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ST. TERESA'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), INDIA

Contents

Editorial

As this editorial is written, the glitzy world of Hollywood, where imagination and creativity serve as the lifeblood, has been hit by the writers' strike against the challenge posed by the rise of Artificial Intelligence. While the strike posed the profound question of how to balance the power of AI with the need to protect human ingenuity and jobs, it highlighted a larger reality – that of amalgamation of the world of technology and the world of artistic endeavour. This is essentially what is reflected in English studies today – the profound transformation it has undergone by expanding its horizons to encompass a broader, more dynamic spectrum of knowledge and inquiry – from traditional literary analysis to digital humanities, from canonical texts to marginalised voices, from rigid silos to interdisciplinarity. As scholars work to decolonize the curriculum and also draw from fields such as environmental studies, neuroscience, and sociology, English studies move to a more holistic understanding of the human experience. Our contributors in this issue have engaged, as usual, with a variety of subjects to discuss a plethora of issues of contemporary relevance – questions of egalitarianism, environmental consciousness, the problematics of identity, and the inherent worth and dignity of humankind.

Dr. Preeti Kumar

An Ecosomatic Investigation of Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*: Reading Disability through Environmental Justice Studies

Dr. Shoba K. N.*

Abstract

Disability studies and Ecocriticism as academic fields have developed methods of organizing respective histories, especially in Western histories. Historians have engaged with themes and subjects as seminal to explaining the present treatment of disability in human and nature; as anthropocentrism (in the case of nature) and social category (disabled humans). As a consequence of the locale of their disciplinary evolution, disability and ecocriticism histories appear to have implicitly assumed a universal trajectory of interpretation. While disability studies has challenged the abled and disabled human binary, ecocriticism has challenged the human-nonhuman binary framework and argued for the necessity to reassess the existing binaries between human and non-human world, and abled and disabled consciousness. Similarly, ecosomatics attends to and investigates the relationship between humanity and the environment, and negotiates a habitable world and a habitable body. The Bhopal gas tragedy (1984), in India, is one of the human-made tragedies that has claimed lives and still has a negative impact on humans and nature. Foregrounding the disabled persons and nature in Sinha's novel *Animal's People* (2007), and using Western and Indian scholarships and literature through the research method of close reading and primarily a textual analysis, the article focuses on the susceptibility of the human body to toxic environments leading to 'attitudinal barriers' (French and Swain 2013) for disabled people. The study also contends that the disability of nature provides an approach for re-thinking the relationship between environmental and disabled consciousness.

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Ecosomatics, an emerging field of study since the 1970s by existential philosopher Thomas Hanna, studies the dynamic connection with the larger field of living beings and systems in which human life is embedded. Humans and the environment are two inseparable entities as there is a constant interaction between them that include biotic and abiotic elements of nature, called physical environment. There is a common notion that prior to the introduction of modern technology, the relationship of humans with nature was harmonious. Many human communities were able to maintain their environment as the human population was relatively small. The communities' take of natural resources was not excessive and as a consequence of that, nature was maintained without significant damage. With the introduction of machines and technologies, a tendency to exploit the natural resources has been seen among humans. As a result of these changing human paradigms, the environment is constantly undergoing both desirable and undesirable changes. Environmental disaster is defined as,

> an event or series of events that threaten and disrupt the lives and livelihoods of people caused by both natural factors and/or non-natural factors and human factors resulting in the emergence of human casualties, environmental damage, property loss, and psychological impact. (Rahman 2019)

Main types of disasters are natural, non-natural, and social disasters. Non-natural and social disasters are generally believed to be caused by human actions and anthropogenic factors. Furthermore, it is widely held that humans as inhabitants of the earth must be responsible for caring for the earth for the common good.

Discussing non-natural disaster, caused by failing technology, failing modernization, epidemics, and disease outbreaks, it is generally believed that there is degradation in biosphere due to the pervasive presence of contaminants released by human activity. Human history has witnessed and is riddled with human-made disasters, from nuclear meltdowns to chemical explosions. McNab (2020) has listed world's worst historical disasters in his book which include the following: The Aberfan Colliery Slip (1966) is a big human-made disaster and the disaster was devastating as 144 people lost their lives. The Seveso Disaster (1976) in the chemical plant north of Milan is another human-made disaster that caused the death of local residents due to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, and thousands of animals died in the incident. Chernobyl Meltdown (1986), Montana Asbestos Clouds (1999), the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill (2010), the Bhopal Disaster (1984), the Sidoarjo Mud Volcano (2006), the North Pacific Garbage Patch (1997), Californian Wildfires (2018), and the Jilin Chemical Plant Explosion (2005). In these infamous events humanity played pivotal roles. The tragic events mentioned above happened due to the consequence of human behaviour which have devastated the environment and taken lives. The disaster that happened in Bhopal has lasting effects even today among the children, like various disabilities.

Human-made disasters are difficult to predict; however, they are preventable. Events such as gas leaks, oil spills, nuclear meltdowns, and industrial fires transpire through human error and carry grave consequences. Gas leaks tend to be some of the most dangerous disasters, because they seem innocuous until it is too late. Gas can directly and indirectly poison people and the environment – spreading rapidly, being unseen, inflammable, and lethal. The most serious gas leak

occurred in Bhopal, India in 1984. Descriptions of Bhopal tragedy, based on the historical records and personal testimonies, have been found in disaster books. Mannur (2017) has observed,

> During the early morning hours of that night the deadly chemical gas swept through the city, destroying flora, fauna, and human life that came in its path. (384)

The gas formed a deadly cloud causing severe body irritation, coughing, lung swelling, bleeding, and even death from direct concentrated inhalation, causing double fold impact on nature and humanity. Observations on the causes of the disaster have been made and one such observation has come through Mannur (2017) who has rightly pointed that "industrial greed and environmental negligence" (382) have caused the gas tragedy. The tragedy and its effects are long lasting as opposed to being contained within a single spatiotemporal moment. Nixon (2011) has termed 'the long dyings' – following the toxic aftermaths both in the past when the incident occurred and its continued effects on humanity and nature in the present. The present article offers a reading of Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* using an interdisciplinary approach of Ecocritical and Disability studies to explore the human-nature divide and the disastrous effects of the Union Carbide Corporation's 1984 gas leaks in Bhopal, India. The disability among humans and in nature shows that there is a need for changing the human-nature relationship towards their co-existence removing the binary of human versus nature. The following sections include an overview of Disability studies – a movement that emerged out of the disability civil rights movement and it discusses various definitions and the importance in the Indian context; Environmental justice – a movement to improve and maintain a clean and healthful environment; Bhopal Gas Tragedy; a thematic interpretation of *Animal's People* and its implications in the present study involving a critical reading of the novel; and the findings and conclusion.

Critical Interdisciplinarity of the Study

Scholars in disability studies have demonstrated the ways in which the culture privileges some bodies over the others, in other words, the binary between abled and disabled bodies. However, there has been a rare examination of the ways in which toxic environments engender chronic illness, leading to disability. The present study employs interdisciplinary perspectives of disability studies and environmental justice studies to examine such issues as eco-sickness, environmental justice, ableism, and slow violence. The study thus presents the foundational documents informing this intersection of fields and also showcases the most current work such as the works of Hall (2016), Siebers (2008), Fischer-Kowalski and Haberl (2015), and Skelton and Miller (2016).

The Disability Studies Premise

Disability studies have been the result of the disability civil rights movement in the late twentieth century following World War II in which the wounded soldiers of the War had demanded healthcare and compensation for their injuries (Hall 2016). Further, the grand examination of gender, race, and sexuality during the 1970s, has added impetus to the civil rights model for thinking about disability rights. Paul Hunt's *Stigma: The Experience of Disability* (1966) set the tone for Disability rights movements in the 1960s and 1970s. In his edited collection, Paul Hunt has stated that the disability lies not in the individual but in their surrounding social environment (146). The discipline has distinguished the medical model of disability from the social model. The

emerging field of disability studies defines 'disability' as,

> … the product of social injustice, one that requires not the cure or elimination of the defective person but significant changes in the social and built environment. (Siebers 4)

Disability studies as an academic field has been the result of activist campaigns and social changes. The emphasis of the movement has been on bringing people with physical impairments into participation in mainstream social activities (Barnes and Mercer 25).

The Oxford Dictionary defines disability as an impairment which can be intellectual or physical. The Preamble to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), adopted by the United Nations, describes disability as one that,

> results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines disability as impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions which require interventions to remove environmental and social barriers. On the other hand, in the medical model of disability, individuals with physical or mental disabilities, are taken as disabled (Diseases and Management).

Disability historians have examined religious events and practices, past episodes of plagues and other epidemics, traditions of institutionalization – asylums, poor houses, and lazar houses – medical diagnoses and treatment of blindness, deafness, etc., (Anand 2020). Hall

(2016) has stated that from the 1980s onwards, disability studies began to gain increasing recognition as an academic field in its own right (19). Disability studies as a discipline has engaged with close textual analysis and theoretical framings of literary works from across different settings and periods (Hall 192). The major task of the academic field was to identify the writings of disabled authors and to establish the focus of cultural disability studies on the wealth of works by disabled authors and intellectuals. The identified authors included were, John Milton, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Alexander Pope, Harriet Martineau, John Keats, George Gordon Byron, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and James Joyce or Virginia Woolf (Hall 192). A close analysis of the disabled authors has been done to put disabled people on an equally political and social stand as,

> The ideology of ability stands ready to attack any desire to know and to accept the disabled body in its current state. (Siebers 4)

In India, as per Census 2011, there are 14.9 million men with disabilities as compared to 11.9 million women in the country (National Statistical Office 2021). As a consequence of the locale of its disciplinary evolution, disability history appears to have tacitly assumed a universal project. The international disability rights movements through the close analysis of disabled authors' writings have enriched the status of disabled persons across the world. It has touched disabled persons through a range of legislative and policy measures primarily in the areas of health, education, employment, and social security. While in India, as Addlakha (2013), in the edited work, has pointed out that the interdisciplinary academic terrain that focuses on the contributions, experiences, history, and culture of persons with disabilities has not yet taken root

since the 1970s (i). In India, in the past two decades, there has been an increase in discussion around disability studies and the emergence of various Disability studies programs (Mehrotra 7). Disabilities studies in India has received attention among both Western and Indian scholars. As far back as 1963, Usha Bhatt discussed some facets of historical attitudes towards disabled people in India. She has pointed out the growth in the social attitude towards persons with disability: exposure and destruction, care and protection, training and education, and social absorption (Bhatt 12).

In the theoretical underpinning of Disability studies in India, disability of persons as the social model is the least discussed area of research. Under the social model of disability people with disabilities face various barriers such as structural, environmental, and attitudinal which require not the medical treatment but the change of perspectives about those disabled persons. According to French and Swain (2004), structural barrier refers to the underlying norms and ideologies of institutions which are mostly based on judgments of normality. Environmental barrier refers to the physical barrier within the environment such as holes in the pavement and lack of resources for disabled people. It also refers to the ways things are done, which may exclude disabled people. Attitudinal barrier refers to the adverse attitudes and behaviour of people towards disabled people (183-205). The character 'Animal,' in the select novel, is presented as the one who faces the above barriers and the theme of disability as a social barrier is vastly discussed in this article.

Environmental Justice Studies: An Overview

Environmental justice is an attempt to maintain a clean and healthful environment for those who have traditionally lived closest to polluted areas. Since the 1980s and 1990s, the environmental justice movement has developed a set of concepts and campaign slogans to describe and intervene in such conflicts. They include environmental racism, environmentalism of the poor and the indigenous, climate justice, land grabbing, and water justice. The justice movement discusses the clash between the economy and the environment which leads to the appropriation, transformation, and disposal of materials and energy by society (Fischer-Kowalski and Haberl 109). The environmental justice movement was prevalent among African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Pacific Islanders. The movement has shown that communities of colour are routinely targeted to host facilities that have negative environmental impacts, such as landfill, dirty industrial plants, etc. In other words, the movement is called 'environmental racism' (Skelton and Miller 2016). The organized communities opposed environmental threats. Latino farm workers fought for workplace rights, and protection from harmful pesticides in the 1960s.

Environmental justice movement is often conceptualized as a locally confined and predominantly urban problem. It is the poor and urban settlers who are vulnerable to the environmental threats. "… rural populations suffer many instances of [environmental] injustice as well" (Nussbaum 34). In India, Chipko Andolan or movement, an ecological movement in the 1970s, marks the beginning of environmental justice movement. Earlier in 1860s, during British rule in India, there was a Bengal peasant revolt against indigo plantations, which also has ecological undertones. Gandhi's freedom fight had also opposed industrialization in India. The rapid growth of industrialization after the Independence ushered the environmental justice movements. Major justice movements in India include the Silent Valley protest (1973) in Kerala which aimed to save the Silent Valley in Palakkad district from being flooded by hydroelectric project;

Appiko movement (1983), was started by men and women in Karnataka, in order to support ecological preservation and restoration; and Narmada Bachao movement (1989), which was spearheaded by native tribals in Gujarat against a number of large dam projects across the Narmada river.

In addition, the tragic incident in Bhopal has negative impact on ecology. Following the events of December 3, 1984, environmental awareness and activism in India increased significantly. The Environment Protection Act was passed in 1986 and under this act the Ministry of Environment and Forests was given overall responsibility for administering and enforcing environmental laws and policies. It established the importance of integrating environmental strategies into all industrial development plans for the country (Britannica, 2021). Some of the objectives of the Act (1986) includes the following: (i) Decision to coordinate the activities of various regulating agencies under the existing law; (ii) Providing deterrent punishment to those who endanger the human environment; (iii) The main goal should be sustainable development; (iv) Sustainable development includes also the protection of life (iPleaders).

Ecocriticism, a field of study which is associated with various kinds of environmental justice, climate change, etc., is generally seen to be one of the integral parts of human research. There is the involvement of general concerns for the nature that is greatly affected by the human behaviour and sometimes even gives way to empathizing with nature. And all these infamous events find accurate representation in numerous fictional pieces in literature. Indra Sinha, who has been very active on behalf of the Bhopal tragedy survivors, focuses a great deal of attention on the injured and disfigured bodies in his famous fiction *Animal's People* and in addition, the novel represents the polluted nature. The disaster has impacted humans and nature: the narrator Animal walks on all fours because chemical poisoning has damaged his spine, leaving him unable to stand up straight. This enforced posture and the childhood ridicule that comes with it eventually lead him to identify himself as an animal rather than a human being. On the other hand, nature suffers with the death of biosphere. By using the theoretical framework of Eco-criticism as a template, this article analyzes Indra Sinha's fiction.

Bhopal Gas Tragedy: An Analogical Report

During the 1950s, expanding global population, particularly rapid in lower-income countries, necessitated an increase in global food production. Therefore, increased global efforts to develop new agricultural techniques were made and in India, the introduction of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides were major developments in a wider reform of farming practices known as the 'green revolution.' Methyl isocyanate (MIC) was used as an intermediate in the production of carbamate pesticides, which was imported from the US, but later a new plant for producing MIC was planned (Eckerman). The decision to establish the plant in Bhopal came after Union Carbide Corporation decided to manufacture Sevin, a pesticide commonly used throughout Asia (Fortun 61). The whole process of establishing the plant was inherently more sophisticated and hazardous (Shrivastava 102). Pressure and heat from the exothermic reaction in the tank caused the gas flare safety system to be out of action which had been for three months. At around 1:00 a.m., December 3, a loud rumbling reverberated around the plant as a safety valve gave way sending a plume of MIC gas into the early morning air (Accident summary). The pesticide plant released MIC into the atmosphere, affecting people living near the plant site. Investigations later estab-

lished that substandard operating and safety procedures at the understaffed plant had led to the catastrophe (Morehouse and Subramaniam 21). Based on several reports (Varadarajan 1985, UCIL 1978, Subramaniam 1985, Kumar and Mukerjee 1985), it is likely that at areas nearest the factory, the cloud would have been mainly composed of MIC and trimmers of MIC, but would also have contained hydrogen cyanide (HCN), nitrogen oxides (NOX), carbon dioxide (CO2), and carbon monoxide (CO), all of which replaced the air. The town was completely silent, people were too sick to work or to even move. The stillbirth rate increased by three hundred percent; peri and neonatal mortality rates increased by two hundred percent (Eckerman). The accidental leakage of the MIC from the Union Carbide Factory of Bhopal caused coma; there were significant wounds in the central nervous system; above all psychological trauma and behavioural disturbances continued to be a dominant feature (Sriramachari 31).

After thirty seven years since the disaster, the survivors and the kin of the deceased are still waiting to be compensated by the government (Hindustantimes.com 2021). The survivors continue to suffer from many diseases, including cancer, tumours, and lung problems, caused by the inhalation of the poisonous gas thirty-seven years ago (*The Indian Express*, February 15, 2022). Rohit Jain, a social documentary photographer, has recorded the human cost of the after-effects of the disaster. In 2019, the second and third-generation children from the survivors are born with a range of disabilities not seen anywhere else in India. Many children and young adults suffer from cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, Down's syndrome, attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder, blindness, learning difficulties, and gross motor delay (Rohit 2019). After 15 years of the tragedy, an activist has stated,

That didn't happen. So even after 15 years of the tragedy, people there were drinking that contaminated water and inviting diseases that were passed on to the generations now. (Chandani)

Nawab Khan, the president of Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purish Sangharsh Morcha has commented,

Hundreds of children were born with birth effects because their parents consumed groundwater for twenty years. Unless the hazardous waste is excavated and disposed of safely, the toxic contamination will continue to maim generations to come. (*The Indian Express*, March 12, 2022)

Indra Sinha: A Biographical Note on the Author

Indra Sinha was born in 1950, the son of Irene Elizabeth, an English writer. In 1967 he moved to Britain with his family after attending schools in England and India. His first novel, *The Death of Mr. Love* (2002), set in Bombay intertwines a fictional story around the Nanavati murder case, which eventually led to the abolition of the Indian jury system. Indra Sinha has shown interest in campaigning and fundraising since 1993 for those affected in the Bhopal gas tragedy. He also co-founded the Bhopal Medical Appeal, which offers free medical care to people affected by the gas. His most recent novel, *Animal's People* (2007), is set in the town of Khaufpur, and is based on the Bhopal disaster. *Animal's People* was shortlisted for the 2007 Man Booker Prize for Fiction and won the 2008 Commonwealth Writers Prize. The major reason for writing the novel has been discussed by the author during an interview with Mark Thwaite. In October 2002, *Outlook India* wrote:

Bhopal isn't only about charred lungs, poisoned kidneys, and deformed fetuses. It's also about corporate crime, multinational skulduggery, injustice, dirty deals, medical malpractice, corruption, callousness, and contempt for the poor…Their struggle for justice and dignity is one of the most valiant anywhere. They have unbelievable energy and hope…the fight has not ended. It won't, so long as our collective conscience stirs. (Sinha 27)

Titular Interpretation

The oxymoron 'Animal is Man' conveys the poignancy of reality and it is a powerful figure of speech which the authors use to reveal the truth intelligently. For instance, George Orwell, an English novelist, has used it intelligently in one of the most powerful political allegories of all times, *Animal Farm* (1945). The novel was a clever attack on communism and Stalin. Indra Sinha's novel *Animal's People* (2007) shares a part of its name with Orwell's novel and it utilizes the oxymoron as a sharp comment against one of the worst industrial tragedies in human history, the Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984. The novel attacks the ignorance of the company that caused disabilities among humans and in nature, changing the lives of thousands of people. On the other side, the title of the novel is used to help identify the unification of people in the midst of suffering following the disaster in the city and also foreshadow the difficulty Elli, an American doctor, will face when trying to open the clinic in Khaufpur. The difficult moment becomes true when she is frustrated about everyone's attitude toward her clinic, and yells "Hey Animal's People! I don't fucking understand you" (Sinha 2007). Elli will have to try to break down the tough barriers which exist among the people in

the city and to help people move past what they fear the most, change. Furthermore, she was unaware as to why the citizens were untrustworthy toward outsiders like Elli who was an outsider among the rest of the city – *Animal's People.*

Summary of *Animal's People*

Indra Sinha's novel *Animal's People* tells the story of a community of slum-dwellers in Kaufpur, who survive the gas tragedy at a pesticide factory in Bhopal, India, and fight for justice in the streets against the US Company. The story is centered on Animal, a sharp tongued nineteen years old boy, whose spine has been twisted so badly as the result of the tragic accident that he is reduced to walking on all fours. Adolescent and 'beastly' boy, Animal is one of the tens of thousands of poison victims whose lives are affected by the Union Carbide catastrophe on 'That night' (14) of December 2, 1984, in Khaufpur. Nixon (2011) states Khaufpur as specific and non-specific: a fictional stand-in for Bhopal; a non-specific for a web of poisoned communities spread out across the global south (46). The fictional city of Khaufpur makes the novel universal in approach as it can refer to places where in the similar incident of gas tragedy and other forms of destruction to nature and humanity exist. Animal, a victim of that dreaded night, tired of Western 'jarnalis' coming to the fictional town of Khaufpur to hear about the catastrophe, agrees to talk on one condition: that he be allowed to relate his story directly into a tape recorder left by a sympathetic journalist. The story is *my story* and it is *put up with how I tell it* (Sinha 32). According to Siebers (2008),

If we cannot tell our stories because they reflect badly on our personalities or make other people queasy, the end result will be greater isolation. For human beings make lives together by sharing

their stories with each other. There is no other way of being together for our kind. (47-48)

Sympathy for the physical condition apart, Animal is a trickster brimming with mischief and cunning. For instance, he sees Zafar, a saintly person in the novel, as a romantic rival. Animal succumbs to an almost irrational hope of walking upright and taking his place among men in order to woo Nisha. However, Nisha, the woman he loves, never sees him as anything other than an insolent, funny brotherly figure whose misshapen form arouses her pity, not love. Betrayed by a body in which almost nothing works except his libido, Animal sees his hope of lying with Elli, the mysterious American doctor who has opened a medical clinic in the town. The residents believe that Elli acts as spy for the American company and they try to figure out who the mystery woman is. In the meantime, one is offered descriptions of the harrowing conditions in which Animal and his impoverished brethren live under the shadows of the chemical plant, which still leaks its poisons into the soil and water.

