal years were from 1790 to 1805, he seems to have maintained an unflagging interest in African children throughout his rule.

From a letter written by a Dutch interpreter on 17 March 1794, we can understand that the said king bought three Negro children from Goa through the Dutch Commodore though the latter had promised to deliver five.⁶ It may be mentioned in passing that the main task of the interpreter, who was appointed by the VOC, consisted of ascertaining whether or not the slave status of persons offered for sale was lawful (Van Rossum, et al. 2020, 301). In another letter in the same year (dated 16th November), the king expresses his willingness to advance half the price of such children, provided they were of the age and price he desired, and states that one of the three Negroes had to be sent back as he was seriously ill; notably, the price have now reached rupees 250 per African, a substantial increase of 60% in a single year.⁷ The same letter shows that the king was keen on possessing boys between twelve and twenty years of age, and girls between ten and sixteen.

If one combines the above pieces of information and incorporate the age bracket, the picture one gets is this: Sakthan Thampuran spent a substantial sum of money for thirteen teenage Africans in fifteen years. The money spent on them and horses was astronomical by any yardstick. What strikes us here is the fact that the king does not seem to have bought Africans as slaves or domestics but as some kind of household decoration and exotic human specimens. So, whether they were intended as domestic help (as Whitehouse describes) or royal possessions, it is clear these Africans enjoyed a much better social standing than local agrestic slaves and indentured labourers.

When the British took over Cochin in 1795, the Dutch wanted to take with them their slaves

but the request was turned down (Whitehouse 27, Galetti 77). Thus, the Africans, irrespective of their social standing, were absorbed into the British Empire. Things, however, did not dramatically improve for the slaves under the British. The native government, which was controlled by the British, owned a large number of slaves and derived substantial income from them (Kusuman 48). In 1813, one comes across an order directing the officials concerned to feed a Negro named Ambady, whom the kings has purchased with money, twice a day from the government feeding house (Oottupura).

Even in 1854, the year in which slavery was formally abolished in Cochin, there were 6,589 slaves in the state; if we count agrestic slaves too, the number shoots up to more than fifty thousand, more than one-sixth of the entire population (Day 95). In the same year, the Dewan (prime minister) of Cochin wrote to the British Resident that most of the government slaves were attached to government lands and,

would be rented out with those lands to private individuals" and the total revenue from the slaves was about rupees 4,000. (Kusuman 103-04)

Three years later in 1857, the total population of Cochin was 39,9059 and slaves of all kinds accounted for 51,305 (Day 375).

Morphology of Martyrdom and Sainthood

At a later point of time, which one can only conjecture, these Africans began to be imagined as deities. It will be remembered that KM meets all the preconditions for a human being to be defied as a god in South India. Blackburn records that in folk cults death joins humans with gods and lists out three conditions which produce this effect:

First, the death must be premature, an end that cuts short a person's normal life span. Second, and more importantly, the death must be violent, an act of aggression or a sudden blow from nature. Many deified heroes are killed in battle, some in less glorious conflicts; others (especially women) commit suicide. Lastly, the death that deifies is undeserved; the person killed is an innocent (if often fated) victim. (260)

In a similar vein David Mosse shows that many minor deities in Tamilnadu were human in origin; following a violent, abrupt or premature death, which cut off the victim before he or she had the chance of surrendering all earthly ties (Bayly 33), they were transformed into gods and goddesses. It is evident that KM, as he exists in oral narrative traditions, admirably fulfils all these conditions: he was an innocent and helpless slave who died a violent, premature, and undeserved death.

Apart from this 'suitable' death, their physical distinctiveness, superior strength, and royal patronage might have catalysed popular imagination of Africans as empathetic but irascible deities. But there is another factor that is likely to have played a crucial role in the transmutation of an African into a folk deity. In many respects, KM resembles the gods who dominated the religious life of South India before the 18th century. These key divine figures stand out on account of their thirst for blood and power; they partake of all the passions and uncontained generative forces which colour everyday human experiences and could therefore be appealed to in time of specific ills and afflictions (Bayly 27).

So, KM is not merely a familiar and sympathetic figure, but one who resists the annihilation of indigenous gods and an agent who preserves

the traditions of piety partially buried by modernity and Brahminical discourses. His offerings which consist of meat, fish, egg, liquor, tobacco, and other dishes not only contrast with the accepted modes of worship but challenge the sanitised narratives which seek to homogenise and hegemonise gods, modes of worship and eventually entire populations. To rephrase, folk deities such as KM along with saints and similar figures engender a social space which sharply differentiates itself from the domain of organized religions.

Conclusion

Saints, demigods, and incarnations with an eclectic and liberal following are a defining feature of subaltern belief systems in Kerala. For example, Pulayas (a former untouchable caste) in Travancore used to worship figures such as Kappiri, Kathanar (literally 'a Christian priest') and Jinn (genies) along with other deities. While it is neither easy nor essential to specifically locate the historical frameworks in which these figures were born, they clearly exhibit features of blended religious practices and traditions (Whitefield 142). Dan Ben-Amos's view,

folklore is a communicative process and folk items represent the collected thoughts of a group of people and articulate their approved style of life. (Garner 54)

is germane in this context. These figures and the systems they are part of/stand for communicate to themselves and others the extent to which cultures and faith have liberally borrowed from diverse sources and assimilated them over time. Similarly, in many places in Kerala, people believe that Christian saints have a sibling relationship with other gods and goddesses (Dempsey 55-59, 83). The idea that folklore is autobio-

graphical ethnography, a people's own description of themselves which contrasts with descriptions made by external agencies such as social workers, sociologists, political scientists or anthropologists implies folklore has the ability to preserve such aspects of culture, and more crucially transmits them to the posterity. Put differently, folklore keeps alive those aspects of cultural life which are ignored/erased by mainstream historiography, though folklore itself is not history per se. A figure in folklore is predicated on creative imagination, but the process of imagination is historically embedded and emanative, and thus, can help one disentangle and interpret mazes of historical evolution and collective experiences.

KM belongs to this league. He occupies an oppositional space and animates counter discursive possibilities. His *taras* and devotees are a mnemonic code that neutralizes religious dogmas by blending them with heterodox streams of belief. What makes KM more interesting and worthy of attention is the fact that he offers an opening to understanding the way in which slaves were positioned and handled by the Portuguese and the Dutch during their regimes and immediately afterwards. In the context of Kerala, slavery is directly related to questions of caste and debates on slavery have important implications for our understanding of the histories of colonial and pre-colonial societies; most crucially proper insights into the evolutionary aspects of slavery enable us to "understand the ongoing and continuously adapting phenomenon of coerced and bonded labour" (Van Rossum, et al. 5-6) as they exist today. As already mentioned, folklore is not history per se, but it does contain elements of lived reality and does communicate cultural identities and social experiences of accumulated historical periods (Ogunleye 436). Moreover, as any cultural law is equally valid and binding for both folklore and

for the other aspects of culture, the data of folklore can be used to test theories about culture as a whole (Bascom 30).

It is true that a mythical folklorist rendering not only has its own limits and limitations but does not need historical legitimacy for its effective functioning. Still, it stands to reason that the belief surrounding KM have the potential to provide perceptive insights into our past. One feels that a cultural close reading of original sources in Portuguese and Dutch coupled with folklore narratives of the time with a focus on slavery will surely shed light on the hitherto unknown and unexplored aspects of colonial rule and ultimately help us understand ourselves better. In the process one will have to break free from the conceptual knots and ties ingrained into our thought apparatuses and conventional wisdom.

Notes

- ¹A temple for Gandhi and other freedom fighters' in Srikakulam park' www.newindianexpress.com/states/andhra-pradesh/2022/jan/30/temple-for-gandhi-and-other-freedom-fightersin-srikakulam-park-2413044.html
- ² Visit to Bullet Baba temple in Rajasthan: Spine-chilling story of a 350cc Royal Enfield that fulfills wishes' www.financialexpress.com/auto/bike-news/visit-bullet-baba-ombanna-dham-chotila-village-rajasthan-spine-chilling-real-story-350cc-royal-enfield-fulfills-wishes-jodhpur-pali-nh-62/2007376/
- ³ africanheritageindia.org/1314-2/
- ⁴oepasse or Topasses were Christians of Luso-Indian origin. In all probability there are domestic slaves formerly owned by the Portuguese and illegitimate children from them (Galletti 89-90; Day 231).

- ⁵For a detailed introduction to Siddis see Purnina Mehta Bhat *The African Diaspora in India* (2018); also Pinto *Slavery in Portuguese India* (1992).
- ⁶Kerala Archives (Regional Centre, Ernakulam), Series I, file number 380/2, dated 17.3.1794
- ⁷Kerala Archives, Series I, file number 380/4, dated 25.11.1794.
- ⁸Kerala Archives, Series II, file number 1159, dated 27 Makam 988 Malayalam Era (1813 C.E).
- Works Cited**
- Anonymous. *The Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama to India, 1497-99*. Hakluyt Society, 1898.
- Armstrong, Karen. *A Short History of Myth*. Penguin, 2005.
- . *A History of God*. Vintage, 1999.
- Arndt, Jochen S. 'What's in a Word? Historicising the Term 'Caffre' in European Discourses about Southern Africa between 1500 and 1800.' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19 Dec. 2017, pp. 1-17. doi:10.1080/03057070.2018.1403212. Accessed on 24 June 2020.
- Baber, Thomas Hervey. *An Account of the Slave Population in the Western Peninsula of India*. Parbury, Allen & Co., 1833.
- Bartolomeo, Fra Paolino de San. *Voyage to the East Indies*. Translated by John Reinhold Forster. Vernor and Hood, 1800.
- Bascom, William R. 'Folklore and Anthropology.' *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 66, no. 262, Oct-Dec 1953, pp. 283-90.
- Battuta, Ibn. *Travels in Asia and Africa 1325-54*. Translated by H.A.R. Gibb. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953.
- Bayly, Susan. *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*. Cambridge UP, 1989.
- Bernard, K.L. *History of Fort Kochi*. B. Bernard, 2015.
- Bhat, Purnina Mehta. *The African Diaspora in India*. Routledge, 2018.
- Bhattacharya, D.K. "Indians of African Origin." In *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, vol. 10, Cahier 40, 1970, pp. 579-82.
- Blackburn, Stuart H. "Death and Deification: Folk Cults in Hinduism." *History of Religions*, Feb. 1985, vol. 24. no. 3, pp. 255-74.
- Caldwell, Sarah. *Oh Terrifying Mother: Sexuality, Violence and Worship of the Goddess Kali*. Oxford UP, 2000.
- Correa, Gaspar. *The Three Voyages of Vasco da Gama and His Viceroyalty*. Translated by Henry E.J. Stanley. Burt Franklin, 1869.
- Dalgado, Monsignor Sebastiano Rodolfo. *Portuguese Vocables in Asiatic Languages*. Translated by Anthony Xavier Soares. Oriental Institute, 1936.
- Day, Francis. *The Land of the Perumals or Cochin, Its Past and Its Present*. Grantz Brothers, 1863.
- Dempsey, Corrine G. *Kerala Christian Sainthood: Collisions of Culture and Worldview in South India*. Oxford UP, 2001.
- Diaz, C. *Social History of Luso-Indians in Kerala*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. University of Calicut, 2009.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith. Routledge, 2005.
- Galletti, A. *The Dutch in Malabar*. Madras: Government Press, 1911.

- Garner, Thurman. "Black Ethos in Folktales." *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1, Sep. 1984, pp. 53-66.
- Ghurye, G.S. *Caste and Race in India*. Popular Prakashan, 2011.
- Harris, Joseph E. *The African Presence in Asia: Consequences of the East African Slave Trade*. Northwestern University Press, 1971.
- Hoskote, Ranjit. 'Beacons of Sainthood.' *India International Centre Quarterly*, vol. 26-27, no. 4-1, 1999, pp. 79-84.
- Jansen, Wm. Hugh. "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore." *The Study of Folklore*, edited by Alan Dundes, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965, pp. 43-51.
- Jayne, K.G. *Vasco da Gama and His Successors 1460-1580*. Methuen & Co, 1910.
- Jayasuriya, Shihaan de Silva. "India and the African Diaspora" Carole E. Boyce Davies ed. *Encyclopaedia of the African Diaspora*. ABC-CLIO, 2008.
- Kusuman, K.K. *Slavery in Travancore*. Kerala Historical Society, 1973.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Blackwell, 1991.
- Menon, P.R. *Sakthan Thampuran*. Mathrubhumi Books, 1958.
- Munro, J.D. *The High Ranges of Travancore*. Unknown publisher, 1880.
- Ogunleye, Tolagbe. "African American Folklore: Its Role in Reconstructing African American History." *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 27, no. 4, March 1997, pp. 435-55.
- Pearson, M.N. *The Portuguese in India*. Cambridge UP, 1990.
- Pescatello, Ann M. "The African Presence in Portuguese India." *Journal of Asian History*, vol. 11, no.1, 1977, pp. 26-48.
- Poonnen, T.I. *Lanthakkar Keralathil*. NBS, 1964.
- Pinto, Jeanette. *Slavery in Portuguese India 1510-1842*. Himalaya Publishing House, 1992.
- Romano, Octavio Ignacio. "Charismatic Medicine, Folk-Healing and Folk-Sainthood." *American Anthropologist*, vol. 67, no. 5 Part I, Oct. 1965, pp. 1151-73.
- Singh, Anjana. *Fort Cochin in Kerala, 1750-1830*, Brill, 2010.
- Thurston, Edgar. *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, vol. 6. Madras Government Press, 1909.
- Van Rossum, Mathias, et al. *Testimonials of Enslavement*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020.
- Whitehouse, T. *Some Historical Notices on Cochin in the Malabar Coast*. CMS Press, 1869.
- Whitefield, Henry. *The Village Gods of South India*. Oxford UP, 1921.



Racial Residues in Children's Literature: A Postcolonial Reading of *The Jungle Book*

Dr. Sony Augustine*

Abstract

Children's Literature is generally assumed to contain themes and ideologies pertaining to the frames of references suitable for a child's perspective and hence is interpreted from the periphery. However, the postmodern techniques of rereading and rewriting have unravelled the deeper levels of meaning involved in literary texts explicitly meant for children. This led to the practice of deciphering children's classics in new ways using hermeneutic practices to bring out the latent ideologies and discourses in them. This study is such an attempt to reread *The Jungle Book*, one of the classical works ever written primarily for children. Behind the innocent story delineated in the work, Rudyard Kipling tries to present deeper levels of meaning and one such important concern is the colonial ideology which is the result of his racial prejudices. What is attempted in this analysis is to reread four major stories in *The Jungle Book* and to project how the racial superiority and colonial oppression can be observed behind the explicit and entertaining stories.

