

One-Day National-Level Conference

# **Literatures of Resistance: Voices of the Marginalised**

**25<sup>th</sup> April 2019**



Organised by

**Department of English**

# **Seshadripuram College**

No. 27, Nagappa Street, Seshadripuram, Bengaluru – 560 020

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## ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

*'I would have liked to tell you the story...  
Had they not slit my lips'*  
--Samih al-Qassim

The word ‘Resistance’ was observed for the first time in 1996 in Palestinian Literature as written by the Palestinian writer and critic, Ghassan Kanafani.

‘Resistance’ means to counter an ideology or action or raise objections to the existing dominant, hegemonic dogmas and practices that are hierarchical and only subjugate the inferior furthermore. Resistance is bi-dimensional, carried out both through reading and writing of texts and may be applied to a gamut of discourses such as: colonial discourse, imperial culture, gender issues, caste and class differences, imbalances due to cultural clashes and so on.

Resistance has existed as long as human history and culture that it attempts to counter and will continue to exist as long as civilisation does. Narratives of resistance are the voice of the oppressed that holds a mirror to existing systems and thereby helps us introspect and evolve as a society. It is thus forever relevant and worth looking into.

Through the conference, the organisers hoped to break the stereotypical notions of the prevailing order and sensitise people, ultimately bringing about a change for the better in society. This was achieved successfully as can be seen in the varied perspectives of resistance expressed in the papers.

## ABOUT THE ORGANISERS

### Seshadripuram Educational Trust (SET)

Seshadripuram Educational Trust, the pioneering educational trust of Karnataka, was founded in 1930. In the course of its sustained growth spanning eight decades, it has established itself as one of the foremost educational organisations in the state, providing quality education to over 22,000 students across 33 institutions in Karnataka, ranging from pre-school to post graduation, research and foreign collaboration. The ultimate goal of the Trust is to impart value-based education, nurturing knowledge that will lead to happiness, peace, harmony and prosperity.

### Seshadripuram College

Established in 1973, Seshadripuram College is the flagship institution of SET and among the premier higher education institutions of Karnataka. The college offers an array of undergraduate and postgraduate courses such as: BCom, BBA, BCA, MCom, MFA and MIB courses and boasts of a current strength of 3050 students. The institution has been awarded the highest 'A' grade in several cycles of the NAAC re-accreditation process and regularly features among the top Commerce colleges not only of Bangalore but of the country in rankings of leading national newspapers. The College has always aimed to move with the times without losing touch with its core values. It forever strives to expose both its students and staff to relevant knowledge and its application across disciplines and domains and thereby live up to its motto, 'Always Aiming High'.

### Department of English

The department, as its mission, strives to Light Lives with Language by conducting activities that enable our students to better their communication skills and thereby meet the demands of today's professional world. Additional online certificate courses are offered to students for the same. The departmental vision – to Connect Worlds with Words aims to nurture in students a literary sensibility and through literature develop empathy towards the world around them. Further, the department – under the banner of Kaleidoscope-The English Club – also organises various programmes to inculcate in the students creativity and a love for language, literature and art in general like: EngMania, the inter-college English fest and Book Club and the Movie Club activities. The department also hosts periodic guest lectures on various interdisciplinary topics with the same intent.

## A BRIEF REPORT ON THE CONFERENCE

On 25<sup>th</sup> April 2019, the One-Day National-Level Conference “Literatures of Resistance: Voices of the Marginalised” was conducted successfully.

The conference was inaugurated by Ms. Poile Sengupta, eminent writer, poet and playwright who delivered an extremely thoughtful and captivating inaugural address. This was followed by an equally enthralling address by the Guest of Honour –Dr K.S. Vaishali, Chairperson, Department of English, Bangalore University. Dr Wooday P. Krishna, Hon. Gen. Secretary too addressed the audience and congratulated the organisers on organising a conference on such a pertinent topic.

The inauguration was followed by the Keynote Address which was delivered by Prof. G. Aloysius, Noted Author and Independent Researcher, Puducherry. Prof. Aloysius spoke regarding - “Subalternity and Resistance: Critical and Contextual Considerations”. Next was the plenary session titled: “Writing as Resistance: Some Thoughts on Gender and Creative Work.” which was delivered by Dr K. Srilata, Poet and Professor from IIT-Madras.

This was succeeded by a conversation; Dr Payel Dutta Chowdhury, Director, School of Arts and Humanities, REVA University moderated the session between Dr Saumitra Chakravarty, Visiting Faculty, Postgraduate Studies in English, National College, Bengaluru who spoke on, “Subaltern Voices in Women’s Ramayanas” and Dr Preetha Vasan, Professor, Department of MA English, Jyothi Nivas College, Bengaluru who spoke regarding resistance narratives in conflict zones.

The conference concluded with a Valedictory session which was presided by Sri M.S. Nataraj, Hon.Assistant Secretary, Seshadripuram Educational Trust and Chairman, Governing Council, Seshadripuram College. Dr M.C. Prakash, Chief Guest, delivered the Valedictory address and presented the best paper awards.

## EDITORIAL BOARD FOR THE SPECIAL ISSUE

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## FROM THE CHIEF EDITOR'S DESK

The Department of English, Seshadripuram College conducted a successful and meaningful One-Day National Conference on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2019. The Conference saw enthusiastic participation from faculty across the country .A stringent process was followed to ensure that only papers based on quality research would be selected for presentation and publication. Abstract submission and approval was followed by thorough scrutiny before final acceptance along with suggestions if required. Full papers underwent stringent plagiarism test through Turnitin software followed by review by a panel of eminent academicians and researchers in the domain. Papers were subsequently mailed back to the author/ authors with plagiarism report and reviewer's report and suggestions for necessary action. 80 papers were accepted for presentation, 39 papers of good quality were sent back for final revision before being collated for publication in this special issue of the International Journal of Research in Social Sciences, June, 2019.

I congratulate the Department of English, Seshadripuram College, in particular the Head of the Department Ms. Nalini Harish and faculty members in charge of coordinating the paper presentations and publication Mr. Allan Raj and Ms. Meghana Goshi for their painstaking efforts in making this publication possible.

**Dr Anuradha Roy**

Principal, Seshadripuram College

## FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

Warm greetings to everyone.

On 25<sup>th</sup> April 2019, the One-Day National-Level Conference "Literatures of Resistance: Voices of the Marginalised" was conducted successfully in Seshadripuram College, Bengaluru.

I thank Seshadripuram Educational Trust and Chief Editor-Dr Anuradha Roy for their support in organising the conference. I also thank the faculty of the Department of English for their dedicated efforts in putting the conference together. I also express my gratitude to faculty from other departments who assisted us as well as the enthusiastic student volunteers for their strong support.

With respect to this publication, I thank in particular-Mr. Allan Raj for his efforts in piecing together and formatting of the content. I also thank Dr Sapna G.S. and Prof.Raji Pillai, Department of Commerce and Management for co-ordinating with the publishers. I am also grateful to Ms.Meghana V.Goshi for managing the plagiarism and review of the papers as well Ms. Tejaswini P. for handling the financial end of the endeavour.

The papers published below span a range of sub-themes of the conference such as: Post-Colonial Literature, Partition Narratives, Diasporic Literature, Racial Discourses, Ethnic Resistance: Aboriginal/Tribal/Adivasi Literature, Gender Studies: Feminist Literature/Literature of the Third Sex, War Fiction: Refugee/Holocaust Literature, Dalit Literature and Literature of the North-East.

The varied views expressed stand testimony to the successful achievement of the aim of the conference which is to give a platform to various voices of resistance and thereby facilitate positive change in evolving mindsets and ultimately society.

**Ms. Nalini Harish**

Head, Department of English,  
Seshadripuram College

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# The Ministry of Utmost Happiness: (Re)Centering the Capital

Shruti Jain

## Abstract

Imagination of Nations, infamously involves an arbitrary generation of a National Self and a Foreign Other, which is highly reductive. It is useful to look at this process of a partial identification of the lives of the Other within the nation, by the National Self, through the distinction between Apprehension and Recognition, provided by Judith Butler.

Indian Writing in English has always contributed to the process of Nation building. One of the most recent in this endeavour of nation building/disrupting has been Arundhati Roy's "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness". This is a novel about the subaltern, written by the mainstream- a testimony to Butler's description of Apprehension. She picks marginalized characters that fall within the imaginary borders of the Nation, in an attempt to have their voices heard through her pen. However, despite her ability to apprehend, her epistemological inability to Recognize these characters, gets in the way of them having any autonomy over their voices, struggles or lives.

Further, all of the characters, chosen from the varied national landscapes become relevant only at points when they journey to the National Capital. The localization that characterizes the struggles of the marginalized, and the Federalization that characterises the efficiency of a Democracy, are both compromised due to her inability to Recognize these lives.

I argue that the distinction between Apprehension and Recognition shall always exist, until the frames themselves are either altered or expanded. So long as the limited and exclusionary epistemology remains standing, certain lives will continue to be lived in Precarity.

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### 1. Introduction

In order to fulfill what he believed was India's tryst with destiny, Independent India's first Prime Minister, at the stroke of the midnight of 15th August 1947, spoke:

"To the people of India, whose representatives we are, we make appeal to join us with faith and confidence in this great adventure. This is no time for petty and destructive criticism, no time for ill will or blaming others. We have to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell."

As Roy relates this melancholic bildungsroman of the children of India, she portrays the slow loss of faith and confidence, the necessity for criticism and resistance, the need to hold those in power accountable for bloodshed, and the need to reimagine the noble mansion of India with an architecture that defies the subscription to caste-religion based vaastu. In "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness", Arundhati Roy weaves stories of injustice and disenfranchisement, as well as resistances of the marginalised. She observes that the "India where it is safer to be a cow than it is to be a woman, is still being celebrated as one of the fastest growing economies in the world." She reminds the reader that "there has not been a day since the British left India that the Indian army has not been deployed against its "own people.""

She builds the alternative narrative of tribals, muslims, dalits, maoist women, kashmiri mothers and militant sons, people with disability, trans people and sex workers, which remains erased from the mainstream narratives of the nation.

However, just like the first Prime Minister of independent India addressed the children of the entire peninsula from the Capital city, Roy too, writes the story of all the forgotten children of the peninsula from the ruins of the Capital city- Delhi. Unsurprisingly, the stories from the margins, related from the centre, come to be relevant only when they appeal to the centre. The localised, almost parochial nature which is characteristic to the struggles of and from the margins is left unidentified. Therefore, by virtue of the position of its writer, the novel recalls the struggles only at those points at which they address the centre

## **2. The Body of the Nation**

Imagination of Nations, infamously involves an arbitrary generation of a National Self and a Foreign Other- a demarcation that is cartographically arrived at. Nivedita Menon recently reminded us of how the idea of a nation for those who are the self proclaimed winners in the mythical contest of patriotism, preexists the people who constitute the nation.

She says that it is “the Hindutvavaadi and RSS notion of nationalism, which sees the nation as a body, the body of the mother. This implies that the nation pre-exists the people, and so if some group wants to leave the nation, it can only be seen as amputation or dismemberment. But in fact, the people pre-exist the nation, they have lived on this earth for millennia, and it is they who decide in what sorts of organizations to live.” (Menon)

This is why expressions of discontent by those from the margins, are often viewed as a threat to the integrity of the body of the mother nation. The typical patriarchal appeal is then made to the sons of the nation to come to rescue their mother from dismemberment and disrespect. Notions of National honour and pride are thus imagined by drawing in the form of the Nation, the body of the mother on the map.

## **3. The Unrecognized National Self**

Edward Said sees the pitting of a unified and homogeneous Self against an equally unified and homogeneous Other, in the discourse of Orientalism as a highly reductive and detrimental process, that not only ignores the differences that exist within the Self and the Other, but also further legitimizes the discrimination caused as a result of these differences. (Said 83) Nationhood too is constructed on the same patterns on building binaries and ensuring homogenization. This homogenization invariably causes and requires amnesia of those selves within the National self, that doesn't suit the National face. Questions have been raised by a generation of scholars on the ability of the marginalised to speak and thereby put forth claims to rights as citizens of the Nation-State. When Butler speaks of lives that do not get recognized as lives within certain epistemological frames, she says that these lives are never really lived or lost in the full sense. Naturally, voices emanating from bodies which are not recognized, are bound to remain unheard, as they would be incomprehensible to the limiting epistemological frames of the mainstream. Thus, either lives need to be produced within the norms that qualify them as lives, or the frames that recognize life need to be expanded so as to include the lives hitherto understood as non-lives. (Butler)

## **4. Writing the National Narratives**

Novels and Newspapers contribute to the building of a sense of nationalism by representing and reinforcing the kind of imagined community that the nation is. (Anderson 45) Literature has facilitated the production, reinforcement and expansion of cultural recognition of unity and oneness. Literature also has the disruptive potential to draw the reader's attention to voices and lives that remain unrecognized due to the limiting frames they may inhabit. For Literature to expand or alter the existing epistemological frames, it will have to emerge from communities which have been denied the mainstream epistemology from the start. Those existing within the normative frames of recognition are bound to be limited by their own ontology within the frames, thus being unable to recognize the non-lives in their entirety. However, the non-lives that exist around the mainstream, often do not go entirely unnoticed. It is useful to look at this process of a partial identification of the lives of the Other within the nation, by the National Self, through the distinction between Apprehension and Recognition, provided by Butler. Butler identifies apprehension as just sensing, a kind of “perception without complete knowledge.” (Butler) Recognition, on the other hand, is a much deeper process of cognition. Apprehension, when seen as a mode of knowing that is not yet, and may never be Recognition, can help in making sense of the previous questions about the ability of the marginalized to make claims to Rights. If the question was posed to the mainstream, then it would point at the epistemological inability of the mainstream to offer Recognition. Thus, it is due to the inability of those who fall within the normative dominant frames of nationhood, to regard those lives that do not fall under the same frames of nationhood,

that the non-lives are pushed to a precarious condition of stagnation, unemployment, legal disenfranchisement and life of Humiliation.

#### **4.1. Indian Writing of India**

Indian Writing in English has always willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly contributed to the process of Nation building. Be it Rushdie's India culminating in the Emergency, or Raja Rao's Indian, frenzy-ing over the Mahatma, at various points, Literature from the mainstream has worked to serve the purposes of normative Nationalism. However, Literature from the margins has also served to constantly disrupt the exclusionary process of Nation building by imagining alternative frames of Nationhood or expanding the existing ones. From Dalit autobiographies to highly localised stories of writers like Perumal Murugan, Literature emerging from the margins has shown a stubborn dismissal of the powers of the centre.

#### **4.2. The Centre cannot write the Margins**

Arundhati Roy's "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" is a novel about the subaltern, written by the mainstream. Roy falls quite comfortably into the frames of Recognition built for the purposes of National unity. The voices of dissent raised by her and her likes have often been publically quelled and violently silenced. The visibility that they attain in their dissent, as opposed to the constantly dissenting lives led by several of the marginalised people attempting to make claims for Rights, shows how Recognizability makes them an "important target" for the exclusionary State to attempt to trample. Further, a targeting of the Recognizable voices causes much more unrest and discomfort among the others themselves existing within the frames of Recognizability. The structural and systematic process of the quelling of the Marginalised voices, upon which the State is built does not seem to be as much of a problem to the mainstream. We witness here a hierarchisation of the Grievability of Lives. The lives which are not lives from the start, quite naturally remain open to injurability and lie very low in the ladder of Grievability. Thus, these unrecognized lives are reduced to a position of absolute Precarity.

##### **4.2.1 Recognition vs Apprehension**

This differential distribution of Precarity, however, does not entirely diminish the possibility of Apprehension. Roy, given that she exists within her normative frames, is able to Apprehend the lives that are pushed to Precarity. Her novel, "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" can be read as a testimony to this process of Apprehension. "The epistemological capacity to apprehend lives is partially dependent on that life be produced according to the norms that qualify it as life" (Butler) Judith Butler understands apprehension as a mode of knowing that is not yet recognition and may never be so. Recognition requires for life to be produced and led within certain frames. When life falls outside of them, it does not get "regarded"- made to bear the brunt of starvation, unemployment, legal disenfranchisement and social stigma. (Butler)

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#### **4.3. Resistance that refuses Assimilation**

In any nation that is multiethnic, the minority ethnic groups reject attempts by the majority groups to assimilate them into the dominant culture. This rejection is not perpetually an address to the centres of the Nation. That Roy recognizes these rejections only when they are addressed to the space she is writing from (and existing within), blinds her from recognizing their resistance and rejection in totality.

The minority groups have also always rejected political domination by majority groups. They have often insisted on fighting for maximum political autonomy through the policies of decentralization and the establishment of federal systems. The overbearing control from the centre, manifests itself in the form of neglect towards the margins.

The minority groups reject unequal economic development of the regions. Instead, they demand that the regions where they are domiciled, just like the regions where the majority groups are concentrated, be accorded a just share of the economic prosperity.

Roy, in her writing of this National novel, picks marginalized characters that fall within the imaginary borders of the Nation, in an attempt to have their voices heard through her pen. She tries to remember every forgotten limb of the body of the mother to which she is supposed to belong. However, despite her astounding ability to apprehend, her epistemological inability to Recognize these characters, gets in the way of them having any semblance of complete autonomy over their voices, struggles or lives.

Roy identifies characters who are discriminated for different kinds of non-normative identities. It is their non-normative or non-mainstream identity that makes them injurable. However, Roy speaks about their vulnerabilities as though these vulnerabilities provide them some sort of protection against violence, discrimination or rigid norms of behaviour. She writes of how only a Hijra woman in Shahjahanabad could dress to portray such outrageous femininity, as opposed to the assumption that the Burkha clad Islamic women, always had to hide the outrageousness of their femininity.

"No ordinary woman would have been permitted to sashay down the streets of Shahjahanabad dressed like that. Ordinary women in Shahjahanabad wore burqas or at least covered their heads and every part of their body except their hands and feet. The woman Aftab followed could dress as she was dressed and walk the way she did only because she wasn't a woman." (Roy 19)

She believes that everyone should be a maut like her Kashmiri lover's brother- Gulrez. People with disability have always been easy targets for those who look to kill in the name of deviance or non-conformity. In Kashmir too, Gulrez's inability to follow military norms makes him more precarious than the other already precarious Kashmiris. However, to desire to be a maut in such dastardly of times, shows how little Roy recognizes the precarity that he suffers. Similarly, in the beginning of the novel, she writes of Vultures that have become extinct as an effect of the chemical used to increase the production of milk in cows. She says that the Vultures were rather happy to have exited from such a horrible story that the world was in the process of relating. One wonders what Occult knowledge Roy must have had to know what the dead vultures feel about being killed.