Animal goes into the forest away from people to live like animals. He spends his time in the forest in hallucinations in which he sees images of his friends such as Zafar and Farouq. He hallucinates that they are dead along with the rest of the city after the gas tragedy. When he sees his friends coming toward him, he at first believes them all to be dead and alive in the afterlife. Zafar tells him they stopped the hunger strike when the Chief Minister promised not to approve a deal without him; the Minister planned to break the deal in secret, but a mysterious woman, Elli, released gasses from the factory into the room, forcing the lawyers to cancel the deal. Elli, Somraj, and Nisha go to America while her clinic is rebuilt. Animal receives word from Elli that he can go to America for surgery to heal his back. He decides not to have the surgery, instead choosing to be his strong unique self.

Identifying an Ecocritical Discourse in *Animal's People*

Co-existence is an ecological term, which places equal emphasis on the relationship between humans and nature. The question that is centred on the ecocritical reading of the novel is: What is the reaction of nature following the gas tragedy which is due to the company's ignorance? Sahu (2014) in her article 'The Emergence of Environmental Justice in Literature' says that the novel discusses the serious impact of the tragedy, not just on the people, but also on the environment (549). Sinha remarks about the impact of the gas in nature and wishes that the natural justice should prevail in the city (Sinha 52). Sinha calls the attention of the human world to nature which is trying to take back the land: the herb scent, it's ajwain; you catch it drifting in gusts, at such moments the forest is beautiful, you forget it's poisoned and haunted. Under the poisonhouse, trees are growing up through the pipework (Sinha 2007). Khaufpur remained poisoned for years after that tragedy and the plight of its people continues to contaminate the ecology of the town. Following the tragic incident, Sinha notes that no bird sings; no hoppers are found in the grass; there is no bee humming; insects can't survive in the poisoned city; it is impossible to get rid of the poison from the company and still the works in the company continues (29). Apart from the disability the tragedy caused for the persons living in and around Khaufpur, it also caused disability, to nature. Nature is voiceless and waiting for justice. The above statement clearly states that, Animal talks to the reader to bring justice to the people and also to the environment.

Frederick (2010) states that ecocriticism speaks for the voiceless earth which is an earth-centered approach; whereas, all the other approaches are ego-centered (31). Similarly, Sinha addresses about the land poisoned by the gas leakage and the suffering humanity in the city, suggesting that harming or destroying nature will only bring about the inevitable fatality of the human race. The consequence of this death of nature is reflected in the characters such as Animal, whose spine is unrecoverably injured, the death of Aliya, and so on. The effect is not only found on the physical health, but also on the mental health as in Ma Franci who forgets the language and loses her mental stability. As Ursula Heise challenges the sense of place in the essay 'Sense of Place and Lieu de Memoir: A Cultural Memory Approach to environmental texts,' this novel as Ursula suggests, brings out the sense of place to bring out the sense of planet in the reader. However, it can't be so certain that ecoconsciousness is rooted in the sense of place, reconnecting individuals with their place has been challenged by Ursula Heise in her book *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*. As she says in her essay, the pre modern societies were rooted in place and followed the models of ecologically sensitive inhabitation, whereas, in the modern world, returning to the local, belonging and caring is not a simple task. Heise reminds that sense of place must be complemented by 'sense of planet,' and local belonging subordinated to global identification (Rigby 117).

Approaching *Animal's People* as a narrative of Disability Studies

Sinha's work is centered on the main protagonist Animal, whose disability is one of the main topics of discussion; others include the negative impact of the tragedy on the nature. The human disability is caused by the violation of basic rights of "Rights, law, justice" (Sinha 65) in the factory. The aftermath of the leak showed how an industrial disaster like Bhopal tragedy can involve a complexity of violations of social rights of people (Presse). As a result of the violation, Animal faces a situation in his society wherein people treat him and perceive him differently, creating a situation of 'attitudinal barriers' (French and Swain 11). Given the circumstances, such as his disability, others' perception about him, how might he expect him to embrace and to value his new identity? Siebers (2008) has noted that there is 'the superiority of ability over disability,' a dominant psychological model in the society, (34). There is a shift in perception about Animal and feels inferior when he says, "I used to be human once" (Sinha 81). The irreversible state makes him feel contemptible and says, "I'd feel raw disgust" (81). He claims, "I am a small person not even human, what difference will my story make?" (82). The thought about his present state makes him feel that he is living his worst nightmare. He hates what he has become, because "The world of humans is meant to be viewed from eye level" (62). The 'eye' referred here represents the society's views about the normal and abnormal. He distances himself and detests the sight of dancers, performing bears, stilt-walkers, etc. He cannot stand the stares of those around him, the looks of pity and contempt as he tries to perform simple tasks in public, and he begins to look at himself with disdain.

Animal recognizes that in the eyes of his foreign viewer, his disfigured form makes him both a curiosity and epidemic problem, for the journalist fails to make sense of him because his body seems to lack the familiar and comfortable coherence of normal human morphology (Williams 589). Animal decides to tell the story only if the story remains his. The tapes explain how Animal was treated by the people, his thoughts, the people's sufferings, their struggle towards justice, and the company's irresponsibility. Ani-

mal gets his name when another child starts teasing him and calling him "jungle Animal," and "the name, like the mud, stuck" (Sinha 71). Animal embraces the name as the logic behind the name emerges from his physical form and social identity. His physical condition is a direct reminder and a powerful visual example of the consequences of the Bhopal disaster.

Throughout the novel, Animal refers to his interlocutor as 'Eyes.' He explains,

> it's like this, as the words pop out of my mouth they rise up in the dark, the eyes in a flash are onto them, … they become pictures of things and of people. What I say becomes a picture and the eyes settle on it like flies. (Sinha 63)

How do people look at disabled people? What defines a human being? People's perception of Animal's body results from the severe deformation of his body as a consequence of inhaling poisonous gas. Animal's body is a reason why people have named him Animal. Animal has the desire to walk:

> Never did I mention my yearning to walk upright. It was the start of that long argument between Zafar and me about what was an animal and what it meant to be human. (23-4)

Zafar is an idealistic activist who, although not a victim of the disaster himself, aligns himself with those who are, and becomes their leader, encouraging them to believe that their demonstrations in the form of marches, boycotts, and eventually a hunger strike can allow them to claim their rights as citizens and victims of corporate wrongdoing. At the end of the novel, Animal refuses the operation that has been offered to him and would straighten his back so that he could walk. But he argues:

> Right now I can run and hop and carry kids on my back, I can climb hard trees, I've gone up mountains, roamed in jungles. Is life so bad? If I'm an upright human, I would be one of millions, not even a healthy one at that. Stay four-foot, I'm the one and only Animal. (Sinha 76)

The theory social constructionism posits that "the dominant ideas, attitudes, and customs of a society influence the perception of bodies" (Siebers 48). Differentiating people based on colour is rampant in a racist society. The racist society sees black people differently from the white people. In an ableist society, the civil rights legislation focuses on the people with ability. In other words, the disabled people are sidelined or thought unnecessary because the existing idea is that they do not desire to enter normal society. Khaufpur which is presented as society in the novel, points out at Animal,

> There he is! Look! It's Animal. Goes on four feet, that one. See, it's him, bent double by his own bitterness.... Animal has no chance to return to his former state of being 'so sweet' and "a naughty little angel" (62). He cannot "stand up on tiptoe" and "hunt in the cupboard for food. (64)

The condition is irreversible for Animal, but what he needs to come to is a different conception of him; one which is based not on the past but on the present and the future.

> Some disabilities can be approached by demanding changes in how people with disabilities are perceived, others by changes in the built environment. Some can be treated through medical care. Other disabilities cannot be approached by changes in either the environment or the body. (Siebers 47)

Demanding changes in how people look at Animal is far beyond the possibility; however, what can easily be achieved is his own approach about his body. Animal has a better chance of future happiness and health if he accepts his disability as a positive identity and benefit from the knowledge embodied in it.

The Emerging Dialogue between the Eco and the Somatic

The disaster in Bhopal, India, posits that nature is disabled and humans are disabled physically and socially. Under the disability studies the human body is subject to the dangers of the world as it is entangled with the environment. As shown in the select novel, any man made disaster causes negative impact for the humanity and nature. Therefore, relationship between the human body and the environment is at the core of Sinha's novel. The work represents Animal's body in states of illness, deformation, and vulnerability as a result of interaction with toxic environments. The victims of Bhopal disaster, like Animal in the novel, suffer from slow violence of the poison. Because of the all-pervasive toxicity in the environment people are still suffering from the disaster even today. More pragmatically, Animal thinks of communicating the truth of his existence as a person who faces prejudices and attitudinal barrier as mentioned by French and Swain (11). It is also apparent that people around him often poke fun at his disability rather than express sympathy. Only the idealist socialist activist Zafar declares that "he dislikes teasing of the disabled" (Sinha 66). Animal refuses to undergo the operation that would straighten him up to walk like normal people. Thus, he conveys that the value of people with disabilities does not lie in finding a way to return through medical intervention to a formal physical perfection (Siebers 47). He is happy the way he is as he can carry people on his back and make them happy.

Sinha shows that Animal is an able person with his physical disability. Persons with disabilities in the past have served to symbolize other problems in the society. Richard of Gloucester in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, a hunchback, wants to be King of England and uses manipulation and deceit to achieve his goal. Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex* represents the flawed nature of humanity and an individual's role in the course of destiny in a harsh universe. He accidentally fulfils a prophecy that he would end up killing his father and marrying his mother. No one ever sees Tiresias as a blind person in Sophocles' drama as his blindness symbolizes his gift of prophecy. Sinha also has presented Animal, who can overturn the dominant image of people with isolated victims of manmade disasters who have nothing in common with each other or the abled persons of society. Straddling the line between the human and nonhuman, Animal willfully splits with the human, repeatedly insists he is not a human being and rejects being understood by the categories that ableist discourse provides.

In a conclusion, the paper has attempted to read Indra Sinha's novel from an ecocritical and disability studies point of view. The aftermath has brought much soul-searching and finger-pointing over who was ultimately responsible for the tragedy. Plant workers, technical experts, and former Union Carbide officials have described a deterioration of safety standards at the plant that they say, helped provoke a disaster. No matter how many years have passed, the aftermath of the Bhopal tragedy can still be seen today. Though it is important for the government to promote globalization it should ensure that there are no risks involved for the people and nature. Also, it is the need of the hour that the laws made get implemented in the best way possible because nothing is more important than the lives of the people. The ghost of the Bhopal tragedy should

guide India's policymakers and rulers. While dealing with multinational corporations for high-value investments or major projects, the policymaker has to be extremely cautious. They must gather the full picture about ownership and also get guarantees against industrial/project hazards.

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Motherhood: Metaphor, Praxis, and the Antitheticality within: A Study of Select Writings of Toni Morrison and Harriet Jacobs

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Abstract

In the existing human history, the trope of motherhood has been interpreted and analysed in a number of ways. Popularly, from the majoritarian perspective, it is viewed as a female's status that is, by and large, synonymous with love, care, nurture, affection, sacrifice, and so on. However, in practice, this may not necessarily always be the case. In the context of literary-autobiographical writings of Toni Morrison and Harriet Jacobs, motherhood emerges as a radically distinct and elusive category. It attains new dimensions altogether in the treatment of this trope by the aforesaid mentioned authors. This paper explores and argues that the understandings of the trope cannot fit in to either set of definitions; instead, motherhood claims a third space in the process of analysis in the light of the writings by the two authors. This third space refers to the reciprocal relationship between the understandings of motherhood as metaphor and in practice. As such, motherhood defies fixity, eludes description, and, in the process, emerges as a trope bearing traits antithetical to itself. In its course of literary analysis of the primary sources, namely *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) by Harriet Jacobs and *Beloved* (1987) by Toni Morrison, the paper shows how the epistemological and ontological positions of 'motherhood' are antithetical to themselves. Structurally, the paper comprises three parts–introduction, literature review, and literary analysis followed by conclusion. The first part of the paper is introductory in nature. Besides defining motherhood, it discusses how it has been viewed 'traditionally' as well as in contemporary thought. The second part of the paper is the review of literature on the trope. The third part is the literary analysis of the primary texts. The last and the final part concludes the paper. Discourse and textual analysis methods have been employed in the paper.

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Describing what it means to be a mother is a challenging undertaking indeed. Noted Christian bishop and theologian Saint Augustine once said, "What is grace? I know until you ask me; when you ask me, I do not know" (Zubko 204). The same seems to hold true of the trope of motherhood as well, because it eludes a precise linguistic definition. In fact, words seem almost inconsequential alternatives when it comes to defining motherhood. Even though it may seem challenging to define due to the complexities and problematizations associated with it, it is almost ineluctable to establish a definition of it, at least a working one. Intellectuals and researchers have made efforts to evolve 'definitive' understandings of both mother and motherhood.

Since perspectives and viewpoints on it are galore across the existing knowledge traditions, defining motherhood is rather difficult. Motherhood is not merely a metaphor, or a trope, or an institution, or one's existential reality, but a universe in itself. However, despite the range of perspectives available on it, two distinct viewpoints can be observed. The first views it as a context and culture-dependent existential reality, whereas the second as a reality with universally essential aspects and stereotypes attributed and ascribed to it. Popularly, it is believed that motherhood is the state wherein 'the unconditional love' is showered by a mother toward the posterity. The cliche expression 'Mother is the embodiment of love is known to all. On the other hand, in the postmodernist, post-structuralist, posthumanist, and deconstructive traditions, motherhood is seen as a subjective experience transcending all the attributes popularly ascribed to it. This set of definitions is antithetical to the popular assumptions often taken synonymous with motherhood. Motherhood has also witnessed itself evolving from being the stigmatised, archetyped, cliched, and the conventionalized image to the 'modern, working-class, single, and super friendly independent' mother and so on.

In the literary tradition, there have been multitudes of literature around the tropes of mother, motherhood, and mother tongue. Holy Mother Mary, Mother Teresa, 'the Divine Mother' Mirra Alfassa, and Sojourner Truth are a few names which gush in, when contemplating the concept of mother. From the Hindu religious and literary tradition, the names which rush-appear on the thought-board are those of *Dharti Mata*–the mother earth, *Mata Sita*, *Durga Mata*, *Prakriti Mata*–Mother nature, *Sheetla Mata*, *Santoshi Mata*, *Lakshmi Mata*, *Gayatri Mata*, *Kali Mata*, and so on. This is, largely, the deified form of female existence.

However, there have been not just goddesses, but, on the socio-political fronts of the collective history of the nation, there have been female leaders as well. Select names, such as Indira Gandhi, J. Jayalalitha, Mayavati, and Mamata Banerjee may be included in this category. These female identities have made their active and resolute presence felt across various domains of national and international recognition. Besides, the concepts of native language and homeland are also deeply associated with the concept of 'mother.' Indeed, various phase such as womanhood, girlhood, and widowhood are also linked to the concept of motherhood. There exist illustrations and portrayals of virgin mothers across religio-mythico-literary traditions in various cultures and civilizations across the span of time and space. This is, by large, the popular understanding of the trope of mother.

The representation of mother-figure has been taken up throughout different generic categories in literary traditions as well. Mother characters find their representation on stage as well. Renowned German dramatist Bertolt Brecht's play *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939) is a

fine example thereof. Hindu religious texts such as the Mahabharata, and the Ramayana have mothers in them, who played vital roles in course of the epics. Jaishree Mishra's novel *Rani* (2008) revolving around the life of the queen of Jhansi is yet another fine example of literature on motherhood.

However, there exists a whole range of writings on the theme of mother and motherhood in both Indian and world literary tradition. The following part undertakes reviewing select writings on motherhood.

As is evident from the introductory part, the trope of motherhood has consistently served as a prominent and extensively discussed topic in literature. Also, the literature around the trope of 'mother' is galore. *The Mighty Queens of Freeville: A Mother, a Daughter, and the Town That Raised Them* (2009) – a memoir by Amy Dickinson is a remarkable illustration of the strength exhibited by mothers, especially those divorced, yet living single. Misogyny, religion, and trauma are among the select areas, which are intricately intertwined with women. In academic circles, there have been instances wherein studies have also been conducted revolving around 'mothers who fathered' their offspring (Nettleford ix).

Scholars have unearthed into terrains as varied as surrogacy (Field), female power (Augoustakis), lone motherhood (Klett-davies), contemporary motherhood (Craig), motherhood and playwriting (Komporaly), stigma and stereotypes associated with motherhood, misconceptions about motherhood, wisdom, and motherhood (Montgomery), and black teenage motherhood (Kaplan). The issues of race entwined with motherhood, textuality, and Harem have been thoroughly taken up by Elif Shafak in her *Black Milk: On Writing, Motherhood, and Harem Within* (2007). Various philosophical aspects associated with motherhood such as lesbian motherhood, lying

to children, and other moral and political concerns are unearthed by Fritz Allhoff in his *Motherhood: Philosophy for Everyone* (2011).

The Concept of Motherhood in India: Myths, Theories and Realities (2020) edited by Zenia Mitra is a major work on motherhood and its various aspects in contemporary Indian context. It casts light on various issues and aspects such as the archetypal imagination of mother, the myths and the representation of mother in Hindi Cinema, mother as 'the Buddha at home' etc. In Indian cinema, mother has largely been represented as the embodiment of love, sacrifice, and kindness.

The dialectics of the real and the imagined woman is adroitly navigated by Rajeswari Sunder Rajan in her book *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism* (1993). She writes, "the study of 'real' women cannot take place apart from the exploration of 'imagined' women" (Mitra 14). Adrienne Rich in her book *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1986) highlights how all born of women are essentially connected to motherhood.

Given the fact that it is elusive to define motherhood, and it has to be defined as well, sooner or later one needs to get on defining motherhood. The journeys undertaken by individuals in the terrains of motherhood may be diverse, unique, and therefore special, in various ways. To put in the most basic terms, it is a state of being a mother, in the first place. Ellen Ross views it as "the cultural process of locating women's identities in their capacity to nurture infants and children" (Ross). By different scholars it has been viewed in various ways. American humorist Erma Bombeck views it as "the second oldest profession in the world" (ii). It has also been viewed as "[a state of] perpetual failure at multitasking, [...] a radical design of . . . everything we know: our values, our skills, our perspective, our ego, our empathy, our – [what not]"

by Libby Chisholm Fearnley in her article "Motherhoo-." The observations and insights into motherhood are incredibly abundant. It has also been assessed as "the ache [one] feels in [one's] chest when [their] son can't see the flock of birds that just flew overhead" (Joyce). Alternatively, the state of motherhood has also been viewed as "a pure magic" (Joyce).

Motherhood has also been defined as a state wherein "someone nurtures . . . and cares for ... the deepest places of the heart" ("Meaning of Motherhood, The"). It has also been observed as synonymous with the capacity to handle hard and frustrating times. Alternatively, it is seen not as a hobby but as a calling, it is something which God granted to humankind. To put it differently, it is also a journey wherein one finds one's identity and meaning of one's life. The ideas evident in the writings of Toni Morrison and Harriet Jacobs are, at times, similar to the above-mentioned perspectives, and, at times, they differ as well. The protagonists as well as 'other' mother characters of Jacobs and Morrison do not fit in either set of definitions. The following part of the paper delves into the literary analysis of the texts, and showcases how the 'third space' is engendered in the writings of Jacobs and Morrison.

The story presented in the *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* revolves around various aspects related to the concept of motherhood. Apparently, it is an autobiographical account of tyrannical incidents happening to a slave girl named Linda Brent, however, it lays bare various other aspects as well concerning motherhood. A new year's eve holds a unique significance for individuals, impacting them in a range of meaningful ways. In Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents*, the reader comes across a reference to a new year's eve. The irony for the slave mother on the New Year's Eve is that for her this moment comes 'laden with peculiar sorrows' (17). The mother is in the bond-age of Dr. Flint. Confined in his custody, she is brooding in introspection, self-reflecting in worry. She almost underestimates herself while ruminating that,

> she may be an arrogant creature, degraded by a system that has brutalised her from her childhood; but she has a mother's instincts, and is capable of feeling a mother's agonies. (17)

The maternal instincts in the mother here shine with a glimmer of humanity. The description grows rather pathetic on the part of another mother described in the autobiography. Narrating another instance of sorrow in a slave-mother's life, Jacobs writes,

> On one of the sale days, I saw a mother lead seven children to the auction-block. She knew that *some* of them would be taken from her; but they took *all.* The children were sold to a slave trader, and their mother was bought by a man in her own town. Before night her children were all far away. She begged the trader to tell her where he intended to take them; this he refused to do. . . I met that mother in the street, and her wild, haggard face lives in my mind. (17)

The above description lays bare the pathetic state of a mother, who loses all her children in a market. Moreover, she is denied the right to know the whereabouts of her children. The heart of a mother has a remarkable capacity to embrace an abundance of emotions. A mother's unwavering love, nurturing instinct, and selflessness–all the virtues are evidently perceptible in this instance. The profound feelings, including those of love, joy, protectiveness, and at times, of concern as well as apprehension–all can be seen collectively in the above mentioned example. It showcases

how a mother's heart is filled with immense care, tenderness, and empathy toward her children. This depth of emotion shapes the extraordinary and unique bond between the mother and her children. This image of motherhood is in consonance with the traditional, cliched, and archetypal image of a mother.

When the tyrannical attitude of Linda Brent's masters reaches its height, she becomes resolute on the further line of action she wishes to undertake. Jacobs writes,

> The war of my life had begun; and though one of God's most powerless creatures, I resolved never to be conquered. Alas, for me! (19)

These lines reflect upon the unwavering determination and resilience inherent in a mother. A deep embedded sense of passion, zeal, and a strong desire for liberation of her own kind, Jacobs writes,

> O, what days and nights of fear and sorrow that man caused me! Reader, it is not to awaken sympathy for myself that I am telling you truthfully what I suffered in slavery. I do it to kindle a flame of compassion in your hearts for my sisters who are still in bondage, suffering as I once suffered. (28)

The fight for self-respect is evident in the *Incidents* quite starkly. Upholding one's dignity and maintaining the sense of worth for a mother is distinctly visible. Recalling her struggle and the moments of ordeal, Brent observes,

> I tried to preserve my self-respect; but I was struggling alone in the powerful grasp of the demon Slavery; and the monster proved too strong for me. I felt as if I was forsaken by God and man; as if all my efforts must be frustrated; and I became reckless in my despair. (48)

The sense of being almost abandoned or deserted is apparent in the above lines. The reader is left to wonder how far one can go in the moments when there is no intervention, no support but unending hours of crisis, profound despair and utter loneliness in one's life. One is also left to wonder whether it is the agency of 'sin,' or some kind of 'divine punishment,' or the failure of faith, or, in contrast, squarely an instance of human tyranny? The *Incidents* is rather a transparent text as it hardly employs the agencies of rhetoric, pun, and satire explicitly. During its progression, the narrative brings into light the contorted face of (in)/humanity assumed toward the narrator. In its course, the autobiography is rather plain, straightforward, and truthful.