Keywords: *Racial Prejudice, Coloniality, Hegemony, White Supremacy, and Rereading.*

*Dr. Sony Augustine, Assistant Professor and Research Guide, Department of Studies in English, Kannur University, Dr. Janaki Ammal Campus, Palayad-670661, Thalassery, Kannur, Kerala, India, Email: sonyaugustine@kannuruniv.ac.in

Rereading the age-old texts is a practice which received impetus from the deconstructive practices proposed by Jacques Derrida and accelerated by the postmodern critics. Many a classical work has been subjected to rewritings and reinterpretations in the contemporary literary scenario and the practice continues to gain momentum. Though this practice had been followed in all areas of literary endeavours, children's literature was suspicious of the process and eluded all sorts of rereading in the beginning. This may be because of the misconception that what forms part of the literature for children does not involve anything serious with regard to its content and ideologies. It was not until recently that insight into the politics of narration incorporated in this field of literary writings began to receive acceptance. This led to the widespread practice of re-writing and rereading children's classics as this academic exercise proved to be the core of postmodern and poststructural criticism. One such prominent area of revisiting is postcolonial studies.

The term 'postcolonial' entails diverse meanings and nuances as it is approached from different stances. Hence, postcolonial literature too is looked upon with many an implication which do not cater to the ordinary understanding of it as the literature that is produced after the period of colonial rule in a particular geographical area. It no longer implies the historical and chronological treatment of subject matter pertaining to that span of time termed as colonial rule and its aftermath. As a result of this renewed understanding, it is possible to reanalyse and to reinterpret the texts both prior to the colonial regime and after it. The locus of such a study involves political, social, and cultural implications. As Hans Bertens points out,

Postcolonial theory and criticism radically questions the aggressively expan-

sionist imperialism of the colonizing powers and in particular the system of values that supported imperialism and that it sees as still dominant within the Western world. It studies the process and effects of cultural displacement and the ways in which the displaced have culturally defended themselves. (200)

In short, any text, exhibiting imperialistic features could be analysed from the postcolonial standpoint. It is in this context that Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* deserves special attention as disseminating the colonial ideology.

Rudyard Kipling, an Indian by birth but English by culture, has always shown the ambiguous nature of his allegiance to both nationalities. However, he resolutely believed in the political and racial supremacy of Britain over India. "He was certain that to be ruled by Britain was India's right; to rule India was Britain's duty" (Nandy 64). This emphasis on the 'burden of the Englishman' had influenced him in the colonial representation of India and its culture in his literary works. He was famous for the racial portrayal of the various characters in his important literary works. *The Jungle Book* is not an exception. Various themes that go into the making of a colonial/racial text could very well be detected in his classic work which was read and appreciated by the readership comprising of both children and adults alike.

The most extensively read of all the stories in *The Jungle Book* are that of Mowgli, the boy brought up by the wolves. The colonial tactics of representing the colonizer as good and the colonized as evil was employed by Kipling as well. The characterisation of the animals in the forest is intended to create a binary between good and evil as the animals appear to be in either of the

group. Those who are the well-wishers of Mowgli are represented as good and they manifest all the positive qualities which are usually attributed to the colonizer in any text that eulogizes the colonizing project. Akela who is the head of the pack of wolves, the father and mother wolves, Bagheera, Baloo, Mowgli's brothers, and the other friends appear as epitome of goodness. On the other hand, Shere Khan, Tabaqui, and the rebel wolves represent the colonised and are depicted as if they are the embodiments of evil. It becomes clear when the first meeting of the pack of Seeonee is held. They are gathered to take a decision as to what must be done with regard to Shere Khan's claim over the man child. However, the pack, especially those who represent the colonial powers, defends Mowgli interpreting the law in order to suit their arguments.

The Law of the Jungle lays down that if there is any dispute as to the right of a cub to be accepted by the pack, he must be spoken for by at least two members of the pack who are not his father and mother. (Kipling 19)

The most important thing in the case of Mowgli is that no wolf speaks for him but Baloo and Bagheera. However, the author depicts them as if they are good and right in, following the rules of the jungle. What requires the attention of the readers is the similarity which one can find between this twist in the law made by the 'good' animals and the manipulation of the laws in the hands of the colonisers.

Another important aspect of the colonial perspective of the text is the fact that Mowgli represents the ambivalence of the colonizer. He comes from the village to the forest. He, at first, finds himself in comfort and satisfaction in the pack. He plays with the animals developing all the animal skill. But his human nature does not allow the jungle to accommodate him entirely.

Therefore, he had to go back to the village where again he is accepted initially. However, later he was driven out due to the fact that he cannot conform himself totally to the culture of man. This precarious condition Mowgli finds himself in is the experience of the colonizer as a result of his encounter with different cultures. Several post-colonial critics,

... have emphasized the failure of colonial regimes to produce stable and fixed identities and suggested that 'hybridity' of identities and the 'ambivalence' of colonial discourse more adequately describe the dynamics of the colonial encounter. (Loomba 92)

It is this unhinged predicament that Mowgli expresses when he says "Man-Pack and Wolf-Pack have cast me out, ... Now I will hunt alone in the jungle" (Kipling 121). However, he will overcome this situation and establish his domination over the colonised as Mowgli comes back to the forest and overpowers the animals.

In the long process of establishing one's own supremacy, the colonizer adopts various direct and indirect strategies. Most important among them is the manifestation of one's material or physical strength. The colonizer, at times, takes an unambiguous stance whereby he pushes aside those colonized people together with the impediments that occur in his way to total hegemony. In *The Jungle Book*, Mowgli wittingly and unwittingly behaves in this fashion. The mother wolf testifies to the lack of cowardice and spirit of dominion in Mowgli, when he was first brought to their cave.

He came naked, by night, alone and very hungry; yet he was not afraid! Look, he has pushed one of my babes to one side already. (Kipling 15)

This process of establishing domination over the colonized is continued till the end of the whole process of colonization. *The Jungle Book* testifies to this when Mowgli grows up like a man under the training and protection of both Baloo and Bagheera. His innate dream for authority or power is clear from the fact that while the pack is gathering together, he stares at the wolves to intimidate them. The colonial project never waits for legitimate measures to establish and retain its total control over the colonized. To this effect, even methods unlawful and unethical are espoused. The brutal killing of Shere Khan becomes relevant in this regard. Shere Khan best represents the colonized 'other' who falls a victim to the cunning plan and strategy adopted by Mowgli. Not able to withstand the physical power and grandeur in Shere Khan, Mowgli tries to trap him in an indirect fight. Shere Khan was killed when he had a good meal and drink. Mowgli knew that in this condition he will not be in a position either to fight or run away. His devious plan was to entrap Shere Khan between the herd of bulls and buffalos while he was resting after the meal. And this wicked plan worked out successfully. The mighty tiger was trampled under the hoofs of the bulls. However, Shere Khan was not ready to run away and decided to fight, though in vain. This shows his power and valour. The resistance shown by the colonized and the snares set against them by the colonizer can very well be observed here and a subversive reading of the novel throws light on the colonization process and its confinement.

Fire plays a vital role in the unfolding of the colonial project in *The Jungle Book*. Mowgli goes to the village and steals fire from the villagers as advised by Bagheera who said to Mowgli:

Go thou down quickly to the men's huts
in the valley, and take some of the Red
Flower which they grow there, so that

when the time comes thou mayest have
even a stronger friend than I or Baloo
or those of the pack that love thee. Get
the Red Flower. (Kipling 30-31)

The Red Flower is fire which alone intimidates all the creatures in the forest. However, it becomes the strongest weapon in the hands of the little colonizer, who escapes from the wolves and Shere Khan with its help. As long as it is in his hands, no one dares to touch him. This fire is the symbol of technological advancements in the hands of the colonizer with which he terrifies and oppresses the poor and the undeveloped colonized.

Kipling's colonial and racial undertakings become more vibrant and punching in "The White Seal," another important story in *The Jungle Book*. Here the entire imperialistic implications assume a new standpoint. What determines the validity of claim over racial superiority is the misconception that race is biological. Robin DiAngelo observes:

This biology accounts for differences we can see with our eyes such as skin colour, hair texture, and eye shape, and traits that we believe we see such as sexuality, athleticism, or mathematical ability. The idea of race as biological makes it easy to believe that many of the divisions we see in society are natural. (97)

The white hegemony is articulated through the portrayal of the hero of the story, Kotick, who is a seal born with white skin. He is the only seal which has ever been born with a white coat and this biological feature elevates him to the level of racial superiority. Since he is white and hence special, all superior qualities his friends lacked were attributed to him. He is presented as an inquisitive one. When men began to take hundreds

of seals to slaughterhouses, he alone noticed it and decided to find out the reality.

Hundreds and hundreds of thousands of seals watched them being driven, but they went on playing just the same. Kotick was the only one who asked questions, and none of his companions could tell him anything, except that the men always drove seals in that way for six weeks or two months of every year. (Kipling 139)

He follows and finds out the truth with regard to this mystery. The racial superiority attributed to the white colonizer as intelligent, smart, inquisitive, and imbued with skills of leadership is contrasted with the others who are inferior to him in all respects. What the author wants to drive home here is the concept that the white race is superior to all other races in the universe.

The depiction of white superiority takes further step when Kotick decides to discover a new beach for the seals to use as nursery. He decided to enquire and find out the best place for his companions. He, in spite of the various difficulties, began his search for a new haven. Here begins a relentless search which is born out of a strong and benevolent mind. Closely reading this depiction of superior qualities attributed to the white seal, one cannot help noticing the colonial project where the western colonizer becomes the embodiment of everything praiseworthy. The seal which is white is equated, in its merits, to the colonizer who belongs to the white race. The litany of eulogies showered on the white man does not end here. The white seal is presented as a traveller. He goes to various places in search of a secure place for his companions. Here the contrasting between the white seal on the one hand and his friends and other seals on the other takes new dimension. The white seal appears to possess all the masculine features traditionally at-

tributed to the colonizer which contrasts with the feminine features shared by the black seals. Kotick is like a European navigator who has circumrotated the globe in search of new lands. He goes to various places, meets with different creatures, encounters dangers, and comes back to his friends at regular intervals.

The racial prejudice reaches its zenith when Kotick finds out a beautiful beach which men have never trodden. He had to follow the sea cows for weeks before the destination appeared. When he returned with the good news, other seals did not believe him and he was called a liar. In his fury, he had to fight and defeat other seals before he went with them to the new place. Now the white seal is presented as if he is the saviour of the race. The postcolonial reading renders the deliberate attempt to delineate the white man as the redeemer of the whole humankind, and especially that of the people whom he subjugates. Kipling seems to emphasise on the burden of the Englishman to teach the 'savages' when Kotick roars to other seals:

I've done my best for you these five seasons past. I've found you the island where you'll be safe, but unless your heads are dragged off your silly necks you won't believe. (Kipling 155)

"Rikki-Tikki-Tavi," another important story by Kipling, is rich with postcolonial elements. Rikki-Tikki-Tavi is a mongoose whose fierce fight with two snakes forms the crux of the story. Rikki-Tikki-Tavi, however, represents the white colonizer who comes to a land which does not belong to him, but tries to grab the monopoly of power upon oneself. He reaches Teddy's house accidentally. That area belonged to Naga, the cobra. Rikki-Tikki-Tavi can best be described as an intruder there. Then Naga is challenged and killed. Nagina, his wife, too was sent to death. The crucial question centres around the right of

Rikki-Tikki-Tavi to encroach the residing area of Naga and Nagina. As in the case of the colonizer illegitimately taking up on himself the burden of protecting the locality, the mongoose uses an authority which is self-assumed. First the colonized loses his power over his own area, which finally leads to the loss of his own life and that of his dear ones. The postcoloniality is intensified since Rikki-Tikki-Tavi is serving a white boy and the killing of the snakes is for safeguarding him.

“Her Majesty’s Servants” too deserves mention when the postcolonial nature of *The Jungle Book* is discussed. A camp of men and animals is the centre of the story and it is the nature of the same that needs special attention.

It had been raining heavily for one whole month-raining on a camp of thirty thousand men, thousands of camels, elephants, horses, bullocks, and mules, all gathered together at a place called Rawalpindi, to be reviewed by the Viceroy of India. (Kipling 249)

This is the plight of the colonized where they have to undergo such physical and psychological hardships. Equally important is the description of the bodyguards and horses brought by the Amir of Afghanistan. They are described as people,

who had never seen a camp or a locomotive before in their lives — savage men and savage horses from somewhere at the back of Central Asia. (249)

The reference to the people as savages is part of the colonial project to denounce and belittle the cultural heritage of the colonized. This is what Frantz Fanon tries to highlight when he says that colonization always tries to distort the self-respect of the dominated people by degrad-

ing their cultural past (210). The author shows contempt at the mention of those men and horses. Disciplining attitude of the white people is highlighted. The order and discipline exhibited by the servants of the Viceroy is contrasted with the free will of the Afghans. But the priority is given to the former in the true fashion of colonial pomp and boasting. When the native officer says “Your Amir whom you do not obey must come here and take orders from our Viceroy” (Kipling 274). What resonates in his words is the pretensions of the westerner with regard to white pre-eminence in all the areas of life. Therefore, decolonization requires an erasure of the negative feelings inculcated in the minds of the dominated people about their own land and culture. This is what Chinua Achebe means when he says:

Here then is an adequate revolution for me to espouse-to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement. (30)

Looking at *The Jungle Book* from a postcolonial perspective provides insights into the ways in which individual and national identities are formed in a colonial situation. It never allows hybridity to persist.

Modernist narratives of dominance and authority, such as those of the Enlightenment, can achieve mastery only by privileging some voice and denying others. In this way the hybrid character of all cultures is discounted in the interests of homogeneity necessary to the exercise of power. (Waugh 363)

This observation can very well be attributed to Kipling.

Though not as obvious as his novel *Kim*, *The Jungle Book* manifests colonial features tacitly

embedded in the apparently innocent animal stories. The politics of a racially conscious narrative is what makes these tales for children more complex and obnoxious. There are a lot of references, as mentioned above, to the hegemonic attitude of the dominant race towards those who are deemed to be always inferior to them and therefore destined to be marginalised and oppressed. A close reading of the stories in *The Jungle Book* can unambiguously bring forth the hidden meanings and implications as well as the political and racial prejudices, as this analysis attempts to do. Though the findings envisaged in this analysis are not exhaustive, it can serve as a point of departure for further research in this area.