"She gathered that the vultures", killed due to the usage of diclofenac to increase the production of milk in cows, "weren't altogether unhappy at having excused themselves and exited from the story"(Roy 1)

Further, all of the characters are chosen from the varied "national" landscapes - from the militants in Kashmir to the Naxalites in Andhra Pradesh. A national unity in temporality is established by tracing how events of "national" importance have had a simultaneous impact on those living within the boundaries of the nation. All of these characters seem to become relevant to the story only at points when they journey to or through the National Capital Region. The localization that characterizes the struggles of the marginalized, and the Federalization that characterises the efficiency of a Democracy, are both compromised due to her inability to Recognize these Precarious (non) lives. All marches and protests that matter to her, seem to have culminated at Jantar Mantar, in Delhi. The resistance that she Recognizes is the one that responds to and is directed at the Centre. Any struggles that may disregard the centre altogether do not seem to matter as much in her frames of recognition.

#### **4.4. At the Centre, from the Margins**

The State in all its faults, holds a certain emancipatory potential for those who remain dehumanized by the civil society. (Anthias and Davis 125) Those whose lives remain unregarded by the citizens around them, can migrate to spaces where in the State can hear them better. The Nation-state in India, despite being quasi-federal in theory, ends up working in highly centralized ways. Therefore, in order to demand rights that one is supposed to be bestowed with by virtue of citizenship, people have to migrate to the Ecologies where all State power seems to be accumulated. All the marches seen in the recent times in India, from the several variants of the Chalo Dilli marches, to the Kisan marches to the Dignity march, have involved neglected citizens from neglected ecologies migrating into powerful ecologies so as to pressurize powerful structures.

In the novel too, a large section deals with the variety of people who have assembled at Jantar Mantar, hoping to have their voices heard. The treatment meted out to some protesters seems to be much more favourable when compared to the amnesia exhibited with respect to the other protesters. This treatment is not independent of the identities that the protesters hold, thereby the demands that they are making.

The novel describes a fast growing and developing city of Delhi. It is a city that is building its skyrocketing buildings on the bent backs of migrant Dalit-Bahujan-Adivasi labourers, transgender people, beggars and miscreants of all sorts, who migrate from different ecologies to seek livelihood and refuge in the dreams of the Capital city. Those who manage to retain the spirit to fight for their shattered dreams and homes, reside in permanently temporary shelters at Jantar Mantar. Ironically, even at this masterpiece of a monument that meticulously records the passage of time, time stands still for those who have been displaced out of any frames of Recognizability.

At this monument, the only person who receive favourable treatment from media and by extension, from the rest of the country are the “old-gandhian, former soldier-turned-village-social-worker” and his team, fighting for a “corruption-free India”. The charade is painted to look like they have the support of the Muslim minority as well as the Dalit “quota” class. The old baby-man seems to cater to the middle-class Brahminical ethos perfectly by advocating the retention of the Caste-system, while condemning the atrocities and exploitation associated with it. This way, the resistances against atrocities could be quelled while retaining the ancestral privilege that legitimizes these atrocities.

When juxtaposed with this favourably “Indian” man and his crew, another Gandhian lay on a fast unto death for the nineteenth time. However, she chose to identify the elements and structural faults that were causing this chain of corruption in the entire system. Unfortunately those she targeted owned the media houses and thereby people’s collective sympathy as well. Therefore, while the entire nation, consisting of the left-wing, right wing and no-wing, united to fight with the baby-man for his holy cause of a corruption free India, the Gandhian woman was left alone and prone to attack or death at any moment. Both the baby-man and the woman migrated into Jantar mantar for what they called the Rights of the people, but the precariousness of the baby-man is deliberately reduced while that of the woman is deliberately increased. (Butler 12)

Then there were those who had migrated to Delhi all the way from Bhopal. They had lived on the pavement for two weeks, to draw attention to their basic human right to clean drinking water and medical care. But one is forced to wonder, if the gas leak of 1984, deformed their human-ness in some sense, for the civil society failed to Recognize them.

Another man who had migrated to Jantar Mantar was Gulabiya. The ecology that he had been forced to migrate out of now lay submerged beneath a dam, with fish swimming through his windows and crocodiles knifing through his high-branched silk cotton trees. His mother had been forced to migrate into a resettlement colony. Destruction of their homes and livelihood had forced Gulabiya to guard the backside of a public restroom.

The Association of the Mothers of the Disappeared, from Kashmir had migrated to Delhi, reminding the Governments of their responsibility to inform the legitimate citizen-mothers of the whereabouts of their sons. These mothers were heckled and threatened. They were branded as terrorists. They were made to feel so helpless and undignified at Jantar Mantar that they decided never to come to Delhi again. The difference in the reverential treatment of a mainland mahatma man and the animalistic treatment of a group of Kashmiri women fighting for their sons lost in an unacknowledged war, is glaring.

All these characters come into her frames only when they are at Jantar Mantar. Their pasts become relevant only when their presents are centered.

## 5. Conclusion

Roy fails to understand entirely those who fall outside of the frames through which she writes. To a writer, writing and existing within the positions of power, the people living in the margins are barely visible. The visibility of the people who have been marginalized is contingent upon their proximity to the centre. Thus, in the novel, the resistance portrayed seems to come to relevance only when it appeals to the centre. This is the distinction between Apprehension and Recognition. It shall always exist, until the frames of Recognition themselves are either altered or expanded. So long as the limit and exclusionary epistemology remain standing, certain lives will continue to be lived in Precarity.

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# Climate Fiction, Neeraliyan — Protest Literature in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Yamuna U V \*

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## Abstract (12pt)

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Climate fiction is the new entrant under the umbrella of Environmental fiction that narrate the harrowing experiences of the human and non-human world associated with climate change. Global warming and species extinction are the major challenges that the world is facing today. The writers of eco-narratives re-present the fear and anxiety of the marginalised world and the impacts of unethical human intervention on the planet. They expose the horrendous impact of global warming with the help of suitable symbols and images. They use fictional writing as a medium to protest the self-centric attitude of the modern civilization and thereby to campaign for the protection of the planet. This kind of protest fiction exhorts people to go back to a life closer to nature which according to them is the only way to restore the rhythm of the planet. Their sole aim lies in reverting the crisis and bringing the planet back to its hey-day. This paper explores the Climate fiction "Neeraliyan" by AmbikasuthanMangad, the environmental writer from Kerala within the framework of ecocriticism to argue that Climate fiction is a form of protest literature that has the potential to challenge the callous attitude of the present generation to awaken an environmental consciousness within them. There is no ambiguity on the fact that the environmental protest literature that exposes the planetary damage and thereby to bring about a tremendous effect and affect on the psyche of the individuals, is the need of the hour to save the planet Earth.

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Literature – in its varied hues and forms – is known to reflect upon the multi-faceted nature of human experiences. Notwithstanding the fact that literature has undergone drastic transformation as a means to respond to the changing social dynamics, it always dealt with the issues that threatened the peaceful existence of human societies. Thus it can be said that literature implicitly functions as an agency to protest against the injustices and also to protect the disenfranchised communities. The dual functions of literature – protest and protect still continues in the 21st century as seen in the genesis of new genres. Protest literature is the umbrella term for all literature that aim to expose the follies and foibles of the society and thereafter to bring about a change that people aspire for. Harvard panel on protest literature defines it as "any form of communication that engages social consciousness and may move someone to action.... Such works may shock us into action by informing us of problems we were unaware of, like the work of Upton Sinclair or Rachel Carson. Other works may cause us to doubt our assumptions through the use of satire and absurdity, like Joseph Heller's Catch-22."

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This paper argues that Climate fiction, a derivatives of Environmental fiction could be justifiably included in the category of Protest literature since it is likely to shake us into action by informing us of the environmental and societal risks associated with the threat of global warming and the ensuing species extinction. This study has examined the Climate fiction, Neeraliyan, which is also a text on animal studies – Olive Ridley turtle being the main characters – originally written in Malayalam by AmbikasuthanMangad, the environmental writer from Kerala, to corroborate the argument. The coherence in themes and narrative technique, suffused with scientific facts encapsulates the urgency and seriousness of the unabated global issue. Drawing on scientific facts about global warming and Olive Ridley turtle, Mangad has designed this protest-narrative in the garb of a fiction to create immediate impression on the readers.

The ecologically inspired text explores how a particular species of the aquatic ecosystem, Olive Ridley turtle is on the verge of extinction due to global warming and the capitalist intrusion into the blue waters of the sea. The Protest literature, Neeraliyan serves as an eye opener on the impending catastrophe and makes a “direct intervention in current social, political and economic debates surrounding environmental pollution and preservation” (Heise, par.1). Neeraliyan provides an all new literary experience, hitherto unseen in regional fiction in Malayalam. The writer uses his fictional writing as a medium for campaigning on global warming, voicing the same concern as George Monbiotte, a non-fiction writer, though with atinge of imagination. The literary-scientific images in Mangad’sNeeralyanare capable of subverting the utilitarian mind set of the greedy people controlled by capitalist forces.

Today, the unethical interventions of man in the lap of nature has led to the creation of ‘risk societies’ jeopardizing the survival of various species on the planet. In the backdrop of accumulating anthropogenic problems like toxic waste, global warming, vanishing flora and fauna in the wilderness, a new form of literature called environmental fiction or eco-fiction has appeared in the scene which seeks to warn us of environmental threats emanating from governmental, industrial, commercial and neo-colonial forces. During the time of its origin it was known as nature writing when nature was considered separated from culture. But when the anthropogenic climate change continued to go unabated, eco-literature like Climate fiction took it upon itself to represent the human violations on the non-human world. Thereafter nonhuman animal that was restricted in the background till then came to the foreground in the plots of fictions to expose the calamity that struck them unaware. Literature of Animal studies deals with the ‘science of extinction’ as many of the species are vanishing from the planet. The creation of eco-narratives led to the birth of ecocriticism, the critical theory that studies the relationship between literature and environment.

In a country like India where majority of the population depends on nature for their subsistence living, the impacts of climate change will be a matter of grave concern. It is not only humans but other species are also under threat from global warming due to shrinking or loss of habitats and scarcity of water and food. “One in six species on Earth could be threatened with extinction from climate change unless steps are taken to reduce global warming emissions, new research has warned” (Times of India). Global warming is the sleeping-giant, the lager repercussions of which would unfold in the coming years in the form of complete extinction of many of the ecosystems. The change has already begun which could be seen in the depleted biodiversity as documented in the paper presented in TheNational Conference on Forest Biodiversity, on 22 May 2011. Some of the species getting endangered in the country which are seen also in Kerala are Vulture, Malabar Large-spotted Civet, Nilgiri Leaf Monkey, NilgiriTahr, Olive Ridley Turtle (Sharma, 81). Hence the environmentalists are campaigning aggressively to raise the awareness of the society on the catastrophic impact of global warming. Today, sea turtles are under many threats – natural as well as human inflicted. The main reason for the vulnerability of turtles is the highly populated human settlements on the beaches in India. Humans and feral animals are their enemies who prey upon them. Global warming is the main culprit for the extinction as the physiological activities of the species fluctuate with the change in temperature.

The environmental writer, Mangad’s works are proof of his deep commitment towards society and environment. He is the only writer in Malayalam who has written an anthology of stories on the theme of ‘environmental engineering’ undertaken by humans for financial gain. In one of his interviews he states, “. perhaps, I am the only writer in Malayalam who has written most number of stories based on environment. Recently, my book named Kunnukal- Puzhakal (Hill & Rivers) was published. It is the first anthology of environmental stories in Malayalam” (Echikkanam 100). His anotheranthology of environmental stories, ThiranjeduthaKadhakal (Selected Stories) consists of forty-one stories, and some of them are: Thokku, Anathara, PottiyammaTheyyam, Dhaivathinte Nadu, Kadalkazhchakal, and Neeraliyan. These have successfully formulated and articulated the environmental consciousness with factual and aesthetic appeal. Thirenjeduthakathakal documents that“These stories are born from the reality that the hills and mountains that have been there for thousands of years are just vanishing in hours in today’s times (345). Neeraliyan highlights the threat, the aquatic biota is facing from the activities related to capital generation for the corporations. Mangad has dexterously woven the real images captured from his neighbourhood, Venneri in

Kasaragode, Kerala where the habitat preservation of turtles is undertaken with the help of the Department of Forestry.

*Neeraliyan* narrates the story of the eponymous hero, Neeraliyan, a male turtle and Bhagavathi, a female turtle who become the victims of globalisation. The industrialised fishing methods and large scale pollution in the sea prove fatal for the turtles. Neeraliyan is also the story of Thankoottan and Sudhamani, a couple from the fishermen community whose mission in life is to save Olive Ridley Turtles from extinction. The writer has included the character of Akhil, a researcher to dwell on the importance of converging science and literature to exhort and transform the individuals to move into action to attenuate the dual crises. Olive Ridley's reproduction is intricately connected to the atmospheric temperature. With the increase in global temperature, unable to hatch, Ridley eggs rot and perish. The issueless Thankoottan and his wife used to find solace in caring for the turtle babies. When the shocking revelation comes from Akhil that Ridley turtle will not come to Venneri any longer for laying eggs, they lose the only purpose in their life and stand benumbed on their future as well as the future of the planet.

The writer makes use of anthropomorphism to give human attributes to non-humans and break the human-animal hierarchy — “... he tried to mount her, but every attempt failed. both his forearms had been lost – either sliced by the propellers of a boat, or bitten off by sharks” (Mangad 27). The disturbing imagery of the trawlers, is a powerful reminder of the damage caused by these modern fishing machines. They have taken over the traditional, nature-friendly wooden-boats to increase the ‘catch’ for export that boosts the capitalist economy. “In Orissa, more than a hundred thousand dead turtles have been counted since the 1990s, and ten to fifteen thousand dead turtles are washed ashore each year, predominantly due to trawlers. Researchers have documented that ten to twenty turtles can be trapped and killed during a single trawl” (Shenoy, Berlie and Shanker 95). Throughout the world, sea turtles have to face mounting threats, mostly from civilised humans. Science and technology instead of churning out solutions for human crises pose new threats to survival of human and non humans on the planet. Despite being informed by science, paying no heed to it, would cost high for modern man as he is on the verge of burning himself from the sun, like the hapless Icarus who didn’t pay heed to his father Daedalus’ words. Modern man discounts the fact that “everything is connected to everything else”.

Mangad, the ecocritic has drawn the nature-human parallel very skilfully. The femininity of both the females are unable to reach its fulfilment in motherhood which is evident in Sudhamani’s words, “How I wished to have a child! My ill-luck! By now I have scooped up at least ten thousand baby turtles with these hands and released them alive into the sea. But I never got a child for myself...” (30). Mangad says, “Of all the animals that live in sea and on land, the female sea turtle is the most unfortunate one. She is not fated to experience motherhood. She cannot lay eggs in the sea. The fish will eat them. What if she comes to the land to lay eggs? She has to cover them with sand and rush back to the sea. Otherwise, predators will eat her. She has no luck at all . . . cannot brood over the eggs, will never know whether they hatched at all, never get to recognize her own children or a chance to caress them . . .” (30). The delineation of the sad plight of Bhagavathi, the turtle in parallel with Sudhamani is a ploy. No other form of protest could shake the human conscious as the above quoted lines which proclaim the oppression of female turtles.

Mangad not only voices a subtle and powerful protest through this narrative but also tries to shake up and wake up the complacent generation of today from their slumber and asks them to ponder over the current degraded state of the environment. The warning about the extinction of Ridleys comes from the researcher, Akhil when he sees the turtle eggs hatch in the day instead of night. He asks, “Was natures’ rhythm going haywire?” (28). Temperature plays an integral role in the reproduction of Ridleys. Scientists have proved this in the book Sea turtles of India. “Lower temperatures produce males and higher temperatures produce females. The pivotal temperature (i.e. the temperatures that produces equal numbers of males and females) varies among species and populations, but is usually around 28- 32 degree Celsius. Influences on nest temperatures (e.g. rise in temperature from impacts of climate change) can result in skewed sex ratios- more males than females or vice versa- which can lower the potential for reproduction” (Shenoy, Berlie and Shanker 14).

In the near future, when the global average surface temperature is projected to increase by 1.4 to 5.8 degree Celsius over the period 1990 to 2100, with nearly all land areas warming more rapidly than the global average. The species of insects, amphibians, birds, and mammals are likely to undergo reduction in their density after the occurrence of climate change. A disappointed Akhil informs Sudhamani about his decision to leave Venneri with the proclamation that “turtles won’t come here anymore to lay eggs . . . Only around fifteen baby turtles have hatched so far. They’re not very healthy either. Nearly four hundred of them should have come out of these three holes. Earlier most of the baby turtles that hatched here were males. For some years now, most have been females. When the temperature goes down, male turtles are born but if it’s between 29 and 34 degrees, all the babies will be females. A great wonder, not found among any other

animals!" (31). This forewarning about turtles lays bare the dystopian reality embedded in the 'real -seeming' unreal, materialistic world of today.

Considering the threat on the turtles unleashed by humans, there is a need to bring awareness on this, among local and global populations. According to the turtle researchers, involving local communities – the persons living on the beaches, the same habitat where Olive Ridley turtles come for hatching – is very important for the conservation programmes to yield results. There is a need to raise the awareness of the young men in the fishing community to protect the turtles and their nests near their homes. Point 136 of UNFCC, Paris report articulates the requirement for local communities to support global warming mitigation in a holistic approach by equipping themselves with knowledge and technology (19). Like the author, who protests against the ongoing exploitation of the non-human world, Thankoottan becomes the representative of Green warriors in literature. He is the poor, lone eco-soldier whose life's mission is to protect maximum number of turtle eggs from human predation; care them till big; nurture injured ones to health. He goes for patrolling the beach armed with the stout branch of a thorny shrub as a self-appointed guardian of turtles. Any turtle egg thief if got caught by him would receive thrashes without any compassion. Fearing the deadly blows, thieves stopped coming to Venneri. In Dee berry's green vision "Green warriors get their strength from being who they are...It is to act boldly, forthrightly and do what needs to be done, to leap boldly into the future" (Eaton, 221). Mangad emphatically mediates the importance of preserving the non-humans whether in land or sea.

There is a sea change in the sea bed today due to the unethical human activities on the planet. The human induced pollutants are proved to be the culprits of the destruction of aquatic animal and plant lives. The injustice done to the aquatic biome does not stop with warming and acidification of the ocean from industrial effluents and oil spills. Discarding garbage and polythene in the sea and ocean adds threat to the marine lives. Turtles especially, mistake the coloured polythene bags as jelly fish and eat them. Many of them die because of that as they don't know to spit (Mangad 30). "Accidental ingestion of plastics has been documented to indirectly cause death due to poisoning or starvation because of the inability to swallow food due to blockage of the food passage by these materials" (Shenoy, Berlie and Shanker 99). In one of the cases, as recollects by Sudhamani, "A week earlier it was Thankoottan who had brought home a turtle with a similarly swollen stomach. But it was already dead. They informed the Forest Department, as the rules demanded. The officers came along with a doctor. When the stomach was cut open during post mortem, everybody was shocked. A huge lump of plastic bits, weighing nearly two-three kilos! The doctor confirmed it was the cause of death" (30). Thankoottan and Sudhamani come across turtles with bloated stomach, either dead on the beach or brought home by others. The non- biodegradable plastics are a real threat to the environment and the planet.