That the experiences or the state of motherhood of a slave could become the cause of jealousy for the 'masters' is very plainly carved out in the autobiography. Dr. Flint, who is depicted as the slave master and primary antagonist in the narrative, experiences feelings of envy, and is covetous of what Linda possesses, i.e., her motherhood. Jacobs writes,

> When Dr. Flint learned that I was again to be a mother, he was exasperated beyond measure. He rushed from the house, and returned with a pair of shears. I had a fine head of hair; and he often railed about my pride of arranging it nicely. He cut every hair close to my head, storming and swearing all the time. I replied to some of his abuse, and he struck me. Some months before, he had pitched me down stairs in a fit of passion; and the injury I received was so serious that I was unable to turn myself in bed for many days. He then said, 'Linda, I swear by God I will never raise my hand against you again' but I knew that he would forget his promise. (66)

Almost in a manner akin to the outright rejection of slavery and experiences thereof, Linda Brent notes,

> Slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women. Super added to the burden common to all, *they* have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly their own (66).

These lines make it evident that the experience of slavery is essentially a gendered experience. In the case of a mother, being a slave is a different experience altogether in comparison to that of a man. Motherhood is a devastating and challenging experience for mothers. Separation, psychological trauma, pain of losing one's offspring–all are various aspects of motherhood and slavery as seen in the autobiography.

In the course of the autobiography, Brent also unveils the different aspects associated with slavery. The oppression and mental torture which she undergoes is largely directed towards her by her master Dr. Flint and his son. Nevertheless, she responds to the insult in a positive manner and transforms it into a valuable lesson. Jacobs notes,

> No pen can give an adequate description of the all-pervading corruption produced by slavery. The slave girl is reared in an atmosphere of licentiousness and fear. The lash and the foul talk of her master and his sons are her teachers. When she is fourteen or fifteen, her owner or his sons, or the overseer, or perhaps all of them, begin to bribe her with presents. (45)

Throughout the autobiography, the account of tyranny inflicted upon the slave mother is both saddening and disheartening. Brent is often times flogged by her master Dr. Flint. Recalling the pain of the whip, Brent notes, "Mighty is the power of the torturing lash" (55). It has to be noted emphatically here that Motherhood is often, popularly seen as an experiential reality which is that of someone 'caregiving,' someone who is 'motherly,' 'loving' and so on, but in Brent's literary-autobiographical narrative, the mother has to undergo the brutal and heinous experience of flagellation. This is an altogether other side of motherhood in practice. The flip side of motherhood which is not so much in consonance with the 'majoritarian,' and the 'popular' understanding of it.

It is even more ironic to observe that despite undergoing the humiliating experience of flagellation, the slave mother is herself repentant. The sense of remorse and guilt for herself is so overpowering that the reader feels pity for not only her but also for oneself. The repenting mother Brent almost burns in the fire of contempt, and she observes,

> That word *contempt* burnt me like coals of fire. I replied, 'God alone knows how I have suffered; and He, I trust, will forgive me. If I am permitted to have my children, I intend to be a good mother and to live in such a manner that people cannot treat me with contempt.' (133)

Slave mother's conviction that she might be treated with 'contempt' just because she has lived an 'abject' or 'mean' life of a 'slave' is a shameful state of affairs. It compels the reader to wonder as to what kind of 'democratic' set up was back then in practice wherein individuals were reduced to the status of sub-humans. The arousal of the feeling of pity in the reader's mind for oneself is also because of the socio-cultural reality prevalent back then. It would not be an overstatement to proclaim that on humanitarian grounds, such a state of existence is indeed pathetic and sub-human. Motherhood, in practice, amid the given situations has to be seen in a different light

altogether. Such a face of motherhood does not fit in the popular, archetypal image of motherhood.

A similar strand of thoughts on the trope of motherhood can be observed in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), a film version of which appeared in 1998. The story of *Beloved* unfolds the experiences of the protagonist Sethe – a proud mother who is extremely devoted to her children. Denver, Sethe's youngest daughter emerges as the most dynamic character. The experiences of motherhood are varied in the novel. The relationship between history and memory is almost histrionically represented. She uses memory to explore and represent various dimensions of slave life.

Though in the course of the novel, there are many tyrannical occurrences; one is particularly worth mentioning in this context. This revolves around what can also be considered the murder of the 'beloved'–the little daughter of Sethe. Beloved happens to be murdered by her mother Sethe under certain compulsions. This compulsion was the fear of her child being put in hostage and subsequently made a slave for the rest of her life. Such a reason behind the murder compels the reader to mull over the circumstances wherein the mother was forced to slay her baby. Description of the reasons behind the murder is appalling to the reader. However, this horrific feeling of dread is not on the part of Sethe, but on the very degenerate and reprehensible human condition. The titular antitheticality makes its presence felt here through this instance. This situation makes the reader wonder: how could human beings ever stoop so 'low' to the level of forcing someone to murder their loved ones? Though this question is humanistic in its tone and temperament, which may come under serious critical scrutiny for the poststructuralists. Needless to say that humanism places human beings at the core of human civilization.

The irony in the above instance is twofold. The scholars of poststructuralism and deconstruction, on the one hand, may find the very phenomenon of murdering problematic, but on the other hand, to Beloved's mother, her murder is justifiable. Because she was ethically right, therefore she killed her daughter. In a way, she liberated her. To her, murder is seen as a means of ensuring redemption in the given context. Views of the post structuralist thinkers are also somewhat similar in this regard. This incident renders the 'traditional' definition of motherhood a bit *too* complicated. The mother is not the sum total of the values popularly ascribed to her in the conventional, majoritarian cultural tradition. Rather, in order to safeguard the freedom of her child, she goes to the extent of killing her child.

In the course of exploring the above instance, one is reminded of French Philosopher Jacques Derrida's text *The Gift of Death* (1992). The associated ideas with this book include: how death could be a 'perfect' gift, which someone could give to somebody. The mother commits murder purely out of the obligation to shoulder her responsibility–the responsibility to safeguard her offspring. The moral and the religious dimensions seem to blur in this instance. This understanding also renders the metaphoric and the otherwise understanding of 'mother' problematic. Precisely, motherhood attains altogether new dimensions in the above instance. Redemption, fidelity, responsibility etc., are some of the watchwords, which guide the course of defining motherhood in the writings. The mother is bound to remain 'true' and 'responsible' to her daughter and it is therefore that she murders her.

To put it in brief, the domain of motherhood is a boundlessly wide one which encompasses a whole range of experiences, responsibilities, and roles. Ranging from being identified as a biological experience to an emotional bond of care, nur-

turing, and guidance, it has been viewed in ways even wider. All the more, when motherhood is entwined with the practice and institution of slavery, it touches upon new dimensions altogether. In this process of evolving, it emerges as an ever more complex paradigm. The populist definitions, on the one hand, echo the emotional and the sentimental aspects attached to motherhood, whereas on the other hand, in practice, as an experiential reality, it turns out to be worlds apart from the popular versions. As seen in the writings of Harriet Jacobs and Toni Morrison, the experience of motherhood is rather a journey of shouldering responsibilities, facing struggles, and deprivation of individual liberty. In practice, motherhood is another name for striking a balance not just between two worlds, but among many–those constituted by fracturedness and separativity. Antithetically enough, the institution of slavery renders their worlds smaller, diminutized, almost unremarkable, and 'less than life' as compared to 'larger than life.' However, it is their endurance; determination and tenacity which help them withstand the inhuman and the vindictive forces. The given scenario and situations render motherhood an experience of third space–neither completely 'universalist,' or 'traditional,' or 'archetypal,' nor the 'postmodernist,' or 'deconstructionist.' Rather, it occupies a third space for itself – an amalgamation of both, yet neither of the two. It is either both, or/and neither of the two. And at the same time, it happens to be both.

The writings of Jacobs and Morrison reflect on this ironic side of the treatment of women. They show how as a metaphor, popularly motherhood is held in high spirits, recognized, praised, and respected highly, yet pain is administered upon them. This state is antithetical, pathetic, and ironic. The paper has attempted to showcase how; metaphorically, motherhood is seen as 'the emblem of love.' However, antithetically, it is a

little too problematic to proclaim so in practice. The paper, in its course, has attempted to show how mother is a person with remarkably distinct meanings attached to her.

In its course, it has explored and shown how motherhood is understood in popular imagination in a certain, unique way, whereas, on the other hand, as seen in the (trans-) literary writings of the authors taken, it is a different experience altogether. In the course of self-reflection, the trope problematizes itself. The 'traditional' versus the 'new' collide against one another and destabilise the established boundaries of the trope. In the course of discussion and deliberation, an altogether new understanding of the metaphor of motherhood emerges which is neither completely the 'traditional' one, nor wholly the 'new' understanding of motherhood. Neither of the understanding is complete in itself. Rather, motherhood seems to transcend both. The epistemological as well as the ontological state remains antithetical to itself, to both the ways of understanding. This renders the trope of motherhood rather an open domain to be further thought upon in the human thought yet to come.

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Modes and Motives of Surveillance: An Eclectic Genealogical Survey

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Abstract

Surveillance, as it happened in the past in direct modes of census and censorships, or as it is happening in subtle forms of digital supervision in modern times, involves a surrogate kind of colonization of the physical as well as mental space of the layman. The paradox, inherent in the relation between the State and the citizen, has been such that one is not able to resolve whether surveillance is to be condemned as a violent incursion into personal territory, or to be tolerated as an imperative of the social security establishment to which one is contractually affiliated. Surveillance, thus turns out to be the perpetually rising action in the drama created by a perennial conflict of interests between the State and another State, between the State and the citizen, and between the citizen and another, as they tend to exercise power and control over each other. The paper tries to trace the evolution of surveillance from previous times to the latest development whereof it has transcended its earlier role as a political instrument to become an *aide de camp* of data capitalism.

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There is an inherent paradox to be read into the title of this article, as it hints at the possibility, rather reality, of a survey, rather surveillance, of the agents and instruments of surveillance which are fallaciously self-presumptive in holding themselves to be untraceable and invincible. Surveillance, like any other mode of trespassing into the life of others, either for voyeuristic pleasure or for hegemonic control, or as it has evolved in recent times, for gathering and transferring of individual data in order to pedal vested commercial and political interests, has an element of violence involved in it, and violence, as Emily Bronte writes in her novel, *Wuthering Heights*, is a double-edged weapon that can hurt at both ends in the long run, if not immediately: the hunter can be hunted, the watcher can be watched, and this explains, the absolute undesirability of all modes and motives of surveillance and counter-surveillance in a democratic society, at least from within. But surveillance has been palpable as a behavioural constant of human social existence from the earliest times, as it has evolved consistently in terms of modality, from the earliest material guises through electronic means, to finally reach its amorphous and ubiquitous operation in bytes. And, as the civilized world has been convinced time and again, every time the practitioners of surveillance feel they could pat themselves on the back for their success in maintaining secrecy, whistle blowers pull the carpet from under their feet.

Even as it is disturbing, if not immediately alarming, it is amusing too to conceive an eclectically shaped genealogical account of surveillance as an orchestrated activity that has been engaging both the apex and the base of pyramidally structured societies and establishments for quite a while in the history of humanity. Along with the transitions in the modalities and consequences of such surveillance activities, the resistance and subversion that the victims – ordinary as well as high-profile human beings – have been able to mount against this obnoxious practice also deserve attention. Altogether, to trace how the contemporary world has come to manage to live under and through the ingeniously inconspicuous and unsparingly scrutinizing eyes of the 'panopticon' that maintains a relentless gaze on both the suspects and the unsuspecting, is at once challenging and disheartening. Often justified and upheld on specious grounds as a necessary evil, tending to be deemed less and less an evil and more and more a necessity in view of ensuring the stability of ruling dispensations, surveillance is essentially a means to contain human energy for action, to control one's thought process, and of late, to prospectively influence one's preferences and choices. The veil of secrecy that shrouds this human vocation renders it rather difficult or disjunctive an effort to construct a genealogy of surveillance which desists meticulously from pronouncing itself. However, an eclectic methodology would turn it into an interesting avenue to explore, whereof disparate parts of the constitutive material of the history of surveillance could be accessed from different sources; a careful recapitulation of lived experience would yield considerable information, quite a bit can be retrieved from literature and the visual art forms like film, and despite running the risk of exaggeration, conjectural thought, to a certain extent, could be expected to throw cognitive light on the modes and motives of surveillance in its proto-historic forms. In the contemporary world, much of what happens by way of surveillance gets periodically laid bare through the work of agents-turned-whistle blowers who deem it fit after a while to listen to their 'conscience,' realizing that it is 'better late than never.'

Surveillance must have been in vogue even in primitive societies – nomadic or settled – where its utility was, perhaps, limited as a means to pre-

clude external encroachment to living corridors, by animals and enemies. Preservation of power and concerns of control and governance were, most probably, not factors to be reckoned with in this early period. The imperative of institutional stability, which necessitated the control of human energies and behaviour, must have come to be operant in the pre-secular, religious order, as it becomes evident from the conceptualization of 'sin.' The notion of sin, which imaginatively put in place a metaphysical regime of 'autosurveillance' must have been an inspiration for later innovators in the field of surveillance to build upon the concept of 'the two eyes from above' which combined 'omniscience' and 'omnipotence' as the twin coordinates of divine will and power. However, it should have been naïve on the part of the church to believe that a congregation of individuals equipped through parables with an ethically conformist psyche would nurture a self-motivation to practise goodness and obedient self-conduct. And, it seems the Church was not inclined to remain in blind faith that its moral authority over the faithful was absolute, but would rather keep constant and stringent vigil for dissidence and defections. Gary T. Marx, a Surveillance Studies expert and Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Massachusetts Institute of Technology notes:

> In the fifteenth century, religious surveillance was a powerful and dominant form. This involved the search for heretics, devils and witches, as well as the more routine policing of religious consciousness, rituals and rules (e.g. adultery and wedlock). Religious organisations also kept basic records of birth, marriages, baptisms, and death.

In any case, an overdose of the 'theological narcoanalytics' using the instruments of sin and guilt, and the terror of torments in Hell, soon proved counterproductive. For a certain period, especially after the protestant Reformation in Europe, this mode of psychologically engineered auto-surveillance continued on a less stringent track through the literary instrument of the Morality plays which depicted the personification of virtue and evil, and the good and the bad angels as a subtle means of interiorisation of the externally codified principles of conformist behaviour. Thereafter, the Renaissance period of Humanistic thought came to witness a more proper substitution of the religious concepts of sin and guilt with the more secular-sounding term, 'conscience' – a keyword in all Renaissance literature – as the key motif of human autosurveillance and self-conformation in a society with discursively formulated principles of morality and order. William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* demonstrates this shift of emphasis to the role of conscience as the normalizer of human conduct and relations. As Prince Hamlet bewails that "conscience does make cowards of us all" where-of the "native hue of resolution / Is sicklied o'er with pale cast of thought . . . / And lose their name of action" (Shakespeare 886), or hopes to "catch the conscience of the King" (885) through the enactment of the play 'The Murder of Gonzago' or when Claudius laments his hardened criminality with stubborn knees and heart with strings of steel (891) that render him unable to heed to the voice of his conscience, the secular discourse of Renaissance Humanism could be seen to supplant the religious notion of divine punishment from above, to accommodate human conscience as the new internalized force of auto-surveillance.

Surveillance as an integral denomination of state craft and mechanics of social hierarchy can be encountered at multiple levels in the narrative course of *Hamlet*. The political imperative of maintaining close and constant vigil over the movement and activities of groups and individuals, with a preemptive force, is clearly depicted by Shakespeare in the play. The stability of vari-

ous institutions of civic society, such as the family, the State, and international relations as well, seems to be dependent on the effective utilization of either percolative or embedded surveillance mechanisms. The motif of surveillance as an instrument of governance and law enforcement comes through in the 'Exposition' of the play when Horatio attributes the hasty preparations for war by Denmark to reports of an imminent attack by the young Fortinbras of Norway whose father was killed in battle by the late King Hamlet. Horatio's account gains significance on two accounts. It indicates the terrestrial extent and sweep of espionage even in those times, as Denmark and Norway are two countries separated by a considerable stretch of the North Sea, with only indirect connectivity through a narrow strip of land that connects them with Sweden. Secondly, and more pertinently, it mentions a particular group of people who, because of the very circumstances of their life, are identified and monitored, as they pose a potential threat to the sovereignty not only of Denmark, but of Norway too, "a list of lawless resolute for food and diet, to some enterprise that hath a stomach in it" (Shakespeare 871). Claudius proves himself to be adept in perceiving and defusing the slightest threat to his hard-earned power, and takes to surveillance as the most effective means not only against the external enemy, but also against dissent from within. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have been summoned to the palace not because of any benign desire to help his nephew out of the melancholy disposition he has fallen into, but out of a shrewd intent to mount a congenially masked surveillance over Hamlet in order to thwart any move by the Prince to reclaim his throne from the usurper. Perhaps it was a wrong recruitment on the part of Claudius, as the two simpletons, with their low intelligence quotient, with no keen flair for the job entrusted to them, with no ulterior thrill to be gained from their

observations and conclusions, and without either the requisite strength of will or the cunning to withstand Hamlet's probing inquiries with respect to the reason for their arrival at Elsinore, lend themselves readily to the sceptical scrutiny of Hamlet. Such inefficient surveillance personnel invites disaster, not only upon themselves but also upon their employer. The character of Polonius also seems to be conceived by Shakespeare as a demonstration of the casualty that can emanate from flippantly carried out surveillance missions. Polonius is an enthusiastic practitioner and a pathetic victim of surveillance in the daily business of life. Self-interest drives the old man to poke his secretive nose into the affairs of everyone else. The man with the strange hobby of hiding behind the arras, in order to eavesdrop on others with their consent is a rare specimen of collusive or collaborative surveillance. He watches with Ophelia's consent her interaction with Hamlet, to prove that Hamlet is lovesick, but his theory is disproved; he entrusts his servant Reynaldo to carry out a thorough surveillance over the conduct of his son in France, but acknowledges that youth is prone to many a vice including promiscuity; (Shakespeare 878–79); he hides in the queen's chamber with the consent of the king, and he loses his life: surveillance is a task that must be carried out in utmost secrecy, collaboration is taboo, and may prove catastrophic.

And, curiously, from the perspective of the realpolitik of surveillance, the attack by the pirates on the vessel that was to take Hamlet to England may be discerned to be part of a pattern than accident, in the overall context of the maritime travel that is mentioned in the plot of the play. The smooth voyages of Laertes between Denmark and France, and the return of Voltemand and Cornelius, the ambassadors of Claudius to Norway, stand in stark contrast to the mishap that occurs to the ship carrying

Hamlet to England. Maritime surveillance meant to enforce zones of exclusive fishing rights and to ensure the safety of ships attached to the political and commercial interests of sovereign powers must definitely have been lax in the case of the latter, as its high-profile cargo was anathema to the State. As reported by Hamlet, the attack took place, "Ere we were two days old at sea" (Shakespeare 898), which is not too far away from the Danish zone of maritime sovereignty. Barry J. Ryan, observes that,

> legally based demarcations, deriving from central authorities, commence[d] in the fourteenth century. (1059)

He also cites an authoritative document to throw light on the spatial extent of surveillance rights of nations over the seas:

> Arguing for a boundary of 100 miles from the coast of Britain, William Wellwood's *Abridgement of Sea Laws* (1613) explicitly evokes security and safety (rather than customary rights) to support his claim . . . Measuring approximately two days' voyage from the coast,

And he added that,

> In this militarized national security construction, the sea was an extension of the land for purposes of defence. (1059)

Hence, it wouldn't be naïve to assume that the reference to the attack by the pirates is suffused with an intricate tone of irony intended by Shakespeare himself, though it is not explicitly stated in the play, whereof it is subtly hinted that an astute ruler with extraordinary cunning and farsightedness, of the ilk of Claudius who keeps in reserve a chalice of poisoned wine to make it doubly sure that Hamlet does not get past his snare by any means, would have arranged for it

to happen without compunctions or difficulties whatsoever. No irrational stretch of imagination is required to suspect a deliberate dilution in the contemporary rigours of maritime surveillance, either with the active abetment or passive connivance of Claudius that could be surreptitiously exercised through his royal authority. The uncanny clarity of his criminal sensibility – Shakespeare's insightful appreciation of such sensibility, rather – prevents Claudius from divulging it to Laertes, lest his credibility as a just ruler should suffer in the eyes of the erstwhile minister's son.

The array of ad hoc, experimental, and all too conspicuous patterns of percolative surveillance existing from the earliest times of human history could not but culminate in the quest for and evolution of incrementally sophisticated and diversified objectives, methods, and gadgets of information gathering, data analysis, and practical application, especially in the wake of the embryonic evolution of nation states in the sixteenth century. The imperatives of the policies of imperial expansionism and colonial explorations, coupled with the scientific advancements of the time, catered to the evolution of more fine-tuned mechanics of distant and mass surveillance. The advent of the prototypes of the modern, sophisticated Telescopes, documented in history to have been invented by Hans Lippershey, a Dutch eyeglass maker, and later developed by people from Galileo to Sir Isaac Newton, provided a quintessential tool of surveillance, not only to astronomers but also to the navigators, explorers, and colonisers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to make a safely distant survey of both the seas and the far-off lands they intended to conquer. The pictures of Captains of ships exploring for colonies, and of military Generals of the Imperial powers, wielding telescopes, and later the binoculars, surveying from a safe and advantageous distance, the lands and the people they

were about to conquer, were soon to become a stereotype to be encountered in books and films. As all material advancements in the course of human evolution had a previous stage of imaginative preconceptions, the realization of the progress from the terrestrial limitations to the areal possibilities of surveillance too must have had a period of imaginary depictions. This imaginative stage of aerial surveillance is perhaps dramatized in the Shakespearean play, *The Tempest* (first performed in 1611) where the character 'Ariel' becomes an organic model for the function and scope of an aerial mode of surveillance as an instrument to attain human political and strategic ends. Unmanned surveillance aircraft, camera-integrated drones, satellite cameras, infrared imaging equipment etc., that characterize modern sophisticated means of aerial surveillance could be traced to have their imaginative prototype in this Shakespearean character.