Works Cited

- Achebe, Chinua. *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays*. Heinemann, 1988.
- Bertens, Hans. *Literary Theory: The Basics*. Routledge, 2001.
- DiAngelo, Robin. "What Does It Mean to Be White? Developing White Racial Literacy." *Counterpoints*, vol. 497, Revised Edition 2016, pp. 97-106. www.jstor.org/stable/45157300.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of The Earth*. Translated by Constance Farrington. Grove, 1963.
- Kerr, Kathleen. "Race, Nation, and Ethnicity." Edited by Patricia Waugh. *Literary Theory and Criticism*. Oxford U P, 2006. pp. 362-85.
- Kipling, Rudyard. *The Jungle Book*. Macmillan and Company Limited, 1961.
- Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. Routledge, 2005.
- Nandy, Ashis. *The Intimate Enemy*. Oxford U P, 1983.



Politicized Gender Position in *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*

Archana S. K.*

Abstract

In our society one speaks the language of rights loud and often. But do the marginalized really have access to these rights? Individuals are denied their rights in the name of sex, sexuality, caste, and religion. They have to either arrive at a compromise or engage in a struggle. A. Revathi was one such individual who has been marginalized because she was born as a male and wanted to live her life as a woman. The paper titled “Politicized Gender Position in the Narrative *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story*” is an attempt to explore the plight of third gender in the autobiography “*The Truth About Me; A Hijra Life Story*.” It is the first of its kind in English from a member of the Hijra community, and it clearly shows how the Hijra community suffers lingual, sartorial, and economic colonization at the hands of this heteronormative society. The chief endeavour is to create awareness amidst people of the grievances of the third gender. The autobiography analyses the plight of the third gender through queer lens. The present study explores the authentic side of the story of the Hijra community and their social status. The autobiography is about the author’s everyday experience of discrimination, ridicule, and pain; it is also about her endurance and her joys. As a Hijra, A. Revathi gets pushed to the fringes of society. Yet she dared to share her innermost life with all – being a Hijra and ensuing in sex work. Her story is not meant to offend, accuse or hurt anyone’s sentiments. Her aim is to introduce the readers the lives of Hijras, their distinct culture, and their dreams and desires. It is a travelogue of travails but the intention of the author is not to “seek sympathy from society or government,” but rather to make this heteronormative society aware of the fact that the Hijras are also human- Hijras also have feelings, they too want to be loved and accepted, they too want to live. The paper focuses on the identity crisis faced by transwoman in general and Revathi, in particular, with the support of Queer theory.

Keywords: Transgender, Queertheory, Heteronormativity, Transsexual, and Gender Dysphoria.

*Archana S. K., Government Guest Lecturer, Department of English, Milad-E-Sherief Memorial College (MSM College), NH47, Kayamkulam-690502, Alappuzha District, Kerala, India
Email: archanask3@gmail.com

The term transgender gained popularity in the academic world during the last decade of the twentieth century, as an umbrella term describing a wide range of people, who crosses over or Trans conventional gender roles. In other words, it is used to describe people whose gender identity and sexual expression/orientation differs from conventional norms and expectations based on their assigned biological sex. Trans men and trans women are individuals identified as trans genders, whose gender identity corresponds to that of a male and a female. Virginia Prince, a transgender-identified author, is credited with coining this term in 1969 when she used the word 'transgenderal' to distinguish herself from transsexuals - that is - Hijras or eunuchs who physically alter their sex from male to female through surgery. Although one can find earlier instances of the use of the term 'transgenderism' in medical context to denote an 'urge for gender ('sex') change,' her use of the term denoted a clear distinction between sex and gender, thereby highlighting a difference between trans-ing sex (male or female) versus transing gender (masculine or feminine). In present times, the term transgender is generally taken as a broad category with many gender identities and expressions that include transsexual, gender queer, bisexual, and cross-dresser, among many others. Whatever is the origin of the term, it is alarming that the term is considered as a deviance from the established gender roles and identities since it intends to defy the binaries of good and bad or wanted and unwanted sexualities.

Many eminent theorists and writers have contributed significantly in deconstructing the sexual binaries and challenging heteronormativity. The post structural writings of French theorists Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, which along with questioning the binaries, also argues against the given fixed nature of sexual-

ity, rather than it being constituted by socio-cultural, political, and economic discourses. Monique Wittig's book *The Lesbian Body* (1973) looks at heterosexuality as a complex matrix of different circumstances and discourses, thereby naturalizing its fluid nature. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of Closet* (1990), Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) and Gayle Rubin's *Thinking Sex* (1994) are some of the seminal works in this regard. Sedgwick in *Epistemology of Closet* (1990) while distinguishing between the 'minoritizing' and 'universalizing' aspects of same sex desire, writes:

The persistence of the deadlock itself has been the single most powerful feature of the important twentieth century understandings of sexuality whether hetero or homo...what we can do is to understand better the structuring, the mechanisms, and the immense consequences of the incoherent dispensation under which we now live. (91)

It is important to recognize and appreciate the fact that gender and sexuality are not fixed but fluid entities. Sexuality is often confused with the term sex and used interchangeably. However, sex is biologically determined and often categorized as male and female on the basis of human anatomy. But defining sexuality is difficult because everyone has its own perception about it and the passionate feelings of love, physical, and emotional attraction that people have for each other keep changing. As a result, the fixed form of sexuality cannot be determined, more so, because, sexuality, apart from being biologically shaped and determined, is also 'socially derived' and various social, political, and cultural forces also play a role in shaping the sexuality of a person. Hence, sexuality, in the broad sense of the term, cannot be considered as purely biological but is also formed by the rules and conditioning

of the various forces of society. It also consists of expectations, narratives or identity formations which are conditioned by society and its different institutions like politics, culture, education, and healthcare.

Similarly gender of a person is also fluid because it is determined on the basis of sexuality. For example, some people have female gender but they behave and feel like a man from inside. Their behaviour establishes them as hairy male sexuality. As a result, they challenge the typical traits of female gender and wish to attain male gender. Thus, labeling sexuality in fixed terms can create problems because its nature is fluid and the characteristics of different sexualities overlap with each other. Due to these overlapping characteristics of different sexual identities like gays, lesbians, bisexuals, pansexual, or gender dysphoric, it can be considered as amorphous. Amorphous sexuality is used to describe people whose sexual orientation keeps on changing, like 'Dansexuality,' which includes the potentiality of being attracted to all genders and gender dysphoria, which means people, who fail to identify their true gender identity and remain in constant conflict with the gender assigned to them at birth.

In the light of the above history and fluid nature of gender and sexuality, the paper would examine some of the most pressing issues related to transgender sexuality and identity raised by A. Revathi in her path breaking autobiography- *The Truth About Me*. As she confesses in the preface, her aim is to "introduce to the readers the lives of Hijras, their distinct culture, and their dreams and desires" (V). Simultaneously, it is also her endeavour to be able to create through her book a little more social space and acceptance for her category of sexual minorities and make people realize that "Hijras are capable of more than just begging and sex work" (V). In her in-

terview with S. B. Vijaya Mary from *The Hindu*, Revathi makes it clear that she intended to write this autobiography,

so that people with similar experiences and who are in similar situations will take a leaf out of my book to deal with their lives. (2014)

The book, in a most forthright and honest manner, traces the journey of Revathi's life from being a helpless third gender victim to a fearless survivor and ultimately ending up as a tireless activist and a bold champion of transgender rights.

Born and brought up in a small village in Namakkal taluk in Salem district of Tamil Nadu, in a modest peasant family, as a youngest son in a family of five siblings, Doraisamy (as Revathi was called till she changed her name and sexual identity) got much attention and affection from his parents as a child. Yet, right from his early days, he had a craving to live and behave like a girl. He liked to go to the village school along with girls, return with them, wanted to play only girl's games and enjoyed helping his mother in household chores. Yet, in spite of constant teasing, and being "regular source of amusement and curiosity," Doraisamy, "could not stop being a girl" (7). The irresistible urge of femaleness in him could not be suppressed even after worst kinds of humiliation and insults. Doraiswamy's 'male body' nurtured the desires and passions of being a female. He always felt that a woman is trapped with a man's body,

A woman trapped in a man's body was how I thought of myself. But how could that be? Would the world accept me thus? I longed to be known as a woman and felt shamed by this feeling. I wondered why God has chosen to inflict this particular torture on me, and why he

could not have created me wholly male
or wholly female. (Revathi 15)

This identity crisis mainly originates from what Judith Butler terms as the 'heterosexual matrix' – a grid which is produced by the various societal institutions and practices – which links the human body to certain fixed sexual identity on the basis of the biological body. Any identity which does not map with this matrix of heterosexual identity with the specific male or female body is considered abnormal.

While referring to the childhood of Doraisamy, it is quite difficult to thrust on the pronoun 'he' or 'she.' Here, in this study, the identity of Doraisamy is referred to as 'he.' This absence of pronoun is the real identity crisis. Here comes the real baffling statement, 'she was he.' This perplexity has made them the third gender in the society, based on their ontological existence. The aforementioned passion or desire towards feminine things, Doraisamy always felt that he has the secret self of a woman, and he was not a complete man or a woman. The narrative of Revathi portrays the crippled identity of a human being, who has faced the non-cultural acceptance from the society. This limitation of cultural construction of gender has paved way to ponder the significance of psyche for the decision making. Here the choice of the transgender identity paves the way to construct an identity. The society has no role to play in the psyche of an individual and his/her decision making. The female spirit, 'wrapped in a male body' has made Revathi to take up a quite challenging decision of living a woman's life. This construct of a woman identity is crucial, as the society has to accept her as a woman, which is next to impossible. But the boldness in Revathi has made her construct the woman identity with the physical transformation. Here the identity of Doraisamy is demolished and a new construction of identity is made as Revathi.

After the traumatic phase of transformation, Revathi finds herself more interested in leading a family life, with husband and children. She knows her bodily limitations that she cannot conceive and give birth to a child. Adoption was another option in front of her (from within people of her kind). Every woman has a mother in her, whether she delivers a child or not.

I knew I couldn't have biological children (...), after all isn't it motherhood all about being nurturing and caring? (39-40)

The real woman in Revathi has made her take a decision of bringing up a child. Fortunately, she has got three daughters, who were males before and castrated themselves to females. They are Mayuri, Famila, and Ritu. They are good friends, the trio, who are educated in Bengaluru and they speak English fluently. They have been living independently in different houses with their male partners. They easily "pass off as women" (41). They call Revathi 'Mummy' and they mean it. They are called the chelas (disciples) of Revathi according to Hijra custom. Once again her identity as a woman is ensured here.

The next phase is her acceptance in her family at Namakkal village. After her transformation to Revathi, she has decided to visit her family in the attire of a female, to reassure her identity as a woman. Her brother was about to thrash her, but she could stop him by saying:

Look! I've had an operation and I'm a woman now. You can't beat me as before, you have no right to do. (113)

She has informed them about the surgery that has transformed her to be a woman. The ardent desire of becoming a woman has come true, though she is a 'pottai,' a transgender, in front of the relatives; she can pass off as a woman in the

places where she is new to. Her sister accepted her as a woman. She made her child call her, aunty. Here the identity is constructed as a woman; a reassured identity.

The society has not accepted the Trans woman as woman in general, Revathi, in particular. They are worried because of their physical appearance and they are measured with a cultural tool which is totally unfamiliar. In the autobiography Revathi accepts the fact that she belongs to Hijra community, and she is not a woman, but she wants to be a woman. Thus, she transformed herself to Revathi from the body of Doraisamy; in fact she freed her female soul, which was trapped in a male body. To the society, this is heights of insanity, and these transformed women are called escapists according to them. They don't understand the deepest desire of them to be a woman. They know only the gender binaries - male and female. Their cultural taboos don't allow the new women (transformed women) to be treated as women or educate them. The Indian society, though basically patriarchal is considered to be a progressive society, but Trans women, are they given justice in the society? Revathi, the empowered woman, has made a challenging decision to write her autobiography and make the world understand the problems faced by her and the women of her sort. She has a statement to the society; Hijras are no longer "stared at" and "laughed" (83), but rather consider them as human beings.

Works Cited

- Agrawal, Anuja. "Gendered Bodies: The Case of Third Gender in India." *Contribution to Sociology*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1997, pp. 273-97.
- Bose, B. *The Audacity of Pleasure: Sexualities, Literature and Cinema in India*. Three Essays Collective, 2017.
- Campbell, Jim and Morag Gillespie, Eds. *Feminist Economics and Public Policy*. Routledge, 2016.
- Hinchy, J. *Governing Gender and Sexuality in Colonial India: The Hijra, c. 1850-1900*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Lal, V. "Not This, Not That: The Hijras of India and the Cultural Politics of Sexuality." *Social Text*, vol. 61, 1999, pp. 119-40.
- Karthik, K. "(Trans) Gender and Caste Lived Experience – Transphobia as a Form of Brahminism." *An Interview of Living Smile Vidya. Sanhati*, 26 Jan. 2013, sanhati.com/excerpted/6051/.
- Konduru, D. and C. Hansing, Eds. "Socio-Cultural Exclusion and Inclusion of Transgenders in India." *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2018, pp. 10-17.
- Nanda, S. *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India*. Wads worth Publishing Company, 1999.
- Prabhu, G. "Writing a Life Between Gender Lines: Conversations with A. Revathi about her Autobiography *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*." *Writers in Conversation*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2014, pp.1-7.
- Revathi, A. *The Truth about Me; A Hijra Life Story*. Translated by V. Geetha. Penguin Books, 2010.



A Reading of Zofia Kossak's *Blessed are the Meek*: Understanding Ethical Choices and Sustainable Peace

Teresa J. Heloise* and Dr. Pius T.K.**

Abstract

The sixteenth goal of sustainable development focuses on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. When abstracts like peace and justice come into the centre along with much more concrete necessities like food, water, or shelter and so on, it is a sign that the world has awakened to the importance of these abstract ideas. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of any of the SDGs is based greatly on the ethical choices, made by individuals, and at large institutions and frames of power. Literature has from time-to-time enticed minds blinded by routine to question one's own choices and their consequences. Interesting among these is the genre of historical fiction which strives to recreate events from different perspectives. And many a time authors tend to juxtapose the present with the past to synthesize a solution for a present crisis from the past event. *Blessed are the Meek* by Zofia Kossak is one such work. Literature makes artistic alterations in history for aesthetic beauty and yet all alterations are unintentionally intentional.