Modern man embraces scientific knowledge to satisfy his greed and proceeds to conquer nature as Dr. Faustus leans towards necromancy in his greed to be above god. The hubristic act alone leads to the fall of Marlow's hero and modern man as well. However, in the modern tragedy apart from man, the whole planet is endangered. The main principle of Deep ecology is relevant here to exhort modern men of today on the value of 'every living being', whether it is tiger, elephant, turtle, crab, earthworm or bacteria, for the sustenance of the planet. Arne Naess propagates the ideology that the well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on earth has value in itself and that humans have no right to reduce the richness and diversity of life forms except to satisfy vital human needs.

Going back to the life closer to nature is the only way to restore the rhythm of the planet, affirms Mangad. Reverting the crisis and bringing the planet back to its hey-day is as impossible as bringing the bard of Avon to Stratford. Thankoottan, is the mouthpiece of Mangad – an ecologically awakened individual who inspires in developing an environmental consciousness and practicing environmental ethics in daily life. As far as environmentalists are concerned, generating fellow attitude to non-humans is the only way left nowfor the humans. Sugathakumari, the writer and environmental activist from Kerala condemns humanity in its entirety. According to her, nature is on the verge of proclaiming that humans are no more wanted on this planet as they have forgotten the meaning of love, empathy and sympathy. As "humanity don't even have the time to turn back" (qtd. in Echikkanam 20) and redeem the mistakes, whatever to be done, should be done now or never. The writers of ecofiction have responded appropriately and urgently to the ongoing anthropogenic calamity.

In the contemporary world when the unabated ecological devastation continues to endanger the lives of the non-human world and no agency has raised to the occasion to revert the impending crisis, it is left with the discourses in different disciplines to articulate the implications of an imbalanced planet on the living system. Patrick D Murphy writes inPersuasive aesthetic ecocritical practice: Climate change, "the mind numbing statistics of the current great extinction of animal and plant life, the slow death of forests and the acidification of oceans" (Murphy, xiv) have not received the due attention and interest of public as it is

warranted. He adds that an aesthetic construction like literature still holds a sway on individuals to alter their ideological perception through ‘intellectual and affective engagement’.

History proves now and again that Protest literature always responded adequately to the wants of humanity in crisis as in the case of racism, patriarchal domination of woman, and class struggle. There is no doubt that the same could be reiterated in the present scenario where the non-human world is at risk. The protest literature like climate fiction will be a saviour for this class with no voice of their own. It strives to push the individuals to adhere to an effective environmental philosophy and to bring about a change in their attitude. This will happen only by fostering the age old traditions and values that uphold spirituality associated with earth, animals and plants. When conventional religions are indifferent to the initiatives meant for the abatement of planet crisis, “all protest literature says to the [victims] have hope – you are not alone.” (Harvard panel).

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# Reclaiming Selfhood through Resistance

## A Reading of Githa Hariharan's 'When Dreams Travel', 'The Thousand faces of Night'

**Divya Hari Rao**

### **Abstract**

Unlike the west, Indian mythology and history are interwoven and is influential in shaping the collective conscious of the Indian societies. Over the centuries, the narratives of mythology and history have been retold in several ways until the colonial power hegemonized the dominant narratives. This paper attempts to study and analyze the shades of resistance towards patriarchy through retelling the stories of the past, reclaiming the lost voice and the search for the individual space. While 'When Dreams Travel' is a reworking of historical traditions of 'The Arabian Nights', 'The Thousand Faces of Night' focusses on characters with names of the Indian goddesses and their struggle to break away from patriarchy. I wish to compare these two texts to study the different shades of resistance.

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### **1. Introduction**

Oxford dictionary defines 'Resistance' as 'the refusal to accept or comply with something'<sup>1</sup>. Resistance has always been an intrinsic part of every social, cultural, political, philosophical, and economic movements and by its nature, it is confrontational. However, not all acts of resistance are driven by rebellion forces or violence. As Usha Bande writes,

Resistance can be as esoteric as silence and silence can be as impenetrable as hegemonic power, conversely both resistance and silence have the potential to challenge power.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore it can be implied that resistance is the consequence of the oppression by the hegemonic power. However, representation of violent resistance occupies a dominant space in history glorified perhaps as the only prevalent form of resistance. It can also be argued that non violent disobedient actions (propagated by Gandhi) is a passive form of resistance that history has managed to accommodate but these two forms are limited to the public sphere (Habermas)<sup>3</sup> of the resisters and their actions are aimed at bringing a radical changes (revolt, uprisings, overthrowing a government, conquering a kingdom, converting an entire state into a different religion, etc.) with intended results. With reference to Bande's words, there are few forms of resistance that are silent enough that happens within hegemonic structure that seems compliant but isn't. Githa Hariharan's novels, 'The Thousand Faces Of Night' and 'When Dreams Travel' explores the various forms of resistance within patriarchy and how women negotiate through several pathways and find their selfhood in the process.

### **2. Storytelling**

The Thousand Faces of Night revolves around the life of Devi who returns from America after completing her higher studies only to be trapped in an arranged marriage that leaves her feeling empty. The story, with its back and forth narrative, gives us glimpses of Devi's childhood where her grandmother narrates several stories from Ramayana, Mahabharatha and several other folklores when something unexpected that happened to their family members or their neighbours.

'In my grandmother's mind, the link between her stories and her own lives was a very vital one. But she could not always find precise mythological equivalent for the puzzling experiences the people we knew had.'<sup>4</sup>

These stories play a pivotal role in shaping Devi's psyche about womanhood much before her confrontation with her real life. These stories influenced her to an extent where she narrates a story which forms a part of her alter-ego.

'I lived a secret life of my own; I became a woman warrior, a heroine. I was Devi. I rode a tiger, and cut off evil, magical demons' heads.'<sup>5</sup>

When Devi gets married and moves to Mahesh's house, her father-in-law (whom she calls Baba) tells her stories which reminds her of her grandmother's but the latter's was a prelude to her womanhood whereas the former's were 'virtuous, less of a ramble and strictly functional'.<sup>6</sup>

At her new house, Devi unearths photograph of her mother-in-law, Parvatiamma, whom she assumes to be dead. Mayamma, the servant who lives there tells her the story of how Parvatiamma walked out of marriage leaving a letter behind and no one spoke of it again.

For Devi, both the stories and the storytellers have been an integral part of her life that has led to her understanding of the self. Though much of the written literature was dominated by men, in this text, Hariharan shows that the art of storytelling was predominantly a women's forte where mythology was not looked as a non-fiction discourse but rather a fiction that represents an anecdote of life. Her grandmother holds the power to narrate the stories the way she wants but we see that she has also internalised patriarchy when she glorifies Gandhari and praises her for being a virtuous wife. She doesn't let the authenticity of her narratives be questioned by her granddaughter and dismisses Devi's questions about the story. Baba represents a stereotypical patriarch who upholds the values of the written scriptures and preaches the responsibilities of a married woman to his daughter-in-law.

'When Dreams Travel' deviates from the original tale of the 'One Thousand and One Nights' and looks at the aftermath of the event where Dunyazad goes to Shahryar's palace to find out that her sister, Shahrzad's disappearance remains a mystery. The novel begins with the four characters, Shahryar, the king of Shahbad, his brother Shahzaman, Shahrzad and her sister Dunyazad.

'Shahrzad appears to be the only person in the world gifted with movement. The three other figures in the scene hold still as if bewitched into their waiting, listening postures ... It is she who holds the scene together.'<sup>7</sup>

Shahrzad has the autonomy to decide the story to be narrated and makes the listeners wait for it. Here, Shahrzad becomes more powerful than the king and thereby resisting his power structures. As Foucault discusses in his essay 'Scientia Sexualis', this power play between Shahryar and Shahrzad is similar to the power play between 'Confessor' and 'Confessee'.<sup>8</sup>

Even in this novel, Hariharan stresses on the fact that the storytellers were predominantly women who passed on this tradition to other women folk. The third part of the novel is composed of various folklores which Dunyazad and her companion (slave girl) Dilshad narrate to each other for seven nights and days. This act of storytelling between two women is not the subversion of power structure between the two women but also subversion of the patriarchy itself. By negating the men in the process of storytelling, these two women try to resurrect the stories of Shahrzad and her disappearance.

### **3. Reinterpreting myths**

If there is Hindu mythology in 'The Thousand Faces of Night', there is 'When Dreams Travel' based on the Arab Mythology. Even though mythologies have been played dominant role in storytelling, Hariharan manages to interweave the folklores into the narrative as these folklores are primarily oral in nature. It is not uncommon to include mythology in the modern literature but in this case but here, we see that mythological stories are reconstructed as a political and cultural act of resistance to the colonial past; thereby the women storytellers reinvent themselves through these narratives and also try to reformulate the feminist identities. Hariharan also tries to re-present the canonized women characters in a different light.

When Wazir refuses to send his virgin daughter, Shahrzad to Shahryar, Dunyazad coerces him to send her to the king instead of her sister, but he refuses. Even before this, Wazir had a dream where he is in the desert on his way to offer the goat as an offering to the lord and he appears and asks him to sacrifice the one that he loves and here, the goat is Wazir's daughter. This scene is a re-enactment of an episode from the Quran where Ibrahim is ready to sacrifice his son Ishmael as per the command of God but God fulfills his vision by placing the ram instead of his son. However, in the case of Wazir's daughter, there is no divine intervention but Shahrzad resurrects her life through storytelling. This is a subtle way of expressing that religion has always been there to save men by oppressing women and as a result, storytelling leads a pathway to women to find her identity.

### **4. The real and the imagined**

Stories have always been an ideal situation to escape for both the teller and the listener but when one looks at the physical world around them through these stories; the physical world becomes a problematic space and the confrontation with the real becomes an act of resistance.

When Nora of 'A Doll's House' slammed the door and walked out of her marriage, many countries in Europe frowned upon its ending criticizing Ibsen and compelled him write an alternate ending, which according to him was 'barbaric outrage'.<sup>9</sup>

Devi who grew up listening to her grandmother's stories developed a perspective on womanhood which was conflicting from her real world. Within few years of marriage, there is a feeling of emptiness in her. Devi's walking away from her marriage, just like her mother-in-law is a resistance towards patriarchy and the institution of marriage.

Dunyazad looks at the ivory-framed mirror, Dilshad tells her that it belonged to Shahrzad and was gifted to her by a merchant traveller, hinting on the possibility that Shahrzad could have been in love with this merchant, explaining her sudden disappearance and King Shahryar declaring her death publicly. Assuming that this incident could have happened, Shahrzad's walking away from her marriage is similar to the act of Devi walking out of her marriage as she was in love with Gopal.

## 5. Search for selfhood

It becomes important for Githa Hariharan to not just represent one group of women, but look at every woman's individual experiences to understand the various shades of resistance. Joanna Filipa Da Silva states that self-assertion creates a positive identity as a matter of self-confrontation, awareness and resistance<sup>10</sup>. This pattern can be found in both the texts where the women annihilate alienation and self-denial and resist in their own way and this resistance is prevalent across different power structures. Devi's confrontation with her reality and marriage leads to her self-realization and in the end she goes back to her mother seeking solace and comfort from another woman. Dunyazad, a widow of Shahzaman could have initiated her relationship with the Shahryar but she rejects him and chooses Dilshad as her companion. Here, lesbianism becomes a political resistance against the dominant authority.

The need for resistance arises from the realization of vulnerability and which in turn leads to search of one's self. Mayamma, the maid had been a victim of domestic abuse and tries to find herself within her the private sphere. Then there is Sita, Devi's mother who would have given up playing veena only to be the caretaker of the family is seen playing the veena at the end.

Unlike the popular representation of women only as a body, the women here transcend their physical self and resist psychologically subverting the power structures little by little.

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# “From Fact to Fiction: A Study of Easterine Kire’s *Bitter Wormwood*”

Vibha B

## Abstract (12pt)

People have been narrating stories from ages ago through oral forms in the ancient times and largely through written forms in contemporary times. Storytelling is central to human existence for it keeps past alive in the present. Stories are also a means through which humans understand and empathize with each others' experiences. People narrate stories to shape their existence and also create identities for themselves. Because of these multiple factors, fictional works are always popular. History is also a form of narrative that, in non-fictional style, informs us about our past. Then, history also falls into the realm of storytelling. Consequently, the narration made either by history or stories blur the definition of fact, fiction and the distinction between the two stands contested.

Particular stories emerging from oral traditions are fixated in print and become a powerful and dominant discourse by suppressing or erasing other parallel or counter discourses. In the current times, fictional works presenting political history of a nation is attracting readers' attention. Many authors are engrossed in presenting multiple versions of history. All these stories gaining popularity revolve around a nation's history and indicate the rise of sub-nationalism. It also resists dominant ideologies and challenges the notion of history as singular.

Insurgencies in the North-East regions of India are illustrations of expression of sub-nationalism. Heterogeneous people grouped as a monolith are protesting to assert their distinct, unique identities and expose the government's atrocity. Fiction has created an effective and far reaching forum for writers from North-East India to present their realities to the world. Hence, some authors hailing from these regions of India are presenting their political history by interweaving it with fiction.

The aim of this paper is to attempt a close study of the novel *Bitter Wormwood* by a Nagaland writer, Easterine Kire, to understand how the author responds to and textually represents the historical events. In the process, is fact amalgamated with fiction? If it is, then what is its implications/purpose? An attempt is also be made to identify the strategies that the author has employed to fictionalize political facts.

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## 1. Introduction

Identity is an integral attribute of every human being. Certain identities are formed at the time of birth while some others are acquired gradually. Jonathan Friedman in his paper “The Past in the Future: History and the Politics of Identity” explains how “identity is intricately connected to a nation and its past, for no self-definition occurs in vacuum, but only in previously defined world” (Friedman). Our caste, religion, country, professional status, etc are some of the defined worlds we are invariably connected with. Some of

these identities are acquired by consent and some others by force. The identity matrix is most problematic at the juncture called ‘nation’. In a nation like India that prides on its diversity, nationalism is an uncomfortably shared feeling. Because, in order to unite on the nation-state front, people have to uneasily shed their immediate feeling of belongingness experienced in the forms of cultural, religious and ethnic identities which is true to them (Aloysius 1998). One of the manifestation of this anxious situation is in the North-East regions of India because nationalism, in this context is not understood, as Benedict Anderson states, “by aligning it, not with the self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being” (Anderson 2006: 12). Communities must be distinguished, as Mike Featherstone explains - by the style they are imagined.

## **2. Bitter Wormwood – An Archive of Ordinary Victims’ Biographies**

Literature creates an opportunity for every being to narrate his-story, record experience and as Alan Barth says, “assigns a historical status to events by documenting them”. In literature, even the ordinary person is given a significant place in history. For the readers, fiction opens up new truths, ideas or a life which one might otherwise never encounter. Easterine Kire’s *Bitter Wormwood* is also one such fiction focusing on the lives of Nagas and it aims at voicing the hidden truths about Nagaland and Indian nationalism, governance and revealing the ancestral, historical and cultural identity of her clan’s people. She intends that her novel be read ‘not as a history text book but as a revelation of lives of ordinary people upon whom trauma is unleashed by the freedom struggle from Indian dominance’. This novel unfolds the struggles of common Naga people during the insurgent years through the lives of Moselie - the protagonist, his wife Neilhounuo – the rifle girl, his daughter Sabunuo, his friend who has a nose for news – Neituo along with his wife Thejaviu and son Vilalhou, their grandson Neibou and his Indian friend Rakesh along with his grandfather Himmat – an ex-army man, his wife Nirmala and their daughter Dipti.

The North-East Indians are not a monolith. Each sub-state of North-East India comprises of multiple tribes who lived as independent kingdoms before colonization. Along with the British, this region came to be a part of India. Before colonization, these independent kingdoms were involved in sporadic wars with neighboring tribes. With the advent of British, the tribes became politically conscious and it’s the British administration that held together the warring tribes. The inhabitants were tolerant towards the British presence in their homelands than towards the alliance with the Union of India for it is admitted that the British though colonized the territory of North-East India, have always recognized the private rights of the indigenous people (Nagas letter to The Indian Statutory Commission: 1929) and thus, have not harmed their identities. Assuming that Nagas were incapable and economically backward to become an independent sovereign state, was hegemonically incorporated into the Indian constitution (T. Amongla). India annexed the North-East region and for the convenience of administration, ignored the cultural and ethnic differences and began to rule the inhabitants. Because, an acknowledgement of the autochthons’ multiplicity stands as a challenge to imagining India as a nation whose political boundaries coincide with its cultural boundaries.

The nation, therefore, becomes represented through a set of more or less coherent images and memories which deal with the crucial questions of the origins, differences and distinctiveness of a people. (Featherstone 2003: 346)

To promote a nation and its interest, documenting a national image, history and single identity is paramount. The sudden preoccupation with accounting of history is closely associated with the era of colonization and the emergence of nationalism. Accordingly, the writers and artists began to churn out works that would represent their nation in favorable fashion. With the invention of printing press, the carefully manufactured national image and identity were documented and widely disseminated urging people to primarily promote nation’s interest. This naturally demanded a creation of a national image and an identity devoid of its sub-narratives (Anderson 2006: 03). Consequently, India hegemonized the ethnically distinct tribes of North-East India to conform to its rules, laws and identity. Post Indian independence, the tribes experienced internal colonization. The groups of 40 million distinct people were all bracketed and ruled under the state of Assam. The forceful integration, division and unison of people based on unnatural boundaries, and labeling them became a major crisis. In addition, the influx of Bengali neighbors and illegal immigrants, economical revolution accompanied by massive ecological destruction (Baruah 1999), social exclusion, dislocated feeling, insensitive governance, language dominance, minority status in their homeland and signs of acculturation all posed a threat to the distinct identity of North-East Indian tribes. Soon after, rebellions first broke out in the Naga Hills of Assam. The tribes revolted against the government’s atrocity and demanded for independence as they felt uprooted within the newly formed political boundaries.

And as the identity of the newly awakened groups has been constituted through the rejection of the old dominant ones, the latter continue shaping the identity of the former. (Lacau 2003: 365)

Therefore, granting independence would mean accepting the cultural and historical differences and asserting the alternate non-Indian identity which would all together threaten the prevailing national identity and political order.

Identities, as Charles Taylor puts it, are ‘partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often the misrecognition of others.’ Since misrecognition causes harm, the tribes are seeking recognition demand for self-government or cultural rights. But projects of recognition are also simultaneously projects that involve constructions of identity. Today, many forums have created opportunity for these ethnic groups to represent themselves (Baruah 2012: 242). Literature is one such forum. Literature reflects life and therefore becomes as much an important source of documentation as non-literary sources. History is rendered to us not only through non-fictional works but also via fictional works.

Fiction has multi-situational origins. It can emerge from an author’s intellect, classroom games, casual conversations, personal experiences, history, oral traditions and so on. All these stories are either tweaked life experiences or exist in the realm of realistic event, feelings, or actions. Among many sources from which fiction is derived, the influence of history and personal experiences are prominent. Many immortal works of great authors have their plots situated in factual/historical settings. Historical novels have gained accolade since the appearance of Scott’s novel *Waverley* in 1814. De Groot, in his work “Literary Fiction and History”, observes that Scott’s works were characterized by extensive use of Scottish dialect which aimed at celebrating the glorious past of his country and its freedom from England; while his admirer Manzoni eliminated regional inflexions in his language to reflect an Italian national consciousness (de Groot 2009: 94). So, in some sense, the act of writing fiction becomes an act of writing nation. Therefore, fact fictionalized novels function as nation building tools.