In the course of the latter half of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century, the world witnessed the emergence of more state-of-the-art surveillance equipment that marked the gradual but decisive passage from percolative surveillance to the current modes of embedded surveillance. Equipment and modes ranging from microscopic transmitters and cameras that could be installed on a watch or a pen, to Satellite surveillance became openly acknowledged means of mutual deterrence and preemptive information gathering during the Cold War years. The James Bond films bear ample testimony, both real and anticipatory, to these developments. Tom Stoppard's 1988 play, *Hapgood* which is a postmodern take on the traditional spy story documents the intricacies and pitfalls inherent in the use of such high-end means and methods of embedded surveillance simultaneously from either end. Stoppard, an ingenious craftsman with excellent transdisciplinary skills, turns a simple episode of espionage involving the

Russian KGB and the British M11 into a scientific thriller with the mixed deployment of surveillance and counter-surveillance, agents, and double agents, original and counterfeit documents, and more importantly politics and sentiments.

Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest* (1998), another play that won international acclaim, becomes significant in this context as one of the earliest fictional documentations of the crossover of surveillance from its earlier pseudo-politically legitimized guise as a strategic implement of statecraft, to become a facile instrument in the hands of private corporate enterprises. The notorious notion of the 'panopticon,' which in George Orwell's *1984* (1949) involves a pathologically ingrained proscriptive psychological consciousness meticulously reinforced in the social and the domestic spaces by the totalitarian ruling dispensation, assumes material reality in *Harvest* in the form a panoptic camera device, called the 'Contact Module' that can turn full circle, sideways, upwards, and downwards, and absorb the slightest movements and sounds in its field. Installed at the centre of the domestic space of the donor's household, by the multinational corporate enterprise called 'Interplanta Services' which recruits young and healthy individuals from the third world for 'voluntary' organ donation to its rich Western clients, it becomes a means for the capitalist forces to make a deftly compulsive intrusion into the private space of the inhabitants, and to consolidate their hegemonic sway over the victims. The donor and his family prove themselves naïve in believing that they could dodge, (as they were actually doing it) the scrutinizing eyes of the Contact Module, as the penetrative reach of the surveillance mechanism installed in the household appears to be horrifying when the human voice behind the machine reveals his omniscience:

Always. I listened in to you, Zhaya. I heard every word said in the room – even when the module was off, it recorded…Saw, too. I know about the toilet being loaned to half the city! About the water being sold. About the food being shared. Every sneeze, every belch. And you Zhaya – I knew when you bled and when you passed wind. I even saw you . . . pleasure yourself, Zhaya, lying there alone. I even knew that. (Padmanabhan 94-95)

Manjula Panmanabhan's *Harvest* is a futuristic play that effectively provides an early hint at the possible degradation in the human environment as surveillance passes from its earlier mode of minimal application as an intelligence-gathering mechanism subservient to the State, into the hands of the power-mongering multinational corporate giants. Surveillance, though vicious by its very *raison d' etre* and modus operandi, could be credited with a certain degree of legitimacy and accountability in its earlier forms. Politically motivated surveillance, meant to track the movements and transactions of people and groups within and across borders that were instituted in the name of territorial integrity and internal stability, could be justified to a certain extent under the social contract to which the individual has signed allegiance. At least in its ideal form, it has been subject to principles of propriety and judicial scrutiny. Detection, prevention, and preclusion of crimes, meant to ensure the overall health of the social dispensation, could be proffered as palpable reasons for the voluntary accession of the individual to mechanisms of social surveillance. However, in the hands of the monstrously corporate capitalist world, there has been a dramatically exponential and patently malevolent diversification of interests, expansion of sweep, and intensification of control, in the modes and motifs of surveillance. State surveil-

lance, both internal and external, engaged the viewer and the viewed – the State and its neighbour, the State and the citizens, or state and the so-called terrorist outfits – on an even keel: the motifs, methods, and the ends were fairly predictable and hence anticipated, and it placed either end in a competitive mode of engagement with each other. With the advent of corporate surveillance, sophisticated to undetectable levels of subtlety, and subject to constant metamorphosis, the gravest casualty has been the predictability associated with traditional political surveillance. The penetrative and intrusive capacity of the surveillance instituted by 'Interplanta Services' in the domestic space of the recruit for organ donation turns out to be too primitive in the wake of the amorphous means of electronic surveillance instituted in the name of Big Data Capitalism of the postmodern world.

The rest is recent history. The civilized world was shocked to witness an unprecedented and massive exposure, among other security related classified information, of the unceremonious surveillance, and scrutiny carried out over the years by the United States National Security Agency and its arms like the CIA and the Pentagon, on even high profile political and diplomatic figures across the world. 'Wiki Leaks' founded in 2006 by Julian Assange, an

Australian editor, publisher and activist . . . came to international attention in 2010 when it published a series of leaks provided by the U.S. Army Intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning. (Julian Assange)

"Wiki Leaks specializes in the analysis and publication of large datasets of censored or otherwise restricted official materials involving war, spying and corruption" (Research Guides). As per the information available on this site,

All major French political parties were targeted for infiltration by CIA's human (HUMANIT) and electronic (SIGINT) spies in the seven months leading up to France's 2012 presidential election. (Research Guides)

Wiki Leaks has also released leaked evidence on the unscrupulous extent to which the United States espied on other leaders of the world, by way of bugging a private climate-change strategy meeting between the U.N. Secretary General, Ban Ki - Moon and the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel in Berlin, and by tapping the Swizz phones of people at the helm in key international bodies, like the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Director of the Rules Division of the World Health Organisation. Among the released intercepts is also the conversation between the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Nethanayahu and the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, the former seeking the latter's intervention to patch up his strained relationship with the U.S. President, Barack Obama. The unequal tussle between the omnipotent U.S. establishment and the determined-yet-defenceless journalist could not but end up in the eventual arrest and incarceration of Assange, who is now awaiting trial in the Belmarsh Prison in Thamesmead, South-East London. However, Assange would forever be remembered as a pioneer among a new class of conscientious individuals called 'Whistleblowers' who prefer to remain undaunted against the power of the establishment in mounting a subversive battle against State-sponsored surveillance.

Close on the heels of Assange came Edward Snowden, the American whistleblower who found it imperative to expose the American surveillance establishment further, as it was getting murkier and more scandalous by way of exceeding its brief in engaging private internet companies, with the purpose of,

harvesting millions of email and instant messaging contact lists, searching email content, tracking, and mapping the location of cell phones, . . . [and] using cookies to piggyback on the same tools used by internet advertisers 'to pinpoint targets for government hacking and to bolster surveillance. (Edward Snowden)

Particularly disturbing and alarming to people all over the world has been the revelation that the,

NSA was . . . secretly accessing Yahoo and Google data centers to collect information from hundreds of millions of account holders worldwide by tapping undersea cables using the MUSCULAR surveillance programme. (Edward Snowden)

Not only did these revelations turn the calm surface of international political relations turbulent, with the German Chancellor Angela Merkel calling it foul by saying that spying among friends was unacceptable, but they also created panic among the global community that embraced the internet technology as indispensable to modern life, as it exposed them to unqualified and unwarranted surveillance by the State.

From the Snowden files, it has been a shorter distance to the latest expose on the more enormously alarming nexus between the State and the world of Global Capitalism in tapping private data for purposes far exceeding those of internal and international security. In 2018, Christopher Wylie, a former employee of the British political consultancy firm named Cambridge Analytica which specialized in managing election campaigns worldwide, disclosed that data from Facebook accounts of as many as 87 million American citizens were harvested by the com-

pany for the purpose of psychographic categorization and personality profiling to be utilized for targeted political advertising during the 2016 U.S. Presidential election (Christopher Wylie). Today, those who are intellectually advanced and more politically sensitive (though far and few they seem to be) among the millions of enthusiastic users of the various web-based social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube realize that the history of their searches and postings would be scrutinized and strategically sorted to attain purposes of social categorisation, consumer profiling, manipulative campaigning, and behavioural controlling, and exclusionary politics.

Frederic Jameson, could not probably foresee, or perhaps felt diffident or reluctant to cogitate on the future turns that capitalism would assume in its attempt to totalize its control over the human mind, and was content to mention only the three successive phases of Classical or Market Capitalism, Monopoly Capitalism, and Multinational Capitalism (Jameson 410-18), in his work, *Postmodernism: Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1992). The current incarnation of capitalism, with the dubious nomenclature of Surveillance Capitalism, or Data Capitalism, has far surpassed its predecessors, in its ability to exercise infinitely more direct, comprehensive, and irresistible control over society. The advent of software surveillance has marked the beginning of a new epoch in which personal data of private individuals are easily accessible not only to multinational business brands and political establishments, but also to nefarious cartels devoted to purposes as devious as pornography, drug peddling, human trafficking, religious, and political indoctrination, and aggressive product advertisement. In the wake of the unbridled expansion of social media platforms surreptitiously promoted by global capital to serve their vested interests, the dignity, and right to privacy of the individual

have obviously become a casualty. The capacity of perpetually self-refining technology to pry deeper and deeper into the private lives of people has been exponentially greater than that of traditional material surveillance. Unsolicited messages, and promotional advertisements, facilitated through unauthorized data sharing often leave the individual with the awkward feeling of being naked on a busy street. People who have been alarmed over the recent trends have mooted desperate remedies ranging from universal sensitization and parliamentary legislations meant to curtail the access to personal data, to even an International Convention on Data Surveillance to draw up a charter that would define the broad contours and specific guidelines for data usage, on the lines of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, or the more recent International Climate Protocol.

Conversely, and paradoxically, there has also been a not-so-concealed celebration of the new trend by individuals who see it as an opportunity to shatter the old order that placed a high premium on cultural conventions, rules and regulations, and customs and manners. They believe that when nothing is private, nothing is sacrosanct, and when nothing is sacrosanct, everything is permissible, and the unqualified freedom offered by the new social media scape is to be savoured without compunctions, to liberate themselves from the shackles of the old regime. To many, social media activism is a facile means to salvage themselves from anonymity, and they would prefer the willing abandonment of the sanctimoniously upheld notions of privacy, over the prospects of dying "Some mute inglorious Milton" (Fairer). In the postmodern epoch of largescale social disintegration, the longstanding definitions of the relation between the variables of liberty and privacy, between privacy and dignity, and between man and society have incrementally come under fresh interrogations. How-

ever, beneath its apparently dynamic surface constituted of free human enterprise, lies a murky and deceptive world of neo-colonial encroachment into the autonomy of the human self. Big Data capitalism, an offshoot of this new era of cyber control and embedded surveillance, has thrown up inescapable questions of individual safety and security. The answers are definitely going to be multivalent and irresolvable.

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Reconceptualizing Subaltern Voices in the Contemporary Malayalam Cinema

Elaise Maria Francis* and Annie Anthony**

Abstract

The subject of subalternity and its innate consequences is yet to find a satisfactory space in Indian Cinema. Filmmakers who made genuine attempts to portray the predicaments of the marginalized sections remain solitary in their efforts, as the predominant absences of the subaltern voices have intensified the execution of violence and oppression against them. In spite of exceedingly casteist film culture, there are some meaningful ventures in the contemporary Malayalam Cinema that have tried to bring out the injustices and the discrimination faced by the members of the Dalit communities. *Varthamanam (2021), Jana Gana Mana (2022),* and *Puzhu (2022)* are few films, which have tried to reconceptualise the understanding of the Dalit existence. In spite of the fact that Malayalam cinema has attempted to address the concerns of the Dalits, they have been stereotyped from various perspectives and were diminished to the status of sidekicks, villains, and merely confined to stigmatized images. *Varthamanam* (2021), *Jana Gana Mana* (2022) and *Puzhu* (2022) transform this notion by addressing the violation faced by them in the realms of domestic, academic, and work spaces and comment on the socio-political and cultural context which pushed them to the margins.

Keywords: *Subalternity, Discrimination, Castiest, Dalit Existence, Stigmatized, and Violation.*

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In his *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature* (2004), Limbale writes that the aesthetics of Dalit literature rest on three things: first the artists' social commitment; second, the life-affirming values present in the artistic creation; and third, the ability to raise the readers' consciousness of fundamental values of life like equality, freedom, justice, and fraternity. In fact, Dalit lives have been misrepresented or were denied to acquire a space in the canonical Indian texts and this absence can also be felt in cinema and other visual representations.

Malayalam Cinema is not different in this regard, as it has been fulfilling the aspirations of the dominant caste for decades. Much has been debated on Dalit history and caste system in general but its strong presence in visual media, especially Cinema is scarcely identified. Possessing a legacy of nine decades beginning from *Vigathakumaran* (1928), Malayalam Cinema fails to bring Dalit characters to the mainstream, which is evident from the tragic plight of first Malayalam heroine, P. K. Rosy. Being a Dalit Christian woman, she was brutally persecuted for playing a Nair woman's role. However, some liberating attempts emerge from the margins in the representation of discrimination and violence based on caste.

Some of these filmic attempts have come out recently which include *Papilio Buddha* (2013) by Jayan Cherian, *Kammattipadam* (2016), by Rajeev Ravi, *Varthamanam* (2021) by Sidhartha Siva, *Pada* (2022) by Kamal K.M., *Jana Gana Mana* (2022) by Dijo Jose Antony, and *Puzhu* (2022) by Ratheena P.T. These films are genuine expressions of Dalit consciousness which were earlier buried in Malayalam Cinema.

The objective of this paper is to examine how far Malayalam Film makers were able to address the Dalit struggle and their self-asserting sensibilities through their artistic creation, social commitment, and consciousness of fundamental values of life.

For the outcastes of Brahminical Hinduism a strong encounter with the existing oppressive force that refused to acknowledge their basic humanity, was essential to come out of the wretchedness they have been subjected to from time immemorial. Retaining the subaltern voice, ages of experiences must find their expression of Dalitness in all forms of art. The term 'Dalit' is derived from the Marathi Language connoting the state of being ground down or oppressed. The term gained its importance primarily as a denotation for the downtrodden and untouchables. The varna concept and the myth of birth of castes in *Manusmriti* were a deliberate fabrication made to oppress the natives according to Jyothiba Bhule. The Dalit question was reconceptualised and the struggle was reshaped during the Ambedkarite phase. He embraced Buddhism and initiated one of the mass religious conversions in Indian history. Ambedkar discusses his views on the origin and development of caste in *Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development* (1916) *The Annihilation of Caste* (1936) and *Who were Shudras?* (1948).

Dalitness inherently is anti-caste and emphasizes identity consciousness and this consciousness has become an integral part of all depressed class/caste and minorities as well. The term Dalit became popular as a label of identity in 1972 with the Dalit Panthers of Bombay, which was widely used by the young Dalit activists. Critics like Sharan Kumar Limbale and Om Prakash Valmiki have contributed considerably to provide a theoretical foundation to Dalit Aesthetics.

The question of Dalit Identity when it comes to Kerala context, neither the congress led nor the communist led alliances have done much to the upliftment of the lower section of the society.

Dalit literature was absent from the Malayalam mainstream literary scenario for a long time. Malayalam literature including the films failed to show the true representation of Dalit lives.

One of the dominant patterns that can be observed from the inception of Malayalam film industry is to look at perfect bodies and thus create a desire in the audience. Such films which are purely commercial not only provide its audience a space for voyeuristic and scopophilic pleasure, but also an invisible space through which caste hierarchies and power relations are promulgated. Films thus normalize various bodies portrayed in the power web and hence a new language comes into being based on the body. The prejudice against the Dalit body has been so deep rooted that there has been very little Dalit participation in the mainstream films.

However, in the recent years, Malayalam films have tried to portray the struggles and injustice faced by Dalit people. *Varthamanam (2021), Jana Gana Mana (2022),* and *Puzhu (2022),* have brought out a fair representation of Dalits and Dalit identity through films. Films can be a representation of society and vice versa. Hence, the paper illustrates how these films have contributed to create a lucid picture of Dalit existence in the contemporary society.

Varthamanam (2021) directed by Sidhartha Siva, narrates the journey of a research scholar Faiza Sufiya who goes to the JNU campus in Delhi to research a freedom fighter, Mohammed Abdur Rahiman. She gets exposed to diverse cultures and people at the University including student leader Amal and her roommate Tulsa. The script by Aryadan Shoukath discusses about every political situation that is taking place in our country from labelling student leaders as anti-nationals to discrimination against Dalit Students. The paper aims to explore the injustice faced by Dalit students in higher education.

Jana Gana Mana (2022), the story revolves around the murder of an outspoken Professor Saba Mariyam at Ramanagara Central University. This leads to a wide protest organized by college students who want justice for their beloved teacher. As the tale unfolds it focuses on caste bias, discrimination and atrocities faced by Dalit students and how the suicide of a Dalit research scholar eventually be the root cause of Saba's murder.

Puzhu (2022) is a modern adaptation of the Thakshaka tale in *Mahabharata.* The film acts as a metaphor to unveil the caste system and its evil nature prevailing in Indian society which is explored through an estranged relationship between a brother and a sister of an upper caste, mainly due to the sister eloping with someone from a lower caste. The film showcases how caste is still prevalent in Kerala society and how its wickedness plays a significant role in the social stratification.

II

In the realm of education too, Dalits were always marginalized. Education was something which was meant for the elite and the upper caste. Ensuring access to education for the Dalits of India has been the greatest challenge for the Indian government in diminishing the social effects of the caste system, which still remain entrenched in Indian society. There have been many different reasons proposed as to why the Dalits suffer from low rates of literacy and primary education enrolment, but the most realistic one describes history and unequal access as the causes. Oppression of the members of the Dalit community was one of the main reasons for this. The people of the Dalit community aspiring to get education were seen as a symbol of arrogance. The films *Varthamanam* (2021) and *Jana Gana Mana* (2022) bring this to the fore.

Though, in 1945, Ambedkar established the People's Education Society in order to give importance and a fair treatment for the Dalit people regarding education, the films show how the Dalits are being tortured and ill-treated in the various academic spaces. India, has made headlines time and again, regarding the suicides, deaths and the harassment of Dalit students in educational institutions. *Jana Gana Mana* (2022) throws light to this. Referring to the incidents which happened in JNU, *Varthamanam* (2021) follows a similar thread.

'Varthamanam' can mean many things - a conversation, daily news, and the present. As the title suggests the film discusses about various aspects, be it the discrimination shown towards Dalit students, to the supreme control of professors, to the mob killing in the name of cow slaughter, to moral policing, to the freedom of artistic expression in universities, it speaks against the different facets of fascism. The activists and anti-fascist student groups of the University are protesting for the rights of Rohan, a student from scheduled caste, Faiza also becomes a part of it. Rohan is denied his stipend for a long period as a result he is not able to meet the expenses to complete the research and the authority disregards the protest. The film throws light upon the plight of students from backward communities. As most of these students come from economically backward communities their families will not be able to support their studies. Often, it's the arrogance from the part of authorities to suppress the Dalits by hindering them from climbing the social ladder and pursuing their dreams.

The dynamics of the campus life takes new dimensions after the lynching of Thulsa Chakma's brother for cow slaughter. Thulsa is Faiza's roommate and she belongs to a marginalized community in Uttarakhand. She is the first from her community to acquire higher studies. Lynching by cow vigilantes has been reported in the media several times. Dalit communities often become easy targets of such cow vigilantes. They are not actually involved in the slaughter of cows, but are only engaging in their traditional business of leather.

As a result, Thulsa, being a bright student, is forced to give up her dreams and go back to her village. Following the humiliation and suppression faced by backward communities, with the support of their Professor Pothuval, the student group decides to perform a skit supporting them and to create awareness about the difficulties faced by oppressed communities among other students. The film conveys the message that humans should remain united beyond the borders of religion or caste.

Jana Gana Mana (The minds of all people), also follows a similar thread being an anti-fascist film. A thought-provoking socio-political drama, written by Sharis Mohammed and directed by Dijo Jose Antony, is the first of two cinematic parts. It focuses on various incidents that gained media attention and were used in the film to provide a true picture of many social evils presently prevailing in the country. The film also decodes how fake encounters mislead the public and the way politicians manipulate public emotion to gain votes. The film is greatly influenced by several real life incidents such as Hyderabad gang rape and the encounter in the form of instant justice following the incident. The film raises many relevant questions regarding law, politics, discrimination, marginalisation, and the influence of sensationalised media.

It is also a true reflection of the death of Rohith Vemula in the University of Hyderabad that stirred up discussions about the deadly casteism that is prevalent in India's leading educational institutions. Often, they are forced to believe that their birth is a fatal accident as in the case of Vidya, a Dalit research scholar who commits suicide for being badly treated by her re-

search guide because of her caste. Saba Mariam was killed by running a car over her by a fellow colleague as she accused him for his brutal discrimination towards Dalit students and the subsequent suicide of Vidya. Saba says she did not quit, she was forced to quit, she also submits a report of 52 students who quit their dreams in the same university.

Vidya is condemned by her caste and is asked to do manual scavenging rather than wasting her time in the university. She is made to feel inferior by her own teacher and is extremely humiliated for following her dreams. Dalits seek to overcome the stigma of caste by education which will liberate them from caste-based occupations but they are made to feel out of place while curiously working towards their aims. Vidya is stuck in the campus for eight years as she is denied any kind of support from her guide to complete the research. Being a first-generation learner from her community she is immensely pressured to complete her studies. Saba finds out the reason for Vidya's suicide and exposes her guide for which she was murdered. Vidya was made to believe that her birth was a mistake; she was ignored, segregated and condemned in the name of her identity.

In the court scene, the defence is represented by Adv. Aravind Swaminathan who raises many relevant questions about the deep-rooted caste system and racism, interrogating the democratic spirit of the nation. Society's predetermination to label someone as a rogue or a criminal based on their appearance is also questioned. Rohith Vemula's death to Madhu's murder in Kerala is recalled in the court room. Madhu, an Adivasi man was beaten to death for stealing food. He belonged to one of the tribal communities from Attappadi.