Keywords: *Ethical Choices, Sustainable Peace, Peace Leadership, Choices and Consequences.*

*Teresa J. Heloise, Assistant Professor, Little Flower College, Guruvayoor, Puthanpalli, Thrissur-680103, Kerala, India. Research Scholar, St. Aloysius College, Elthuruth, Thrissur-680611, Kerala, India, Email: angelpeace143@gmail.com

**Dr. Pius T. K., Retired Associate Professor and Research Guide, Post Graduate and Research Department of English, St. Aloysius College, Elthuruth, Thrissur-680611, Kerala, India
Email: piustharakan@gmail.com

This paper aims to delineate the concept of peace idealized in the persona of Francis of Assisi in contrast to the scenes of the crusades. The idea of war and the evangelical teachings of peace are yoked together and led parallelly in the novel *Blessed are the Meek* by Zofia Kossak. The paper intends to investigate peace, including the structures, attitudes, and organisations that support it, as well as the motives that motivate people to work for it. Along that, it also tries to comprehend the complexities of conflicts and violence and the conflicting ideas of peace. In doing so it not only analyses the historic narrative and its characters but also the narrative structure and the proclivity of the author in the narrative. The paper begins by trying to understand the notion of peace. This eventually leads to the exploration of various strategies used to maintain or make peace which has evolved from the perceived impression of peace. Finally, the paper tries to extract the requisites of sustainable peace by exploring and analysing the instances in the novel and problematising the decisions and consequences in each of its fictional situations. These objectives are significant because it tries to investigate the author's efforts towards understanding what one calls today as sustainable peace in her contemplations of the crusades and its possible ethical alternatives placed amidst the panorama of the crisis of her times. It enables speculation of possible peace in the twenty-first century sustainable development goals perspective through a journey of a fictional thirteenth century crusade penned during a war-ridden twentieth century.

Understanding Peace

On 1st January 2022, the fifty fifth World Day of Peace, His Holiness Pope Francis concluded his message by hoping,

may more and more men and women
strive daily, with quiet humility and

courage, to be artisans of peace. And may they be ever inspired and accompanied by the blessings of the God of peace! (8)

In a natural way of thinking, peace is the most sought but often evading concept. On reflecting on the root words for 'peace' in different languages one finds that it comes from words that meant 'to fasten' (from *pak* Proto-Indo-European root); "free" and "friend" (from *frith* pre-Norman English root); "safe," "whole" (from *sal* hamito-semantic root) and so on (Wescott 96). There is no direct meaning for peace. Peace could mean the absence of violence, reconciliation, stability, harmony, balance, respect for the other, calmness, (as in Sanskrit word for peace *shanti*), tranquility, reconnecting (as in Indonesian word for peace *damai*), bind together or joining what was separated (from *eiro* Greek root). It means a lot of things together. Or rather it takes a lot of things to make peace. As Wolfgang Dietrich states "...there could be more than one legitimate possibility of thinking and living peace" (Dietrich 2).

Putting all the meanings together it might be understood that, peace is essentially proactive. It requires something to be done or a certain condition to be maintained and peace evolves as a consequence of this positive action. Johan Galtung suggests that there are two kinds of peace. Namely positive and negative peace, it is like two sides of a coin. The Norwegian peace scholar then goes on to define that positive peace,

is the integration of human society, the prevalence of social justice and negative peace 'is the absence of war,' absence of personal violence. (Galtung, "Violence" 183)

Progression of thoughts on peace is intricately connected to justice. Justice in its simplest

sense means giving what one deserves. It is in the absence of this act of righteousness conflicts arise in interpersonal or intra-personal relationships. Therefore, a discourse on peace cannot be complete without linking it with justice, coercion, power, and power structure. Peace is connected to coercion because at times conflict or violence is absent not because everything is well or harmonious but because of unhealthy compulsion or force for the sake of security. Likewise, it is connected to power and power structure, where power would simply mean the ability to control and the power structure is a group or an organization that has this ability.

A diachronic exploration of peace exertions exposes a variety of strategies and theories for maintaining, building, and sustaining peace. The ancient Greeks had an Amphictyonic League to limit wars between city-states. Pax Romana during the golden age of Rome established peace by taking care of the welfare of the citizen and stationing strong armies at the borders. In the Middle Ages 'Peace of God' forbade people from conflicts in places of worship. This age also saw the justification of war for justice and defence in the 'Just War Theory.' By the seventeenth century councils for peace were formed with plans for peace. This continues till the present times. In varying degrees such as peace retaining, conflict averting institutions rely on treaties, pacts, agreements, negotiations, diplomatic dialogues, and the like. Peace in most of these methods is intended to be retained by upholding justice, serving equity, and maintaining a balance.

Today, the contemplations on peace have progressed much and the target is on building 'Sustainable Peace.' Including both dynamics of the negative, as in the prevention of destruction and the positive, as in the promotion of integration of society one might define sustainable peace as,

existing in a state where the probability of using destructive conflict, opposition and violence to solve problems is so low that it does not enter into any party's strategy, while the probability of using cooperation, dialogue and collaborative problem-solving to promote social justice and wellbeing is so high that it governs the social organisation and life. (Coleman)

A deliberate choice of action willing for peace is required to retain sustaining peace. Therefore, it can be understood that if peace is the absence of conflict and a consequence of choices, and if lasting peace is an outcome of positive or ethical choices, then conflict is a consequence of unethical choices.

Ethical choices and the essentials of Sustainable Peace

In the third book of her historical trilogy on crusades, *Blessed are the Meek*, Zofia Kossak-Szczucka delineates a fictionalized picture of the thirteenth-century saint, Francis of Assisi amidst a war-ridden milieu. While using material extensively available on the historic Francis of Assisi, she diligently seasons him with her expectations of a peace leader. The book recreates one of the pivotal moments of Church history in all its vividness of adventure and intensity of emotions at the cusp of reconquering the Holy Sepulchre. Kossak has meticulously prepared a backdrop that would highlight the contrast of the various characters. Written around and published in its original Polish version in 1937. Zofia Kossak is a prolific Polish writer and this book is a part of her historic trilogy on the crusades. The most interesting aspect is the condition of Poland during the time of the book's publication. The two decades of the interbellum period were a period of new ideas in Polish literature. While the first

decade was characterised by the vivacity and vitality of the restoration of Polish independence, the second decade was infested with murky musings of the impending war, national conflicts, and growing pessimism. The latter decade saw a profusion of prose works tending to find solutions. Zofia's fiction of the crusade appears to be a way to find a solution to the present by looking at the past.

The Evangelical Idea of Peacebuilding: Transition from 'Just War' to 'Just Peace'

The book has its title from the 'Sermon on the Mount.' This happens to be one of the most articulate passages on Christ's radical teachings on peacebuilding and social justice. It postulates eight states that would lead to great joy. It is a philosophy awakening the people of God to the right attitude for achieving harmony and well-being righteously, thus the Kingdom's manifesto of peace. It is a law of love and abandonment. Gandhi was influenced deeply by this passage in the Bible and fashioned the *Sathyagraha* –the non-violence movement from it. "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth" (*The Holy Bible* Mt 5.5). The first part of this verse forms the title of the novel. Meekness is an amalgamation of inner humility, righteousness, moderation, and gentleness. In a spiritual sense one who is aware of oneself before God is humble and meek. Such persons would maintain a moderate attitude and thus will inherit the earth for they are already content with whatever is. The title, therefore, foreshadows the novel's alignment to peacebuilding and just peace.

Set in Italy, Acre, Jerusalem, and Egypt, the first chapter portrays the beginning of the thirteenth century and the Pope's anguish about the decaying Christian society, the warring European nations, civil outbreaks in Italy, nuisance caused by heresies, and above all the sorrow of the loss

of Jerusalem due to the failure of the fourth crusade owing to the greed of the knights. The first part gives much stress on Pope Innocent III's effort to call for a new crusade. When he failed to move the West, which had grown distrustful and materialistic, to pursue again a religious goal, the children shamed their elders flocking to the Holy Land. The legendary Children's crusade is given much life in the book. The book shows how the children were deceived by two Venetian ship owners, and of the crowds of children who embarked in Venice, those who were not drowned were sold into slavery across the sea. This touched the conscience of Europe and the fifth crusade was immediately set up.

The idea behind the crusades is the just war theory. Almost all cultures have favoured the Just War or the *Dharma yudha* as a final resort when evil goes beyond the limit. This doctrine ensures that the war is justifiable through a series of criteria. St. Augustine and St. Aquinas advocate the theory. It proposes that a war waged on the command of a rightful sovereign, waged for a just cause, on account of some wrong the attacked have committed, and also if the warriors have the right intent, namely to promote good and avoid evil then the war is just. The novel subtly questions this justness of the war when it shows glimpses from both sides of the camp. Warrior knights like Jean de Brienne, the Templars, the Hospitallers, and religious commanders like Cardinal Pelagius and the Pope himself on the European camp and Malik Al-Adil, Al-Kamil, and his commanders on the Arab camp, insisted, strategized and implemented war tactics in the name of the Holy Sepulchre or that piece of the port. But parallelly one has the little poor man who moves about among all these people envisaging to gain without weapons what the weapons could not. And rightly the Polish version of this novel was known as *Bez Oreza* meaning 'without weapons.'

Leadership for Sustaining Peace

Leadership plays an immensely great role in the task of peacebuilding. The novel brings an assorted variety of leadership, each showing its merits and demerits based on the choices they make. Every situation presents an easy choice, an essential choice, and an ethical choice. Most of the time ethical choices bear fruits of lasting peace. An individual's perception of events and worldview can influence their choices. Moral psychologist James Rest explains that ethical actions are the result of four psychological sub processes, namely, moral sensitivity, moral judgement, moral focus, and moral character.

The subtitle of the book suggests that it is a novel on St. Francis of Assisi, but the book gives equal attention to Jean de Brienne, the titular king of Jerusalem, bringing out a vivid contrast is the intention of the author. The very first time one see him, he is amidst grave personal unrest. He is asked to be the king of Jerusalem by marriage to the girl queen of Jerusalem. But he was passionately in love with the wife of his kinsman Blanche of Champagne, and she with him. He justifies his love relationship with her on the grounds of passion. This is an easy choice natural to his desire. Through his passionate hankering, he wrongs himself for desiring something that is not his, and wrongs Blanche's husband for coveting him of his lawful wife. So far, the choice he has made hinders only the lives of a few people. But for this reason, he tarried in Italy without leaving for Acre where he was to be king consort and take up the command of the crusade. His going to Acre and being King was an essential choice. He chose it because he could not evade it. His loveless marriage with Marie, Queen of Jerusalem, leads to her early death. The continuance of his affair with Blanche leads to negligence of his duties. He loses commandership of the army, which further leads to a lesser efficient but

more eager person to take up command. This again leads to the refusal of a peace truce, which leads to shameful defeat in the battle and the deaths of countless people on both sides. His scruples lead Blanche to end her life, leaving her son Theobald in sorrow. Here it is apparent that the chain of consequences of unethical choices and actions brought mass destruction, internal, and external conflict.

Jean was not a completely bad leader. He is thought of by the sultan as a knight more inclined towards peace than war. He had the magnanimity of listening to his people which made him popular among the knights of his court. He had a certain degree of indifference to wealth, for he never accepted any money from his wife or subjects though his coffers were near empty. At the least, the death of his young wife stirs him back to his duty consciousness. But by then he was too late. The butterfly effect of his easy choices had drastic consequences. Had he chosen the ethical action, he would have been still in power, could have had a voice to accept the truce, could have averted the war, and saved many lives including that of his dear ones. As he exclaims "Again and again that chain of consequences. When and where will it end?" (Kossak 357).

The book exposes several other characters who play the role of a leader but fail to fill in the capacity of peace leadership. For instance, in the very first chapter Pope Innocent III, the leader of the church is presented as a patriarch who has succeeded in suppressing wars, internal conflicts, heresies, and other crises by the excessive use of his authority, and military power. He is presented as one who is trying to unify Christendom by attaining a lot of power and prosperity. He thinks about the people but his latent goal is always achieving secular power to attain spiritual freedom. He is also seen to be planning a war for the sake of peace. Even though he is aware of his frail-

ties and the decadence of the church he finds himself helpless and unable to lead toward the right goal. This is also the reason why he can accept Francis as a new leader, or the protector of the church.

Yet another character in a leadership role is Cardinal Pelagius. Garbed in crimson he is presented as someone who is disliked by all. He believes that “in the world, nothing but force avails, and in order to be mighty one must be rich” (Kossak 73). He thinks that the goals would set right the means. His choices lack people-centredness. He does not care for the deaths of the people during combat. He is the one who takes charge of the crusading army instead of Jean de Brienne. He was provided with an opportunity to end the war and receive the Holy Land as a truce. But he refuses the offer and goes on to battle despite the warning of experienced warlords around him. This leads to a shameful defeat. He was not leader enough even to take up the responsibility of this defeat but forced/pleads his second in command Jean de Brienne to plead before the Sultan to release war hostages.

Peacebuilding is based on an associative approach: peace as the abolition of structural violence [oppression and domination] and not just of direct violence [warfare]. (Galtung, “Three Approaches” 285)

Due to their inability to make ethical choices that would prevent war or oppression or domination these leaders cannot be considered leaders for peacebuilding.

In stark contrast one has Francis. He is not placed in any political or religious leadership position, but he is depicted as someone who rises to that role without title due to his ethical choices. Some of the qualities Shai Har-El mentions found in true peace leaders are so. He says,

A peace leader chooses to believe that peace is possible when almost everyone else does not and builds it patiently, “peace by peace” ... a peace leader is a passionate, courageous, unyielding foot soldier in the unceasing battle for peace...a peace leader steps out of the box, takes risks, and makes the impossible happen...a peace leader listens attentively to his or her people and communicates authentically, actively and effectively. (Har-El 143-144)

One finds in Francis a person who firmly believes in peace. When he discusses with Pope Honorius about the matter of the Crusade and securing Jerusalem back, he says the troops need to go to Jerusalem unarmed, in the love of the Lord, because there is no need to defeat anybody. The very first dialogue Francis has in this book is “May the Lord give you peace” (Kossak 16). And throughout the book we see him making choices that build peace in him and also help others to do so. He is thought of by some characters in the novel as a dimwit, because of his seemingly undoable ideas. He never argues about anything yet gains the desired effect by meekly waiting. He is pictured as being people-centred; as one who feels the pain of the poor, the sorrowing, and all who are in various crises. He compassionately helps them resolve it and achieve interpersonal and intrapersonal peace. The novel illustrates him as a person who leads but never dominates; open to corrections and opposing opinions. Kossak has efficaciously chiselled out a true peace leader in Francis that she probably felt was very essential in her time.

Cooperation, Dialogue, and Collaborative Problem Solving for Sustaining Peace

An extension of Francis’ efforts on sustaining peace can be seen in his ability to cooperate with people working for and in peace. This is

clear in the way he leads his own community of minor brothers who have different ideas, and different personalities. But together they cooperate to live a life based on the Gospel.