The parallel study of pioneer Indian novels which in Meenakshi Mukherjee’s opinion, are mostly preoccupied with historical romances with that of social realism novels which provided an insight into the lives of the oppressed, clearly states that people were disparately engaged with the history (Shodhganga). As a result, analogous and often juxtaposing histories exist and get exposed through fictionalization of facts. Kire’s novel explores the experiences of people on both the sides of the border belonging to different generations and reveals many competing truths. The insurgency narrative begins with the coming of radio into Moselie’s life. It is through radio that Moselie and Neituo become aware of Indian independence and annexation of Nagaland; death of Gandhi and their hope to form a separate homeland.

The departing British government has left behind two new nations, India and Burma. Partition is the new word that has been formed by the collapse of the British South Asian empire. India and Pakistan are being divided into two separate nations...” the man’s voice droned on the radio. (Kire 2011:38)

Gandhi’s death caused a great set back to Nagas for he was the only Indian leader who empathized with the Nagas and had supported the Naga right to remain independent of India.

Mose sat down and stated, “Gandhi was shot dead today!”.....

The radio says that they have caught the killer. (Kire 2011: 47)

Extreme patriotism towards homeland marks one of the characteristic of Nagas. The forceful integration, labeling of identity and internal colonization accentuated Moselie and Neituo’s desire to join the Naga National Council (NNC) and fight for their homeland. Both men and women actively took part in underground wars. Moselie’s wife was famous as the ‘rifle girl’. Their journey as NNC worriers is an insight into the tough, troubled lives of all NNC warriors and the resulting army brutality on NNC warriors’ family. Details regarding the guerilla warfare, their alliance with China, hoisting of Nagaland flag, rapes and murders committed by army and peace talks with government are exposed in this section of narration.

Kire reveals bitter face of history by juxtaposing one truth with the other and narrating it through antagonists’ perspective. Some of the illustrations are –

- The presentation of war years in Nagaland through the story of Moselie, a Naga –

Mose and Neituo were on their way home when they saw four men being beaten by the army. the men covered their bleeding heads with hands but the soldiers continued to rain blows at them. One man lay unconscious on the ground, but the soldiers did not stop kicking him in the head. (Kire 2011: 79)

- And Himmat, an ex-army man’s idea of who Nagas are –

... we were told that the Nagas wanted to secede from the new nation of India. The additional information we were given was that they were primitive warmongers, with a fearsome tradition of headhunting. (Kire 2011: 195)

The above descriptions reverse the perception regarding the two parties – Nagas and Indian government along with its army; what people think and what they really are.

- News paper headlines –

"Civilians support Insurgents in Nagaland" he read out loudly from an article in *The Indian Express*, a newspaper based in an Indian metropolis. The journalist had reported that the Naga insurgents actively received help from the civilian population who donated money to their cause. (Kire 2011: 164)

- Mose and Neituo conversation –

He flung the paper down in disgust. "Why don't people come here and see the situation for themselves instead of writing such crap?" he spat out. (Kire 2011: 164)

Shillong Accord Treaty was signed last year ..... between the Indian government and the captured Naga leaders ..... Now the Indian government has had to admit that it was invalid treaty because it was signed under duress. The Naga signatories were prisoners tied to their beds and carried to court in stretchers. (Kire 2011: 145)

Thus, the above mentioned illustrations signify that Kire's fiction rendering history functions as Manshel terms, 'news disseminators' and aims to narrate an alternate story that is true and antithetical to the dominant discourse of India, a secular united nation with single colonial history.

Authors produce historical/factual novels by either employing factual settings and developing characters in the historical backdrop, or by developing factual characters in the fictional setting. Kire employs, in the foreground, the political facts of Naga freedom struggle to build her fiction. Her style of writing resembles that of journalistic writing for she is preoccupied with delivering all facts from the victim's perspective rather than involving in adopting ornamental language and complex writing. She also intends to reach out to a larger audience with the long-hidden facts. The story is built up by small chapters that remind of news paper articles. It is fast-paced and is narrated using the techniques of flashback and story-telling in order to highlight the impact of violence and freedom struggle on different generations over six decades. Flashback technique of story-telling creates, in Alan Barth's opinion, "a pleasure of self-recognition/identity creation by converting the memories of recent event into literary history" (Alexander Manshel). This fiction sandwiched between competing facts like the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) reports and letters written to Indian Statutory Commission and President of India and Nine Point agreement forms the structure of the book. Kire, as spokesperson for the Nagas, even inserts in her fiction, the news paper articles and radio news broadcastings to authenticate her version of history. Nehru's rejection of request to separate from India, boycott of Lok Sabha election of 1952, hoisting of Nagaland flag in 1956, declaration of Armed Force Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in 1958, formation of Nagaland as a separate state in India in 1963 and the break out of factionalism in 1975 are some of the political events that actually took place during the insurgency period in Nagaland. However, the brutality of Indian army and atrocity of the government is not widely recorded. The novel aims to expose all this.

The intermingling of facts with fiction implies that both the genres, i.e., historiography and literature possess an element of truth in them. As noted by Frank Ankersmit in his essay "Truth in Literature and History", Leopold von Ranke who is the father of modern source-based history approvingly quotes Quintillianus' words, "history is closer to poetry and is, so to speak, a poem in prose." Ranke, soon after reading Scott's historical novels developed an inclination towards historiography and studied non-fictional sources of history only to conclude that the 'historical facts were more poetical than the fiction and the aesthetics belonged to the world of facts rather than to the world of fiction.' Jean-Marie Schaeffer on her quest to define the clear distinctions between realistic and non-realistic narration, in her essay "Fiction vs. Factual Narration", examined the concept of fact and fiction at semantic, syntactic, pragmatic and narratological levels, only to conclude that the two forms are indistinguishable from each other. A couple of instances from Kire's *Bitter Wormwood* –

- The army camp is set on fire – when the villagers see the fire at a distance, they assume that the insurgents have set the army camp on fire and that the villagers have to face the wrath of the army the following day. Though the soldiers shout of being attacked by the insurgents, neither did they get tortured nor does Himmat mention about the attack. Instead, he narrates a different story of careless behavior of a smoking soldier that caused fire. But the reason doesn't get a public acknowledgement.
- The puncture of army truck tyres – when the tyres of the army truck had punctured loudly, the army thought that they were being ambushed and launched their attack on the townspeople.
- Rise of factionalism – National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) breaks away from Naga National Council (NNC) on a misunderstanding created by signing Shillong Accord under duress.

- illustrates that the incidents concluding in enigma blurs the distinction between fact and fiction and the truth is believer dependent like Matt Haig says "any fiction is a reality of a different world" (Dyer, Geoff). Unlike the contemporary historical novels which mostly showcase the catastrophes involving natural disaster, political assassinations and violent revolutions (Alexander Manshel) the traditional historical novels spoke largely about the nationally significant events and heroes. The wide range of content that form the crux of

these stories has made the scholars wonder, what thus is history? E. H. Carr, in his famous work “What is History?” clearly states that historical facts are assimilation of certain information that is common to all historians. However, history is not objective information because the selection of certain events and conversion of the same into historical fact is, says Carr, a historian’s subjective act. Xavier Marco Del Pont closely examines the definitions proposed by panel that determines the award for the historical fictions across the world, to define history. He terminates his study on the note that history is defined very narrowly and that ‘certain periods of the past are undefined and thus, left unclaimed’ (Del Pont). These explorations not only alter our perception of history but also insist on the infinite richness and complexity of the past and rebuke the historian for privileging one fact over the other (William Graebner). Kire’s novel, in addition to destabilizing dominant discourse, not only delivers multiple faces of history and introduces the Nagas to the world, but also subtly reveals the transition phase that people are engaged in. This transition gets expressed in the ambivalent narration unfolding through the perceptions of Himmat and Rakesh and also a good friendship between Rakesh, a mainland Indian and Neibou, a North-East Indian. The ambivalence also signifies complexity of the situation and societies and indicates that history is not fixed and can be best understood only its plurality.

Two generations after, the attempt to accept the alliance of North-East India with mainland India is represented in the form of friendship between Rakesh and Neibou.

“My grandfather has the greatest respect for your people. You should hear him talk. He always says the years he spent in Nagaland were the best years of his life,” Rakesh blabbed on. (Kire 2011: 184)

“In any case, I have told you my grandfather has nothing but admiration for your people.” (Kire 2011: 187)

However, they still continue to be maltreated – when in Delhi, Neibou learns about the molestation of North-East girl by Holi revelers who first teased her by throwing water balloons on her. When the case was reported to the police, he denied to register the case (Kire 2011: 207). In Mumbai, a man had attacked and killed a Naga girl and in Pune, five boys were beaten badly by a mob (Kire 2011: 208).

Today it's a rape, another day it is a stabbing, how are we expected to believe that we are Indians when all this racism goes on? We are served last in a restaurant and cheated by taxis and autos and even rickshaw pullers. Why do they treat us different from other Indians? (Kire 2011: 208)

Ironically, mainland India forces the North-East Indians to become its citizens while on the flip side, continually alienates them and ignores all the racism targeting them. Himmat and Rakesh who represents liberalist, as individuals feel that Nagas are clearly not Indians but they are Indians on paper and by nationality.

‘Power corrupts’. The nation’s power manifesting in the form of army is very authoritative and its power conforms people. Himmat individually is a very pleasant person who feels that Nagas are ethnically and culturally different from Indians and hence, have all the rights to separate from India. However, as an Indian soldier, he conforms to the supreme power and unquestioningly works towards conforming Nagas to Indian constitution either by consent or by hegemony. Though he has respect towards Nagas, he refers to them as insurgents.

“Well Raklu, I was working for the government and that was the way the government defined them. So I had to use the terms that government used. We were not there as occupying force. But we were to prevent secession by the Nagas from the Indian Union. (Kire 2011: 200)

Power possesses stronger and far reaching arms. Its shadow is cast on people, sometimes consciously and most of the times, is engraved unconsciously. Dipti, Rakesh’s mother represents most Indians who are unaware of reality and succumbing to dominant ideology suggest solutions that involve a step only from North-East Indians to change –

“I can see that”, said Dipti. “It’s about learning to let go of the past. I shouldn’t really say so much as I have never experienced the hurt and pain these people have. But I know if they could deconstruct history, they could create their own solutions.” (Kire 2011: 235)

At the state level, the idea reiterates –

“I know what you mean,” replied Neituo. The trouble with the peace talks is that the Indians are still insisting on a solution within the Indian Constitution. It does make one doubt the sincerity of the talks... (Kire 2011: 168)

### 3. Conclusion

India has constantly been deceiving the Nagas and has defined them only by their conflict. India has forced identity onto them and employed heavy militarization. This situation has created identity crisis and hopelessness among the new generation.

Naga children are being taught they are Indians but when they go to Indian cities they are completely alienated by the Indian population. (Kire 2011: 212)

“But many of my North-East Indian friends believe that they are ethnically Indians, and when they meet this kind of treatment, they are so traumatized by it.” (Kire 2011: 208)

At such times of crisis, one would imagine that, if anything, ethnicity would be a powerful counterstatement to the modernist discourse of nationalism. Bitter wormwood is a leaf powerful enough to keep away the evil and bad spirits. The novel concludes on the note of simple solution of going back to roots/tradition. Kire also revisits her roots in her presentation style by unfolding the fiction through story-telling which marks the primary attribute of oral tradition. Bitter wormwood - part of nature signifies its generosity; nature is boundless as against the man’s nature of confinement to borders and ideologies. The Nagas have modernized to cope with changing times. Historical novels cause cathartic effect and helps in accepting the traumatic past (Alexander Manshel). It is time for India to accommodate the ethnically different citizens by giving them their due respect and the only thing they have now asked for. It is time to focus on what makes our unity rather than on what is our commonality. Flores explains, the sense of ‘unidad’ is what bonds the groups above and beyond the diverse particular commonalities (Flores 2003:97) and stop brutality on people who did not cross borders, but whom the borders crossed (Flores 2003: 99).

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# Dhangar Community: A Study of Interdependence Between the Mythologies and the Lifestyle in Rural Parts of North Tip of Karnataka and South Tip of Maharashtra

Manali Sunil Desai

## Abstract

India as a country has many identities. One of which is “the country of gods and goddesses”. This entitlement has given its way to different literatures which is better known as mythologies. Every god, goddess, demon or even the religious institutions in rural, suburban part of the country has different stories. This paper will be looking at the mythologies from the rural parts of north-west Karnataka and south end of Maharashtra. Furthermore the mythology not only becomes a folklore or a story but also paves for a way of living for many tribes and communities. This paper would be exploring and understanding the inter-dependency between mythologies, communities and way of living in the larger umbrella of nature and natural setting. The information obtained is not only from the people thriving in these communities in a marginalised space but also from the religious personalities the community i.e. the Dhangar Samaj. The paper further becomes a quest to understand the choice of containing to live in these spaces by these individuals.

### Keywords:

Marginalisation,  
Exclusion,  
Subaltern,  
Dhangar,  
Nomad.

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In the book, *Theorising social exclusion* the concept of **social exclusion** is explored vastly. There is an ardent attempt to understand the concept of “social exclusion” by making sense of the lived experiences which have been inspired from diverse privations and lack of justice lived by communities and localities, across the social fabric. *Social Exclusion* becomes an umbrella term for marginalisation, rejection, silencing, isolation and segregation where oppression is nothing but the act of ostracism. The idea of ‘*social exclusion*’ is a new concept and is related to a lot of different spheres of life such as the economic, political, cultural and social structures of society which further makes a variety of associations and interpretations to the concept of ‘*social exclusion*’ also binary to it, the concept of ‘*social inclusion*’.

The book traces the origin of the concept until the recent use of the term. The term **Social Exclusion** originated in France (*Lenoir 1947*) where the use was seen amongst the French Socialist politicians in reference to individuals who were uncovered by the social security system. Overtime the term was associated to many other communities who were ‘*excluded*’. The Durkheimian philosophy mentions, “*exclusion threatens society as a whole with the loss of collective values and destruction of social fabric - a deficiency in solidarity*”. After a wide spread of this idea in France during 1980s, there was an expansion of this concept in the European commission, The United Nations Development Agency, World Bank and International Labour Organisations in different contexts. After which the idea has been explored relentlessly across the world in different discussions and researches and will continue to do the same. The book further explores the typologies for understanding social exclusion with the types and the sources.

Along with the theory of social exclusion, the other theory which became very important in light of marginalisation is **Subaltern Theory**. In her essay, “*Can the subaltern speak?*” Gayatri Spivak proposes the subaltern theory where she has borrowed the term ‘subaltern’ from Gramsci (Italian Philosopher). The term becomes a reference to the underrepresented or unrepresented group of people / community.

*“I like the word subaltern for one reason. It is totally situational. Subaltern began as a description of a rank in the military. The word was under censorship by Gramsci: he called Marxism ‘monism’, and was obliged to call the proletarian ‘subaltern’. That word, used under duress, has been transformed into the description of everything that doesn’t fall under strict class analysis. I like that, because it has no theoretical rigour.”* (Morton quoting Spivak)

According to the understanding of what Spivak said, *Subaltern* is a reference to the *oppressed individuals, groups, communities*. It is certainly not that there is no voice at all for these individuals or communities but even if there is, the others do not have the patience to listen to them. Why? Because the voice is ‘**subaltern**’.

Subalternity cannot be understood without the connection of it to the colonialism and the racial discrimination. With the advent of colonialism began the racial discrimination. This further escalated into the two main racial discriminations in the colonies across the world especially in Latin America and India. Firstly, between the native residents and the colonisers (European forefathers / white settlers) and secondly between the natives who undertook the path of “progression” offered by the colonisers and the natives who resided in the same community, continuing their lives in the similar manner which led to their categorisation and then marginalisation. The division of the society was based on the issues of race.

*“The world divided into compartments, this world cut in two is inhabited by two different species. The originality of the colonial context is that economic reality, inequality and immense difference of ways of life never come to mask the human realities. When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species. In the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich”* (Fanon 30-31)

It is the subalterns who are made to believe that they belong to an ‘inferior’ race and not otherwise. This is not only in relevance to the period of colonisation but also in the period of post-colonisation, whose distinction was made by Ashcroft in *The Empire Writes Back*. Where the denotation to the former i.e. colonialism is “period before independence” and latter i.e. post -colonialism means “cover all the culture affected by imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day”. The evolution of the repercussions of the racial subalternity continues where ‘race’ paves way to the ‘ethnicity’ where the variation of humans in terms of ancestry, culture, social patterns, traditions gets accounted (Ashcroft 207).

Briggs, J . And Sharp, J (2004) in their paper *Indigenous knowledges and development: a postcolonial caution*, talk about the developmental theories in relation to the indigenous knowledge system. It also talks about the voices of the indigenous people who face the problem and need of getting “developed”. The paper further talks about the domination of the West in every possible way over the East moreover the indigenous communities. Eventually making the western knowledge and lifestyle ‘scientific’ and others become non -scientific. The knowledge systems faces a hierarchy where West is at the top, dominating over the East. Where as there is fair chance that the indigenous knowledge system could be equal to the Western (scientific) system or even hold more value. The establishment of the West and their knowledge system as superior is ultimate result of the colonial rule over the world and furthermore the neocolonial power relations. This leads to the domination of the Western Knowledge system, which Escobar in 1995 says “*it is not through a privileged proximity to the truth, but as a set of historic - geographical conditions tied up with the geopolitics of power*”.

In the field of developmental studies there is a constant debate about the incorporation of ‘other’ voices and knowledges. In the postcolonial theories there is a bigger debate about this inclusion, also because the Western power and Western knowledge are the key components to both the colonial and the postcolonial ways of understanding and acting in the world at large. Development Studies is considered to be a spatter in modernist, or even colonist by many postcolonial theorists. To many, Post-colonialism is seen to provide extremely complex discourses and theories benighted of the reality in the vast world.

*"Development studies does not listen to subalterns and postcolonial studies does not tend to concern itself with whether the subaltern is eating"* (Sylvester 1999)

Earlier in this paper Spivak is seen questioning about the voicing of 'the Subaltern'. She argues that there is no voice for the subaltern and even to be heard there is a need of saturation with the words, phrases and cadency in terms of the western thoughts. For not taken to be granted - and to be seen as offerece of knowledge and not folklore - there should be clear translation of the subaltern life into the scientific, developmental and philosophical Western concepts and languages. The entire process gets caught in the translation which is not an expression of the subaltern but a continuous act of interpretation.

The above mentioned theories and ideologies become very crucial in the study of a community which is marginalised. Marginalisation is not only political in nature but geographical, cultural as well as social largely. Dhangar Samaj or Dhangar Community falls under the same category. The Dhangar community happen to be one of the oldest community in the world. The word 'Dhangar' is derived from the Devanagari language. Primarily, the community is located in the state of Maharashtra, but eventually got dispersed across the borders of the state. The literal translation of the '**Dhangar**' is 'wealthy'. The mythologies say that the home of this community was in Gokul, Vrindavan which was also the home of Lord Krishna. The foster father of Lord Krishna, Nand Meher, belonged to this caste.