Jana Gana Mana and *Varthamanam* portray the discrimination faced by Dalit students across India. According to Ambedkar's vision, education has a revolutionary role in empowering the oppressed and to create equality in society. It can be a powerful instrument in creating a new social order. These films show, despite their relentless struggle, how Dalits become prey of casteism and remain in the margins of development.

III

Puzhu (2022) takes a different path of narration as it reveals the psyche of an arrogant casteist bigot, Kuttan. He is a former cop and a widower with a young son, Kichu. Kuttan hails from a Brahmin family and his understanding of the world is from an egoistic lens rooted in his social standing. The mental agony he experiences is an outcome of his casteist notions and from the guilt of his past deeds as a police officer. Tension arises as his sister Bharathi moves to his apartment complex. The siblings are estranged because Bharathi elopes with Kuttappan, a man from a lower caste, and is deemed to have disgraced their Brahmin family by marrying a Dalit. Everyone who occupies a space outside the circle of his inherited social privilege is viewed with contempt and suspicion. Kuttan believes in a sense of victimhood in his relationship with his son, sister, and the society as a whole, which is ironic as he belongs to a highly privileged community. He is not able to comprehend the advantages that consequently followed him from his birth nor does he realize the cruelty he inflicts on people from other caste and religious minorities.

The title holds layers of meaning and deepens with the theatrical work that runs parallel to the main plot. Directed by debutant Ratheena and based on a story by Harshad, *Puzhu* can be seen as an adaptation of Thakshaka's tale in *Mahabharata.* Thakshakan is the story about a mythical king Parikshit, who ill-treats nature, disdains forest-dwellers, and insults a sage meditating in the forest. The sage's son curses him with

death by snakebite. Terrified by the curse, the king transforms his home into a fortress where he dwells alone, but is ultimately deceived by his murderer, the half human half serpent king, Thakshakan who comes in the form of a worm (puzhu). *Puzhu* is not just a bearer of death but at the same time holds a dehumanizing effect; it is a metaphor for the caste bias. Whenever Kuttan is around his brother-in-law (Kuttappan), he shows aversion and hate as if the other person is not a human being but a worm that deserves nothing but disgust.

Bharathi, being a progressive woman, decides to live her life with Kuttappan, a theatre activist and is now pregnant with his child. They repeatedly try to register their marriage but the man's caste and colour is denigrated. The film also speaks about honour killing. The murder of Kevin Joseph, a Dalit Christian youth from Kerala must be evoked here as it is also a case of honour killing based on caste prejudice. It also throws light on the truth that discrimination against Dalits is not limited to Hindu communities listed as lower castes but also those who have converted to other religions, they are constantly being hunted.

In the climax of the film Kuttan violently smashes and kills his sister and Kuttappan, with a memento of Nangeli that Kuttappan is awarded for his best theatrical performance. What infuriates Kuttan is that, his sister is bearing the child of an outcast and he is going to name her 'Nangeli,' if it's a girl child. A child born of an inter-caste marriage is automatically considered an outcast. Hence, naming a child born to his sister, 'Nangeli' was unacceptable to Kuttan and is a disgrace to the family heritage.

The legend of Nangeli from Kerala is smeared in blood and injustice. Nangeli, a woman of lower caste, rebelled against oppressive feudalistic forces by cutting off her breasts in a pro-test against a horrific tax called 'breast tax.' She presented the bleeding organs on a plantain leaf to the king's official who came to collect tax for covering her breasts.

Women of low caste couldn't cover their bodies if they didn't pay the breast tax. They silently wept and lamented their fate, shame building upon shame under the gaze of lewd old men for whom the right to dignity came with a price. But Nangeli was a woman of virtue — she would not barter money for honour. And so, she chose death (Pillai 1).

The way Kuttappan is murdered with the memento of Nangeli is deliberately used as a powerful symbol in the film to show how the subaltern voice is suppressed at the hands of caste system.

Brahmins have enjoyed the power and privilege in today's society since time immemorial.

> Traditionally, the learned Brahmin is the recipient of many privileges; in fact, he was represented as a higher being, to be revered by lesser humans. (Keppens, Roover 1)

Kuttan, being a member of an upper caste family, believes that his caste is above all others. He silently propagates the idea that, Brahmins who are designated as priestly class, religious teachers, and scholars are superior to other castes as Brahma gave birth to the Brahmins from his mouth according to *Manusmriti*. This can be seen in various instances in the film where Kuttan tries to establish his knowledge as the supreme one to his son. 'Tomato is a fruit,' he quietly terrorizes his son, who is unable to identify whether tomato is a fruit or a vegetable; he not only corrects him but also punishes him with imposition 500 times.

Reiterating the fact that Brahmins in India have held positions of privilege since time immemorial, Kuttan raises his son keeping the same legacy.

India's Brahmins have enforced a stranglehold on the country's knowledge production for over a millennium, and since the industrial era have expanded their influence to secure influential positions within the ruling class, and top jobs in the government, universities and research institutions, and in business, industry, and trade. (Mukunth)

According to the Brahmin legacy, children are seen as a symbol of rebirth and it is the role of the father to pass on his legacy and tradition to his oldest son, who is supposed to carry it forward without questioning it.

In *Puzhu*, Kuttan exerts a similar authority over his son and reveals that he had a grandfather like him who helped him to achieve a successful profession and become what he is. Kichu is banned from playing outdoor games with other children as it may pollute his body. On the other hand, he is forced to play games like chess which requires a superior cognitive skill. Kichu learns Carnatic music even though he dislikes it. "Indian classical music is believed to be a divine art form which originated from the Devas and Devis" (Ananthan). Hence, it was always a mandate within the Brahmin community to learn Carnatic music.

Dr. Ambedkar's famous quote from *Annihilation of Caste*, states that inter-caste marriages were 'the real remedy for breaking caste.' Ambedkar thought 'fusion of blood' would create the feeling of kith and kin. Inter caste marriage is still seen as a taboo within our society even today, especially among the upper castes.

Puzhu (2022) brings this out very evidently as Acchol (Bharathi) is detested by Kuttan when she decides to spend her life with Kuttappan.

The Dalit person marrying outside caste, say to an upper caste, finds himself or herself duelling between the struggle of their community, and the culture of their spouses and in-laws. (Yengde)

Acchol wants to reunite with her family and come back in terms with her brother. Her very presence irritates Kuttan.

Even in the era of globalization and modernization, thoughts on marrying Dalits and Dalits receiving an education still remain a major problem in our society. Kuttappan and Bharathi become the prey of the same caste prejudice. It is indisputable that Ratheena becomes a significant voice in establishing a Dalit screen space in the hegemonic realm of Indian Cinema.

IV

Exploitation is one of the greatest challenges faced by any country. Nothing can bring bigger shame to that nation or country. "The size and method of exploitation may be different but the whole world is a victim" (Shaini 1). Social activists have raised their voices against exploitation time and again. In a country like India, exploitation has become a normal practice of society. One of the relevant areas where this exploitation is targeted towards is the Dalit community. As a result of the Varna system, Dalits have been stigmatized from ancient times in various realms. Be it the denial of the right to education, to even their basic rights, the films discussed here has managed to showcase this marginalization experienced by the ex-untouchables and the minorities. The films take a commendable effort to bring the Dalit lives to the limelight, by representing the oppressive circumstances they undergo in vari-

ous dimensions of their lives. The films showcase the inhumane treatment shown towards the people of the Dalit community and the way they are marginalized. The founder of Dalit Voice Shetty says:

> The problem of untouchables is not political and economic, but social and cultural. There has been no positive progress on this issue. Though laws exist to protect Dalits, atrocities against the marginalized community have not decreased. (21)

Through various cinematic techniques, meaningful content and inspirations picked from real life incidents, the films bring to light the genuine issues of the marginalized. Hence, by tackling sensitive issues such as the one of the marginalized communities, the films have managed to represent the real and the raw situation faced by Dalits.

Varthamanam (2021), *Jana Gana Mana* (2022), and *Puzhu* (2022) these films bring the questions of caste and identity into the cinematic space to establish a space for the subaltern concerns. These are path breaking attempts that make fearless efforts to be the voice of the voiceless. They are extremely political and provide a stark image of the contemporary political scenario. They have successfully exposed the political hegemonic networks that are interrogated through the powerful medium of cinema, an ideal instrument of social change. These artistic creations managed to play an effective role to raise the viewers' consciousness of fundamental values of life like equality, freedom, justice, and fraternity.

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Intersectional Discrimination as Represented in *Geeli Puchi*

Dr. Pritha Mukherjee Sanyal*

Abstract

The OTT platform provides space to narratives of diverse kinds. There have been various experiments with both form and content. One of the most significant evolutions has been in giving representative voices to issues and concerns that have remained taboo in mainstream cinematic narratives. For example, sensitive representations of same-sex/queer relationships have been a phenomenal contribution of the OTT web series. One such significant representation of same-sex relationships is in the short narrative *Geeli Puchi* - a part of the web anthology Ajeeb Daastaans. The representation of queer relationships shows a significant departure in this narrative while 'normalizing' it. The love story addresses multiple concerns of which homosexuality is an incidental aspect. Bharti Mandal, a queer, Dalit, working-class woman, faces intersectional discrimination and oppression. Bharti Mandal is pitted against her upper-middle-class Brahmin and domesticated lover, Priya Sharma, whose class and caste give her a privileged position in society. The narrative ends with the marginalized protagonist rising up to the adversities determined by intersectional discrimination and creating agencies by taking advantage of the situations that come to her. The research paper intends to critically read and show intersectional discrimination as represented in same-sex relationship in the short web narrative *Geeli Puchi* and how she realizes resistance and agency through manipulation and guile to assert her well-deserving place in society.

Keywords: *Web Series, Same-Sex Relationship, Dalit, Working-Class, Intersectional Discrimination, Resistance, and Agency.*

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Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality was primarily in the context of Black feminism. Identifying intersectional discrimination against Black women paved a new path in understanding the plight of marginalized women. However, the protagonist of *Geeli Puchi,* one of the short stories in the OTT anthology *Ajeeb Daastaans* is a victim of intersectional discrimination. A lesbian, a Dalit, and a woman of working-class background, Bharti Mandal represents intersectional discrimination and marginalization at multiple levels.

Queer Theory critically looks at the cultural and literary representations of the queer community as deviant, sick, or criminal, and simultaneously recognizes sexuality as a significant category of critical analysis when dealing with cultural texts. Queer is an umbrella term that is inclusive of gay/lesbian, transgender, transsexual, bisexual, asexual, and many such non-heteronormative existences. Michel Foucault, in *History of Sexuality* (1990), theorized sexuality as within structures and power discourses. He discusses how queer sexuality has been marginalized as it was considered to be unnatural. Foucault successfully shifted sexuality from the domain of body to discourse and culture (45). In *The Homosexual Role* (1968), Mary McIntosh argues that labeling the queer as deviant and criminal was a form of social control (182). Jeffrey Weeks asserts that homosexuality as a perversion is not a feature of some people but rather a perception created through various discourses (Waites 260). Gender, as Judith Butler propounded, is performativity. Identities are the effects of institutions, practices, discourses, with multiple and diffused points of origin (525). Thus, gender and sexuality have always been an outcome of dominant discourse; hence, any deviance from them; it is

considered a transgression. Neeraj Ghaywan's *Geeli Puchi* represents same-sex relationships and can be undoubtedly read through the lenses of queer theory as it questions and displaces the powerful, hegemonic dominance of heteronormative discourse. The narrative is an interesting representation of the same-sex relationship. To a large extent, the story is a noteworthy progress in the representation of a queer relationship.

Dialectical Materialism / Marxist understanding of power relations are critical in analyzing the narrative. The study makes generous use of dialectical materialism in critically analyzing the protagonist's position against the economic structure. The narrative is certainly a strong representation of marginalization based on class and caste. It reflects the class barriers in the work-space and domestic front. The opportunities and agencies denied to Bharti Mandal were primarily because of her class and caste identity. The determining factor of depriving and providing agencies to the characters primarily is based on class.

Bharti is not only queer but also from the working class with a Dalit identity. Her position is undermined by intersectional discrimination. Climbing the social ladder is a transgression for a Proletariat, Dalit woman with unconventional sexual choices and gender roles. The power structure of the bourgeoise needs to be 'protected' from the 'outcaste' and the 'outsider.' Efficiency and quality are irrelevant. The dominant institutions like family, office, factories, and society must repress and suppress eligibility at the altar of classism and casteism.

The representation of LGBTQ+ in the mainstream cinematic forum has always been questionable. From judging them as a transgression from 'normalcy' to being the butt of ridicule with exaggeration and caricature, the representation

has been anything but sensitive. In the '70s, Bollywood saw cross-dressed people as travesties and trans-people as palm-clapping fools. They often provided 'comic' relief from the plots of heteronormative concerns and conflicts. What problematized the representation further was the endorsement by the superstars and the iconic matinee idols of the '90s and the early twenty-first century. Whether it was Aamir Khan's cross-dressing mockery of a dance performance in the movie *Baazi* (1995) or Karan Johar's patronizing stance and slapstick ridiculing of gay relationships *Dostaana* (2008), queer representation was never a serious artistic endeavour. There were sporadic efforts to tell queer stories seriously, like in *Fire* (1996), which revolved around a lesbian relationship between lonely sisters-in-law. However, such movies were banned and censored or drew curious interest for their steamy scenes. The attitude towards queer took a while to develop into a sensitive one. The evolution has been gradual with sensitive portrayals of homosexuality in movies like *My Brother Nikhil* (2005), *Memories in March* (2010), *Aligarh* (2015), and more the recent mainstream representations of queer in *Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga* (2019), *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* (2020) and *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* (2021). Representation of the queer has seen more sensitivity and maturity in many regional movies, including Bengali features like *Ar Ekti Premer Golpo* (2010), *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish* (2012), and the more recent national award winning *Nagar-kirtan* (2017). In all these cinematic narratives, gender identity, sexuality, repression, marginalization, and social stigmas were important aspects of the discussion.

However, Neeraj Ghaywan's *Geeli Puchi*, a short story in the web anthology *Ajeeb Daastans* (2021), takes the discussion of queer further by normalizing it, interestingly, by making it an incidental aspect in a narrative that questions various other discriminations. The same-sex love story does not make homosexuality the focal point of the discussion. However, it emphasizes intersectional discrimination, where sexuality is not given focal treatment but is represented as one more tool of oppression amidst many others to marginalize individuals. This study aims at analyzing the intersectional discrimination in Neeraj Ghaywan's short story *Geeli Puchi* in the web anthology *Ajeeb Daastans*.

Geeli Puchi portrays a relationship between two young women. Bharti Mandal is a factory worker. As a poor Dalit lesbian, Bharti is considered the lowest of the low. In the factory, she is gender-shamed by her male co-workers. In her personal space, she is a lonely person, reminiscing over her previous unsuccessful relationship. Bharti is educated, qualified, intelligent, and a competent worker. However, she fails to climb the professional ladder because of her caste. Priya Sharma, an upper-class Brahmin married woman, is recruited for the job Bharti desires. As Bharti and Priya get acquainted, they develop a special bonding. Priya recalls her intimacy with her female college buddy, whom she lost touch with as the latter got married. Bharti gradually finds a shared space with Priya. Unlike Bharti, Priya is yet to acknowledge her sexual orientation. Nevertheless, it is Bharti who encourages Priya to accept her reality. Bharti is sorted as far as her sexuality is concerned. A lesbian by choice, Bharti responds to Priya's advances. The narrative does not limit itself to depicting the same-sex love story. However, it moves beyond as it questions the multiple oppression and discrimination faced by Bharti for being a Dalit, working-class woman who does not conform to the established gender identity.

Bharti Mandal, a Dalit queer woman, introduces herself to Priya Sharma as Bharti Banerjee. She is constantly discouraged and denied a managerial role at her workspace due to her class and caste identity. The discrimination becomes pronounced when she realizes Priya Sharma has gotten the position without adequate skills and qualifications. At work, the manager compliments her expertise with heavy machinery and even calls her an artist. The fact that she has been given a job that is most certainly more pronounced as 'male' is certainly a departure from gender stereotypes. Bharti is welcomed amongst her male working-class colleagues as an efficient and dependable worker. Her masculine appearance and body language work to her advantage. It is interesting to see a lesbian with an unconventional appearance be accepted in a gender-defying role.

However, Bharti meets with layered discrimination. She fought against certain gender stereotypes, and her sexual orientation was not immediately relevant at her workplace. However, a more significant threat to her was class and caste identity. As far as class is concerned, it is noticed that Priya Sharma attempts to break the barrier both spatially and socially. Priya comfortably overcomes the wall of class barrier and shares her meal with Bharti at the worker's canteen. When Priya notices the canteen space is not conducive for a personal tete-a-tete, she welcomes Bharti to her cabin, symbolic of the 'sacred' place of the upper-middle class. (Ghaywan 1:10:37). Priya even visits Bharti's home to complete the merger of the two classes. Bharti's working-class identity is evident in her modest home. Priya is not uncomfortable in accepting the class barrier between the two. Mutual attraction is inevitable. The gender and class distinctions are further

problematized when the beautiful and subtle moment of the consummation of the relationship takes place in the kitchen space in Bharti's humble home. Priya makes the first move by softly kissing Bharti (Ghaywan 1:23:20). This subtle yet poignant exchange of desires ironically happens in a predominantly gendered space for the women validating their domestic limitations. However, the kitchen becomes a space of subversion and resistance for the two women to assert their sexuality. *Geeli Puchi* is a milestone in symbolically identifying the kitchen as women's comfort zone to execute their agency and establish their queer preferences. Thus, to a considerable extent, the narrative shows the protagonist walking through the class, gender, and sexuality barriers, at least in the romantic space.

While analyzing the intersectional discrimination and oppression in Bharti, one can witness the biggest and the absolute one to be the caste identity. Bharti is aware of the oppositional forces around her. The intelligent, smart, and educated woman that Bharti is, she knows the roles she needs to play and the identity she must wear or hide to find her way through. In her relationship with Priya, though Bharti attempts to be honest with her sexuality and class, she fails to find the courage to disclose her caste identity. Bharti introduces herself as Bharti Banerjee, concealing her Dalit identity. Priya Sharma, the upper-class wife and daughter-in-law of the Brahmin family, meets Bharti at their mutual workspace. She accepts their class differences and agrees to reach out to her. Bharti acts as a catalyst for Priya to embrace her sexuality. Priya shares her past proximity with her female college buddy. When Bharti assumes Priya is ready to embrace her completely, she chooses to come clean in the relationship and discloses her caste identity (Ghaywan 1:30:06).

This revelation follows with a dip in the relationship as Priya hesitates, though they continue to meet.

This study primarily focuses on the intersectional discrimination faced by Bharti Mandal. However, it would be a gross simplification to assume that Priya Sharma has it easy. Though equipped with certain privileges of her class and caste, Priya is a victim of patriarchy. She is confined to a marriage of convenience, but her heart is elsewhere. Though she manages to step out of her domestic walls and find a job, she fails to sustain this independence.

Geeli Puchi is undoubtedly a departure from the stereotypical representation of same-sex relationships. The narrative shows a sensitive approach towards the relationship without 'othering' it. Interestingly, Bharti's sexual orientation is not even a conversation in the factory space. On the contrary, her masculine traits help her find a place in a 'masculine' job as a factory worker handling heavy machines. Her masculine appearance is a point of ridicule for her co-workers, who are all cis male. However, the visual narrative does not incorrectly portray the lesbian protagonist and the same-sex relationship as a transgression.

In representing intersectional discrimination, sexuality and gender roles seem to co-exist with the larger oppressive forces like class and, more significantly, caste identity. There is no exaggeration or blame-gaming in representing the queer relationship. Simultaneously there is no name-calling, mockery, or taunting in depicting the love story. Neither of the characters in the love story is a caricature. They are human beings with common imperfections and flaws, not determined by their sexuality. The narrative also does not take the responsibility of portraying homosexual characters with exemplary moral traits.

The characters tread on grey zones, show selfishness, and embrace both love and manipulation throughout their journey. The significance and the success of *Geeli Puchi* lie in this. The narrative does not aim to 'talk' about homosexuality. The richness of the narrative is by not making the same-sex relationship the highlight but incidental to the multiple, intersectional discriminations faced by the marginalized protagonist.

From looking at queer people as the butt of ridicule in the mainstream cinematic narrative to criminalizing them and labelling them as 'unnatural' to appreciating same-sex relationships as 'normal' and incidental, *Geeli Puchi* is certainly a milestone. Though a subject and a product of intersectional discrimination, Bharti refuses to enjoy victimhood. The adversities and the challenges have yet to thwart Bharti's spirit. On the contrary, they have taught her to be cautious and use things to her advantage. When Priya is forced to be a stay-at-home mother, it paves the way for Bharti Mandal to acquire her dream job. Bharti strategizes to create agencies for herself. She finds her way through her intelligence, skills, and manipulation. She becomes a standby for Priya at the workspace when the latter takes her maternity break. She slowly establishes herself in her newfound role. Bharti realizes this is her opportunity and she grabs it. She manipulates her way through and convinces Priya's family that it would be unwise for the latter to return to work anytime soon (Ghaywan 1:46:21). Bharti has learned the harder way to manipulate and get what she wants. Nobody is here to play a morally superior role. It is a dog-eat-dog world. The game is to survive. For Bharti Mandal, survival of the fittest has been her mantra from the word go. It cannot be denied that Bharti was more deserving of having the job than Priya.

Nevertheless, it is a love story of trust and betrayal for both. The fact that they are a same-

sex couple is just incidental. In the capitalistic world, the ability to create reality is in the hands of the powerful. The economy is a significant factor in determining choices and agencies.

Forming a classless society may be a distant reality—however; Bharti avails of the choices given to her circumstantially. The rise of the proletariat by virtue of their ability, skills, education, and capacity is a Marxist dream. Bharti represents the proletariat breaking the oppressive wall of the bourgeois as created by the workspace that strives to exclude her from acquiring an intellectual space. As an outcast, she recognizes the impossible union with her upper middle class Brahmin lover. However, the choices for a Dalit, working-class queer woman are limited. Hence, survival strategies must be self-acquired to form resistance.