He advocates dialogue and collaborative problem-solving measures for sustaining peace. This is obvious in the instance when Damietta is successfully conquered and Al-Kamil has no choice but to propose a truce by offering Jerusalem to the crusaders. Cardinal Pelagius rejects the truce and arrogantly decides to continue the siege. When Francis knows this, he is very sorry for the people of both the camps who had died and who would soon die because of the impending war. He comes in for a dialogue with Cardinal and tries to persuade him to make peace. When the Cardinal turned him down, he courageously goes to the Sultan for dialogue, to make some means to stop the war. Francis could endlessly make himself vulnerable to sustain peace. In the end, even though he could not stop the war, he gains the respect of the sultan. When things turned and the war was won by the sultan, he agrees to release war hostages for the sake of Francis instead of annihilating them.

Inclusivity, Transparency, and Accountability - Elements of Peace Culture

"Inclusivity is key to ensuring that peace is maintained over time" opines Youssef Mahmoud, senior advisor at International Peace Institute, and Anupah Makoond, Peacebuilder from Mauritius. They further assume that,

Peace is the automatic outcome for states that have inclusive, transparent, and accountable institutions, fair legal frameworks, inclusive economic policies, and a culture of tolerance. (Mahamoud 3)

If the states need to have these qualities it means individuals need to have them in them-

selves first to see peace as an outcome. One finds that Francis is open-minded and receives everyone and everything without any kind of distinction. Inclusivity is one of his traits. His attitude is such that, one must,

nurture the same goodwill and charity toward all, be they Christians or heathens, be they Arabs or Turks, good or bad, Serve and help everyone of them. (Kossak 364)

He has the tolerance to include everyone in his circle. He is very transparent in his dealings and his relationships. One of the characters is amazed that there is no need for a façade or pretence when one comes before Francis. Francis also approaches people clearly and transparently. Each time the author describes the physical structure of Francis a repeated mention of 'clear eyes' are seen. This could be symbolic of the transparency displayed by Francis. There are many instances' Francis displays his accountability. He keeps his word to the Sultan. He finds himself accountable to even strangers whose distress he has come to know.

In the novel, Francis finds a peaceful solution to resolve the problem of the Holy Sepulchre in his own way. In a peaceable way. In the last chapter, one finds Francis and Jean, now at Acre, having a heart-to-heart talk. Jean is disturbed still that he was unable to secure Jerusalem and keep the Holy Sepulchre from being defiled. But Francis assures that, he has left a handful of Brothers Minor who joined him in Jerusalem by the sepulchre and other Holy Places. They will forever be there and love the Lord with all their might and that love would outdo all worldly splendour and glory. When Jean de Brienne says that they would be thrashed by the enemy, Francis confidently tells,

They will hold out for no one will wish them ill. Only a weapon challenges a weapon, and might challenges might, while that which cares not for worldly protection is the safest and lasts the longest. (Kossak 374)

Conclusion

Through this work, Kossak is expertly capable to convey that conflict cannot resolve conflict. The meek Francis brought to life in the book sheds light on new ways of conflict resolution. One also finds that the sustainable peace that Francis tried to build is an outcome of consistent, dynamic, and ethical choices. Leaders who are visionaries of peace and who practice such choices play a great role in sustaining peace. A radical change in the mindset of all people to be a global community motivated by a deep and enduring commitment to peacebuilding would be required to grow a peace culture. A peace culture is one that normalises the thought process of the people to continually think of the common good. It is one that naturally negates power accumulation as a hidden agenda in any transaction /communication. Wellness in its full essence is sort for and received in such a state.

Despite setting sustainable development goals and so many countries signing it, the world is still facing serious disharmony, war, and unrest. Achieving peace, justice, and well-being is miles away. The world organisations have come up with new definitions for peace, yet peace is still evasive. This paper briefly looked into the understanding of peace down the time. It also explored the understanding of the peace in this novel. At the end of this deliberation on the various characters and scenarios within the novel, one might clearly conclude that the difficulty in achieving or reaching a state of sustainable peace is not due to the incomplete understanding of the idea of peace but due to the choice of actions that are not in alignment with this understanding.

Works Cited

- Coleman, Peter. "The Missing Piece in Sustainable Peace." *State of the Planet*, 4 Aug. 2022, www.news.climate.columbia.edu/2012/11/06/the-missing-piece-in-sustainable-peace. Accessed on 6 Nov. 2012.
- Dietrich, Wolfgang. *Interpretation of Peace in History and Culture*. Translated by Norbert Koppensteiner, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Francis. "Message for World Peace Day." *L'Osservatore Romano*, Vatican City, 053 (2.728), 31 Dec. 2021.
- Galtung, Johan. "Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peace-making and Peacebuilding." *Galtung, Peace, War, and Defense: Essays in Peace Research*, vol. 2, 1976.
- . "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research." *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 6, no.3, 1969, pp. 167-191. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/422690.
- Har-El, S. "What Makes a True Peace Leader?" *In Search of Israeli-Palestinian Peace*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- The Holy Bible*. New Revised Standard Version, Theological Publication in India, 1999.
- Kossak, Zofia. *Blessed Are the Meek: A Novel about St. Francis of Assisi*. Translated by Rulka Langer, Roy publishers, 1944.
- Mahmoud, Youssef, and Anupah Makoond. "Sustaining Peace: What does it mean in Practice?" *International Peace Institute*, 2017, pp. 1-5. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.com/stable/resrep09504.
- Wescott, Roger W. "Reflections on the Etymology of Some Words for 'Peace'." *International Journal on World Peace*, vol. 7, no. 3, Sep. 1990, pp. 94-97. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20751475.



The Presentation of Female Sexuality in Vikas Sharma's *Love's Not Time's Fool*

Dr. Kavita Arya*

Abstract

Female Sexuality across the culture, barring a few exceptions, is viewed as subordinate to male sexuality and is controlled through traditional practices and restrictions on female behaviour. Controversial traditional practices like female genital mutilation prevalent at some places in Africa and Middle East are seen as attempts at nullifying female sexuality. Honour killings are often carried out to control female sexuality. In most Indian fictions, female sexuality is conveniently swept under the carpet while male sexuality is exhibited without any remorse. There is some inhibition around the subject of female sexuality and women are presented to be at the receiving end as sexual partners. Husband and wife are not treated as equal human beings but are expected to be a dominating husband and a submissive wife. But Vikas Sharma's *Love's Not Time's Fool* (2021) does not shy away from presenting female sexuality in its true nature and colour. His female characters are sexually awakened persons. They not only know and understand their power and position as women but also assert their sexual desires and preferences. They are not shy or scared of being women; rather they celebrate their womanhood, and, instead of suppressing their sexuality, they express their sexuality without any inhibition.

Keywords: *Love, Emotion, Female-Sexuality, Beauty, Charm, Lust, Lesbian, Emancipation, and Empowerment.*

*Dr. Kavita Arya, Associate Professor, Department of English, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith, Station Road, Maldahiya Crossing, Maldahiya, Kashi Vidyapith, Chetganj, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh-221002, India, Email: kvarya@gmail.com

Female sexuality, which is a part of human sexuality encompasses broad range of behaviours and processes including female sexual identity and sexual behaviour. Traditionally, female sexuality has no female perspective. It is defined in terms of male sexuality. It ignores the woman's need of access to sexual health and education regarding safe sex and birth control, their desire of bodily autonomy, and their right to give or withhold consent to sex. The choice of 'safe sex' or 'protected sex' is available only to men, not to women. The virginity and chastity of women are associated with family honour. In a patriarchal society, like the Indian society, women are not born but made through social and cultural conditioning. They are taught not to demand or show interest in sex or to find pleasure in sex. They should submit to their husbands for sex and not have sex outside marriage. Men are taught to feel entitled to have sexual relations and pleasure, and their self-worth is demonstrated through their sexual prowess and notions of authority and power over women. Opposing such inequalities in heterosexual intercourse, Catharine Mackinnon points out that men and women may be unequal on the basis of worldly considerations like wealth and status, but in the matter of sexual interaction which is a biological process, they are equal. She says,

The assumption is that women can be unequal to men economically, socially, politically, and in religion, but the moment they have sexual interactions, they are free and equal. (7)

Vikas Sharma's novel *Love's Not Time's Fool* which derives its title from the first line of third quatrain in William Shakespeare's Sonnet No. 116 is a female centric novel which presents both implicit and explicit aspects and manifestations of

female sexuality and behaviour through the narrator and chief protagonist, Richa Pandit alias Vaidik, and other female characters.

Main Text

Love's Not Time's Fool presents female sexuality in its various aspects like physical charms, biological sex, gender roles, sexual orientation, etc. Apart from Richa Pandit, the central female character, there are three other female characters in the novel namely, Nikki, Rikki, and Ishqi, who express their sexuality in different situations. Their sexual feelings, thoughts, attractions, and behaviour towards both men and women mark their sexuality.

The novel begins with the description of Richa Pandit as a smart young woman. She has a healthy body image and a very good dress sense. She is conscious of her physical beauty and female charms which could catch lusty male gaze. As, she stands naked before the mirror and looks at herself, she gives a sensuous description of her physical appearance in the following words;

As I wore a woolen high neck pullover and trousers, I admired my figure. My boobs appeared bulging out in this tight pullover and my hips appeared out of tight trousers. (Sharma 5)

The description of her own beauty shows her self-love; she loves and admires her own feminine charms. Looking at her own body makes her feel good, as she feels comfortable with what she is. Her chance of meeting with Abhilash, a student of St. John's College Agra, and her spontaneous efforts to befriend him and bring him home, and the way a fast-paced intimacy develops between them show the dominance of 'love hormones' or 'happiness hormones' which Richa never tries to conceal. Her man-hunting moves are the bold expressions of her sexuality.

Like a hunter, Richa pursues her game. As they go on to play tennis in her home tennis court, she follows Abhilash's eyes and stealthily notices them stopping involuntarily for a while on her bosom. Her attraction towards him and her rousing interest in him are obvious in her following his wandering eyes to find out his level of attraction to her beauty and charm. She derives pleasure from watching how he stealthily notice the rise and fall of her breasts and smooth and beautiful thighs during the play. Her offering to him her husband's bathroom marks her intentions. Her carnal desires make her watch his naked body under the shower through the partition glass of the adjacent bathroom, and then suddenly joins him naked to bath together. She seduces him in having sex with her by offering wine and Abhilash yields to her seductive charms. To prolong this blessing and satisfy her craving for physical intimacy with Abhilash, she asks Abhilash to shift from his P.G. accommodation to her house as a part time employee of her Peppe & Tette Footwear for Rs. 25000/- per month. Their living together under the same roof gives Richa all opportunities to express her sexuality and allow their love to evolve at a fast pace. Richa's first love affair with Robert Lee in the USA was kept a secret from her family. She used to spend time with Robert Lee in the privacy of hotel rooms and got pregnant from him before marriage. But her affair with Abhilash is not a secret. She talks about sex, reflects on her sexual needs and desires, and connects with him on equal terms. She decides when and where she wants to have sex with him. She manages her sexual desires and makes choice and expects sexual pleasure from the act. She enjoys sexual attraction, expression, arousal, foreplay, intercourse, and orgasm without fear, guilt or shame. To her, sex is a matter of availability, convenience, and mutual willingness. Richa's sexuality may be a result of her social, economic, and cultural background. She grew up

in a high-class society receiving her education in the liberal atmosphere of the USA, her emotions are not burdened with guilt consciousness of committing adultery. Moreover, the biological urges supersede the ethical, moral, and cultural concerns. Richa tells Abhilash that she was "free for him every time and every day" (Sharma 131). They make love frequently and spontaneously in the wink of an eye.

Richa knows the strength and power of the female sex. So, she does not approve of Shakespeare's statement "Frailty! Thy name is woman!" in "Hamlet" (146). She tells Abhilash that being a woman she cannot be unfair to womanhood and blame women for human problems. She is aware of the consequences of what she is doing and is ready to face them.

My simple presumption is that everybody suffers trouble for their evil deeds and one has to pay heavy price or disobedience of ethical codes. (21)

But she never thinks that she is doing anything wrong by following her heart. In her morning prayer to Lord Krishna, she says,

Perform thy duty regularly with love and don't bother for results.... Good action can make your character good and bad actions lead you to your doom. Nobody likes a greedy and lecherous person as the nobility of character is the greatest pearl that shines even in darkness. (35)

She is a dynamic person, a confirmed pleasure seeker, ever eager to make the best of everything, every day. She never bothers about what the people will say.

Richa is frank in her conjugal life. Her relationship with her husband is not pleasant. She

suspects that her husband is having extra-marital affair with his employee, Indumati Varshney, but she keeps her suspicion under wrap, unless she gets a valid proof:

But it was futile to blame him as Indumati often talked of going abroad with a boy friend from Aligarh. How could I blame an innocent virgin who worked hard for the office and I needed some solid proof for that? I hardly doubted Malya for the fuss. Appearances are often deceptive. (52)

She confronts Indumati who had returned from a business trip to the USA and Canada prior to Malya, and asks about her pleasure trips with him.

Indumati passes on to her the information received from Malya's friend, Tiny Srivastava, in the USA, that Malya "has been hit on his penis while fielding in a cricket match. He has no potency so far as his manhood is concerned" (122). She tells Richa that during the trip, Malya had forced her to sleep naked with him, and enjoyed playing with her body but failed to have sex with her. Indumati had to return earlier to escape such orgies. Now Richa remembers how Malya had 'postponed sex' after getting hurt in the cricket match just after three months of her marriage. His surgeon had passed off his open surgery of penis as a major surgery in the lower abdomen.

Richa's expression of sexuality is not limited to the cozy atmosphere of home alone but extends to the outside world. When she goes to Mumbai with Abhilash, they stay together in the same room in the hotel 'Holiday Inn,' and spend a lot of time drinking wine, making love, and sleeping in each other arms. Richa thinks of her husband and worries for Abhilash. But she does not suffer from guilt consciousness as she asks

herself, "Why does Malya not respond to my love sensations? How long to feel dissatisfied like this? Will worldly pleasures never quench my thirst" (66). When Abhilash calls her "Malya's worthy wife," she asks him not to bring Malya between them. She is not concerned with social, ethical, and moral norms of society. She wants to break and forget all the bondages set around women. She tells Abhilash, "I wish to love you in a way that makes me forget the whole world. Hell with all people and worldly things" (77).