Initially, there were twelve tribal divisions of Dhangar and along with it was the sub-division of labour amongst the brothers of one single family. It went on to create three sub - divisions and one half division, where the three divisions were - *Hatkar* (Shepherds), *Ahir* (Cowherds) and *Mhaskar* (Buffalo keepers) and the half division were the *Khutekar* and *Sangar* (wool and blanket weavers). All these sub - divisions emerged from the Dhangar Community, which we know today.

Today, the use of 'Dhangar' is exclusive to the Shepherd caste of Maharashtra, being one of the oldest existing communities of India, its history traces back to the times of Mahabharata. The community has contributed to many dynasties which have ruled in different parts of the country.

The paper explores the interdependence between the community and mythologies, specifically in the regions of the south - tip of Maharashtra and north - tip of Karnataka, which is where the temple of Shri Balumama is situated, in Adampur. He was a shepherd belonging to the Dhangar community. He went to become a great shepherd saint, and the temple is his shrine. His life as a shepherd has been very inspirational for the people of the community. He was a man who helped the down trodden and the poor and the people belonging to the lowest sects of the society. While shepherding, he has performed several miracles. He lived a life as a nomad traveling long distances with his cattle in the parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka. The sheep which he had were considered as holy as him. If the herd stayed or passed through someone's field or farm, it was considered very auspicious. The descendants of these original sheep are taken care by the temple and are believed to be of good luck. The community faces a lot of politics attached to the caste system and also getting identified as a Scheduled caste but their attachments towards the temple and the traditions of the cattle herding majorly remains the same. The nomadic culture attached to the community and the mythology is also the same. There are thousands of people who travel across the lands of Karnataka and Maharashtra with their sheep. They reside in tents on the farms and fields of people with permission. This culture is not a surprise for the rural parts of North Karnataka and South Maharashtra. In conversation with one of the people of this group who has been travelling cross the lands since his birth, it was understood that it is the cycle of life and a pattern too. They do not have any physical possessions also not much money with them. They consider their cattle as their only wealth. The sheep are taken care with great love as well as respect especially from the people who are the devotees of Shri Balumama. In the earlier days, the cattle was everything for them, many a times they would survive from the milk which the cattle gave them and pitching their huts on the farms and eating whatever the landlord will give them. But since few years the scenario is changing into a give and take relationship like the Barter system, meaning people travelling often give the products of the cattle for the obligation of the land provided for them to stay. And usually the stay is for a very long period of time, lasting upto three to four months. The cattle not only helps in providing the milk but also the wool of the sheep is considered very auspicious and must haves for any auspicious occasion. They community thus also specialises itself in the weaving of the sheep hair / fur which is famous as '*kamballi*'.

The nomadic life is very difficult to continue because of the ever changing and 'developing' world which we reside in, possessing new challenges for the community in every shift they make.

Though there are a tremendous amount of difficulties faced by the community, it is with great pride that they continue to live the life like their ancestors.

The constant moving around actually has become a business for the community. During the conversation, it was also understood that the group which travels with the heard gets paid for settling in a field. The profit is more if there is a large number of sheep, because the sheep dung becomes the manure for the fields and are very beneficial for the agricultural purposes and the land as well. The crops grown are also very healthy. Where as the weaving takes place only once there is full growth of the sheep hair and is sold mostly for religious purposes. All of these activities become very sacred. Though the community has been categorised as a scheduled caste, in rural parts of the Maharashtra and Karnataka they have earned respect for what they do. The community accepts that they are still very ‘backward’ in terms of education and other lifestyle. But they are happy to be so because they believe that they are close to nature and see god in nature and living the way they do is a blessing in today’s world where everyone is ‘caught up in a race’.

The sheep, in this community is of the highest importance and is the prime symbol of the Dhangar Community. The legends say that Balumama had given only one sheep to a villager and this sheep was no ordinary sheep, and he asked the villager to take care and come back to him with 100 sheep. The villager did come back to him with 100 sheep and since then sheep have been restored as beings of significant importance. Even in the legends of Jai Malhar, the second wife of Lord Malhar was from the same community and was very attached to her cattle. These legends have given the sheep the significance of god. Until the very recent times there have been no trading of sheep. The sheep becomes important for one more reason is that it gives them money and shelter and has been doing so since the rise of the community. The host of these nomadic cattle breeders like the landlords etc, also see the sheep as a symbol of good health and wealth on their lands and there is also a strong belief that the animal could be the incarnation of the god.

There is a constant dependency between the nature and the community. Many of the families have a permanent land in the villages surrounding the shrine of Shri Balumama or other saintly figures of the Dhangar Community, but still they continue to live in the nature because they also see this as an act of serving to nature as well as God. All the expeditions they take is away from the eyes of the people of urban cities. They follow the trails of their forefathers, and often settle in the lands or farms of the families where their forefathers have been settling from different generations. It is not only to respect their past or their ancestors but also to connect to them and pay respect to their hosts for giving them the opportunity to stay and breed their cattle.

There are many nomadic tribes in India, all them have been labelled either as scheduled castes or as backward caste. These labels have made them marginalised in the eyes of the politics of the society. There is a constant debate about the representation from these different communities and struggle to have an identification for themselves and recognition. Dhangar Community faces a similar challenge. As much as they want to make a place for themselves in this ‘new world’, they want to also retain themselves with the traditions of the community. Along with this there is fear of extinction. When asked ‘what’ extinction? The answer is - “*everything ...extinction of the identity of the community, extinction of the traditions of the community, extinction of the stories of the community ...there is fear of extinction about everything attached to the community.*” The fear of extinction is not the one by not having any representation but also with having a wrong representation. Like the tag of a caste getting attached to the community has led to a lot of changes in the way the society views them. The labelling has affected them in every manner. And the community is striving to have a better name and recognition because they are not harming anyone or anything and keep a string to the past of the society and the country attached in different ways but jeopardising their future and life in many unimaginable ways.

The members of the community also share a feeling of being the natives of the land. When asked, how? They talk about how people in the ‘old India’ moved around the country with their cattle, settling across the country and also engaging themselves in the agricultural practices. The umbrella term is ‘Nomad’, which is an identity for the people of this community. The communities biggest worry is not yet about being extinct of the traditions but for the very moment is about questioning about their lifestyle. Their whole point being is “we respect the space of development of the entire world but why cannot they respect ours. The nature (god) is watching everything. We do not speak polished languages neither do we have any cars or vehicles or furnished houses or plastic card money, but we are living a life of god, life of our forefathers and our saints, within nature and not taking anything from the nature”. This becomes a striking statement because it is a great factor indicating the idea of co-existence, which ecocriticism talks about.

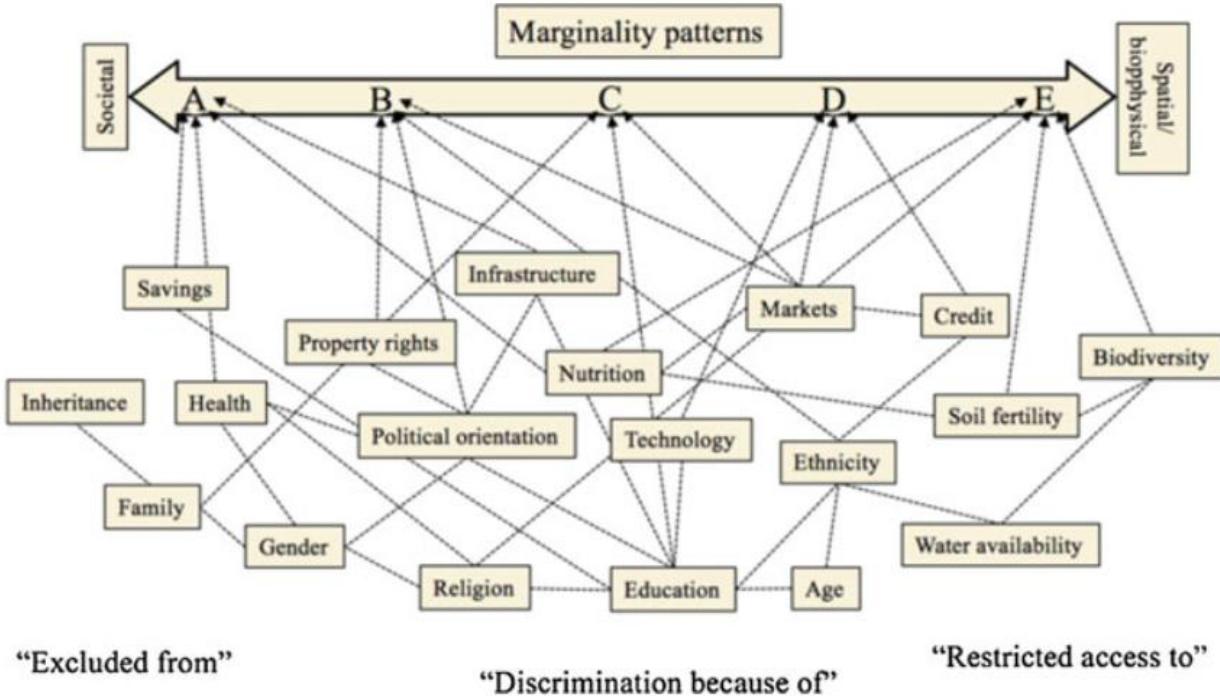


Fig1.1. Examples of causal factors underlying different marginality patterns (adapted after GAtzweiler et.

The idea of co-existence is a constant principle of this community, especially within the people who herd their cattle while travelling. There is not much meaning made otherwise when there is categorisation of this community as a nomadic community, only after a considerable amount of interpretation and conversations with the members of the community it is understood that the nature and nurture are the two factors and the only factors of the community in the view of their lifestyle.

One of the concepts to understand the marginality is association of it with poverty. It was Gatzweiler along with his co-authors, who researched and established the connection of extreme poverty with marginality. The explanation of this research is done with the network of causal factors. A combination of different factors lead to marginality, which is obviously shifts the attention from the factor of low income alone. The chart below gives a clear understanding of the reasons of the marginalisation which is very practical in nature and whose association with different communities gives the reasoning of the categorisation of the community as the other, and also setting them apart from the 'centre', casting them away. It makes sense largely because every individual or community is an integral part of multiple systems, voluntarily or involuntarily and few are always at the edge of these social groups even though the group dynamics is considerate of spatial dimensions as a complexity of causal factor.

The community will continue to face the problems of being marginalised and there have been a lot of efforts by the community to deconstruct this identity. For example, everything associated to them was considered lower caste and looked down upon. It was because of this reason that the sheep, the identity of this community, was given importance by Shri Balumama, so that the associations made to the community through their occupation or lifestyle should be with respect and not disgust or looked down upon. Inspite of the ardent efforts the community still lives in the margins of the society, sustaining themselves with their traditional ways of life and not harming anyone else and hoping that some day they get recognition for what they do and who they are.

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## Third Sex Feminism Across Twitter Handles

**Hemalatha SK**

### **Abstract**

The foremost challenge of the third sex feminism has been to prove that trans women are indeed women too! No more or no less than any other woman whose sex is assigned as female by birth itself. This clearly shows that the battle between sexes while achieving equality is not just any more between male and female, rather it's also between assumed female (a male with sex transition to female) and assigned female (whose sex is assigned with birth does not feel the necessity of changing it). The past couple of decades have brought forth the issue of the rights of trans women too. The study on trans gender and their rights have become the concern across the major disciplines like Psychology, Sociology, Biology, and Cultural studies. Again, it has become a hard-pressed issue with Human Rights organizations across the world.

The Present paper wishes to explore into the third sex feminism to know in detail the challenges of the third sex feminism. The efforts and strategies made to meet these challenges and by whom? whether or not the feminism of the third sex is equal to the feminism of the second sex. How for the Cis women/ TERF/ FAAB believe that, all feminist movements must also work for trans women rights too? Can a transwoman exactly live the life of a ciswoman?

The present paper wishes to choose some key twitter handles created by the reputed organizations and individuals on gender studies and critically analyse their contribution towards constructing the trans woman identity /psyche among the followers and the fellow participants. It also shows the importance of Twitter as a significant social medium towards constructing and deconstructing the understanding of the contemporary feminism/s.

The paper confines itself to the study of transwomen under third sex and provides references to show how not all LGBTQ+ communities share all the assumptions of transfeminism. The visibility of transwomen is more when compared to transmen. Again, major studies on Transgender have explored the life of trans women. There is still a long way to go towards studying cultural identity of transmen.

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When the division of sex had happened once upon a mysterious time, male was considered the first sex, female-the second, and there was clearly an absence of the third sex. In the human history neither the sex box nor the gender box was even imagined for the third sex par in equal with elite two sexes. From the immemorial mythology to the present human history of couple of hundred years any sex other than the first and the second were considered a great mistake or curse of the nature, and also a kind of practice/punishment of human culture across human history.

The third sex is rather a contemporary political phrase! In fact, when women were referred to as second sex, definitely they were not happy as they were unable to figure out why women are second sex, not the first sex! In fact, the oft quoted French Feminist Simone De Bouvier's *The Second Sex* (1949) traces the

phenomenal history of (ill) treatment of women by the so called first sex. Probably even for the third sex people, the phrase third sex happened to be some identity extended towards them out of human sympathy if not the proper identity.

### **The Third Sex / Gender:**

The third sex people are intersex people. Some of them are naturally born having the bodily elements of both female and male. However, majority of the third sex people are born into a healthy male or female body but opt for sex change out of their strong psychological drive that they are born into a wrong body hence they need to change their body to the convenient one. They are transsexual people and believe in adopting the gender role of the new found body. In the contemporary world they are referred to as third gender. Transgender or the third sex people include trans woman, trans man, gender queer, gender non binary also. Of late, many gender boxes have been created by various studies towards accommodating all sex variants of human offspring based on their preferences of gender role and sexuality. The third sex has various names across human cultural history. They are addressed as Hijras, Kothis, Kinnaras, Tirunangais, Mangala Mukhi, Khwajasara, and eunuchs also.

The human world has always been worried and also surprised about the emergence and existence of the third sex. The various studies have shared their researches in this regard. The gist of such studies drawn from different disciplines like Biology, Psychology and Sociology. The perfect male and perfect female whose assigned and assumed sex and gender both are same come under the category of cis genders. However, it is needed to be known, how many humans graduate in the gender tests with distinction? Some lack proper combination of biological ingredients; some lose out on proper sexual organs; some have both the elements of male and female sex organs; some look male with strong feel that they are female and vice versa. Some have 'XXY', 'XYY' like variant confused chromosomes that cannot tell male from female or vice versa (add citation). Some are perfectly alright with anatomy and psyche but their sexuality will be towards the same sex. Some cannot follow the lessons of cultural orientations (for they are pressed by yet to be identified something else) properly hence most men behave womanish and similarly many women express masculinity. Humans are trapped in their own body and psyche in the name of gender and struggling very hard to prove to some assigned gender identity. They question normativity of any gender and express fluidity of gender.

There are many people around us who cannot give conformation of the kind of gender which our cultural construct expects. Not all the persons who wear sarees, and not all the persons who wear pants and shirts are men. Not all the persons marry the opposite sex; not all the people feel manly even though they have body of male; not all the women feel they are women even though they have body of female. They present and represent sex and gender which is unacceptable to the mainstream culture. Until recently they were willingly ignored by the human culture. Hence majority of them lead the life of obscure. Today their voices are getting momentum. People have started listening to them.

Our innumerable historical narratives of ancient India do document the presence of people, who are referred to in the subcontinental cultures as "neither male, nor female". Across studies they are classified as Transgenders. According to a study, the transgender is an umbrella term that covers LGBTQAA. Lesbians - (Who are biologically, psychologically, socially female, but they exercise their sex preference towards female only. Gay- (the male version for the same sex consummation); Bisexuals- whose sex preferences for both male and female; transgender- a castrated/ non castrated/ both sexual organ person prefers any one gender identity and may be lesbian, gay or bisexual (A person who is a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex); queer- (includes drag queens or transvestites) who cross dress, overtly dress and lives like both genders choosing one at different occasion; Asexual- who denies any identity; Allied or All.

### **Studies on Trans sex/gender:**

Of late Transgender studies has taken the momentum throwing a greater challenge and threat to Gender studies. The disciplines like Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology, Biology have their respective enquiries on transgenders. However different nations have different legal acceptance towards them. According to various media published on April 15<sup>th</sup> 2014, the Indian constitution accepted transgenders as third gender in the year 2014 and extended the facilities of OBC to them. However, the struggle for gender identity has remained a major issue to be addressed by all. The narratives by transgender are immensely available in the cultural arena of India. To cite some of them, A. Revathi's memoir *The Truth About Me* and *Life in Trans-activism* many transgender writings are being read across universities by the students of Gender Studies. Similarly, Living smile Vidya's work *I am Vidya*, an autobiography that depicts the life of transgender women in India. The success of transgender become complete only when we break the two-gender theory

and involve all gender inclusive theory. Many NGOs and transgender organization like *Sangama, Ondede* are working towards it. Many blogs, twitter / face book accounts spreading awareness on their existence and rights. International Film Festivals are dedicated to them. Pride parades across the world are held every year. The central and the state governments of India are developing a support system through schemes. At the higher education level not only that the U G C has called for reservation of seats for transgender, but at the same time it is inviting many more scholars to do research on them.

### **Transwomen challenges and Twitter handles:**

The transwomen challenges have been widely addressed by social media. One such vibrant and ever active medium is Twitter. Twitter was opened in the year 2006. It's an American online news and social networking service. Since then many millions of people have opened their accounts and follow each other across the globe. In the area of gender studies, Twitter handles are used by universities, various organizations of gender awareness, human activists, trans individuals, cis people everybody express their ideas, opinions presently in 280 characters. Retweets happen, photos, and video clippings are accommodated, various links have been established for further awareness and involvement of the public. Millions of people view as soon as somebody tweet and tweet replies and responses are continued in the form of thread.

Twitter handles are playing a major role while bringing gender related discussions as major issues in the global society. Majority of registered users are authors, activists and the people with gender awareness and high profiled people in the global society. These users will have their twitter handle and at the same time will be active with their different social media accounts. In this way the issues get emphasized in all the types of media. Their major concern across their twitter handles being inviting the people to be trans ally, providing awareness on law and policies of the government. Studying on articles and bills on trans rights. They run awareness program on health and hygiene. They reconstruct human culture as trans inclusive culture through pride parade, trans festivities, movements and beauty pageants too. For all such various reasons, twitter remains a very popular medium to bring upon gender awareness and equality of all the sexes.