The study establishes that Bharti Mandal is a victim of intersectional discrimination. A queer, Dalit, lower-class woman with a masculine demeanor, Bharti meets with oppositions at every point. Despite her education and skills, she is denied agency in her workspace because of her identity. She loses agency in her relationship for being an outcast. She cannot share her emotional experiences with anyone because of her unconventional choices. *Geeli Puchi*, a short visual narrative in the web anthology *Ajeeb Daastaans,* is a sensitive and genuine representation of a queer relationship. It does not ridicule, taunt, or make petty fun at the expense of the characters.

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How can you Stay Free when you have to Whisper? The Ironies of Menstruation and the Politics of Patriarchy Veiled in them

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Abstract

Menstruation derives from the Latin word *menes* which means moon, and the menstrual cycle thus co-related with the lunar cycle, is experienced by more than half of the world's population. Considered inevitable to human existence, menstruation has always been silenced because of many societal norms. Being unavoidable to life and taboo at the same time points to the ironical nature (imposed) on menstruation. Starting from this, menstruation has a lot of ironies attached to it, whether its modern time or ancient, there is this one phenomenon that remains unchanged. The beauty of pregnancy and the ugliness of menstruation, the sanitary napkin ad which promotes women being active on their periods but silences it in the very name, are a few examples of such ironies. Menstruation, though labeled as the reason to save the human race from going extinct, is not treated with the same respect or love. A menstruating woman is inevitable to life, and a woman who can't menstruate is given the status of no less than a wretched. Then why do people consider menstruation as taboo and menstrual blood impure, biologically speaking menstrual blood is venous and is as clean as the blood that comes from any other part of the body, and ironically the blood and the bleeding woman are always sidelined and considered as untouchable, impure and forbidden. This paper thus is an attempt to seek those ironies attached to periods, and the politics behind them.

Keywords: *Periods, Taboo, Patriarchy, Menstruators, Myth, Irony, and Non-Binary.*

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How am I beautiful
When I am pregnant
But not when I am menstruating
Don't you know
You can't have one
Without the other.
-She Dreams when She Bleeds, Nikki Tajiri

Menstruation and menstruators have always been quite a complex area of concern in almost all parts of the world. Menstruation, as they say, is one of the crucial elements of human existence, and remains hidden from the limelight because of several reasons. The phenomenon, which is purely biological and has nothing to be ashamed of, sits in some of the darkest corners of public discussions. Being a girl, who grew up hearing elders saying several terms under their breath instead of going with 'she got her periods' or 'she is on her periods,' I have always had this doubt; why so? Why can't they simply say the truth instead of picking one from the enriched euphemistic period vocabulary or creating a new one for the same? According to research undertaken by the period tracker app, 'Clue' with the help of the International Women's Health Coalition, there are more than 5000 euphemisms for menstruation all around the world, which is not a negligible amount. They go from simply saying 'She got it' to Strawberry Week, Aunt Flo, Lady Business, Moon Time, Crimson Tide, Red Wedding… so and so on. Though this seems quite hilarious in the first go don't they represent those millions of voices screaming out that 'I am on my period'?

Euphemism according to the Oxford Dictionary is a mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one considered to be too *harsh* or *blunt* when referring to something *unpleasant* or *embarrassing*. Stressing the words, harsh, blunt,

unpleasant, and embarrassing would give anyone a shock, should period belong to this category, if so, who put it under this illogical and weird tagline? Can this be read as a dark politics of the phallocentric culture? Because if menstruation and menstruating women are continued to be glorified for nourishing human existence, they will get an advantage of it, which would be adverse for the patriarchal community. So, their strategy would be to create a negative undertone for that particular feature which gives women an upper hand, thus, menstruation is silenced, the period is darkened, and a lot of other soft and mild names are implied for it. So that the menstruators would have a guilty consciousness for what they are experiencing. Period, the word has Latin and Greek origins, contains the meaning cycle, and started to appear in English vocabulary for menstruation only in the 1800s. The inability of the patriarchal society to accept this word eventually led to the creation of more than 5000 new words that have the same meaning but a soft undertone. The question that would haunt every menstruator here would be is menstruation and menstruators that problematic?

Coming to India, euphemisms here vary from state to state. In Kerala, one of the terms used is '*theendari*' which means untouchable, and the most common saying is '*purathavuka*' which can be translated as being out of a territory, here home. There was a sensational movie that came out in 2006 by Roshan Andrews, which spoke about the lives of three girls titled *Notebook*, in Malayalam. There is a particular scene in that movie where one of the title characters gets her period unexpectedly, and she uses the word '*chums*' to describe her condition. It's a common North Indian usage that means a close friend, among the most commonly used euphemisms this has a positive connotation, but still silences

period talks. Analyzing these words helps you to increase your stress level as the meaning of the majority of words being in the mask of a soft and mild one degrades the biological phenomenon of menstruation and these words attribute 'periods' a demonic figure.

The nature of the words for menstruation in a given culture may illuminate the prevalent attitudes toward the subject. For example, in Germany, the menstruous woman is regarded as unclean, and two of the more common vernacular terms are 'Schweinerei' and 'Siiuerei,' both of which stress the filthy aspect of swine. On the other hand, where the menstruating woman is regarded as not quite up to par physically, as in the United States, unwell, indisposed, and sick is polite synonyms for the catamenial state. These words were more frequently used in the past than they are now, but some of those now more commonly employed by younger women represent menstruation more as an inconvenience than as an illness: the curse and the nuisance (Joffe 1).

Now the question that arises here is, why does one need them? Why is the age-old concept of menstruation being the inevitable affair of life, not brave enough to turn up in its own identity? Menstruation, is seen sometimes as a curse or a blessing on women (which again is questionable) and is seen as something that only helps to carry out human generations from time immemorial. So according to this theory, without menstruation, human beings would become extinct. Then why are people so afraid or ashamed to utter the same word, instead search for those code words, that wouldn't let others know that someone got their period. It's not just about those who say it; it also addresses those who listen to it. I've seen people making weird faces, with wrinkled foreheads, wide opened noses, and shrunken eyes, when someone bravely says that they are on their period. Their inability to accept people talking it

out in public can be read from the mixture of navarasas in their faces. And at the same time, these same people would be so much worried about some 'girl' in their family in her teenage not getting her menarche yet. Isn't this an irony?

What follows then? What happens when a girl gets her period for the first time? Totally a strange feeling, most of the girls would have theoretical insight about the process but experiencing it is not that easy most of the time. Kamala Das in her autobiography titled *My Story* details her maiden experience of getting her periods that is her menarche. In the sixteenth chapter titled *Mahabharata,* she narrates the incident which can be associated with the *cheerharan* of Draupadi, who was dragged forcefully to the *Kaurav Sabha* and her dress was snatched by Dussasana, while according to *Mahabharata* she was on her period. In *My Story,* the author talks about her maiden experience of fear, embarrassment, and anxiety which is contrasted with the easy attitude of her mother. Being a girl completely unaware of menstruation and related complications, she feels insecure, humiliated, and haunted.

> My frock had large spots of blood on it. I felt the hot blood flowing onto my thighs and dripping down to the floor. I am ill, I am dying, I cried to my mother. Something has broken inside me and I am bleeding. My mother lifted my dress and said with a laugh, it is nothing to be worried about; it is what all girls get at twelve or thirteen... She asked me to change my dress and taught me to wear sanitary pads. She told me that the blood only showed that I was ready to be a mother. The maidservant kept laughing as she watched me change my dress. What a simpleton this child is, she said. After three days of dampness, I was as good as new again. (Das 65)

Now, so many dos and don'ts surround menstruation, which varies from place to place and from time to time, like, the contemporary discussion that runs about women in their period plucking curry leaves, and not being let to touch the pickle jar! These regional taboos get varied, but one universal taboo is that women can't engage in sex while they are on their periods. What if she has a sexual urge during 'that time of the month'? She has to suppress it. Again, menstruation being that inevitable tool that can save your species from going extinct surely needs sexual intercourse to make this process possible. So, one has to have her periods and should engage in sexual intercourse to make babies, but sex during periods a taboo. What can this be called, if not an irony?

Myths and taboos related to menstruation are uncountable, jumping to them would leave people bumfuzzled, and still mentioning a recent one among them would tear the hypocritic face of the modern educated crowd. Entering temple premises during menstruation was always a heated topic, recently one of the most celebrated and followed men on social media had commented that, if a woman on her period enters temple premises her menstrual blood flow would get reversed. Now that was a new revelation to modern science too. The ironic side of this is not the speaker or the spoken content but the audience, the so-called well-educated and modern people who still need some point to avoid and suppress women, for them this was new click bait. Even after knowing that all these are cooked-up stories, the manly side of human life still follows this gibberish. The myth that one used to hear in one's childhood about menstruation is related to Lord Indra. This king of all the Devas in heaven was cursed for killing a sage. And this curse that would destroy Indra to nothing was divided among earth, trees, water, and women and this curse was accompanied by a blessing.

Because of this, the earth got the power to heal along with some cracks on the surface as the curse, the trees got resilience power with oozing barks, water was awarded the power to purify other things with the destructive waves as the curse, and finally, the women got the ability to bear new life and menstruation as the hoodoo. Though no questions are allowed in a story, my most genuine concern would be where were the men while Indra was distributing his curse and the masked blessings among the selected candidates? One more thing that can be added to this line would be on the state of Indra after hearing the contemporary theory of reverse menstrual blood flow; he would be astonished for not having this much intelligence back in his days.

Advertisements play a pivotal role in molding the consciousness of the people. As a medium that enters into one's virtual world even without their consent, ads leave a great trace on viewers' minds. They always promote their products by pointing out their pros compared to the cons of the same product of other brands. On menstrual hygiene product ads, one thing that always remains silent in them is an important term in a women's body, which is the vagina. The intimate products meant to be used by 'women' (which again is controversial since it's not just women who menstruate) during 'those times of a month,' as they say, didn't even specify where to put them. Two of the sanitary napkins that are highly in demand in India are 'Whisper' and 'Stayfree,' they don't justify their roles in a menstruator's life even in their names. In the beginning, they used to come up with euphemisms and blue liquid which doesn't even resemble the menstrual blood, for the promotion of their brands. Though they started to acknowledge the change and made necessary corrections, one thing that doesn't change with time is there. That is the generalization of the menstrual experience of women.

Among all the products that are advertised on the screen, menstrual products would be the only one which markets themselves without saying the actual purpose and the related affairs openly. They say that stain is good, but menstrual blood stain would be blue in colour. The ads show the sanitary napkin being pasted on a cloth, not even a panty, not mentioning where the blood come from, what is it called, and so on. They would simply go like 'during those times of a month'… and there is a group of other women who don't get periods every month. What could be a better term used for them? One of the most napkins selling company in India, silences period in the very name of the product; Whisper! If one has to whisper that they are on their period, then what is the whole meaning of creating an ad that shows the empowerment of only one category of menstruators?

Menstruation and the experience of the same would change from person to person, the pain, mood swings everything differs from one to one. So, generalizing them to one or two categories like dancing or playing is nothing less than an atrocity towards the people who experience it. A major issue still left behind is addressing only women when talking about menstruation, the Queer. In an era though not completely when society started to be inclusive of all humans, few concerns like menstruation remain unaddressed. Advertisements again being one of those types that are accessed by a larger community, behave ironically when comes to non-women menstruators.

Recently a jewel brand from Kerala, *Bhima* came up with a revolutionary ad, by introducing a transwoman as their model. Arguing for the right of 'all' women to wear ornaments and be a bride. But the menstrual hygiene product brands are still not ready to accept the fact that it's not just women who menstruate. Whether it's to stay free or to whisper it's only for the women, these brands don't even address the non-binary menstruators whose experience would be different from the women menstruators. What about them?

Analyzing history can give multiple facets of subjugation, either forcefully or gently with love. Here in the case of menstruation, too these two facades can be seen. Menstruation is bestowed divinity, as it marks the readiness of her body (remember only her body) to become a mother. Menarche is always celebrated calling it the making of a complete woman; the girl is beautifully decked up, given sweets and gifts, and whatnot. The devilish little droplets there are considered a holy gift. And, something that is celebrated and divinized once, glorified for marking the readiness of a woman's 'body' for bringing a new life into the world, slowly turns into a tool for suppression. Either kindly by saying that their body is too weak, it needs rest so be in their private space, or forcefully by claiming bleeding body untouchable, women are sidelined.

When she becomes pregnant, she is again taken to the same phase of her menarche where she is glorified, gifted with love and materialistic pleasures only to continue the same routine after nine months. So, menarche is beautiful, pregnancy is awesome but menstruation is not, how can that be justified? Would calling it irony, and the most extreme one of all related to menstruation be wrong? No one talks about the feelings of a woman during her periods, her cravings during pregnancy are always fulfilled, and no one hesitates to grant her whatever she asks for. But somewhat the same emotions experienced during menstruation are mocked. Mood swings during pregnancy are justifiable but the same during menstruation is neglected by saying oh she is PMS-ing, without even knowing what PMS is.

An irony that would cause an earthquake to all the menstrual-related discussions would be the entry of a non-menstruator to the scene. What happens when a man takes the courage to talk openly about this taboo subject, he would be labeled as insane. Again, taking reference to the movie *Notebook,* the scene where the young hero goes to the store to buy sanitary napkins for the girl shows the awkwardness and embarrassment a boy has when he has to deal with the 'girly' things. The system of calling the napkin a packet of bread is not foreign to Malayalam cinema, since the same is shown in another youth movie *Chocolate*, somewhat the same situation the discomfiture and gawkiness of Shyam in holding the napkin packet in a way teaches the male audience that yes, it's a taboo.

Visiting the novella inspired by Arunachalam Muruganandam's life by Twinkle Khanna titled *Sanitary Man from a Sacred Land* would give a more realistic picture of the same. The title character, Bablu Kewat is in a venture to produce sanitary napkins initially for his wife Gowri, and later for the entire female community at a low cost. But knowing this the first person who objected was his wife; the entire community teased him, condemned him for intervening in woman's business, and was forced to leave the village. The man is not ashamed to conduct experiments to check the durability of the pad he made on his own body; he even went to the extent that he bled in the public which created a lot of chaos in the village.

The next day myriad rumors spread all over the small town. Bablu was turned into a demon, a vampire who wanted to suck the blood of virgins, and said even that he was involved in perverse sexual activities with female goats. Parul paraded Lata in front of the entire neighbourhood as the lucky victim who, all thanks to God's kindness, had escaped from Bablu's diabolical intentions. Gowri, who burst into hysterical tears on hearing about the incident, finally called her brother to fetch her and went to stay at her mother's house for an indefinite period of time (Khanna 115).

Even the wife, after experiencing difficulty during her periods, didn't support him. She was ready to bear all those physical and mental traumas along with the untidy sanitary system that they followed without any hesitation. Being a real life encounter, this wins over all other ironies.

A phallogocentric world ruled by the carriers and the creators of patriarchy can do no less than this to humanity. They first took over reign on the customs, the culture, and on the language, which led to making people believe that menstruation and menstruating women are a curse on humanity, at the same time one they can't live without, and thus they chose to be hypocrites. As a result of which on one side of the culture, Adam stood cursing the entire womanhood for making him eat the forbidden fruit and on the other side Lord Indra is showering blessings and cursing the comparatively weaker sections of the universe!

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An Analysis of the Difficulties Faced in Depicting Climate Change in Fiction with Special Reference to Lorin R. Robinson's *The Warming*

Silpa Anand S.* and Dr. T. K. Pius**

Abstract

Anthropogenic climate change has become a matter of acute concern disrupting normal lives across the world. Any discussion on climate change inevitably concludes in confusion, resultant frustration as it always digresses into complex debates on its complex socio-cultural background. The representation of climate change in literature also faces a similar dilemma as it finds it impossible to encompass the various aspects of the phenomenon. The abstract nature, large scale, complex socio-cultural dimensions, dominant discourses of climate change denialism, political plays, and machinations of the corporate sector and the general tendency of humankind to stick on to lifestyle comforts compound the difficulty in perceiving climate change in its wholeness. All these aspects impact and influence the representation of climate change in imagination too. Thus, it can be said that the challenges confronting the aspiring author of climate fiction is legion. While attempting to work on the imaginative depiction of such a vast phenomenon, it is imperative that all the socio-cultural, political, psychological, and ideological aspects surrounding it should be considered and accounted for. This poses a serious and daunting challenge. This paper intends to look into the challenges in incorporating climate change into fiction with special reference to Lorin R. Robinson's speculative climate fiction *The Warming*.

Keywords: *Climate Fiction, Representational Challenges, Socio Cultural Background of Climate Change, and Climate Change Denial.*

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Climate Change has, in a very short span of time, evolved from being a matter of speculation to a matter of acute concern. The unprecedented rains and the consequent flood ravaging the land of Kerala vouch for the threat posed by the shifting climate pattern. Communicating the multi-faceted aspects of climate change to the non scientific community is not an easy task. Literature, being one of the most traditional and most influential mediums of communication, plays a great role in spreading awareness about the issue, especially the anthropogenic nature of climate change, to the society.

However, climate change, till recently, being a subject dealt with mainly by the realm of science, bringing in a dialogue between science and the humanities itself presents great difficulty. Moreover, climate being an issue of kaleidoscopic proportions, deciding upon a narrative technology to aptly project the theme itself becomes almost impossible for the authors.

The unpredictable moods of nature and the unprecedented shifts in the weather patterns all over the world has become a matter of heightened alarm in the contemporary world. A cursory scan of the recent news papers will reveal that the term 'climate change' can be spotted more than once, under different contexts, almost every day. An earthquake at one part of the world, a random shower at another part, disappearance of species, emergence of previously unknown diseases, animals intruding human territory, escalating number of heat waves and sun stroke incidents, lost crops, tourism collapsing due to disappearance of migratory birds or seasonal flowers refusing to bloom, rising sea levels, bleached corals, raging storms, droughts, and floods. Everything can be traced back to the term 'climate change.' The issue has begun to filter into the minds and consciousness of people, and is thus finding expression through various mediums. The United Nations and other organizations of significance recognize the issue as an escalating threat to the existence of the earth and are trying to take measures to tackle it.

However, literature, as a medium of expression, can be seen grappling to find an effective narrative mode or strategy to represent climate change. The recent evolution of the genre of 'Cli Fi' and the swelling number of works on the theme stands for the recognition of climate change by the literary world. Yet, the inability to anchor upon a definitive strategy to depict the issue is evident in most works.

Amitav Ghosh, in his seminal work, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, speaks about the reality of climate change and our inability to think or communicate effectively about it. The discourses on climate change, have till recently, been circulating exclusively in the scientific community in a language that is mostly unintelligible to the common man. The increasing frequency of natural calamities all over the world has succeeded in raising the level of anxiety among the populace. However, presenting the issue effectively in arts and literature still proves difficult or even impossible.

Benjamin Kunkel, in his article "Inventing Climate Change Literature," published in The New Yorker, says,

> If climate change has, to date, proved hard to write about, that's because it exists for most of us, to date, as something that afflicts different neighbourhoods, distant cities or future times....we are aware of climate change and, also, we are not.

The lack of serious attention given to the issue of climate change is in fact one of the very crucial impediments to the effective representation of the issue in literature. Moreover, most writers seem to find difficulty in dealing with a subject that demands representation of a probable but undesirable future and also in blaming the humankind for initiating that future. Majority of the works represent vague and dystopian futures which immediately relegate them to the genre of fantasy and science fiction, diminishing the possibility of the works being given serious critical attention. Climate change narratives have been criticized for being 'doom laden,' unhelpful, distractive and misinforming.

Lawrence Buell says,

Apocalypse is the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal….; for the rhetoric of apocalypticism imagines that the fate of the world hinges on the arousal of imagination to a sense of crisis. (60)

However, in spite of the pitfalls and difficulties, the grave nature of the climate situation calls for the representation of the issue in literary works so that the awareness is spread among the non scientific community. Fiction can help to trace the dimensions of a futuristic world and its implications across social, cultural, and emotional registers. Literature might not evoke immediate action but it is an effective tool in bringing out how the society understands and responds to various discourses and experiences of climate change.

Lorin R. Robinson, in his work *The Warming: Speculative Fiction about the Human Impact of the Climate Crisis*, adopts a novel, experimental method in dealing with the theme. The narration uses three primary story telling devices. The first is a narrative of twelve chapters which ends with an epilogue. The narrative depicts a futuristic scenario beginning in the year 2047. The second device adopts the format of flash backs and has seven chapters depicting seven stories from different parts of the world through first person accounts of warming related calamities. Even when the stories project the incoherence of the narrative by standing well apart from the main plot, they help in intensifying the gravity of the theme. The third device introduces a series of fictional short video, news stories, also in the flash back mode, underlining the social, political and economic aspects of the growing climate crisis.

The very complexity of the narrative proves the daunting challenge faced by the author in trying to illustrate the varied aspects of the issue of climate change. The primary challenge posed is the effective tethering to climate science and fiction. The novelist is faced with a multitude of questions about the relationship between climate science and the novel. Adam Trexler in his seminal text *Anthropocene Fictions*, details the hurdles placed before an author of climate fiction: –

1. Which set of predictions should the novelist follow?

2. Which time zone should the novel be set? In the near future, where the changes must be harder to discern or the distant future where the changes are most likely to become undeniable?

3. How do the most dynamic and ever changing prophecies about the warming, heat waves, droughts or the Gulf Stream affect the novel's imaginative possibilities?

4. Is it permissible to oversell the threat or to compress the timescale to provide more dramatic possibilities?

5. If climate has indeed changed in the fictional future, how are the characters to know about it? The author will have to create a scenario where scientists explain things to a new generation not familiar to the constancy of nature that existed in an unknown past.

6. But what if the situation is such that the scientists, media or all agents aware about the situation have already been decimated?

7. What should the novel focus upon – the human agency in bringing about the climate catastrophe or the meteorological details of the future climate?

Robinson tries to scale these hurdles by attempting what can be called a collage of several fictional modes bound together by an overarching storyline. The central story focuses on the life of Dr. Jonathan Carver, a marine scientist, who works on a project that would help, alleviate the growing hunger and famine that has resulted from the climate change catastrophes around the world. Onto this basic story line is stringed a number of incidents from around the world and from different time zones that are the direct aftermath of the climate change phenomenon.