Richa knows how to tackle the advances of her brother-in-law, Nirupam Kaul, who was full of lust for her and was eager to seduce her, ever since he had seen her in his father's *uthaoni*. When he visits her after Holi on the pretext of business and invites her for having sex with him, she eagerly surrenders herself to him because she wanted to have sex with him. They make the best of time making love several times. But when he proposes to her to shift to Delhi and offers to buy an apartment for her in Dwarka Colony where they could make love without being disturbed by his wife, Neelam Kaul, she is guarded in her response. She does not want to spoil the conjugal life of her younger sister:

As he mentioned the name of sister Neelam, I was taken aback and thought of his growing lust for me. Since I had only one loving sister as my patron and guide, didn't wish to cheat her and interfere in her personal life merely because of Jiju's lust and my selfish gains. (141)

She also wants to keep his investment of Rs.1000 crore on her proposed textile unit. So she bargained with him that he should either sacrifice his wife and children for her sake or she will come to Delhi once a year on the pretext of business meeting and pass time with him in the hotel

to satisfy his lust. Nirupam feels irritated and leaves for Delhi the next day after satisfying his lust to his heart's content. Despite her *Jiju's* amorous advances and her casual sexual relations with him, Richa finally decides to share the secrets of her *Jiju* with her sister to save her conjugal life. Later she also makes Neelam to take Nirupam to court for offending her after her marriage with Abhilash and refusing to consider her as a member of the extended family.

But after her sexual encounter with Nirupam, Richa is left wondering: "Is a widow everybody's wife" (143). Finally, she decides to maintain her self-dignity by marrying Abhilash and getting rid of her one month old widowhood, to reign in her animal instincts, and cherish the social virtues of chastity, fortitude, righteousness, and forgiveness. After marriage she tells Abhilash,

If Wife of Bath could have five husbands in the church, I, being daughter of an I.A.S. Officer, and highly educated abroad, has the right to chose a man to love me for the sake of love (147).

However, she does not want to leave anything to chance. So, she takes with Abhilash certain mutual vows like refraining from gambling with money, investing in share market, drinking outside with philanderers, and having extra-marital relationship. They promised to be true to each other and cherish each other. Obviously, their marriage marks the end of their sexual freedom but their vows are meant to give a safe direction to their conjugal life and business.

Richa's sexuality is revealed even in her bridal night. She celebrates her bridal night with Abhilash as equal players in the game of sex. In traditional honeymoon, the bride under the veil sits modestly on the bed and waits for her hus-

band to enter the room, remove her veil and de-flower her. But even in her 'ethical honeymoon' after their marriage, it is not Abhilash but Richa who directs the action:

I asked him to enter the bedroom just after one minute only. First I covered my head with the *pallu* of my *saree* and sat in the middle of the bed. Then I asked him to enter the bedroom. As he tried to remove my *pallu*, I asked him – "You have to present a gift to enjoy honeymoon dear Abhi. This is a ritual. (148)

Apart from Richa, at least two minor female characters in the novel-Ishqi and Nikki- express female sexuality at different stages of the story. Ishqi belongs to a lower middle-class family but she is quite frank and bold in the expression of her sexuality. When Abhilash was studying in intermediate classes, he often pressed her breasts and hips while playing carom board and cards. He used to arouse her sexual thirst but never quenched it. Even after the lapse of four years, Ishqi feels that thirst and she gropes Abhilash when she gets a chance to share bed with him in a room in Richa's house. She wants sexual gratification from Abhilash and she feels hurt and starts weeping when Abhilash terms her demand as "nonsense" and "lechery" and stops her advances (58). She tells him that he was not fair to her sentiments,

You aroused me and then left me dissatisfied. Abhi, was it decent then? How is it indecent now though I have waited for your company for nearly four years? Disgusting that you have changed in this big city. (58)

The episode shows that biology supersedes the ethical, moral, and cultural concerns which tend to suppress female sexuality.

Nikki, Abhilash's former co-resident in the P.G. accommodation and then his colleague in 'Peppe and Tette Footwear,' is quite open in expressing her sexuality and demanding sex and marriage from Abhilash. On her first evening in Richa's bungalow, after playing tennis, Richa had sent her to Abhilash's room for taking rest at night. Abhilash had got excited to see her by his side in bed and had consensual sex with her. That was a chance encounter, but when Nikki wanted to take that chance encounter further for a decent future, he told her frankly that there was no love between them. But Nikki declared that she loved Abhilash with her "heart and soul" (95) and she wanted to solemnize 'Gandhrava Marriage' with him. She had planned everything at her own and arranged for two garlands to be exchanged as a part of marriage ritual. Abhilash succeeded in convincing her to postpone that 'Gandharva Marriage' for a bright future ahead and satisfied her rising passion in bed saying, "Nikki, a dead body cannot enjoy pleasure. Even Gods aspire to love earthly paragons of beauty" (97). Here Abhilash approves of Nikki's sexuality and says that it is but natural for a living person, man or woman, to feel attraction and desire sex and there is no need to suppress it.

Lesbianism and female bisexuality are revealed in the sexual behaviours of almost all important female characters. There is a hint at the lesbian passion of Richa for Ishqi when she receives a body massage from her:

I don't know if she enjoyed pressing my hips or the breasts but I felt excited. But I checked my rising passion as she was my maid servant (91).

A relation of the same can also be found in Nikki Rikki as they shared the same bed and slept together and groped each other with pleasure. She tells Abhilash in the context of her first chance sexual encounter with him:

It is true that unconsciously I was searching for Rikki by my side in bed. But you pressed my boobs, and then hips and what not (94).

Richa and Rikki enjoy lesbian pleasure when they share a bed almost in a state of nakedness. Once when Rikki's undergarments were wet with perspiration after playing tennis. Richa gave her a buttonless cotton gown to wear. As Rikki entered the bed, she found Richa only in panties. Richa told Rikki that generally she slept without clothes and asked her to remove her gown if she so desired. Their lesbian pleasure starts as Rikki lay down by the side of Richa in the same quilt:

Soon Madam [Richa] embraced her bosom taking her to be Abhi. Both of them kissed each other for long four-five times but Madam missed the company of Abhi that night. (46)

However, these are mere chance encounters and individual mental or mutual explorations of pleasures and have been kept under wrap by the concerned characters.

Richa's satisfaction in her boundless love for Abhilash, her subsequent marriage with him, her marriage vows, and her control over lesbian feelings, restrain her sexuality from reaching the verge of radical feminism which rejects all the patriarchal ideals and seeks to eliminate male supremacy in all social and economic contexts. Richa and other female characters in the novel follow the golden middle path. The story ends with the discovery that Richa was pregnant from Abhilash and he hugged her saying, "Our life is complete now" (176).

Vikas Sharma's *Love's Not Time's Fool* may be compared to his novel *I.A.S. Today* (2021) which

presents female sexuality through its central female character, Trishla Vasu, an I.A.S. trainee who shares room with her fellow trainee, Romesh Shrotriya, in the hostel of Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie. While Trishla is the daughter of a serving I.A.S. officer in Karnataka, Romesh's family belongs to the farming class in the rural area of U.P. It is Trishla who takes Romesh to Evelyn Bar Hotel and orders for champagne to celebrate his victory in his maiden speech delivered to his fellow trainees. It is Trishla who plans a visit to the Kempty Falls and asks Romesh to accompany her. On reaching the fall she changes into a swim suit and swims like a big fish asking a hesitant Romesh to follow her. After coming out of water, she stands by his side and hugs him hard. On their way back to the hotel, she sits very close to him and puts her hand on his thighs. She walks to the dining hall taking his hand in her hand. She shares the same bed with him and tells him, "Forget everything in my arms and let me burry my pat in your arms" (Sharma, I.A.S. 133). But Trishla differs from Richa in having sex before marriage. Trishla has sex with Romesh only after performing marriage rituals to become husband and wife, garlanding each other, taking mutual marriage vows, and Romesh putting a pinch of vermillion on her forehead. Trishla makes her own choice and takes her own decision without any regret,

She had taken firm decision to marry Romesh come what may. As a young girl, she led her life in her own way and material comforts and a grand marriage show had no significance for her now. (134)

She invites the faculty members and the trainees to an evening dinner and announces her marriage with Romesh to avoid any rumour-

mongering. Obviously, Richa and Trishla are placed in different situations, but they have two things common between them which is that they defy any patriarchal conditioning on their sexual behaviour and they follow the best part of the tradition for the sake of order and stability in their conjugal life.

Conclusion

Love's Not Time's Fool shows that the perception of modern Indian women is transforming and they are overcoming the restrictions which have evolved through the ages, asserting their sexuality as Richa Pandit does. The bondages imposed by society and culture are breaking in the 21st century. Expression of female sexuality is seen here as a kind of woman empowerment which promote women's sense of self-worth, their ability to determine their own choices, and their right to influence changes not only for themselves but also for others. Altogether, it creates a safer and enjoyable world not only for women but for everyone. Richa feeling confident and comfortable in her body, her urge to express her own sexual interests and her ability to derive pleasure from sex are the testimonies of her empowerment and this empowerment is a blessing for Abhilash, Nikki, Rikki, and Ishqi. Richa is never scared of being a woman, and when one is not scared of being a woman, it is a mark of true emancipation and empowerment. This is the evidence that in the 21st century sexism is being normalized.

Works Cited and Consulted

- Archer, John and Barbara Lloyd. *Sex and Gender*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Carroll, Janell L. *Sexuality Now: Embracing Diversity*. Cengage Learning, 2009.

- Mackinnon, Catharine A. "Are Women Human? And Other International Dialogues - Stuart Jeffries Talks to Leading Feminist." www.theguardian.com. April, 12, 2006. Accessed on 03 Jul. 2022.
- Miller, Leh and J. Justin. "The Psychology of Human Sexuality." *John Willey and Sons*, 2013.
- Rao, T. S., et al. "Female Sexuality." *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 57 (Supplement-2), July, 2015. www.indianjpsychiatry.org. Accessed on 03 Jul. 2022.
- Sharma, Vikas. *Love's Not Time's Fool*. Diamond Books, 2021.
- . *IAS Today*. Diamond Books, 2021.



Re-defining Femininity: A Study of the Mini Screen Femininity

Dr. Rafseena M.*

Abstract

Indian tele-arena, widely popular for its TRP rated soap operas and comedy shows, has been discharging a heavy role in the circulation of a popular mass subculture. Heavily idealized idol-images of masculine and feminine subjects have not only hijacked the rituals and Indian traditions to speak of, but it has also cunningly dumbfounded its representations to the larger public. The public domain of mass media, and its recipients have willfully suspended their disbelief in favour of the social exclusion of the unrepresented masses. The present paper probes into some of the popular TV soap operas in Hindi in Indian Television to eke out a parallaxian view of the feminine subjects whereby the focus would precariously point to the non-represented feminine subjects from the socially backward groups. The paper would take a closer analysis of the select TV soap operas using the concept of Parallax by Zizek in order to embark on a search for the henceforth hegemonic manifestations of femininity in the Indian context as well the willing social exclusion of the above-mentioned subjects.

Keywords: *Femininity, Idealized Femininity, Popular Culture, Masculinity, and Media.*

*Dr. Rafseena M., Assistant Professor, Department of Studies in English, Dr. Janaki Ammal Campus, Kannur University, Kannur, Kerala, India, Email: mrafseena@gmail.com

Indian culture and tradition, with its richness of values and customs dating back to the time of the Upanishads, the vedas, the puranas and the epics, uphold the immense treasure of the Indian ethics as well as its moral stand. The ancient myths and sagas of sacrifice, prowess, humility and dignity has been brought into the frame work of a celluloid from the beginning of the Indian Television history with the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharatha*, being telecasted, thereby creating a new history in the arena of the 'epic' reproduction. History should not remain obscure to the common man; there lies the essence of such representations. History, myth, and media thus embarked on a new journey in the Indian Television history. History of Indian Television, when pragmatically analyzed, asserts the basic truth that indeed it was 'his' story that was being recorded through the lens of the celluloid. History itself testifies the late entry of 'her' stories into the Indian television field with the introduction of technology on a large-scale basis in the beginning of the 20th century, with some strong female protagonists being introduced into the Indian macro and mini screens.

Be it the field of cinema or drama, 'femininity' and its associated representations have always had a monotonous development. With the concept of 'satisavriti' being pinned onto the Indian cultural establishment, femininity tends to be represented as a sacrosanct position which the Indian household holds for a woman. Womanhood has been ascribed a position of respect in the Indian tradition. The concept of God in Hinduism as 'Ardhanariswar' too points to the respectable attributes, religion has endowed upon woman. Ideal womanhood glorifying the value of chastity (pativrata) as illustrated in the *Ramayana* directs one to the image of an idealized feminine figure in the Indian socio-cultural set up.

To understand an abstract entity like femininity, it has to be juxtaposed with its counter entity, masculinity. The present paper, rather than focusing on the differential nature of the two entities, would focus on the absences and pitfalls the Indian telly soap operas have been willingly implementing in projecting an idealized femininity. For this purpose, select T.V. operas have been subjected to a deeper introspection from a parallaxian perspective as offered by Slavoj Zizek in his magnum opus *The Parallax View*.

Subject, as enunciated by Zizek, evolves basically on the differential axis of an object. To be a subject, Zizek observes, one has to submit "oneself to the object's passivity, of its passive presence, is that which moves, annoys, disturbs, traumatizes us" (19). The object, on the other hand, "is that which objects, that which disturbs the smooth running of things" (19). Thus, while "the subject is defined by a fundamental passivity, it is the object from which movement comes" (19). Looking at the concept of femininity from the subject/ object viewpoint, a parallaxian angle becomes functional so much so that femininity gets defined in its oppositional relation to masculinity as well as femininity itself. The notion of parallax is constituted by,

The apparent displacement of an object caused by a change in the observational position which provides a new line of sight. (19)

The basic notion of femininity being presented as an idealized one on account of the woman's sense of sacrifice, devotion, love, tolerance, and commitment to her duties, however posits a very problematic nature about its very existence when the same is taken out of its safe zone and is appropriated on to a bigger subject area.

The notion of idealized femininity, as nurtured and developed in the Indian social context since the ancient times, has been commodified with the emergence of popular mass media and the mass culture. A woman with all the essential features of an ideal female character, as per the standardized patriarchal belief system says, is one who can very well be acknowledged as a 'kulastree,' one who hails from a very respectable upper-class family. She is the epitome of virtue, tolerance, sacrifice, and unconditional commitment to her family. The virtue of woman has been praised in the ancient sagas and the epics that the circulation of such an image was very easy when the epics got televised into episodic narratives. The met narratives, thus, contributed a lot to establishing the idealized notions and celebrated it without any disagreement. The social space, as generated and expanded along the lines of family status and heredity, not only got itself intertwined with the new space of media, but it also resulted in the procreation of an amalgamation of the popular mass media and the mass culture.

The confluence of popular mass media with the standardized and accepted norms of societal behaviour had its influence on the general taste of the public in more subtle ways. A resurgence of the public interest became more visible with the privatization of the media towards the second half of the twenty first century. With a view to the high rated TRPs, the visual media tuned itself to the motto of providing idealized versions of family entertainment soap operas. The Indian scenario was offering vast spaces of new media endeavours so much so that the concept of idealized femininity was revived with much vigour but in new forms.