What makes transwomen's movements unique is that they have to prove that their identity is as womanly as that of the cis women and the kind of life they lead is made different and more screwed up when compared to Cis women. To list some of the unique problems which the trans women face according to various sources could be summed up as follows:

- Many of these third sex people live a life of obscurity like in an exile or as a refugee. They keep themselves purely invisible to the society. It's to the extent that their census is never accurate. The visible, declared trans people are taken into documentation. The number of people who make themselves visible to the world are very less when compared to the trans people who do not show up. In order to make the trans people visible to the world, according to Wikipedia, every year March 31<sup>st</sup> is observed as International Transgender Day of Visibility and a US based transgender activist Rachel Crandall founded this day in 2009.
- Gender neutral wash room or bathroom issues. Trans people find it hard to use public bathrooms as people attack them out of transphobia. Find for particular day to celebrate this. Universities efforts to meet this. Transwoman face violence. many public toilets are not open to them.
- Issues related to their families are greater. Their parents do not accept or give support to them. How many of them have been assaulted for their choice of sexuality? How many of them can lead a peaceful marriage life? How many of them can adopt children?
- The problem of pronouns- they like to be addressed with pronouns of their changed sex and gender. One should be alert enough to identify them or ask politely about their pronouns.
- The problem of documents, political and economic identity, jobs, profession, reservation, sympathy and empathy.
- The problem of finding dedicated health care policies and facilities.
- Victims of lookism, ableism, transphobia. The worst part is violence, murder, marginalization and poverty against trans people.

Let us look into how the efforts have been made to face such challenges by some twitter handles.

- With the name, Invisible No More with the user name PV-Trans, shares in its bio details regarding "how trans persons will not be erased from history". Many trans individuals like Rosemary, a Mathematician from Australia tweets on Transgender day of visibility and calls upon "to have

removed any remaining unnecessary and discriminatory barriers that prevented trans and gender diverse people from updating their ID to match who they are.” Such twitter handles supporting trans visibility are available in hundreds. They uphold the trans spirit of visibility and against trans discrimination.

- There are en number of tweets available on twitter in support of trans woman using gender neutral washroom. Amamda Jette Knox, an advocate from Canada tweeted that “she lives with trans people and shares washrooms with them”. A trans woman and Vegan chef Sophia Banks tweeted that “at workplace she rarely had to use women’s washroom as washrooms at work place are all gender neuter.” Many twitters are available showing how many organizations, universities, media houses have opened gender neuter washrooms.
- A tweet from Pyrrha of London (a student) at the twitter handle Classical Queer appreciated trans kids stating that, “trans people who lived with their parents at home are braver than U S Marines. A sex positive parent, Taryn De Vere from Ireland tweeted on how she comforted herself reading a trans supportive tweets. She stated that “how she was scared for the future of her trans daughter, but after having seen tweets in support of trans people she felt this world is safe for her daughter”.
- A famous classical dancer, trans rights activist, and trans woman author from India Laxmi Narayan Tripathi has authored two autobiographies, Me Hijra, Me Laxmi and Red Lipstick- The Men in My Life, where she has talked about hijras’ life, tradition, culture, plight & rights and their sexualities. She has her twitter handle at ImLaxmiNarayan where she Tweets/ retweets about trans woman. She was one among the pioneers who worked for the trans people identity in India. Her joy of no bound is expressed in her tweet when she said that she was “very happy in the landmark judgement by supreme court, that the transgenders have been given same rights as man and women. India declared transgender identity as third gender on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014. On the same day one can find this tweet from Laxmi.
- Vidhi Centre For Legal Policy tweets on Laxmi at Vidhi-India and stated about Laxmi Narayan that she is the first transgender to be anointed as Mahamandaleshwar, and she works to revive Vedic Kinner traditions among transgenders.
- A centre that uses twitter account namely, Gender Critical Action Center at GenderCritical, joined in 2018, resolved “to fight against flaws in the proposed US Equality Act. It Called upon people to understand biological reality and work for transgender rape victims also.
- Claimed to have the most read LGBT+ digital media publisher with its twitter handle PinkNews tweets almost about every issue of trans people. About trans people pronouns it stated on how trans people were given stickers asking people to respect their gender and pronouns. That is in other words It calls upon people to address trans woman as she and trans man as he, and for gender nonconformist its ‘they’.

Motivation to fight against atrocity against transgenders fighting against the transphobic words. Calling someone a tranny or too butch to be a girl etc.

- An interesting observation is shared by Nat Geo Photography at its twitter handle NatGeoPhotos that, “in Afghanistan’s patriarchal society, having sons is a blessing while daughters are a burden. The cultural practice called *bacha posh* may seem to ensure a better future, but often it makes life harder” Bacha posh is seemed to have a practice in Afghanistan and Pakistan that young girls would guise themselves as boys and lead the life of freedom and also support their fathers in workshops until they reach puberty. It shows how cross dressing as man made girls enjoy their freedom at least for some time.
- There are millions of tweets available in the world of twitter on trans feminism and trans identity which include themes like trans magazine, trans media watch, sex reassignment surgery, trans health and trans world sport. These pro trans people twitter handles are not without the trolls. They have a significant other twitter handles to fight against. These handles are mainly from TERF (Trans Exclusionary Radical feminists) and F AAB (Female Assigned at Birth). These feminists do not

agree with transwoman and their identity. They challenge transwoman like anything. One such handle is Women's Voices with its twitter handle WomenReadWomen. They fight for the identity of the Cis women. They claim on their twitter bio that they "create audio recordings of radical feminists' texts essays and excerpts". Such and similar twitter handles do not focus on transwoman, in fact their fight is against men. According to them "men accuse women of 'biological essentialism' and its anti-transhumanism", they say that "erasing sex is homophobic", hence trans women are not appreciated by them. They hate men for according them "men used women, enslaved women, operated on women, experimented on women, and raped them also".

A very interesting and impressive work towards trans gender equality could be found in the twitter by name Department of Gender Studies at Indiana University with the twitter handle Gender Studies IU that joined twitter in 2010 from Bloomington Indiana and has stated in its bio that it "serves as a transdisciplinary studies of gender with other substantive categories of analysis and identity including race, sexuality, class, disability and nationality". This university arranges talks, panels, events that are open to public; identifies abuse in LGBTQ + relationships; works towards anti-genderism as global phenomenon; recognizes the trans communities' contributions; offers courses on Gender, Sexuality and Pop culture and it offers scholarship as well.

Thus, twitter handles could be used as a powerful tool to bring upon better changes in the human world. However, they are not without limitations. Any account holder could face bullying, face trolls and one's mental health could be at stake. There are users who have closed their accounts, stopped tweeting, blocked some body, got blocked by somebody, reported upon something and got reported too. However, the copyrights are with the twitter owner that comes with terms and conditions for the twitter users.

To conclude, across feminisms whose requirements are hard pressed than the others. Is this Cis women's, transwomen's or trans lesbians? Who is more, who is less?

Problems are unique based on the assumed or assigned sex and the accepted gender. If cis women face the problem of rape, human trafficking, patriarchal, familial oppression, burden of being angel of the house, economically deprived, whose identity is always after the first sex, man! Majority of lesbians never felt the need of men in their life. Their fight has been to receive lesbian rights in our society. Same sex marriage has not yet received approval from the Indian apex court. For lesbian third sex people's problem not their priority.

What remains to be answered is Are there many types of women out in our society? If so, so many feminisms will fight for their rights the war across feminisms, across twitter handles have emphatically screwed up the word gender. As along as the fight is for claiming gender through sex, the war across different feminists and feminisms continues till the world's end. Can we have a world without gender? Instead, can we have a world with all inclusive human rights?

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# Analysis of I am Malala and Anne Frank as Narratives of Resistance

**Femy Francis**

## **Abstract**

Resistance is a means by which the subaltern and the marginalized section of the society voice out their concern against the dominant power structures which oppress them. Resistance can be either violent or passive. Most of the oppressed use the passive or non violent means of resistance to create greater effect in the dominant power structures like religion, state, and patriarchy. Non violent means are usually codified into writings of women. Testimony is a powerful means by which a victim who witnesses the violence voices it out through their narratives.

Women use autobiography, diaries, and memoirs to voice out their concerns and victimization. Through the writing of their self, they narrate their pain and suffering. These three genres help women to explore their self which is suppressed by power structures like patriarchy. Autobiography was initially used only by men and women were excluded from it. Now when women use it to narrate their lives, it is challenging the canon itself.

These narratives by young girls become an alternative history of the subaltern, countering the main stream history. Though they start by resisting for their individual survival, they become the collective voice of their community and gender. They both speak for themselves and their community and do not let anybody represent them. Both Malala and Anne resist oppression. Malala does it consciously with a certain aim, whereas Anne does it unknowingly and we see it as Anne's resistance in her own way. These texts and their act of writing can be seen as their means of resistance against patriarchy, religion, culture, race, and state powers.

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The word “resistance” is from the Latin root word “resistere” which means to stand against dominant structures. It could also be a slow or invisible strategy that has the potential to dismantle or break the power structures of the society. The term resistance was first used to describe Palestinian literature, by writer and critic Ghassan Kanafani, in his work “Literature of Resistance”. The writings from this geographical space was later known as resistance writing, which can be interpreted as “a writing of self-assertion and resistance to oppressive political powers.”

Resistance needs to be used when there is an imbalance of power at personal, social, political, and economical levels in a society. Through the act of resistance, a voiceless voice can create a level of discomfort in the centre. It is also interesting that both power and resistance are interlinked and power is central to the voiceless marginal and oppressive centre. So, resistance deals with power structures like patriarchy, religion, caste, class, race, and state thereby questioning the legitimacy of these structures. For example, in postcolonial literature, the colonised people resisted the white man's stereotyping by writing back to the centre. The authenticity and authority of the imperialistic centre is questioned by the colonised, who are in the periphery of the power structures.

Resistance literature as the term signifies is a kind of literature that originated in different parts of the world, out of the long confrontation between the powerless and powerful. It is a powerful medium to exchange views, carry messages, and to theorise political parameters of liberation movements.

Resistance literature portrays the struggle for cultural, historical, political, ideological identity, and physical existence of natives in the colonized regions of the world. It emerged as a part of liberation movements, and the struggle for freedom in the third world. The colonized use it to recover the lost voices, and fight certain myths as political dimensions that invoke national consciousness, enhance the feeling of self-identity and existence and creates an agency for the marginalized and oppressed. Resistance literature actively records the history of people and provides human dimensions that any historian cannot do.

There are many systems of hierarchy, and individuals can be simultaneously powerful and powerless within different systems. Women under patriarchy become both the victim and the victimizer. As we see in Mrs Warren's Profession where Mrs Warren is initially the victim of patriarchy and poverty which forces her to become a prostitute, but later when she has a choice she becomes the oppressor of women and gains power.

The use of resistance is not just to challenge or question the power structures, but to have some space for the marginalised. It can do much more as it can even destabilize the centre. As a result, the power structures are forced to bring in transformations. In the women suffragettes' movement, women were allowed voting rights as well as be a part of the power structure. So, here we see that the power structure is disturbed, yet the women get the possibility to explore the system of power.

Through the use of resistance, we can see the hidden potentials of oppressed individuals and groups whose weakness gets transformed into strength. This can be seen in the writings of Wole Soyinka where the writer voluntarily chooses to write in his native language, which was considered as barbaric and uncivilized by the white coloniser. By using his native language in his literary works, which was initially a matter of shame for him, he is questioning, and challenging the validity and authenticity of the coloniser's language. Thereby, he dismantles the superiority of the white centre. He is also asserting his African identity and is refusing to accept the coloniser's language and superiority in submission. This way, he is empowered and creates a unique space in the African literary space.

In these circumstances of resistance by the oppressed, and the marginalised of the society, writing plays an important role as a weapon for the voiceless. The act of writing will become active non-violent forms of resistance, but it is powerful, and can dismantle the power structures more effectively. When the marginalised write, it becomes like a kind of alternative narration or discourse to the main stream discourse to patriarchy, religion, and history. This, in turn, can counter and challenge these hegemonic discourses effectively.

If the violent resistance fails to produce any change, then the mainstream discourse will have only the account of the winner's side, which is the centre's discourse. But when the non-violent resistance, is through writing, even if it will fail to make any impact on the centre initially, it will still remain as a counter discourse to the main stream narratives. It can still challenge and dismantle the power structure in the course of time. So writing itself is an act of powerful resistance.

One of the means of writing which becomes a powerful way of resistance is Testimonies. This is where the individual is refusing to erase the pain, and violence inflicted on him/her. This is an empowering and powerful mode for women's resistance at the margins. Testimonies are capable of recreating the pain and trauma more effectively. Here, the oppressed women use written words as their weapon against state, patriarchy, religion, and other oppressive power structures bearing witness itself becomes an act of resistance for women where they have refused to run away and instead bear testimony to the violence and atrocities committed to them.

These acts of women resistance shows how they are capable of decoding and denying the various multilayered narrations of power in which their subjugation is described from the powerful narrative. But these women can replace this narrative by their own voices. In Little School, a survival tale told by Alicia Partnoy, who is a Latin American Scheherazade bearing witness, who tells her stories to keep herself alive.

Once you bear witness to violence, if not voiced out, it will kill the witness with guilt. It is also a way of denying justice to the victim whose victimization you have bared witness to. Bearing witness needs courage and voicing it out can drastically affect the victimizer. Testimonies are fluid and difficult to categorise, because the word "testimonio" can describe anything written by a first person witness who wishes to tell her story of trauma. Since it is first person narration it will also have more authenticity and value.

A testimony deliberately blurs the line between "the personal and political" to give the women in the margins a voice. These narratives are produced by subaltern people on the periphery or the margins of the society, or state. Thus the margins of the state is now "writing back" are an attempt to correct the romanticised version of truth. So, women's literature can be seen as empowering and powerful mode of resistance against state, patriarchy, and other oppressive structures. This can be seen in the writings of Bhama's *Sangati* where she writes as a dalit woman about the oppressive systems of her own society.

Women autobiographies are to be read as “strategic necessity at a particular time, rather than an end in itself.” Autobiography has provided a productive space for different notions of the female subject to emerge, one which can register the plurality of subjects and perhaps just as crucially –the plurality of reasons for these of the self as a form of writing. A critique Reginia Gagnier says” autobiography is pragmatics of self representation”,

Feminism initially looked at autobiography to provide a textual model of ‘consciousness-raising’ writing that would enable that same movement between the personal and the political between personal revelation and collective recognition. Rita Felski says feminist autobiography writing took the form of confession, offering to its readership an intimate and frequently painful experience which was part of progressive revelation to the self and others of women’s fate under patriarchy and the need for change.

Alternating words used for women’s autobiography from life writing to personal narrative-itself marks a shift away from an uncritical western understanding of the subject of autobiography. For Doris Sommer, her choice of the term testimonies for Latin American women writing arises precisely out of a need to mark their differences from the genera of autobiography, which has historically privileged the extraordinary individual.

Male Autobiography is seen as unique tale, uniquely told, about a unique life. Autobiography also has special nature as a memorial creative art. It may be understood as a recollecting narrative act in which the writer, from a certain point in his life –the present looks back over the events of that life and recounts them in such a way as to show how that past history has led to this present state of being.

Autobiographies can be seen as life writings because in Greek autos denotes “self” bios “life” and graphe denotes “writing” So, self writing. In life narratives the teller of her own story becomes in the act of narration both the observing subjects and the object of investigation, remembrance and contemplation.

Autobiographical narratives can be read as historical document, source of evidence, for the analysis of historical movements, events, persons. Autobiography could recuperate identities to its own paradigmatic history or it could provide a space of excess and resistance, depending on how we interpret it. These texts are always specific to history and geographical situation. Probyn demonstrates the self can be both an “object of inquiry” and a means of understanding.

Memoir is new word for self life writing this is attached to popular forms of life writings and as nominal marker to distinguish stories about unacknowledged aspects of people’s lives, sometimes considered scandalous and titillating. For Nancy K.Miller the term memoir captures a dynamic postmodernism in its movement between the “private and the public subject and object.”

It is not a neutral and passive record, but rather a creative, and active shaper. It exercises memory in order to recollect and narrate. Memory is immensely creative because it creates the significance of events in discovering the patterns into which those events fall. Interplay of past and present; of present memory reflecting over past experience on its way to becoming present being, that events are lifted out of time to be resituated not in mere chronological sequence but in patterned significances.

Feminist resistances find expression in individual actions and women’s movement, but their main concern arguably remains assertion of the self and the search for personal freedom. It focuses on resistance as the power of the powerless and the modes of resistance as the inherent strength of the weak that enables them to win a dignified space in the society.

Diaries are plain-spoken, lively, and full of details. They seem to emerge directly from the writer, fresh and intimate, bringing us closer to who that person was. Diaries are “private” kinds of writing which gives us a past from an individual’s point of view. Historians see these writings as being personal rather than private texts.

Diary writing can be seen as personal writings because it reveals how the writer resisted oppositions of their time. Most of the diarist has written it to be read only by them self. And they even mention it like for example in Hampsten has sounded the depths of Midwestern farm women’s personal writing, rich with the desire to tell, yet paradoxically inscribed” read this only to yourself”.

Diary can be seen as the most introspective way of writing when compared to other forms. Diarists usually begin writing because of drastic changes in the lives. Some consider their diary as a close friend to whom they can share their inner most secrets. Especially women see diary as a safer place to express their innermost thoughts. This narrative can be considered as work of fiction or memoir.

Autobiographies, memoirs and diaries are three different gener. When we look at autobiography it is normally the narrative of an individual who wants to present the personal achievements to the society. It is to show how one can lead a successful life with negotiating with the difficulties. It is to show that individual as achiever to the world so others can learn from them.

Diaries on the other hand are an intimate account of an individual’s personal thoughts that the individual may not want the world to know in their life time. It is written to evaluate their personal growth.

Though these three genres are different yet it is interconnected when it comes to women as the narrator and the subject matter. In these areas when it comes to women's writing we see a common trope of self discovery or quest for a self identity. These narratives stops being just personal and becomes collective voice of that section of women. These literary spaces give women space to explore their inner self their sexuality and gender discriminations at collective and individual level. It does not stop at personal it becomes political voice of narrative.

As these three spaces were initially used by men to explore their ideology it was restricted to women. Once women start using these medium it is challenging the canon. There by it becomes an alternative history and narrative which challenges and breaks the canon which are male centric. There by speaks of women issues which are not given much value in the canon. This writing within the male canon itself becomes an act of resistance. For example in Jamaica Kincaid's works the autobiography of my mother. Though the title says autobiography of my mother she does not talk about mother but herself and her rejection of motherhood which is against the canon and its laws.

When women choose to express and explore their individual and collective identity the genres they choose for these purpose is mostly autobiographies, memoirs and diaries. This might be because in genres like poetry there is a need for aesthetic values or in novel it is mostly considered as fiction which is not completely real. In these genres it is considered to be authentic representation of self and truth. It is also a space where self is allowed to be explored and dealt with. The personal can be expressed in much better way without restriction as self is the main subject.

*I am Malala* is an autobiography of a girl called Malala Yousafzai from the Swat valley of Pakistan. Malala narrated her story to Christina Lamb who authored it, and the book was published in the year two thousand thirteen. Christina Lamb is a leading foreign correspondent who reports on Pakistan and Afghanistan. She has won Britain's Foreign Correspondent of the year award five times as well as the Prix Bayeux, Europe's most prestigious award for war correspondents.