The preface, unlike all conventional prefaces, presents a comprehensive history of the changes the earth has undergone over the period of several millennia since its beginning. The preface features the chronicle of the evolution of *homo sapiens* from the hunted to the hunter and from there to the superstition of being the 'master' of the whole world. Now, anthropocentrism dominates the life on earth as an overarching ideology, defining and informing everything else. This anthropocentric way of the world has inevitably led the world towards irreversible damage. The attempt to 'subdue' the world, according to the author, has actually resulted in ruining it as a habitat for ourselves. And this ruin is in fact a call for retribution from the ecosystem, which has begun to shatter simultaneously in all parts of the world in different forms of what is termed 'anthropogenic climate change.'

After the preface, which sets the work in its genealogical trail, comes the prologue set in 4046 which squarely introduces the situation wherein, the world is under the throes due to ever changing weather pattern, and the scientific and political community is on a race to override the destructive climate and provide some kind of shelter to the humanity. Thus setting the scene, the novel follows the life of Dr. Jonathan Carver, through which is revealed the climatic condition of the world at the time, concerns, climate change denials that take place. However, chapters dealing with different climate change situations during different time periods are introduced randomly. For instance, the third chapter reverts back to the year 2021 featuring a set of mountaineers scaling the Kilimanjaro and this narrative is infused with images of the political aspect of the climate change crisis.

Even when a futuristic scenario is illustrated, the author painstakingly incorporates present day events quoting them as the reasons for several crisis situation of the time depicted. For instance, the narrative presents how in the year 2016, the Tanzanian Government built a road bisecting the northern half of the 5700 sq. mile Serengeti, disrupting the greatest animal migration on earth. Now the migration is in disarray and the animals are dying in hundreds and millions.

Similarly, chapter five takes a diversion from the central narrative to portray a massive climate refugee exodus from Viatupu Island in Polinesia, in the year 2027. The chapter details, through the memories of Solomone Lomu, the chief of the

island, how the rapidly rising sea level disrupted and later made impossible the life of people in his and nearby islands, and how they are forced to move out in search of newer pastures for existence. Thus, when the main narrative focus upon how the future struggles to combat climate change, the interspersed chapters succeed in tracing the various aspects that led to this out of control climate situation.

The chapter seven deals with a 2029 storm that completely disrupts and spirals things out of control in the country of Bangladesh. Seen through the eyes of Sumon, one of the few survivors, we get to witness the catastrophe from the receiver's end. The plot, that is reminiscent of the Biblical story of Noah, presents the ray of hope shining for humanity as Sumon, with his family floats in a God given sail boat in search of dry land.

Thus, despite of large scale deviation from the conventional modes of narrative strategies, the author relatively succeeds in bringing together and though, tentatively, tethering the multifarious aspects of climate change – climate change denial, apocalypse, climate refugees, political and economic issues, humanitarian questions, anthropocene, migration and all other related fields. The novel can be said to be an ambitious effort to explore the many aspects of climate change crisis and its implications on the future of the world and humanity. The author can be given credit for the exploration of the impacts of anthropogenic global warming over the course of several decades, on several continents and in the lives of several distinct set of characters.

The very disruptive nature of the narrative strategy adopted can be seen as effective evidence to the challenges in incorporating an issue of multifarious dimensions into literature. Climate change, to be presented in literature in its entirety seems to be a rather impossible task by the look of the novel. The repercussions of the climate change phenomenon can reach individual lives, at the same time affecting the working of the world as a whole. Therefore, the scope of a climate change novel can range from individual tales to epic sagas.

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Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: An Eco-cosmopolitan Reading of "To River Thames"

Lijo K. George* and Dr. D. Lourdhu Mary**

Abstract

Eco-cosmopolitanism has its roots in Ecocriticism, Globalization, and Cosmopolitanism. Eco-cosmopolitanism deals with an 'environmental world citizenship' or 'ecological connectedness' within the blue planet. Human beings are ever more conscious of its need to protect the environment, as it has come to a stage that if not given the due consideration, the universe could become unoccupiable to human race. Literature all over the world has given a lot of prominence to this area, resulting in the emergence of a new genre of literary criticism namely ecocriticism. Ursula K. Heise, one of the leading American ecocritical thinkers, gives prime importance to two concepts namely, sense of place and sense of planet. Sense of place stresses on a strong rootedness and thorough knowledge of the local environmental issues and sense of planet leads to the global understanding of such issues. Sugathakumari, an Indian poet and activist, has written numerous poems in Malayalam to conscientize the people about the need to protect the environment together with all the organisms and richness of the universe. Though these theories never existed when she wrote this poem, she speaks along the same line as Heise, and draws inspiration for this poem from a global point of view. As an environmentalist, she is very much rooted in the local environmental issues and at the same time speaks about global issues that can affect the existence of the blue planet. This paper is an attempt to focus on the poem "To River Thames" ("Thames Nadhiyodu" in Malayalam) written by Sugathakumari from an eco-cosmopolitan outlook.

Keywords: *Eco-cosmopolitanism, Globalism, Cosmopolitanism, Ecocriticism, and River Thames.*

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*S*ense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* is a book published by Ursula K. Heise, the Chair of the Department of English and professor at the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, from the University of California, Los Angeles. The origin of the theory of eco-cosmopolitanism can be traced back to this book. She traces the history of eco-criticism from its beginning and presents this new mode of understanding of ecocriticism as an offshoot of cosmopolitanism. It is a term that integrates environmental concerns into a cosmopolitan worldview. Heise would also agree to the term put forward by Patrick Hayden as 'environmental world citizenship,' building on convalescences of the cosmopolitan project in other areas of cultural theory.

'Think globally, act locally' is a well-known slogan of Rene Dubos that was formulated when globalism was much associated with utopian social ideals. The theory of globalization focuses on the economic and political aspects of globalization, emphasizing the ways in which global capitalism and the rise of multinational corporations have created a homogenized global culture. As a literary theory, globalization tends to focus on the impact that creates on the production, distribution, and reception of literary texts. Cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, focuses on the ethical and cultural dimensions of globalization, and gives prominence to recognizing and valuing cultural difference. Cosmopolitanism, as a literary theory, tends to focus on the ways in which literature promotes cross-cultural understanding and empathy. It reflects and represents diverse cultural experiences, or putting it more explicitly, it explores about how literary texts can challenge the assumptions of the reader and broaden their perspectives.

Sugathakumari, an Indian poet and activist, was born in 1934 in Kerala and passed away in 2020 due to post covid ailments. She is the founder secretary of 'Prakriti Samrakshana Samithi,' an organisation for the protection of nature. She wrote numerous poems in Malayalam to conscientize the people about the need to protect the environment together with all the organisms and richness of the universe. As an activist, she was at the forefront of environmental and feminist movements in Kerala. She has also written several essays emphasizing the need to protect nature. Sugathakumari is known for her engagement with poetry and environmental activism even from the early 1970s when conservation emerged as a global agenda for the first time in the West. Until her death, she has remained a guardian of forests, rivers, mountains, coastal regions, wildlife, and precious natural resources in Kerala.

Eco-cosmopolitanism

Speaking about environmentalism, ecocriticism, and imagination of the global, Heise is of the opinion that her intention was to,

> explore strands of environmentalist and ecocritical thought … to be shaped by impulses mostly unrelated to national or regional differences. (8)

The works that she selected for this book are,

> principally meant to point out to ways of imagining the global that frame localism from a globalist environmental perspective. (9)

According to Heise, one of the founding impulses of the modern environmental movement was,

> the urgency of developing a holistic understanding of ecological connectedness, as well as the risks that have emerged from human manipulation of such connected systems. (22)

Sense of place and sense of planet are two concepts that take prime importance in the first chapter of the book. Sense of place means that one should have a strong rootedness and thorough knowledge of the local environmental issues and it should lead to the global understanding of such issues namely, sense of planet. In other words, she is of the opinion that in analysing the literary texts, one foot is to be strongly grounded on the local and the other on the global. The solution for alienation from nature is to reconnect to the local places,

> an ethical code based on what is geographically or socially nearby will be able to cope with larger contexts such as the national or the transnational realm …. (34)

Cosmopolitanism revolves around the concepts of deterritorialization, social, political, and cultural constructions or practices and procedures:

> Theories of cosmopolitanism circumscribe a field of reflection rather than a firmly established and shared set of concepts and assumptions. All of them are concerned with the historical, political and cultural circumstances under which modes of awareness that reaches beyond the local and national emerge and sustain themselves. (37)

The theories put forward by Guha and Martinez – Alier use cosmopolitan concept to provide a short hand for a cultural and political understanding. This helps individuals to think beyond the boundaries of their own cultures, ethnicities, or nations to a range of sociocultural frame works.

Eco-cosmopolitanism goes beyond this to 'more – than – human world'- the realm of non-human species but there is also a connectedness with both animate and inanimate networks of influence and exchange. It certainly allows those making such choices to base their decisions on a thorough understanding of the cultural and ecological frameworks with in which they will play themselves out. Eco-cosmopolitanism, then, is an attempt to envision individuals and groups as part of planetary "imagined communities of both human and non-human kinds" (61). Eco-cosmopolitanism, therefore, goes beyond ethic proximity to,

> investigate by what means individuals and groups in specific cultural contexts have succeeded in envisioning themselves in similarly concrete fashion as part of the global biosphere…. (62)

Heise also agrees along with Vandana Shiva that,

> such perspective needs to be attentive to the political frame works in which communities begin to see themselves as parts of a planetary community…. (62)

Rivers and Ecosystem

Rivers are the lifeline of the earth's ecosystem, providing crucial services to the ecosystem that support a wide range of biodiversity, nutrient cycling, and water supply for human and wildlife communities. However, the increase of human population and the expansion of human activities have caused immense pressure on rivers, resulting in severe environmental degradation. Rivers are highly vulnerable to pollution, habitat destruction, and over-exploitation, which affect not only the aquatic ecosystem but also the surrounding environment. Environmentalism refers to the social and political movement that advocates the protection and preservation of the natural environment. Rivers are central to the environmental movement, as they are a symbol

of the interconnectedness of all aspects of the environment. Rivers are critical components of the water cycle, which connects the oceans, atmosphere and land, and therefore play a vital role in regulating the Earth's climate.

River Thames

River Thames is said to have the purest of water flowing through it in comparison with all the other rivers flowing through various metropolitan cities. Any river is very much connected with the life and culture of the cities surrounding it. A quote from S. Curtis would give the actual picture of the river and how it is presented as the 'artery and life blood' of London,

> London's famous river has long been the subject of reverence and worship and the deified figure of Old Father Thames symbolises the spiritual hold which this great river has on the city's culture and people. The Thames articulates the city; it is its artery and lifeblood and its most definitive geographical feature crossed by 33 bridges, connecting the north and south banks of London, the river offers a lens into over 2,000 years of human occupation. (165)

The river has also been the source and inspiration of a number of classical authors and poets. Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Blake are few among the many such great writers:

> The River Thames is effectively London's largest open space, despite the presence of the city's numerous Royal Parks. Its sinuous path offers intriguing vistas at each gentle turn. It has featured in some of the great works of Shakespeare and Dickens, the poetry of Wordsworth and Blake and the paintings of Turner, Whistler and Canaletto. More recently, musicians

have found inspiration in the river, with The Kinks romanticising the view from Waterloo Bridge: '… as long as I gaze on Waterloo sunset, I am in paradise.' (166)

Big Thames Clean up

The Princess Alice formerly known as PS Bute, a British passenger paddle steamer, sank in river Thames on 3 September 1878, costing the lives of around 700 passengers in the steamer. The travellers were all ordinary citizens of London, who had gone for a one-day trip to the seaside and were returning. The drowning was not the sole tragedy about the death. Quite a number of people died because of the polluted water they drank while being drowned, and the trailing ailments that followed as an after-effect. During the reign of Queen Victoria, Thames which was the only source of drinking water for the city of London was dying out without oxygen. The water of the river smelt with foul stench and became the source of epidemics. The water was found to be dying together with all the fishes, plants, and the complete biodiversity in it. Around 10000 people were estimated to have lost their lives around the river due to various sicknesses, and the most tragical of all was that about half the number of children who were born into the region, died before the age of five. The average life span was calculated to be thirty five, and the river was officially declared dead.

Eco-cosmopolitanism in "To River Thames"

Sugathakumari wrote this poem in 1980 when she came to read a newspaper report about the river. The river, which was declared dead due to industrialization and urbanization, had undergone a transformation. And now crystal-clear water flows through the river was the report. It was also reported that world famous swans and salmon fish have returned to the river. The poet

was overjoyed at this report, and wrote a poem detailing about the previously dead and the present rejuvenated phases of the river. She also compares the holy rivers of India and their pitiable situations right now to that of river Thames.

> Someone told me, Thames,
>
> A man came who loved you deep...
>
> He saw the anguish of your weary flow
>
> And tears filled his eyes
>
> The warm drops fell on your breast
>
> A miracle! a smile dawned on your face
>
> His love turned to anxious care for you
>
> And the glow of heroic work for you
>
> His hands became a thousand hands
>
> They took you up and washed you clean!

(Lines from 26-35)

Sugathakumari notes in her poem that seeing the pathetic situation of the river, somebody - the name is not mentioned in the poem - who was in a silent or dumb passion for the river was overcome with remorse, and his eyes were full of tears. The poet describes in the poem that, two drops of tears that fell from his eyes into the dark bosom of the river changed its fate. This, the poet describes as a miracle and the river starts smiling thereafter. That passion or love for the river was changed into a dedicated lifetime mission. This mission to clean up the river was taken up by another thousand arms, and now the river flows again, smiling. History tells us that it was Joseph Bazalgette, a civil engineer who began this lifetime mission of cleaning up the river together with the assistance of many others under the name 'Big Thames Clean up.'

He was able to influence the government to form policies against the pollution of the river and stringent rules were passed to protect the river. Protection walls were built on either banks of the river, with several pipes being installed and thus helping the river to flow with strong currents. When the flow of the river was strengthened, a lot of junk wastes were also washed away in the strong current. Number of water treatment plants were established and the water in the river Thames was pure over the years. He was awarded with various titles such as 'Sir' and 'Sewer man of England.' He was instrumental in protecting a large biodiversity, which includes 126 species of fish, various plants, and birds on its banks.

> River Thames, you flow again
>
> Redeemed into new life...
>
> The filth and sins of centuries
>
> You had received into your heart
>
> Foul and dark you had turned
>
> Fallen into corruption's depths.
>
> Thickened with putrefying oil
>
> Helpless to flow, you had crept like a sup
> pressed wail
>
> How long, how long you had suffered
>
> Oh! Thames, river of royal pride!

(Lines from 1-10)

The poet begins the poem by stating that Thames has been flowing again, redeemed to a new life. The poem begins on a positive note, and the very next line onwards until the end of the second stanza, the poet describes about the pathetic condition in which the river was. The poet says that the river was most helpless to have received the sins and filth for centuries in her heart, and turned out to be black in colour. The water had become thick, stagnant, and hard with putrefying oil. The royal Thames has been groan-

ing and wailing in its present corrupt phase for pretty long.

> From your breast soured by man
>
> Birds flew screaming away
>
> But to what shelter could they go
>
> Fish sank to death in your poisoned stream
>
> Your long stretches of shore
>
> Where no grass grew and no flower bloomed
>
> Darkened with defilement
>
> (Lines from 11-17)

The poet fiercely expressed her anger towards human beings who have been responsible for making river-heart bitter and causing the birds to abandon the river. But where could the fish escape other than to die in the depths. The long stretches of river banks have turned out to be black with stains and no flower blooms or no grass sprouts. The swans with broad, soiled white wings have disappeared, singing their first and last mournful song. The only thing that moves about in the river now is steamers and boats. The great river lay in dirt, grim, and smouldering for centuries.

In the third stanza the poet speaks about the reversal of fate, the river had experienced earlier. As it has been mentioned in the first stanza of the poem, the river is rejuvenated and flows as the pride of the city again. The poet says that she is overjoyed reading about the story of transformation of river Thames. In the fourth stanza the poet compares the Holy Rivers of India with River Thames. Hence, these rivers, namely, Ganga - who is considered to be goddess- and Yamuna have become black with greed of human beings.

Though Sugathakumari could have never heard about the theory of Eco cosmopolitanism,

she brings in the same ideas into her poem through the last eighteen lines of the poem. Surely the theory of eco-cosmopolitanism came into light only in 2008 with Heise publishing her arguments in the book *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*. This can very well be noted that as Heise has put forth, both a sense of the local and a sense of the global is very much needed if one is to go forward with the next level of eco-criticism. Sugathakumari was a person who was very much aware of the local issues of the degradation and exploitation of nature even as this stream of thought was being developed in the West from the early 70s onwards. She had been much involved in such various issues, and in fact, this poem was written in 1980.

The sense of globalism can be seen in this poetry in two realms. First of all, the poet is not just limited to the local problem of exploitation of nature, so to say, strictly sticking on to the locality. She brings up the point that the exploitation and pollution of watersheds or water sources is a global problem. The inspiration to write this poem is a global issue in one sense. One cannot also deny the fact that the poet is dealing with individual local problems of exploitation, though they are happening in two different continents and almost on the opposite poles. The problem seen individually could be very much local, and can also be interpreted as part of deep ecology.

Secondly, as Ursula K. Heise argues that ecocriticism needs to move out of this local description of the environmental issues to that of global problems that can affect the planet, such as deforestation global warming ozone depletion etc. Even at the beginnings of the discussion of these issues, Sugathakumari speaks about such issues in an indirect way in this poem. Not only in this poem, but also in many other poems, she raises issues of global importance. The follow-

ing lines from the poem are to be analysed in the light of the theory of eco-cosmopolitanism:

> Our dead forests fill with smoke
> Birds convulse in agony and fall
> Trees are slaughtered, streams have driedup,
>
> The earth is turning hot,
> We progress bravely, we hoard up cash,
>
> Selling our children, our God, our mother

(Lines from 65-70)

What the poet intends to bring to the attention of readers is nothing else than deforestation and global warming. The actual state of any river has a deep connection to the society associated with the river. It speaks about the cultural and social heritage of the society. It speaks about how the people have been educated to conserve the biodiversity. Only people without any concern for the future can exploit the river, can pollute the water with plastics or any other materials like chemical wastes and liquid wastes from factories which could damage the biodiversity of the natural water sources. Therefore, with the assistance of the theory of eco-cosmopolitanism, one can easily conclude that Sugathakumari's works can be interpreted in the light of these theories though they have come into existence decades after she has written her poems.

Conclusion

Sugathakumari could not have heard or read about the theory of eco-cosmopolitanism when she wrote the poem "To River Thames." But she was indeed very much aware of the global issues of environmentalism that can put to stake the blue planet itself. Through her poems she has tried to bring out these issues into the understanding of the common people. She has been quite successful in conscientizing or creating awareness in her readers about these issues of global importance through her poems. Taking into consideration the arguments of Ursula K. Heise, with regard to eco-cosmopolitanism one can very well interpret this poem of Sugathakumari in the light of these theories.

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Adapting Shakespearean Plays to Yakshagana: An Inquiry into the Problems of Indianisation through the Case Study of Macbeth

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Abstract

Shakespeare is not just a name and theme, but a great institution and culture himself, who has got infused into different cultures across the world, bringing together the East and the West. He has been read, acted, translated, adapted, and alluded to, so often, and in so many different cultures, that his global reach is now generally assumed to be greater than that of any other author. There have been innumerable attempts to Indianise Shakespeare, both in literature, and performance. Efforts have been done to adapt Shakespearean plays into Jatra (Bengal), Kathakali (Kerala), Yakshagana (Karnataka), and Nautanki (Uttar Pradesh), in addition to producing several movies. There have been no systematic studies on the adaptations of Shakespearean plays into Yakshagana, despite it being one of the prominent traditional theatres of India. The present paper is an attempt to analyze the process of adapting a Shakespearean drama into Yakshagana, based on our personal experiences of adapting Macbeth into Yakshagana, the challenges faced, solutions found and responses received. The paper describes the entire process of Yakshagana adaptation of Macbeth, notes the merits and demerits of such an adaptation examining it from the traditional framework of Yakshagana, the problems of characterization and form, and suggests possible solutions for overcoming criticisms.

Keywords: *Shakespeare, Adaptation, Yakshagana, Traditional Theatre, and Indianisation.*

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Indianising Shakespeare

Shakespeare, the quintessential English poet and dramatist, has been read, acted, translated, adapted, and alluded to so often, and in so many different cultures, that his global reach is now generally assumed to be greater than that of any other author (Sen 1). Shakespeare is implicated in the biggest and most significant colonial construct in India with all its cultural baggage. In this land of diverse regional languages and cultures, it is vital to note that translations and adaptations of Shakespeare appear in all corners of the country, demonstrating the ease and willingness of troupes and players to adopt Shakespeare and nurture him within prevalent traditions of the theatrical spectacle (Panja and Saraf 5). His plays have been translated and staged all over the country, be it in Bengali, Hindi, Urdu or Marathi, in the north-eastern language Assamese or in the south Indian languages like Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Tamil.

Shakespeare has been performed extensively in varied ways and expressed through multiple cultures of India. From folkloric presentations to the contemporary theatre, Shakespeare's plays are being adapted, transformed, altered, restructured, and successfully presented for the last two hundred years. The socio-cultural milieu of India fusing with the tradition of West, often creates an 'Indianized Shakespere' (Rout 1).

Rout (2) has categorized the plays of Shakespeare produced in India in the last two centuries into three broad types: Literary translations of the plays, adaptation into socio-cultural and political situation of the country, the reflection of Shakespearean plays on Indian writings and performances. While the first category tried to cater to academia, the second one tried to serve the masses, the last one being experimental in nature and used more in a post-colonial light.

The second half of the Twentieth century has witnessed Shakespeare's plays performing for the contemporary theatre, interwoven into the traditional and folk theatre forms such as, Jatra (from Bengal), Kathakali (from Kerala), Yakshagana (from Karnataka), and Nautanki (from Uttar Pradesh) etc. There may also be a combination of one or more of these forms within a single performance. Such Indianization of Shakespeare is not only achieved through a fusion of the forms, but also in a deeper philosophical level resulting in an intercultural rapprochement with the text and practice (Rout 7; Panja and Saraf 7).

As scholars have observed, Shakespeare's plays reached out to local audiences only when they were modified in order to make them relevant to the cultural and ideological concerns of the new audiences that were far removed from Shakespeare's own. However, Sen (186) has argued that the degree of transculturation is greater when Shakespeare is adapted to media which involves performance, than when he is adapted to a purely verbal medium, such as translations. This process of indianization through performance has been termed as 'performative transculturation.'