The present paper, which attempts to focus on a parallaxian positioning of 'idealized femi-

ninity' in Indian telly soap operas, centres its focus on addressing the gaps, the fissures and the absences of the erstwhile representations of femininity in the mainstream. With the feminist movement gaining momentum in the Indian soil, the Indian woman has been able to voice their experiences in the patriarchal society in modest terms. New approaches in all walks of life ensuring a dignified life for women of all representation are what an ideal outcome should have been. However, the patriarchal bound social set up ensured the undaunted hegemony of the male superiority in unequivocal terms. With the passage of time, society opened itself to include a readiness to accept woman representation into its ambit with female empowerment as its motto. Media, especially the new generation channels offered myriad forms of opportunities for the social enhancement of women. Thus, the new facet of Indian Television era is heralded which contributed immensely in the empowerment of women.

Addressing the issue of being feminine, one has to seriously look into the ways in which the T.V. soap operas have been functional in propagating an ideal womanhood. Citing the randomly selected teleserials in Hindi like *Iss Pyar Ko Kya Naam Doon*, *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*, *Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki*, which got premiered on Star Plus Channel in the first half of the 21st century, the soap operas provided the mini screen audience with a visual treat of family entertainment. The plot, in simple terms, which showcases a marital alliance between a wealthy business man and a middleclass woman, does not deviate in projecting an image of the ideal bahu in the Indian household. Portraying an ideal family establishment, these soap operas revolve around the sacramental portrayal of an ideal daughter-in-law. Though these female protagonists hail from a middleclass background, with marriage

they are elevated to occupy the status of their husband's identity. The female protagonists are transported to assimilate a new identity which suits and serves the taste of the structural realities of the new household, which again projects an image which caters to feed the imagination and expectations of the viewers in embellished terms.

The real problem does not remain visible to either the audience or the characters themselves. The mini screen platform enhances and airs only such shows where the viewers are provided with a version of life which is unachievable or impossible for the majority. By propagating such versions, though the field of television and parallel media platforms makes itself an industry providing the means of income to the artists and other people who work behind it, the reality is appropriated and tampered to a certain extent. The popular culture industry has been very selective in not only deceiving the public with a utopian version of family construction but it has been also successful in concealing the social exclusionary practice which was going on in discrete ways across the length and breadth of the country.

The parallaxian perspective offers a binary of how a subject gets defined with the help of the object which acts as a catalyst in formulating the identity of the subject. The concept of idealized femininity contains within itself the contradictoriness of what is not ideal. The female protagonists symbolize the epitome of virtue and tolerance on one hand and on the other hand they are given the gigantic responsibility of being the carriers of the ideal Indian culture. What is not represented here is the fact that the male members of the family do not come into the purview of being the objectified subject at any point of time. The masculinity factor is given an ambiguous approach for most of the times; nobody questions

the polygamy by the male characters. The most prominent deciding criteria of masculinity being the professional success quotient of the male protagonist in focus, light is not shed on their vices and drawbacks. Hence the 'ideal' gets different treatment; what is ideal for being accepted as the ideal femininity is not the ideal one for the ideal masculine assertion. Still what is expected is that of uncompromising sacrifice from the female characters.

While the study of select T.V. soap operas directs one to clearly look into the ways in which ideal femininity is established, it also maintains its silence regarding the absences and fissures in the way femininity is represented. The absences here talk about those unrepresented feminine subjects in the main lead because of the mere fact that their origin does not entitle them to have an access to the mainstream feminine subjects. The T.V. soap operas have been willfully suspending any chance of the poor being represented in a virtuous manner. The reference is here in relation to those possible representations which have not been done so far. The daily soaps do not portray the ordinary life of the layman in its simplicity, instead a fairy tale like romance is what the TRP (Target Rating Point) rates speak as the most sought-after topics to be watched.

The second parallaxian perspective, applicable in delineating the celebrated ideal womanhood, stands much in an anatomical difference between the two genders as male and female. With perfect male figure adorning the family heritage, idealized feminine issues gets juxtaposed to all other versions of femininity, including the ones where a vicious model of femininity in the role of a villain is necessary to reiterate the essential qualities of being the most acceptable version of the fair femininity. The irony latent here lies in the basic argument that while the dif-

ferent aspects of masculinity does not get juxtaposed with one another in the race of getting declared as the epitome of perfection, the episodes in the daily soap operas are structured in such a way that the female protagonists have to subject themselves to an array of 'agnipareeksha' and emerge victorious proving their worth to be recognized as the ideal femme persona. The process of evolution, thus, involving the subjectification of the objectified subject as the ideal version of femininity, rests on the basic assumption that virtue shines even amidst the pile of vices; and it is the second sex who has to propagate their constructed identity in the most viable form applicable.

Works Cited

- Iss Pyaar Ko kya Naam Doon*, directed by Nissar Parvez, Maan Singh, Arshad Khan and Lalit Mohan, season 1, episodes 1-408, 4 Lions Films/Star Plus, 2011-12.
- Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki*, created by Ekta Kapoor, season 1, episode 1-1661, Balaji Telefilms/Star Plus, 2000-2008.
- Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*, created by Ekta Kapoor, season 1, episode 1-1833, Balaji-telefilms/Star Plus, 2000-2008.
- Zizek, Slavoj. *The Parallax View*. The MIT Press, 2006.



Building Individuality in the Afghan Public Space: A Study of Atia Abawi's *The Secret Sky*

Maya Venugopal*

Abstract

The article is an analysis of the Afghan woman writer Atia Abawi's novel which sketches the journey of Fatima, the central character. In the novel, Fatima's journey from the domestic space of a remote Afghan village to the public space of Kabul attains political significance as her travel challenges the religious patriarchy that dominates the nation. Fatima represents the third world woman of Afghanistan whose daily resistance against the rigid village space and her staunch decision to conquer the public space represents the struggles of the many Afghan women against the numerous odd and hostile situations of their nation. The article theoretically analyses how the character of Fatima matures from a naïve young woman of the village to a woman of strength whose politically shrewd perspective facilitates her lonely but successful journey towards individual freedom.

Keywords: *Patriarchy, Public Space, Third World, Tradition, Female Body, and Knowledge.*

*Maya Venugopal, Assistant Professor, Department of English, NSS College, K. R. Puram, Cherthala-688541, Alappuzha District, Kerala, India, Email: mayavngopal@gmail.com

An analysis of contemporary literature about Afghanistan shows that majority of them are produced by the western writers who either picturise Afghan women as backward, meek, and victimised beings or as extremely religious individuals. However, a small number of literary works produced by Afghan women, whose families migrated to the west during the Soviet invasion, paint a different picture. The women protagonists of these literary works represent the cross-section of the women of the nation who resist the various social and political forces around them with much energy and enthusiasm. Chandra Talpade Mohanty's understanding of the third world as a geographical location that narrates "powerful histories of resistance and revolution in daily life" and whose contours defining "the complex ground for the emergence and consolidation of third world women's feminist politics" (2) throw some light into the reading of literary works from Afghanistan and thus comprehending the complex lives of Afghan women. Mohanty considers the Asian, African, Latin American, Middle Eastern as well as the minority populations (people of colour) in the United States and Europe as part of a community with,

divergent histories and social locations, woven together by the political threads of opposition to forms of domination that are not only pervasive but also systemic. (4)

The diversity of social locations, class, ethnicity, and race make the daily struggles of these women different from that of the western women and those diversities make their writings distinct from the western women writers' literary engagements. They also warrant a special reading strategy for they transgress the conventional logic of Afghan women's representation. Atia Abawi's debut novel *The Secret Sky: A Novel of Forbidden Love in Afghanistan* is one such work.

First published in English in 2014, the novel offers a different understanding of the life of Afghan women. Abawi is an American born novelist of Afghan descent whose parents migrated to America during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The novel is set in the post-Taliban period in a small remote Afghan village which is entirely cut off from the central governing system of the country and has its own system of laws. In the introduction to the novel, Abawi reveals that her visit to a remote village in central Afghanistan dwelled by ethnic Pashtuns and ethnic Hazaras inspired her to set the locale for her fictional work there. She also states that the novel is influenced by real events and real people. The novel narrates the story of Fatima, a young Hazara woman who falls in love with the young Samiyullah, a member of the ethnically superior and rich Pashtun community. Both Fatima and Samiyullah were childhood friends and when they meet after a long time in their village, the wavelength they shared as childhood friends turns into a matured relationship. Even though clashes between Pashtuns and Hazaras are common in the rural areas, the ethnic divide and the financial disparity do not become hindrances in their decision to get married and move from their undeveloped village to the much-developed city of Kabul where they hope to "get lost in the crowds and start living together" (Abawi 152). The couple's sudden decision to elope to Kabul happens after the families of Fatima and Samiyullah come to know about their secret meetings through Rashid, his cousin. Both Samiyullah and Rashid were sent to the madrassa for religious training. While the former returns disillusioned from the madrassa, Rashid transforms into a young fanatic who equates religion with power. For Rashid as well as for the whole villagers, the courtship between a Pashtun boy and a Hazara girl is a religious taboo, but for the couple, it is an open and a pure relationship between two human beings. With the help of Mullah Sawar, a

Muslim ascetic, Samiyullah and Fatima get married and manage to reach Kabul while Rashid follows them along with the local warlord Latif and his gang members. The story ends when Fatima and Samiyullah take refuge at the Human Rights office in Kabul. The events of the novel unfold through the narratorial voices of Fatima, Samiyullah, and Rashid who alternatively articulate their perspectives to the readers. Yet, Fatima's resilience and staunch decision to trespass the boundaries set by the village are most highlighted in the novel.

Women's struggle for rights cannot be analysed in the terms of gender alone. Various social and cultural factors, and multiple sites of power related to race, class, caste, ethnicity, state, and nation influence the existence and evolution of women and their rights. Fatima's strategic encounter against these forces is visible throughout the novel. She can be seen as an ordinary, passive young girl of a classic patriarchal order who empowers herself and amasses the strength to resist the divergent elements of the classic patriarchy once her identity is wounded under the system. Deniz Kandiyoti, the academician who researches on gender relations in the Middle East, in her article "Bargaining with Patriarchy" analyses how women resist various social forms of patriarchy. She designates these varied forms of patriarchy as "patriarchal bargains" which act as "concrete constraints" and influence women to strategize their resistance (275). The classic patriarchy is one such social form which is found in geographical areas that includes the Middle East, North Africa, South and East Asia. Classic patriarchy represents a significant cultural ideal which comprises of a patrilocal social order and a family order which are headed by senior men. By the term 'patrilocal,' Kandiyoti signifies the local households of the agrarian societies, the system in which the senior men exert power and domination.

The implications of the patrilineal-patrilocal complex for women not only are remarkably uniform but also entail forms of control and subordination that cut across cultural and religious boundaries, such as those of Hinduism, Confucianism and Islam. (Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy" 278)

Fatima is the inhabitant of a remote village which is ethnically divided and is dominated by the strict rules of religion. Within this patrilocal social order which represents the classic patriarchy, girls remain at home and boys are allowed to move outside the village for the purpose of education, trade, and jobs. The male-centred village system, the ethnic tribal laws and the rigid family structure exercise their authority over Fatima's life. In the beginning itself, Fatima's narratorial voice sketches the village as a conservative space in which her menstruated body becomes an obstacle on the way to the village public space. The ethnical constraints also become hurdles on her way. Fatima says:

My mother says that it's no longer proper for a girl of my shape to go out and play, that it will be seen as indecent. But even if she did let me play outside, I don't have anyone left to run in the fields with. Most of the girls around my age aren't allowed to leave their homes and the boys have begun helping their fathers in the fields and shops... it seems I no longer belong in my family – at least not the new me – the bizarre, curvy, grown-up me. This feeling of nowhere-ness makes me empty inside in a way that I can't explain to anyone, not even Zohra. She seems to be embracing all the changes that I can't. (Abawi 4-5)

Fatima introduces herself as the odd one out of the traditional village space. She belongs to 'nowhere' while her best friend Zohra imbibes the changes effortlessly. In another instance, Fatima's friend Zohra hints at women's destiny thus:

When we get married, do you think our husbands will have us sitting around and reading books.... Donkeys or not, they'll be our bosses. (Abawi 23)

The village subjugates women to fall prey to the traditional patrilocal order in which they are othered.

Tradition designs women's physical and intellectual selves according to its whims and fancies and it generally evolves from the patriarchal ideology. In this process, women's perspectives and thoughts become irrelevant. The sociologist Dorothy E. Smith views tradition as a male-centred ideology which evolved and developed in male circles, depriving women of their space in such circles. She writes:

What men were doing was relevant to men, was written by men about men for men. Men listened and listened to what one another said. This is how a tradition is formed.... Women have been deprived of the means to participate in creating forms of thought relevant or adequate to express their own experience or to define and raise social consciousness about their situation and concerns. They have never controlled the material or social means to the making of a tradition among themselves or to acting as equals in the ongoing discourse of intellectuals.... They have not had, until very recently, access to the educational skills necessary to develop, sustain and participate in the making of a common culture. (Smith 18)

The Afghan village portrayed in the novel is traditional in the sense that in its rural domain, traditions are formed by men and women inhabit either as silent victims or as agents of patriarchy. In this context, Fatima stands in contrast to the other women characters of the novel and decides to own her identity. Fatima's friend Zohra remains the submissive victim of the male-centred order for whom selfhood is an entity controlled by the village space and the family. In her conversation with Fatima regarding the educated women in Kabul, Zohra describes her village as an entirely different space from the city, nevertheless both the spaces are situated in the same country.

And that's my point. We can't change that. Those women have the protection of the capital; we rely on the protection of our families. (Abawi 24-25)

The city space and its progressive elements remain alien to the rural population and forbidden matters for its womenfolk. Zohra's wishes and concerns are shaped according to the cultural needs of the family and the village. She is one among the several women of that rural space who do not possess independent existence.

Fatima's mother is yet another woman who imbibes the patriarchal order of the village and trains her daughter to perform her duties as per the demands of the patriarchal system. Her mother asks Fatima to colour her hands with henna to look attractive:

'Every woman needs to look her best, even if it is just for her own family, Fatima,' she told me, for what was probably for the millionth time. She has always felt that I needed to act more like a girl instead of yet another son, and never lets me forget it. (Abawi 28)

In the beginning, she is a woman who sends her daughter enthusiastically to Zohra's grandmother to learn alphabets. However, the mother begins to act as one of the members of the patriarchal culture once she comes to know about Fatima's relationship with Samiyullah. Gradually, she becomes the source of misogyny and subjects her daughter to physical and mental torture.