Malala Yousafzai is a young girl from Swat valley of Pakistan who faces discrimination from the time of her birth. With the help and support of her father she overcomes the gender discriminations and the religious practices of her community. Her father helps her get education by opening a school where girls are allowed to excel in all fields like boys. Through her father's guidance she starts voicing out her concern for girl's education in her valley and gradually gains national attention.

When the Taliban entered her valley, they banned education for girls. Malala starts an education campaign about life under Taliban by writing for BBC Urdu under the pen name, Gul Makai. This brought international attention and her fight was seen by Taliban as a threat to their power and they targeted her. On October 2012, she was shot in the head while she was returning from school on a bus. However, she miraculously survived. She was later honoured with International Children's Peace Prize in two thousand thirteen. She is also the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner in the world. Today, Malala continues her fight for children's education and now it is not just for Swat valley, but internationally.

As the victim, Malala chooses to narrate her life and sufferings under the Taliban. She becomes a witness who wants to keep the truth alive and not be erased by mainstream history and narratives. Malala's book becomes an alternative narrative, or the swat valley's history in Pakistan, which is subjective and an insider's perspective. It displays the history of the subaltern and voices the concern of women, especially the girl child.

Malala becomes a representative of a collective voice of a community and the girl child. Initially, her resistance is just towards the oppressive patriarchal world in which she is trying to find a space to assert her female identity. This resistance slowly moves to her resistance against the Taliban who denies her and her gender, education.

Malala's book is also seen as a resistance towards the west, especially America's portrayal of Pakistan. America's perspective of Pakistani citizens, both male and female, is challenged by her narrative. America after the September eleven attacks sees all Muslim male as terrorists. Their perception is that Muslim religion is patriarchal and oppressive. Through the portrayal of Swat valley men and her father, she destroys this notion of the Americans. Her father and his male friends stand firmly for the education of the girl child. They are against Taliban's atrocities and do not follow Islamic rules blindly.

In this narrative we can see Malala as the critical insider. She does not romanticise Islam and their ideology. On the other hand, she criticises the blind faith in religion. She even uses the example of Prophet Mohammad's wife to show how Islam as a religion does not discriminate women or oppress them but men have interpreted it for their benefit.

She is also critical of her culture and Pashtunwali codes which are irrational and has no solution for problems apart from killing, and hatred. She ends up becoming an intellectual exile wherein she criticises both America and her own country. She portrays both sides as evil-driven by political agenda. Both the

countries are in blame game. Pakistan will not accept that it is a nation which is helpless when it comes to the Taliban and America from the fact that they are also responsible for Pakistan's internal terrorism indirectly through the war in Afghanistan.

This narrative can also be seen as a resistance against the stereotyping of Pakistan and its people by the Americans. Malala initially shows resistance by not wearing her head scarf which might be seen as her resisting patriarchy. But in her later public appearance, we see her cover her head and this is to break the stereotype of America about Muslim women as trapped in burkha. This is the only oppression and concerns of these women, thereby side-lining all other kinds of oppression.

The very act of Malala preferring to voice out as a child victim of Taliban becomes her resistance against the silencing of the girl child and women in her religious community and her country. It is also a counter narrative to the main stream narrative of her attack and the reasons for it. She speaks out the truth there, by speaking for herself and her community and not allowing somebody else to represent her community and gender.

Malala's diary entries to the BBC become an important recorder of history and a medium by which the outer world can know the problems of interior Taliban affected areas. Her pen name "Gul Makai" which she uses as a pseudonym becomes a literal representation of herself. As per the folk story, the girl convinces the elders to agree to her relationship with the help of Quran. Similarly, Malala is trying to convince the world and Taliban that education of the girl child is a must, as Quran does not restrict it. So her diary becomes both a recorder as well as her weapon for resistance.

She uses school and education as a medium of resistance and rebellion to confine to the societal norms. She also sees pen and words as equivalent to machine guns or even more powerful weapons. She has the will to be educated in her house, if not in school. We can see children have more spirit to fight for their rights than the elders of the society. Children come across as fearless and teachers who should guide them are cowards.

Her form of protest is well-planned and moulded by her father and Shiza. Her family is not restricting and patriarchal, and so she can express her desire. Here, her community is not targeted to be wiped off, but only their education. She is also exposed to more powerful women so she can dream big. She is also introduced to Anne Frank. She does not use any violent mode of protests because she thinks that if she does that there would be no difference between her and terrorists.

Here, the whole act of resistance of the individual Malala "I" becomes a collective "We". Initially, it is for her education and acceptance for her identity as a girl child. Her father does it for her. And once she is being given a self identity through her father, she explores the other possibilities and avenues available to help and represent her gender and subaltern like her.

By voicing out from her community, she shows how oppressive her community and country are and therefore, there is no idealisation of her culture and country. By rejecting and finding flaws with her country, she is not accepting the American discourse and values they project of Pakistan. She criticises both these spaces in her narrative. Through her narrative, we see that America and Pakistan do not value the civilians of Pakistan and they are mere collateral damages in the struggle for power of these nations.

Through her narrative, she also breaks the discourse and stereotypes of Muslim women in Pakistan, who are only oppressed by patriarchy, which restricts them from the outer world. She shows how these women of her community are strong. There are artists and dancers who are women. She also shows how the women have more freedom before the coming of Taliban.

Malala was considered a free bird by her father. She used this freedom available in her home to explore her horizon of knowledge through educating herself. Thereby, she becomes aware of the oppression of other children around her and started demanding equality for the girl child in the field of education.

It is also interesting to see that as the west is focused on the burkha-clad women. Malala, through her narrative and resistance, makes the same west to shift its focus to the human inside the burkha who needs education and agency, and not sympathy and pity. She takes her resistance to the global level, thereby highlighting the girl child's plight in Pakistan without education.

She also gives an alternating history of Pakistan itself through her description of the political instability. She sees women having greater potential than the pen and sword. Hence, she wishes Benazir Bhutto will be the leader who will lead and bring in change to womens' lives, but unfortunately Malala had to step in to lead her nations in different way.

Throughout Malala's resistance towards the Taliban's hegemonic power, the Taliban had not warned or attacked her. They did not see her as a potential threat to their power, but as she gained recognition in her nation and the west through her diary for the BBC in pseudonym, the Taliban felt threatened and they attacked her to end her campaign.

The attempt to kill her was to silence her forever and also to warn others not to resist the Taliban anymore. If the Taliban can kill young women like Malala, then they can do anything to anyone who opposes them even if it is woman.

Malala's will power to be alive makes her resist the attempt of silencing her. She in turn becomes more powerful through this attempt of killing, when she gains world recognition and the Nobel peace prize. Therefore, she has become a greater resisting voice of swat valley against the Taliban.

Malala, by penning down her Autobiography, creates a narrative resistance which is counter to the main stream and the Taliban's narrative. This narrative is to keep her memoir alive and to not be forgotten by the world. It is also to inspire others to voice out and resist their oppression.

Anne Frank the diary of a young girl was translated from Dutch by B.M Mooyaart – Doubleday. It was published in the year 1967. This is a diary written by Anne frank who is a young girl who shows the changes which enter her life through the Nazis anti-Semitic rule. She and her family along with another family go on hiding for two years to escape the persecution in Holland.

She starts her entry in the diary on the fourteenth of June, nineteen forty two, on a Sunday soon after she receives it as birthday present. Her last entry is on first August, nineteen forty four, Tuesday. The period in between is spent in a secret annexe that she describes in her diary. In May, nineteen forty five when the war ended, Anne's father, Otto frank, was the only survivor and when he returned to Amsterdam, he was given his daughter's diary. Her diary was first published in nineteen forty seven.

Ann confines in her diary all her secrets wishes and desires for the future, although she writes her diary just because she was lonely and wanted a friend. Through genocide, the Nazi Germans wanted to wipe out the Jewish race. Anne challenges this act through her diary. She resists the Nazi Germany from erasing her as a Jewish individual.

Although, her entries of the day to day chores, fears, and celebration of the secret annexe seem normal, it shows the adversities of war. Through her narrative, we see the condition of the Jews before Anne and her family go into hiding. Once in hiding, through the description of her life and the realities of world outside, we get glimpses of the atrocities committed against Jews.

In her narrative, she also shows how the Dutch who have given her and her family shelter suffers due to Nazi and their occupation. Apart from the political atmosphere, we also see the child Anne blossoming into a teenager. Through her narratives she explores her inner self and fulfils the quest for her identity as a woman.

She also tries to rebel against patriarchy, but initially she tries to be accepted there through her father. Here, she sees her mother as a rival. There are clashes with her mother to gain her father's attention. Once she fails in her attempts, her focus shifts to Peter. Here, her rival is her sister and yet she surpasses all obstacles to connect with him. Through Peter, Anne tries to understand herself and help him built self confidence.

The Germans have determined to wipe out the race of Jews, but we see Anne hoping for a future after war. She wants to be a journalist and also a good mummy to her children. She, her sister, and Peter get educated in the hope of continuing their studies in the future. By dreaming for the future, Anne resists the attempts of Germans to erase her race and culture.

During the earlier publications, there have been attempts to erase her sexuality and her sexual experiences. This might be to show her as an innocent child. In the later publications, it was not edited. Anne's sexuality shows the internal conflict of a child at the verge of puberty and struggling to cope with this in her hidden place, there by her diary also becomes representative of Anne's personal struggle.

Anne initially sees herself as just a Dutch girl like others around her and she enjoys a normal childhood. Once the anti-Semitism begins, she feels that her Jewish identity was thrust upon her and she accepts it unwillingly. Through the act of hiding for survival, her identity as Jewish is emphasised.

Unlike other Jews, she does not feel connected to her religion and the holy land of Jerusalem. She and her family are not very orthodox like the Jews who follow all the religious rituals faithfully. Anne, in fact, sees Holland as her fatherland and loves this country. She wishes to assimilate into Holland.

In the course of her narration, she feels more attached to Holland. We see Anne trying to see her Jewish identity differently. She feels like a Jew when she thinks of the difficulties she has to go through and hopes her race will be held up as an example for their sacrifice. Here, she really acknowledges and realises that a Jew can never be just Netherlanders or just English or just any country's citizen, but Jewish first and Jewish always.

Anne is ready to suffer as all other Jews do. Yet, she wants to survive the war and have a better future. She feels guilty that she is saved and is hiding when she thinks of her friend and other Jewish people. This can be seen as her survivor's guilt because she repeatedly sees her friend in her dreams.

She does not prefer the traditional ways of her culture like for example, parenting. She is critical of her own race and she does not romanticise them. Yet, she feels helpless when she sees and hears of the atrocities

committed against her race. Jews generally do not prefer gentiles and they normally stay in a closed community. Here, we see her family and others in the secret annex grateful for the help they receive through their protectors, who are non Jews.

Anne's narrative shows the reality of a Jewish family and breaks the conventional notion of Jews as a community. She breaks all stereotypes associated with women of her community such as Jewish women are manipulative, greedy for money, materialistic, overbearing, and nagging. She herself prefers books over clothes, her mother and Mrs Van Dan are not women who are greedy or manipulative.

So, by portraying women of the secret annex, she gives a counter narrative to the popular narratives of Jews. Germans blame Jews for the failure of the war. Through Anne's narrative, we see Jews were nowhere related in the war or politics. Nazi's account of Jews in history, will be countered by Anne's diary.

Even when she is critical of her race, she and her family do not give up their Jewish qualities completely. They are ready to take an extra person to save his life. This shows that they are ready to take risk for Jews' sake. Though there is continuous quarrelling among the members of the secret annex, we see community spirit and one family atmosphere within the inmates and the gentiles who help them.

Anne, as she is ready to accept the Dutch and the English, is critical of Nazi Germany and its occupation in anti-Semitism. Not only because they have caused her and her family to go in to hiding, but also due to the atrocities and inhuman activities the Nazis have been committing on Holland just because they have given refuge to Jews. Due to this, the countries which have given refuge to Jews have been worst hit in the war. They are impoverished and are starving.

Anne lives in constant fear of the Nazis. She also holds Germany responsible for making Holland and other nations become Jew haters due to war. On one hand, Jews are sent to concentration camps, and on the other hand, the targeted countries like Holland are committing brutal crimes against one other due to poverty and unemployment. So Germany becomes the persecutor of both the Jews and countries like Holland.

Her act of writing the diary itself can be seen as her resistance against being silenced. Her family's decision not to surrender to the Nazis is an act of collective resistance against an oppressive system. She starts her writing just to confine to her friend all her secrets, but the friend becomes the survivor and the recorder of her struggle and resistance to survive on a day-to-day basis.

Through her writing of herself, she is able to identify who she really is. She explores her sexual and unique self. She speaks for herself and her community and does not allow anyone else to speak for her or represent her community's suffering. By this, she asserts her identity and power as a Jewish girl.

Anne's diary becomes an alternating narrative or history for the Jews and the world. The victim's voice is articulated through her work. She has an urgency to tell her story and the realities she is facing. She becomes a witness. She wants the world to know of her community and her as an individual. She shows the reality of Jews during the holocaust which makes it more realistic and authentic.

She does not take patriarchy and Nazi persecution lying low. She rebels against both these oppressive powers. She opposes patriarchy by exploring her female self and sexuality. She opposes and resists the Germans by voicing out her pain and suffering during the Holocaust.

In the hierarchy of the power structure, women are the least and a girl child is further lower in the hierarchy. Anne Frank and Malala come from this periphery of the society. So, these girl children are oppressed by their age, gender, race, and ethnicity. These young women are technically the subaltern who are voiceless, and cannot speak like Gayatri Spivak. Yet, they do not stay in this state and they empower themselves and voice out their concerns and oppressions.

Anne, though she writes for herself initially, we see that the dairy slowly takes a trajectory where it is no more her habit of writing. The diary becomes a mean by which the Jewish girl victim is voicing out her oppression as the Jew under the Nazi regime. She sets examples for others to follow her medium of resistance.

Malala is inspired by Anne Frank's diary and how it was a medium of her resistance and uses it for her own resistance against the Taliban. When Malala writes the diary for the BBC regarding the daily life in the swat valley, she is also trying to adopt the same method of Anne to bring attention to the valley and its concerns.

These young women are politically aware of what is happening to their community and themselves under the oppressive rule. They see the immediate need to voice out their concern. They do not want to be subjugated by the state rule. So, they rebel. In the process, both use writing as a medium to show the outer world of their inner realities.

Anne does not see her writing of the diary as resistance. It is the reader who reads it as a writing of resistance and testimony of young Jewish women. Through her writing, we see Anne transgressing from her patriarchal conventions and norms by exploring her sexuality.

Malala, on the other hand, fights for the cause of education of herself and the girl children in her neighbourhood. This awareness of oppression and taking the initiative for her education itself is the beginning of her resistance against patriarchy, and her religion which has made her powerless.

Since we see a young women's perspective in both these texts, we can imagine how oppressive the system is that the innocent child has also internalised the hegemony of power and want to reject it. They both become the witnesses and victims in this narrative which makes it more real.

Through their narrative we do not see what happened in history, but what happened to them in that particular historical movement. So, what has history done to these young women's and their community? These narratives are giving us the subaltern history which is normally suppresses and systematically erased.

These narratives become alternative historiography. The pain and trauma of witnessing has been narrated thereby breaking the stereotypes and mainstream history about the events. Since two young women narrators are speaking out, there is a greater importance given to note their oppression. It is also interesting they do not allow anybody else to represent or re-present their suffering due to lack of agency. Anne, though she is in hiding, uses the medium of diary to express her concerns. Malala uses the help of her father, but does not allow him to speak for her cause.

Through their narration, they assert their self-identity, cultural and traditional identity, of their community. Through them we get to see the suffering of their community and race at close quarters even though they are critical of their community.

Both these texts deal with young women from different space and time, yet these use resistance as a strategy to voice out their oppression. The Patriarchal father figures do not oppress them but instead help them. The fathers become strong figures of support against patriarchal and state oppression.

Anne is resisting patriarchy which is represented by her mother, and the Nazi Germany. Malala, on the other hand, is resisting the religious and Taliban's oppression of educating women. Both are also resisting the attempts of the mainstream narratives by their own narrative.

In case of Malala her resistance is well-planned. Her text itself is a well-planned resistance against silencing by the Taliban. Through her memoir, she recollects only the crucial incidents which lead to her resistance, and attack, and her subsequent fame. Anne does not do it in a planned manner. We see her narrative as a day-to-day account which counters the Nazi account of the incident. Anne explores herself through her narratives. Malala does not explore herself as her identity is already given to her by her father. Her narrative is about the resistance in different stages.

The crucial point of difference between the two texts is that Anne's mode is diary and Malala's is an autobiography. The genre is different but why they choose this mode is important. Anne never wanted it to be public. She chooses her diary so that it remains personal. Malala choose this mode so she can use her memoir to narrate resistance which will show the world her community's suffering. In Anne, there is an immediacy to tell her suffering, since she is in hiding and in constant fear of being taken to concentration camp. Malala's narrative is after her attack and resistance of the Taliban.

These young women resist in their own individual, collective, and cultural ways, thereby making a mark in history which is otherwise male dominated. Hence, we can see I am Malala and Diary of Anne Frank as texts of resistance to oppressive hegemonic structures of power.

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# Transcending Gender, Sport and Regional biases: A Study of Mary Kom's *Unbreakable: An Autobiography*

**Manjula Veerappa**

## **Abstract**

Sport as a domain was less frequented by women in India. The commonly contested issue with regard to this was that men are better than women and that they have more opportunities than women. Sports was deemed unsuitable for women given their physical weakness, menstruation, motherhood, family responsibilities and their entry into spaces which are public. India lacks a sporting culture like the west, not many Indians take to sports. Those who take it up face innumerable challenges, the explicit problem being marginalization. The different facets of marginalization of sportspersons and sports are gender, class, place of birth and the preferential treatment given to cricket over other sports. This paper focuses on the autobiography of 'Six time World Amateur Boxing Champion' Mary Kom's autobiography *Unbreakable*. Mary Kom chose a sport that does not have many takers in India and is a sport which is regarded as a man's sport. Boxing is often called "the manly art of self-defense".

The first person narration of the hurdles, determination and glory give an insight into what it is to be a sports woman. This paper will also examine the factors that aid and impede the journey of this sportsperson. *Unbreakable* is a lucid depiction of the innumerable struggles the petite, gritty, tribal girl from Manipur goes through. Her unwavering spirit goes on to slash and burn the myths surrounding women, marriage, motherhood and boxing.

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Sport plays an integral part in the growth of an individual. Discipline, healthy lifestyle, and camaraderie are key takeaways from sport. It also enables an individual to break barriers in pursuit of excellence. When the history of sport is mapped, there is a disparity in the participation ratio of men and women. This is largely because sport was perceived as a symbol of masculinity. Women sportspersons have been in a disadvantaged position as access to sport, facilities and opportunities have always been the prerogative of male athletes. "Sport, as a cultural and commercial production, constructs and markets gender; besides moneymaking gender may be sport's chief function".(Scranton and Flintoff 2013: 17) Men's and women's sport are segregated, men's sport is intended to attract male spectators but women's sport is deemed successful only when it appeals to both male and female spectators.