Yakshagana – A Traditional Drama

Yakshagana is a traditional dance-drama of Karnataka performed in open-air throughout night. It is a multi-dimensional folk theatre comprising of dance, music, spoken word, body language, stage techniques, costumes, and makeup. "Of India's many folk-theatre forms, Yakshagana may be the most colourful, vigorous, and spirited." (Ashton 1). It has been described as a "heroic, mystical, splendid, fierce, savage, and beautiful" art being "a theatre of battle scenes and heroism, loyalty and treachery, colour and pageantry" (Ashton 1).

Yakshagana has close similarities with similar art forms prevalent all over the country - like the *Ankiya Nat* of Assam, *Jathra* of Bengal and Bihar, *Odissi* of Orissa, *Veethi Bhagawatham* of Andhra Pradesh, *Terukoothu* of Tamil Nadu, *Kathakali* of Kerala, *Dasavathani* of Maharashtra and Goa, and even similar forms in Sri Lanka and Far East (Joshi 1). Yakshagana has been, over the centuries, a major form of expression of the coastal and *Malenad* regions and as such occupies a central place in the cultural ethos of the people (Bapat 8).

Though traditional Yakshagana draws its themes from Indian mythology, it has responded to contemporary needs amidst oppositions from a section of scholars and artistes, and has witnessed shifts in themes. The diversified themes adopted by Yakshagana have been mythological, historical, folk, imaginary, semi-imaginary, Sanskrit drama based, filmy, Tulu mythological, social etc., (Joshi 28). The non-mythological or 'modern' themes of Yakshagana have also been classified as interpolated themes, folk themes, historical themes, legends of local temples, imaginary/social themes, and awareness-oriented themes (Padmanabha and Kumar 396). Several attempts have been done to adapt themes of literacy, agricultural development, environment, social harmony, health and sanitation, etc. into Yakshagana in the past sixty years and have been proved highly effective in enhancing the consciousness of the society (Padmanabha 243). The shift in themes has been possible because of the adaptability and flexibility of Yakshagana.

Western Classics in Yakshagana

The process of shift in Yakshagana themes has witnessed an adaptation of western classics into Yakshagana over the years, and the emergence of Tulu Yakshagana (a prominent local language of Karnataka) can be identified as one of

the reasons. *Dalavayi Muddanne* by Bottikere Purushottama Punja – an adaptation of Matthew Arnold's "Sohrab and Rustum," *Raja Aadipasha* by G. S. Bhat – an adaptation of *Sophocles*, and *Oedipus Rex* is a few instances. Even Shakespeare has been adapted into Yakshaganaas *Gendasampige* by Siddakatte Vishwanath Shetty – an adaptation of *Hamlet*, *Paapanna Vijaya-Gunasundari* by Padekallu Venkatramana Bhat – an adaptation of *King Lear*, *Gunapana Kalyana* by Hosthota Manjunatha Bhagawat – an adaptation of *All Is Well That Ends Well*.

There have been efforts to bring the elements of Yakshagana into Shakespearean plays, as a part of the process of Indianization. Eminent theatre personality B.V. Karanthhad knitted Macbeth with the expressions of Yakshagana, by using its costumes and a few instruments for his production[1].

> The form brought stylization and Indian images into the production. With the amalgamation of Karanth's experimental theatre music, and stylized movements of Yakshagana, the play brought new aesthetics enriched with visual and aural sensibility. (Rout 9)

Though there have been many studies on Indianising Shakespeare, through films and theatrical adaptations of his plays, there have been no systematic studies on the adaptations of Shakespearean plays into Yakshagana, despite it being one of the prominent traditional theatres of India. The present paper is an attempt to analyze the process of adapting a Shakespearean drama into Yakshagana, based on our personal experiences of adapting Macbeth into Yakshagana, the challenges faced, solutions found, and responses received. The project is examined on the basis of the idea of adaptation being "a delib-

erate, announced, and extended re-visitations of prior works" which refers to both the "product and process of creation and reception" (Hutcheon xiv).

Product and Process

Though both drama and Yakshagana are brought under the same genre of 'theatre' due to the similarities in their form, they differ in many respects, especially in the modes of engagement and the actual performance. Though there have been numerous debates over the question whether Yakshagana is a folk or classical theatre, many scholars have arrived at a general conclusion that Yakshagana is a folk art in its origin, which is moving towards a classical status, subjected to continuous refinement. "Yakshagana represents a continuum between the classical and the folk" (Awasthi 64). This 'semi-classical' nature of Yakshagana itself poses many challenges for adaptation.

When the project of bringing Macbeth into Yakshagana, was took up the major task was to consider the theme, structure, style, characters, and the actual stage presentation. Yakshagana is a multi dimensional traditional dance-drama comprising of dance, music, spoken word, body language, stage techniques, costumes, and make-up, and this basic structure should not be changed. Besides, Yakshagana is originally a 'ritualistic' art, and experts and audience have time and again indicated that any experiments in the art should follow *yakshaganiyate* (i.e., the traditional framework of Yakshagana), without which it will lose its originality.

The first requirement of a Yakshagana is a 'prasanga,' which is quite different from the text of a drama. The prasanga, i.e., an episode or playtext, is basically a composition of verses or poems, developed around a specific theme and there are no scripted dialogues. Extempore is unique for Yakshagana, which is a key point where it differs from the regular theatre. A prasanga comprises no dialogues and stage directions, and it is left to the artistes performing different roles to develop their own dialogues on the spot, without deviating from the verses that regulate the flow of the story.

The prasanga composed by veteran Yakshagana artiste Surikumeru Govinda Bhat was selected for the performance.[2] Though Yakshagana dialogues are extempore and the professional troupes usually perform without rehearsals, script had to be prepared to train the artistes for two reasons: First, the theme was new unlike the usual prasangas based on Indian mythology, and the performers were amateurs. Secondly, sufficient care was necessary to see that some of the expressions, unique of Shakespeare, were brought into the adaptation as they were. Yakshagana uses a unique language rich with vocabulary and tone, which is quite different from the day-to-day conversation. A well-prepared script and direction were thought to be a major requirement for the performance.[3] The troupe was trained on a weekly basis for two months. Since the members had the basic training in Yakshagana, they could be trained with specific choreography for the present adaptation – the stage techniques, dialogues, movements, body language, and the scene sequence. The last three rehearsals were made along with the *himmela* (the accompanists), and a few changes according to their feedback.

The Scene Sequence

Though the adaptation followed Shakespeare's original plot, some changes were made in the sequence as per the requirements of Yakshagana. The scene sequence is given below:

Scene-1: Entry of Macbeth and Banquo. They are on their way back to Scotland after defeating rebels from Ireland and Norway. They

discuss the outcomes of the confrontation, praise each other, and exit.

Scene-2: Entry of witches. They anticipate the arrival of Macbeth, and exit. Entry of Macbeth and Banquo, followed by the witches. The witches congratulate Macbeth addressing him as the thane of Cawdor. They also prophesy that Banquo will 'create kings.' As both were curious to know more about the riddles, the witches disappear.

Scene-3: Court of King Duncan accompanied by his sons Malcolm and Donalbain. As they discuss the victory of Macbeth and punishing the thane of Cawdor for his betrayal, Macbeth and Banquo enter. Duncan praises Macbeth and names him the new thane of Cawdor. Intrigued by the prophesy of witches, Macbeth develops ambition within him, and invites the king to his castle for a dinner. All exit one after another.

Scene-4: Entry of Lady Macbeth. She receives a letter from Macbeth which informs her of Macbeth's encounter with witches, their prophesy, his new responsibility, and his invitation to King Duncan for the dinner. Macbeth enters. Lady Macbeth persuades him to make use of the opportunity to kill the king, overriding all his objections, concerns, and dilemma.

Exit of Macbeth, and entry of Duncan, Malcolm, Donalbain, and Banquo. Lady Macbeth welcomes the guests; all exit for the dinner. They enter the stage again after dinner and exit for rest.

Scene-5: Macbeth's monologue, expressing his dilemma. Entry of Lady Macbeth. She attempts to persuade him to kill Duncan. Sharp exchange of words. Macbeth's decision to execute the plan. Exit of Lady Macbeth, followed by Macbeth.

Scene-6: Entry of Macbeth after murdering the king, and his continued anxiety. Lady Macbeth enters and tries to console her husband. Both exit.

Scene-7: Entry of anxious Malcolm and Donalbain. They decide to flee to England and Ireland, respectively. Both exit.

Scene-8: Entry of Banquo. Tries to comprehend the reasons for the developments. Entry of Macbeth. He pretends to mourn for the death of the king. Banquo exits. Macbeth orders his people to kill Banquo and his son, who could be obstacles for him. Exit of Macbeth.

Scene-9: Banquo's ghost appears during a night feast. At the sight of the ghost, Macbeth raves fearfully, startling his guests, who include most of the Scottish nobility. Lady Macbeth tries to neutralize the damage.

Scene-10: Entry of Macbeth. He goes in search of witches to know more about his future. The witches again prophesy that Macbeth cannot be harmed by any man born of woman, and he will be safe until the Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Castle. They also suggest that he must be cautious about Scottish nobleman Macduff. The witches exit, followed by Macbeth.

Scene-11: Entry of Macbeth. He orders that Macduff's castle be seized and, Lady Macduff and her children be murdered. His exit.

Scene-12: Entry of Macduff. Aware of his family's execution, he vows revenge. Reveals his idea of joining Malcolm. He exits and enters stage again with Malcolm. They decide to fight against Macbeth with the support of English king. Both exit.

Scene-13: Entry of an overwrought and conscience-ridden Lady Macbeth. She is plagued with fits of sleepwalking in which she bemoans what she believes to have bloodstains on her hands. She commits suicide.

Scene-14: Entry of Macbeth. The news that his wife killed herself causes him to sink into a deep and pessimistic despair. Meanwhile, he is informed that Birnam Wood is moving towards Dunsinane. A frightened Macbeth exits.

Scene-15: Characters, representing soldiers, enter the stage holding tree branches, take a round, and exit, followed by a fight between Macbeth and Macduff. Vengeful Macduff declares that he is not 'of woman born' but was instead 'untimely ripped' from his mother's womb. Finally, Macduff kills and beheads Macbeth, and decides to crown Malcolm.

Scene-16: Macduff enters along with Malcolm. Malcolm assures the subjects of Scotland of giving them a good administration. Macduff concludes saying that one should listen to his inner self, but not to the external vices. Both exit. The show ends.

The Performance

Though the adaptation was loyal to the original storyline of Shakespeare, a lot of alterations were made while shifting between two art forms (See Table-1). Shakespeare's *Macbeth* has a total of twenty eight scenes in five acts,[4] whereas its Yakshagana adaptation has only sixteen scenes as shown in the previous section. Though Yakshagana has followed the play's chronology in developing the plot, it has skipped twelve scenes from the original work, without leaving any significant details.

The impromptu nature of Yakshagana allows one to abridge or expand a prasanga according to the need and convenience of the situation.[5]

Table-1: Major shifts between Macbeth and Yakshagana Adaptation

Particulars	Shakespeare's Macbeth	Kannada translation by D. V. Gundappa	Yakshagana Prasanga by Govinda Bhat	Final Adaptation
Scenes	28	28	16	16
Characters	More than 30	More than 30	20	10
Lines	2477 lines	2600 lines	99 verses	58 verses
Duration	120 minutes	120 minutes	240 minutes	150 minutes

Artistes can use their discretion to abridge or expand a scene by prolonging a conversation or cutting it short, though the control remains with Bhagavata, the singer. However, some critical lines in the original play were retained in Yakshagana (D. V. Gundappa's translation) which were integral to carry the 'essence' of Shakespeare.[6]

Even the number of characters can be reduced as per the need and availability of artistes, though the prominent ones cannot be avoided. Making use of this advantage, one could abridge the original plot into sixteen scenes. However, the Yakshagana version was of one hundred and fifty minutes, which is a little lengthier than the usual length of the original play.

The original play begins with the scene where the three witches converse, followed by an army camp, meeting of Macbeth, and Banquo with the witches. The Yakshagana begins with the entry of Macbeth and Banquo, who meet witches on their way back to Scotland. It has also not included scenes such as Macduff being the first one to reveal the murder of Duncan, the conversations between Macduff, Porter, Lennox, and Macbeth, between Old Man and Ross, between Lennox and another Lord, murder of Lady Macduff and her son, etc. However, the Yakshagana has not left out these details.

Moreover, only ten characters – Macbeth, Banquo, three witches, Lady Macbeth, Macduff, Duncan, Malcolm, and Donalbain – were used for the adaptation. Characters like Lennox, Ross, Menteith, Angus, Caithness, Fleance, Siward, Young Siward, Seyton, Lady Macduff, Hecate, and a few others, have not been used in the performance.

Characterization

Characterization was a major requirement of the adaptation, which was inevitable to fit the theme to the framework of Yakshagana. Macbeth was dressed in black like Karna, who is a tragic hero in Mahabharata; Lady Macbeth was dressed like Kaikeyi, who gets influenced by Manthara in Ramayana; Banquo was dressed like Vibhishana, the one who is for Dharma in Ramayana; Macduff was dressed like Arjuna in green, as he fights for a good cause. The witches were presented as *Hennubanna* (female demons in Yakshagana) like Thataka or Shoorpanakha. King Duncan was dressed in red, a usual dress used for a ruler in Yakshagana, while Malcolm and Donalba in in *pakadi* (a kind of headgear in Yakshagana used for young warriors) like any other princes. For the sleep walking scene Lady Macbeth wore a black sari, symbolizing the tragic end. Unlike the other Yakshagana shows, red lightings were used for the murder scene, Banquo's scene and Lady Macbeth's sleep walking scene.

Arguments

The performance received comments both supporting and criticizing the adaptation.[7] The major observations supporting the adaptation are that, it has proved the adaptability and flexibility of Yakshagana, and such initiatives should be encouraged. The theme of Macbeth fits well with the traditional framework of Yakshagana, which usually presents plots from Indian mythology. 'Victory of good over evil' is the essence of all Indian epics, and the message from Macbeth suits well to the 'aura of Yakshagana.' Experiments are inevitable for the growth of any art form. Yakshagana should welcome experiments if it should survive the challenges of modern age.

Some of the criticisms received were that such adaptations harm the sanctity of Yakshagana, which has been considered a 'ritualistic art' for centuries. Only plots from Indian mythology suit the framework of Yakshagana. There are abundant stories in Indian epics, and there is no need for a 'foreign' theme. The use of names of characters and places as they are in the play in Yakshagana make the audience uncomfortable. Experiments should be conducted within the 'boundary' of Yakshagana. A Western theme is irrelevant.

The responses also included a few suggestions, and the prominent one was: the names of characters and places should have been Indianised before adaptation. Further, the impromptu nature of Yakshagana requires professionals or artistes of high caliber who can enhance the impact of the show. As one of the respondents pointed out, much effort is needed from the artistes to maintain the essence of Shakespeare, reflected in his language and style.

Discussions

Most theories of adaptation assume that the story is the common denominator, the core of what is transposed across different media and genres, each of which deals with that story in formally different ways, through different modes of engagement – narrating, performing, or interacting. In adapting, the story – the argument goes, 'equivalences' are sought in different sign systems for the various elements of the story: its themes, events, world, characters, motivations, points of view, consequences, contexts, symbols, imagery, and so on (Hutcheon 10).

The present adaptation is a shift between two worlds – the west and the east – and hence required a systematic approach towards the theme and the form. As scholars have indicated, "themes are the easiest story elements to see as adaptable across media and even genres or framing contexts" (Hutcheon 10). However, the theme required no much effort towards adaptation, since the plot of *Macbeth* fits well to the framework of Yakshagana without any specific alteration in the storyline. When the author dwelled into composing a Yakshagana prasanga out of Macbeth four decades back, he paid much heed into the adaptability of the Western theme, and finally felt that the theme required no change and it could be directly transformed into a Yakshagana, even without changing the names of places and characters.[8]

Adaptation, like evolution, is a transgenerational phenomenon. Some stories obviously have more 'stability and penetrance in the cultural environment.' As it has been aptly put, stories do get retold in different ways in new material and cultural environments; like genres, they adapt to those new environments by virtue of mutation – in their 'offspring' or their adaptations. And the fittest do more than survive; they flourish (Dawkins 193).

As Yakshagana exponents have identified, an 'ideal' Yakshagana Prasanga should fit into the following framework (Joshi 45) where a composition that suits well for the singing and dance styles of Yakshagana. Sufficient scope for an artist's imagination and explanation. Apt selection of a variety of *tala*s (beats) and structure. Arrangement of verses/poems, convenient to the entry and conversation of characters. Dramatic sequences and a variety of poetic sentiments. Variety of characters; scope to bring different Yakshagana characters. A systematic approach to the plot: the genesis, evolution, development, culmination, etc. A central theme in the plot, and the development of characters in support of this theme. A gradual speed in the development of the story. A story and subject that suits to the *'vesha'* system (costume and make-up) of Yakshagana. An experimental outlook in order to give newer dimensions, appropriate to the structure of Yakshagana.

Since the prasanga Macbeth followed each requirement of the framework, and the actual stage adaptation was a rewarding experience. However, it required much effort towards sketching the prasanga into different scenes, developing stage techniques and choreography, scripting dialogues retaining the Shakespearean essence, training the troupe, and most importantly, characterization – which should suit the 'vesha' system of Yakshagana (costume and make-up) as mentioned above.

Since the characters and story could have been matched well with the Indian themes, the characterization in this project was not a Herculean task. In any adaptation, characters are crucial to the rhetorical and aesthetic effects of both narrative and performance texts because they engage receivers' imaginations through recognition, alignment, and allegiance (Smith 62). As mentioned earlier, B. V. Karanth's technique of

using Yakshagana costumes in 'Birnam Vana' (Hindi version of Macbeth) had added to characterization. He had chosen Yakshagana for fluid rhythm and a strong dramatic style. Karanth's submission is a significant note:

> I do not find myself capable of producing Shakespeare the way he is produced in his own country. Were I to do so, it would be false of me. Therefore, my use of the Yakshagana form is not for my own sake, but because it is a part of my awareness and expression. (Rout 10)

As Rout has emphasized, the playwright's creation of the situations, plot and characters for 'Macbeth' is empowered with universality, high emotions and larger than life situations which are well expressed through the application of the native stylized form of Yakshagana. Fused with the form, the play is expressed through Indian sensibility, while the form helps establish the entry and exit of the characters and the emotional tensions in the play.

In this view, the specific suggestion received following the performance of Macbeth Yakshagana, that the names of characters and places could have been Indianised, is an acceptable point. The history of adaptations, particularly of Shakespearean plays, has shown that the performances became successful only when they were Indianised in all respects – though no specific studies have been done with regard to adaptations of Shakespearean plays in Yakshagana so far.

Conclusion

Two famed actor-directors staging Bengali Shakespeare in the late nineteenth century were Girish Chandra Ghosh and Amarendranath Dutta. While Ghosh preferred remaining true to the original and lost the audience's interest quite speedily, Amarendranath chose adaptations.

His Horiraj (c. 1896), an adaptation of Hamlet, proved quite popular while Ghosh's expensive Macbeth (1893) 'staged in the European style,' was a box-office disaster (Panja and Saraf 6). When Bharatendu Harishchandra, the father of modern Hindi drama, adapted 'The Merchant of Venice' as 'Durlabh Bandhu' in 1880 – the first Hindi rendering of a Shakespeare play – he had Indianised even the names of the characters and also places (Awasthi 53).

Adapting any western theme to Yakshagana is a clear step towards Indianisation, which will certainly prove a successful attempt. It has been clear that Shakespeare's play reached out to local audiences only when they were modified in order to make them relevant to the cultural and ideological concerns of the new audiences that were far removed from Shakespeare's own (Sen 1). Even the early Kannada translations of Shakespearean plays in the nineteenth century, took much care see that they were 'localized' and hence there were 'Surasena Charitre' (Othello), 'Panchali Parinaya' (The Merchant of Venice), 'Ramavarma Lilavati' (Romeo and Juliet) and so on. As the playwrights felt that the outlandish names would affect box-office receipts adversely, Indian names were substituted. This naturally necessitated a change in setting. Their main aim was to make the characters, scenes; dialogue, etc., appear natural on the Kannada stage while following the original as closely as possible (Rao 64).

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Endnotes

1   He had directed the play 'Barnam Vana' for National School of Drama, New Delhi, in 1979, based on Raghuvir Sahay's Hindi verse translation of Macbeth.

2   Govinda Bhat had composed the prasanga in 1970s, which was based on the Kannada translation of Macbeth by eminent litterateur D. V. Gundappa. This translation of 1936 has been considered one of the finest Kannada translations of a Shakespearean play. The prasanga had been performed only once by a troupe of amateurs.

3   There is no concept of director in traditional Yakshagana. Bhagavata, the singer, himself is considered the troupe leader and the director. However, many Yakshagana scholars have observed in the recent times that Yakshagana requires a director, and the performances would be better with a kind of 'choreography,' though not in the strict sense of a dance event.

4   Act I has seven scenes, Act II has four, Act III has six, Act IV has three and Act V has eights scenes.

5   Traditionally, Yakshagana is an overnight show that begins at 8 pm and ends at 6 am. *'Kalamiti Yakshagana'* (limited duration Yakshagana) is a recent phenomenon, where shows have come down to 3-4 hours to suit the convenience of the audience. The same plots performed overnight have been abridged to *Kalamiti Yakshagana* without harming the flow of the original storyline.

6   Such as "Fair is foul, and foul is fair…" (Act I, Scene 1); "Come, you spirits that tend on mortal thoughts unsex me here…" (Act I,

Scene 5); "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well, It was done quickly…" (Act I, Scene 7); "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand…" (Act V, Scene 1); "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and tomorrow Creeps in this petty pace from day to day…." (Act V, Scene 5).

[7] Personal interactions with Yakshagana scholars and artistes such as M. Prabhakar Joshi, M. A. Hegde, S. P. Padmaprasad, Ananda Hasyagar, Dinesh Nayak, Avinash B., Shashank Arnady, and a few select audience.

[8] Personal interaction with Govinda Bhat, the author of the prasanga.

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