The incidents which occur later in the kitchen portrays Fatima being dragged by her hair and taken to the oven. The mother's intention is to pour boiling water over Fatima's body which she identifies as the site of adultery. If Zohra is a helpless victim within the traditional patriarchal culture, Fatima's mother is the agent of the same culture. She uses the kitchen as a space to domesticate her daughter according to the needs of the family and the patriarchal society. It also turns to be a torturing centre where Fatima is labelled as an immoral woman.

Do you like being a whore?' she shouts. I notice the kettle is at full boil. I can hear the bubbles hitting the inside of the hot metal, and the steam is billowing from the spout.... She starts to tilt the kettle, and the scorching water falls onto my bare arms. The pain is searing and I start screaming. 'This is what whores deserve!' my mother says with a look of delight on her face. 'This is what you deserve for shaming us! (Abawi 136-38)

The rural family space dwelled by Zohra, Fatima, and her mother defines itself as an ideological apparatus in which the men control the positions of power and women are taught to internalise their inferior status and to remain submissive to the thought processes of the apparatus.

Dorothy E. Smith defines culture as a 'manufactured' object which evolves within a ruling ideological apparatus reigned by people holding influential positions. She borrows the idea of ideological apparatus from Francois Lyotard and places it in the context of woman-man relations. Smith defines the ideological apparatuses in a patriarchal society as,

parts of the larger relations of ruling the society, the relations that put it together, coordinate its work, manage its economic processes, generally keep it running and regulate and control it. (Smith 19)

In such social spaces, cultural practices are manufactured by strong men and the weak and marginalised sections of the society like the women are excluded. Women are not only excluded from the making of cultures but are also 'othered' within the culture. Fatima's mother unconsciously absorbs this othering, becomes an agent of the patriarchal culture and exercises her agency upon the daughter.

The idea of the manufactured culture which creates 'othered' individuals also points to the fact that culture and identity are interlinked. Within the manufactured culture, the male, and female identities are separated as different entities which carry two different significations. Cultural situations contribute to the patriarchal exploitation of the female body which is defined as the marker of culture. This tendency to equate the female self with the female body accentuates the process of othering. On the other hand, the male body is inscribed with authority. In the chapter titled "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions" in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler analyses how the female body and its performances are controlled by culture

which perceives the body as “the scene of a cultural inscription” (165). The female body which is at once passive but sexually significant becomes a site on which cultural sources ‘external’ to the body are inscribed. Butler quotes Michel Foucault who figures body as a surface of cultural inscription and claims that the ultimate task of genealogy is to “expose a body totally imprinted by history” (Butler 165). The body is nullified of its existing self, and it is transformed to become a carrier of values.

This process of inscribing cultural values onto the female body has caused the victimization of Fatima. By sharing public space with a young man of the superior ethnic clan, it is her body which violates the decorum, hence the body needs to be penalized under male supervision. For her mother as well as for the men who rule the culture, she becomes a “whore” who “grew up craving the attention of men” (Abawi 177). Fatima’s body is put to torture by her mother and her three-year-old sister is killed by the Taliban men as a punitive measure. The violence unleashed by Latif, the Taliban warlord in Fatima’s house after her elopement demonstrates how a woman’s body is forced to bear the family’s as well as the whole culture’s idea of honour. Latif fails to find Fatima at home but imposes all his might on the other family members, ultimately, killing Fatima’s little sister.

The treatment of female body within the village space should also be analysed under the light of Islamic laws pertaining to female sexuality. The Islamic concept of active female sexuality plays vital role in defining the conduct of the female body in the public sphere. Islam does not distinguish human biological instincts as good or evil but perceives them to be pure. However, the social order and its set of laws become vital in regulating the expression of human instincts.

Thus, in the Muslim social order governed by religious laws, an individual is not supposed to control or destroy her/his instinctual energy but order them according to the needs of the social order. Under this religiously defined social order, sexual desire is strictly monitored and is ordained with the social purpose of procreation.

According to Islam, aggressive female sexuality initiates *fitna*, utter chaos, and disorder. The feminine is a threat to the social order. Hence, there arises the need to design the Muslim social order in such a way that it subjugates the aggressive sexual power of women and makes them weak. The Muslim female body is controlled through constant surveillance, limited entry into the public sphere, most significantly, through the prohibition of isolated presence with a man. In this manner, the religious patriarchy of her village regulates Zohra, Fatima, and her mother from claiming the public space. Fatima is eventually labelled as a prostitute. Once Fatima violates the social order and enters into the public domain with her lover in isolation, the religious social order deems it necessary to control her body, thereby, her feminine self.

Fatima emerges as a woman who successfully interrogates this notion of women as dangerous beings in the public space. She strategizes her resistance against the religious, ethnic, and familial constraints, subverts the social order and claims her space in the public domain. However, her struggle is not only to gain physical mobility but also to get access to the intellectual domains of the society. From the very beginning of her adolescence, Fatima understands that the village system conspicuously demarcates between the domestic and the public space, the former meant for men and the latter reserved for women respectively. Bibi, Zohra’s grandmother is the only learned woman in the village. She represents the urban educated woman of the past who lived her

adulthood in Kabul before settling in the countryside. Fatima is attracted into the world of learning opened by Zohra's Bibi. If learning alphabets is a silly pastime for Zohra, for Fatima it marks the beginning of breaking the shackles and crossing the boundaries set by the village tradition. In Bibi's classes, she dreams of Kabul, the city where women have the prospect of joining universities for higher education.

I hear there are universities in Kabul – universities that girls can go to. They can become doctors, lawyers, midwives and even artists! They can read as many books as they want, and no one is jealous... there are even women on radio and television. (Abawi 24-25)

Her urge is to get access to education and be part of the common culture, moving from the traditional/domestic space to the public sphere. For her, eloping with Samiyullah not only fulfils her desire to choose her partner but, most significantly, also gives her entry into the open intellectual spaces of Kabul.

Fatima foresees her future in Kabul as a liberated woman who attends the university for higher education. She decides to flee the village and while packing her belongings, she keeps safe the book of poems gifted by Bibi, which she believes shall guide her through the path of knowledge. Her zeal for exploration is evident when she expresses her desire to be out of the village despite the fact that religious fanatics frequently threaten educated young women in the city.

Even if it's ugly, even if it's terrible, I wish someone would let me see the world for myself. Then may be I would understand. Then may be I could have this conversation with Sami without feeling small, stupid, and simple.

I want it to be for me,' I say. 'I want to see the world outside our village. I just want... to know what else there is. It can't be ugly if girls are going to school and working in other places. (Abawi 62)

Fatima enthusiastically gazes at the world of knowledge which was denied to her. She knows that the city can provide her with educational as well as other prospects. For her, Kabul represents the modernised space. Her journey from the rural/domestic space to the urban/public space, therefore, is an effort to disrupt the accepted Islamic norms of knowledge and emphasize her presence in the realm of knowledge.

Islam gives due importance to knowledge and reasoning and the latter is aptly put to purpose when one searches for knowledge. Scientific knowledge is seen as "the best form of prayer for a Muslim believer" (Mernissi, 45). To gain pure knowledge, a person should liberate the self from all kinds of inner strife and external distractions, including indulgence in earthly pleasures. Nevertheless, this priority is reserved for men. Islam advice a male believer to dedicate himself to the search of knowledge and withholds this opportunity from a woman and designates her as the external distraction on the way to knowledge. Her only purpose is to procreate.

Women are a dangerous distraction that must be used for the specific purpose of providing the Muslim nation with offspring and quenching the tensions of the sexual instinct. But in no way should women be an object of emotional investment or the focus of attention, which should be devoted to Allah alone in the form of knowledge-seeking, meditation, and prayer... Women are considered not only outside of humanity but a threat to it as well (Mernissi 45).

Fatima is all set to dismantle this patriarchal mindset. Her struggle is for the establishment of an independent identity deeply rooted in scientific knowledge and feminist ideology. Her aim is to reach the city of Kabul. In the novel, Kabul is presented as a modern city where people enjoy the benefits of mobility. Samiyullah gives a description of the city:

There are so many people in Kabul, they'll never notice two more entering the city. They won't know who we are. We can get lost in the crowds and start our lives – together. We can be happy. (Abawi 152)

Fatima Mernissi states that the integration of women into the educational spaces in the cities has been radical as it shook the walls of knowledge exclusively controlled by the male community. As part of the modernisation programmes, cities witnessed rapid urbanisation which was coupled with mass education and opening of universities for both the sexes. The cities witnessed the emergence of a new class of educated youth which comprised of both women and men. Muslim women who were, since centuries, excluded from the spheres of knowledge gained a new platform in the urbanised cities. The repercussions of this shift became visible in the Muslim world in which the young, educated, and unmarried woman replaced the earlier image of the young unmarried woman as '*fitna*.' Women's education reduced early marriages and fertility rates alike in various Muslim nation. Mernissi writes:

Access to education seems to have an immediate, tremendous impact on women's perception of themselves, their reproductive and sexual roles, and their social mobility expectations... the main thing to remember is that women's education disturbs the traditional

sexual identity reference points and sex roles in Muslim countries, which are obsessed with virginity and childbearing. (Mernissi xxv-xxvi)

It is not surprising that the traditional patriarchy of the rural space restricts Fatima from gaining mobility. She falls under direct observation of the system once she decides to seek mobility and shift herself from the village. Latif, the warlord who represents the fundamentalist face of the Taliban, moves around the village and the nearby towns along with his men in search of Fatima. Latif is portrayed as the typical religious fanatic who is the personification of violence and cruelty. He restricts women's access to education and improved positions in the society. Being the representative of the Taliban, Latif waits to find Fatima and prosecute her publicly for crossing the social borders.

However, Fatima commences her journey and as the first step, makes her presence on the streets which symbolise the public domain. Fatima represents the modern woman of identity when she problematises the political dimension of the street as a public space.

Fundamentalists are right in saying that education for women has destroyed the traditional boundaries and definitions of space and sex roles. Schooling has dissolved traditional arrangements of space segregation even in oil-rich countries where education is segregated by sex, simply because, to go to school, women have to cross the street! Streets are spaces of sin and temptation, because they are both public and sex mixed. And that is the definition of *fitna*, disorder! (Mernissi xxviii)

When Fatima walks through the town streets with Samiyullah, she is amazed to see the immensity of life around her. Even though from afar, she observes people, shops and buildings

very keenly and with great enthusiasm. "The town is so massive; I wonder how many people live in it. There must be hundreds" (Abawi 175). When Fatima sees the huge mountains, the narratives of her father unravel in front of her eyes, the narratives about Afghanistan's geography. The streets, thus, pave the way to the open world, the world of knowledge and wisdom.

However, claiming the streets is not an easy task for Fatima. The strangeness and intimidations she encounters on the streets need to be surpassed tactically. Here Fatima uses *chaddari* as a strategic weapon. *Chaddari*, the long, loose garment which covers the entire body became a necessity for the urban women of Afghanistan when the Taliban imposed it upon them. Accounts of Afghan women narrate how they transformed the inconvenience of the dress into their own benefits. During the rule of the Taliban, Afghan homes were turned into underground schools and women used their *chaddaris* to hide and transport books and other learning tools from house to house. Thus, *chaddari* played a noteworthy role in designing the routine strategic resistance of Afghan women during the Taliban rule. Fatima becomes yet another exemplification of such a strategic resistance.

Rural Afghan women rarely use *chaddari*. For them, the cloth is meant to be worn while travelling long distance from villages. Fatima uses the fabric for the first time while she escapes to the town. She narrates the inconvenience of the attire and how it restricts a woman's free movement.

I can barely breathe. It feels like I'm in a heavy bag that encloses me from head to toe. I gasp, searching for the air that will keep me from fainting... the steaming heat makes it worse. It's as if there are coals surrounding my feet,

raising the temperature around my body. Beads of sweat soak my clothes and slowly evaporate in the confined space, fusing with the air, making it even thicker. The only ventilation comes from the little holes pricked through the cloth. The holes are meant to help me see, but the truth is they don't help much. The dark fabric is blinding (Abawi 171-72).

Nevertheless, she effortlessly alters the blue coloured long garment for her own advantage. Apart from helping Fatima to hide herself from Latif and his gang, wearing *chaddari* also helps her to remain obscure and view the public roads and the people. It also gives her a sense of protection from the frowning looks of people. After taking resort at a cave on her way, Fatima removes the *chaddari* to feel liberated but realises that she feels safe when clad in it. She says,

I promptly peel the sweat-ridden blue fabric off my body and throw down next to me. I thought it would feel liberating to take it off, but I don't feel free, I just feel vulnerable. Although I can breathe again, I miss the protection. No one knows who I am when I'm wearing the *chaddari*, but now people can see my face, my features and my ethnicity... I suddenly want to drape that horrible blue *chaddari* back over my face and body. I want to feel safe again. (Abawi 176)

It is evident that Fatima uses the cloth as a safety mechanism for a young woman who embarks upon an independent journey for the first time in her life. She can be seen using the security of the *chaddari* till the end of her journey and it forms a key factor in her strategic resistance until she ends her journey at the Human Rights

Commission office in the city of Kabul. The novel comes to an end when Fatima and Samiyullah reach the safety of the Human Rights Office after crossing all the hurdles.

Fatima belongs to the group of the Afghan women who exploit their pragmatic wisdom to successfully problematise the strict boundaries set by the Afghan patriarchy. Her journey attains strong political significance as her aim is to embrace the public city space of the nation rather than fulfil her personal desire. She represents the many Afghan women whose unknown but strong resistance problematises the patriarchal face of the public space. Fatima's protest is not only against the Afghan male authority but also against its tendencies to turn women into fettered agents. When she makes herself free from the clutches of the rigid social structure of the village and claims her presence in the public space, Fatima announces herself to be a woman of individuality who is not willing to be yet another agent of patriarchy.

Works Cited

- Abawi, Atia. *The Secret Sky: A Novel of Forbidden Love in Afghanistan*, Kindle Version, Philomel, 2014.
- Butler, Judith. "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions." *Gender Trouble: Feminism And the Subversion of Identity*, 3rd ed., Routledge, 2002.
- Kandiyoti, Deniz. "Bargaining with Patriarchy." *Gender and Society*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1988, pp. 274-90, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/190357.
- Mernissi, Fatima. *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*, 4th ed., Indiana UP, 1987.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, et al., editors. *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Indiana UP, 1991.
- Smith, Dorothy E. *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. Northeastern UP, 1987.



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. Alphonsa Vijaya Joseph
Nationality	:	Indian
Address	:	St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam Park Avenue Road, Cochin-682011
Publisher's Name	:	Dr. Alphonsa Vijaya Joseph
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.

Friday, June 30, 2023.

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. Alphonsa Vijaya Joseph, 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.



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

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

St. Teresa's College established in 1925, affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University, now St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam 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.



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