In India, women did not actively participate in sport till the dawn of independence. It was considered a taboo to participate in sport in public. In the pre- independence era, the women participated in sport were either those who belonged to the Anglo-Indian community or to the aristocratic families. Indian women started representing the country in the early 1950s. They participated in the Helsinki Olympic Games in 1952, International Women's Championship (Hockey), UK in 1953-54.

The commonly contested issue with regard to sport was that men are better and they have more opportunities than women. Sport was deemed unsuitable for women given their physical weakness, menstruation, motherhood, family responsibilities and her entry into spaces which are public. "Differences in female sports participation are seen to be the result of socialization practices carried out by institutions such as the family, the media, and the school" (Greendorfer, 1993 ; Oglesby, 1978 ). For example, girls are socialized into feminine activities such as netball, gymnastics, or hockey and into a female physicality, and boys are socialized into masculine sport such as football, rugby, or cricket and into a male physicality (Scranton, 1992). Furthermore, discriminatory practices prevent women from having equal access to sporting opportunities including facilities and resources."(Scranton and Flintoff 2013: 97)

Sport as a domain is less traversed in India. Not many are encouraged to pursue sport because of the overriding emphasis on education and job security. In spite of this nonchalant attitude, India has produced innumerable sportspersons who have made a mark on the global sport arena. Indian sportspersons have bagged medals at the Olympics, Commonwealth Games, Asian Games, Grand Slams and other such major sports events. Many a time these victories fade into oblivion.

Sportswomen in India have found it difficult to make an impact not just because of gender marginalization but also because of sports marginalization. In India the word 'sports' is mainly associated with cricket. Cricket and cricketers overshadow most other sporting achievements. One aspect that unites an otherwise diverse nation is cricket. India is a cricket frenzy nation. Media coverage, fame, facilities, monetary and non-monetary benefits received by the cricketers out does the ones received by non-cricketers. But the irony is that this fame and fortune has been limited to 'men's cricket'. 'Women's cricket' comes nowhere close to this. This apathy has reduced to some extent but the fact remains that the women cricketers are not on the same page as their male counterparts, be it the opportunities, remuneration, commercial breaks, media attention and response from avid cricket followers.

The nuances of sport and a sportswoman's life can be better understood by the stories the sportswomen narrate about their lives. The expression of the self, the account of one's life is Autobiography. Autobiographies do not speak only about the individual but also present to its readers the socio-cultural, political and economic situation of the place and age in which the individual is in. Philippe Lejeune a scholar on autobiography defined autobiography as "a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality. Autobiography is all about the 'self', 'identity' and the conscious unraveling of one's life. Autobiography of a sportsperson is called 'Jockography'

The jockographies of sportswomen depict the struggles, opposition, rancor faced by them within the family and outside the family. The autobiographies are also a celebration of their determination and their steadfastness towards the sport.

Six –time world champion, Olympian, Padma Bhushan, Arjuna and Khel Ratna awardee, Mary Kom is the first Indian boxer to pen her autobiography- *Unbreakable: An Autobiography*. Mary Kom articulates the rugged road trekked by her to realize and fulfill her desire. The autobiography delineates the meandering journey of a woman from a neglected and a remote part of India who went on to redefine boundaries of womanhood and motherhood. She also broke the stereotype associated with the people from the northeast and made the country proud by winning a bronze medal in the 2012 London Olympics.

Mary Kom is one of those sportspersons who came in for a lot of criticism for choosing a sport that was considered to be out of the realm of women. Mary Kom chose boxing, a sport which did not have many women takers in India as it is generally regarded as a man's sport. Boxing is often called "the manly art of self-defense". Undeterred, Mary Kom pursued the sport that called for aggression, physical and mental strength. These qualities are considered masculine and not suited for delicate and weak spirited women. Mary Kom did not toe the line; she went ahead and debunked all myths associated with boxing and women.

In India, boxing was a name that was synonymous with men till 1998, as it was only in that year it was officially introduced for women. Manipur has the distinction of being the first state in the country to introduce boxing for women. The state has produced some of India's best boxers.

Jelinek in *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism* brings out a few differences between the autobiographies written by men and women. With regard to content Jelinek says that men's autobiographies

focus on their professional lives and are “success stories and histories of their eras”. The women’s autobiographies accentuate personal and domestic details and describe their relationships with other people. This aspect is very prominent in *Unbreakable: An Autobiography* where Mary Kom speaks extensively about her family and her extended family. Mary Kom was raised in Kangathei a remote village in Manipur, about 45 kilometers from the state capital Imphal. She was born to landless labourers Mangte Tonpa Kom and Akham. Poverty saw Mary toiling in the fields and taking care of domestic chores in her free time from school.

The Kom tribe had a contemptuous attitude towards girls being educated. “In the Kom society of those days, boys were given preference when it came to education. Most people believed that, since a girl would get married and go away to her husband’s home, there was no point in spending money educating them. But not my dad-he wanted his first born to be the first born to be the first in the family to pass class ten”.(Kom 2013:12) Inspite of the penurious condition at home the Kom couple was particular that their children went to an English medium school. Education in an English medium school was seen as a way to alleviate them from poverty. “And my parents had only a rudimentary education, that too in the local language. Convinced that his lack of education was at least partly to blame for his lot, Apa was determined that his children must go to an ‘English school and complete their matriculation.” (Kom 2013:11-12)

Mary was good at athletics from her school days, and had won a number of prizes. Her inclination towards sport saw her academics taking a back seat. Her concentration on sports was not acceptable by her father. He did not want her to waste her time on sports and “face the discrimination and disadvantages that his own lack of education forced him to bear with”. (Kom, 2013, 22) Mary was not the one give up.

Mary Kom’s excellence on the field prompted her school principal to tell her father to enroll her in Sports Authority of India (SAI) in Imphal. Her father was perturbed as he did not have the resources to send her to Imphal. Mary’s passion and persistence persuaded her father to relent and he took her to Moirang instead of Imphal where she trained under Nipamacha Kunam, an NIS coach. She started training in athletics. Her only concern was that she did not have a balanced diet to support her training. She was in sports because she liked it, excelled in it and also knew that it could be a channel for her to get a job under the sports quota and end the financial misery at home. Mary Kom’s father accepted her proficiency at sports and moved her to SAI in Imphal. Here she tried a number of track and field events, but nothing really impressed her. Slowly she realized it is boxing for her and decides to meet Oja Ibomcha, the chief coach at SAI. Her meeting with the coach did not go well in the beginning. Boxing a sport that involves immense physical energy, toiling, sweat and unwomanly action is always seen as a sport for men than woman. Mary’s entry into boxing was marked by comments like, her first coach Oja Ibomcha said “You are a small, frail girl. With gold earring, you don’t even look a boxer. Boxing is for young boys.” (Kom, 2013, 31) Her grit and determination proved him wrong.

Mary’s parents were not aware that she had taken boxing. Her father whom she calls farsighted, progressive had also expressed his dissatisfaction and disapproval when he realized Mary’s choice of sport. The information about her taking to boxing was breached to them through a newspaper article that reported of her winning gold in the State Championship. This irked her father who sent his wife to bring her back home. He did not want her to pursue boxing as she is a ‘girl’ and has to be married. He paused to think about it and replied gently, “You are a girl. One day, you will get married. Should anything happen, should you get injured, it will be a big problem. Many boxers get serious injuries; I have seen blood streaming through their faces. If you get injured, it will cost a lot of money, which I do not have. Apa remembered that I used to devour martial arts movies, that I wanted to be like the fighters in them. ‘If you’re really interested in combat, why don’t you join judo or karate? (Kom 2013: 41) Mary Kom’s father’s primary concern with her pursuing boxing is that she is a ‘girl’ and has to be ‘married’. Marriage is deemed inevitable to a woman and her face or body should not be tarnished by injuries. The beauty myth is universal and a woman’s physical beauty is given importance. “A woman looks like a million dollars, she’s a first-class beauty, her face is her fortune”.(Wolf 2002: 20) Boxing as an event has been associated with phrases like ‘serious injuries’, ‘blood streaming from faces’, ‘injury’ etc. However these are markers for masculinity.

Mary Kom’s autobiography lends itself to different kind of readings. The reader gains insight into the societal structure, position of women and economic conditions in Manipur. Though Manipur is a tribal, agrarian, economically backward region it has provided plenty of opportunity and encouragement to its women sportspersons. It also has some very dedicated, enthusiastic and socially sensitive coaches. “The

coaches, every one of them spared no effort. They were also sensitive to the fact that most of us were from low-income families and far-flung areas and villages". (Kom 2013: 37)

The tentacles of patriarchy are wide spread and have no geographical limitations. Women are generally considered "the other", "weaker sex" and men give voice to their needs. Men are known to have better physical vigor than woman. The society to which Mary Kom belongs to is patriarchal 'in disguise'. Manipur compared to rest of India is more egalitarian with regard to gender relations. Mary Kom is the personification of the empowered Manipuri woman. Women in Manipur play a significant role in the economic and domestic spheres. Yet women there do not enjoy the same status as men. Mary Kom's autobiography has a sprinkling of a few incidents that speak about patriarchal notions in the Manipur society. The instance where she speaks about boys preferred to girls with regard to education and physical work being associated with men, division of work between husband and wife, where "the woman runs the house even if she is a career woman"(Kom2013:69) kitchen being the exclusive 'space' of the woman and chores meant only for woman. "In Manipur, men do not do the work of women. It's frowned upon...A man holding a broom or doing household work is labeled 'henpecked' and spoken of disparagingly..." (Kom 2013:86-87) She speaks about her helping both her father and mother in their respective work. "There were many jobs I could do that even the boys struggled with. All three of us siblings were given chores, and as the eldest, I took my responsibilities very seriously. I helped in the fields, even with ploughing the fields – a task that required immense strength, because the bullocks were not easy to control. The menfolk would stand and gape, seeing me drive the animals." (Kom 2013: 13)

Mary Kom's autobiography has a typical woman's voice with regard to spouse and children. Mary Kom has acknowledged and credited her husband Onler as one of the people instrumental in her success. Onler was not like the stereotypical husband, he took over the reins on the home front and 'allowed' Mary to concentrate on her game. She says "Onler knew from the beginning that ours would be an unusual marriage. A wife who is absent for most of the year cannot run the home..." (Kom 2013; 69)

There are strong notions that a sportswoman's career comes to an end with marriage and is unthinkable after motherhood. Her father's greatest fear when Onler broached the topic of marriage was "are you thinking of putting an end to my daughter's career?" It was not only her father but also the people around her who said that her sporting career would cease after marriage. She silenced them all with her overwhelming performance inside the ring.

Marital life, especially for a woman does not stop with marriage. Patriarchy prescribes motherhood as an important stage where all other things take a back seat. In the case of sportswomen, their sporting careers are written off. Motherhood plays an important role in Mary Kom's life. When it comes to her children she speaks about the maternal pangs during long separations from her children. Her father's advice, "Sanahen, now that you're a mother, it's enough. You will be tired. Stop boxing" (Kom 2013: 82) speaks about restrain motherhood places on women. Mary's titles and medals after marriage and motherhood have quelled those notions.

Scholars in the sociology of sport have shown that many women have been empowered by being involved in sport inspite of traditional gender ideology. Involvement and excelling in sport has given women financial empowerment and recognition. Mary Kom's family's present economic status is because of the laurels brought by her through her sport.

Discrimination and marginalization among sport has been expressed in a discreet manner in Unbreakable. Mary Kom had to fight to get the recognition she has today. She says the difficulty was because of her gender and her sport. Her name was struck off from the list of Arjuna awardees at the last minute but she finally got it in 2004. Milkha Singh who was on the selection committee of the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna award rejected her application saying that he did not know which sport she competed in. This was after she had got an Arjuna award and Padma Shri award. She also says "But how do I beat the cricketers? M S Dhoni won the award after one World Cup win". She has been very vocal about her and her fraternity not getting their due. "I have been vocal in my demand for the upliftment of sports other than cricket, in spite of the hostility I faced for that stance. For a large part of my career, I had no sponsors. I have even, on occasion, paid for my travel to participate in competitions and camps. I have proven that women can achieve as much as men can, and I have shown that boxing can be as engrossing as cricket for Indians." (Kom 2013:132)

Mary Kom is a national icon who put India on the world boxing map. Today she has a movie made on her life, is a brand ambassador for some well-known products and services. Documentaries and short films to tell

Mary Kom's story have also been made. Mary Kom has also fought the battle of national identity. "There was also the fact that I was not always recognized as Indian in my own country...When I used to say I am from Manipur, many people didn't even know where it was".( Kom 2013:91)

*Meeting Mary Kom*, a BBC film showcases the journey of Mary Kom of then and the Mary Kom the world knows now. The film also dwells on Manipur as an 'area torn by insurgency' and is a 'forgotten state' by the central government in New Delhi. Manipur is a region that has seen internal ethnic conflict and armed struggle for independence. The Manipuris face alienation and feel segregated from mainstream Indians because of their physical features culture and the language they speak. People from the northeast are subject to derogatory remarks.

"Because of our Oriental looks, people from the Northeast are often mocked in other parts of India. We're called Nepalis or Chinkies, and people call out things like chingching chong-chong".(Kom 2013:91) The need for identity and the desire to be identified is expressed in Kom's own words ".....my desire to assert the identity of my tribe 'Kom' within my own country and the world over..... I'd be able to popularize the culture and ethos of my tiny tribe". (Kom 2013)

Despite the contempt towards the people from northeast she is proud to be an Indian." Whether or not I look 'Indian', I am Indian, and I represent India, with pride and all my heart". (Kom 2013:91)

Autobiography, as a genre provides a platform to the marginalized sections to chronicle their lives and sensitize the multitudes who fear to take the desired steps or shun the normalized 'male' spaces for fear of non-acceptance and ridicule

In a career spanning over two decades Mary Kom not only punched beyond expectations but she also dispelled all stereotypes associated with women in sport.

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# An Analysis of the Indian Novels ‘The White Tiger’ and ‘The Inheritance of Loss’ as Post-Colonial Narratives of Resistance

Lakshmi Kumar

## Abstract (12pt)

The paper attempts to analyse two Indian novels: Aravind Adiga’s ‘The White Tiger’ and Kiran Desai’s ‘The Inheritance of Loss’, from a post-colonial and post-globalization perspective. It aims to explore the challenges faced by the oppressed sections of society and the struggles encountered to establish their identities amidst a class-ridden industrialized society. The turmoil faced by the characters due to their attempt to retain their traditional ways of living, the issues of the Indian social system harassing the individual and the lack of educational and moral support have been points of study. The resistance of the marginalized, the man and the woman, who are at the receiving end of the ladder of oppression and the way in which the power structures inherent in the society operate on them, become the objects of this study. The study focuses on the network of the patriarchal and hegemonic structures acting on the colonially oppressed classes of people in the contemporary globalized world.

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The contribution of Indian writing to world literature is mainly due to the extremely creative literary works by Indian novelists in English. Their works concentrated on a wide range of issues like nationalism, freedom struggle, social realism, individual consciousness and the like. This was made possible due to the overwhelming output by novelists and thus established itself as a noteworthy force in world fiction. It is to the credit of these novelists that they have overcome the hurdles of writing in a foreign language and have evolved a distinctive style for themselves by mastering the intricacies of the language and assimilating in it the hues and flavours of the Indian – sub continent. (Web)

In the recent times, the number of writers writing in English has been enormous and ever-growing; however, the identity and nationality of the writers are under question. The prominent writers are either western-based or of Indian origin, being the visible representatives of Indian Writing in English. The eternal issue of finding whether it is an authentic voice of ‘the insider’ or the ‘outsider’, has been rampant among the literary critics. The aspect of defining an Indian writer based on the origin, nativity and race is always under debate. These issues continue to flourish in the Indian writing in English though unresolved.

To this group belong the writers in question, Arvind Adiga and Kiran Desai who have their allegiances to India as well as the West. While both of them were born in India, they moved to the West, stayed there becoming part of the diasporas and wrote either there or back on the Indian soil. In spite of moving to the Western countries and getting influenced by those cultures and their way of life, they, as in the case of many other diasporic writers, did not lose connection with their native country, India. Thus, the two books being discussed are stories set in the Indian milieu and trace identity issues amidst a capitalistic, globalized world

of oppression, marginalization, grappling with the newly confronted circumstances and complex dilemmas of post-independence India.

Kiran Desai, born in 1971 in New Delhi, is an Indian-American author whose second novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), became an international best seller and won the 2006 Booker Prize. She is the daughter of the novelist Anita Desai and lived in India till she turned 15, after which her family moved to England and then to the United States. Her first novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, was published in 1998 and received a lot of appreciation and numerous awards. While working on what would become her second novel, Desai lived a drifting life that took her from New York to Mexico and India. After more than seven years of work, she published *The Inheritance of Loss* in 2006.

The novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* is set in India in the mid-1980s. Its central character is a Cambridge-educated Indian judge Jemubhai Patel who spends his retired life in Kalimpong, near the Himalayas, with his granddaughter Sai. Their lives are disrupted by Nepalese insurgents, a set of boys from the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF). The novel also discusses the story of the judge's cook's son Biju as he struggles to survive as an illegal immigrant in the United States. *The Inheritance of Loss* happens to be a keen, richly descriptive analysis of globalization, terrorism, and immigration. When she received the Booker Prize for the novel in 2007, Desai became the youngest female writer to win the award.

Aravind Adiga, born in Chennai in 1974, is a writer and journalist. He was brought up in India and Australia. He studied English literature at Columbia College and Oxford University. Adiga first worked as a correspondent for *Financial Times* and then for *Time Magazine* before pursuing his career as a fiction writer. He worked as a freelancer later and during this period he wrote *The White Tiger* (2008), which won the 2008 Man Booker Prize and made him popular worldwide. He currently lives in Mumbai, India.

The novel, *The White Tiger* explores the postcolonial condition of social inequality, injustice and discrimination set against a background of stark colonial slavery. It deals with the class struggle in a post-globalized and modern society. It outlines the crimes committed by a village boy hungry for money and power in a capitalistic world. Darkness and Light are contrasting images used to present the irony of the poor classes' inability to voice out their protest over their discrimination. The character Balram Halwai, a taxi driver who makes his way to the upper-class through his crimes inadvertently proving that the only way to success is through dark ways of life. Ashok and Pinky Madam, and Kusum are other characters who play a pivotal role in this crime story.

Apparently both the novels are Booker Prize Winners and illustrate the growth of democratic India. They mirror the lives of people in Contemporary Indian society and present the state of the marginalized to the world. Bizarre Indian realities in the post-independence era have been effectively unveiled and the harshness is portrayed through Indian political figures and parties. They encompass the post-independent political scenario of India referring to movements like GNLF & other socialistic struggles. The GNLF fights for a separate "Gorkhaland" for the Nepalese.

Both the writers being diasporic, discuss the state of their homeland through their narratives which speak about the resistance offered by the class-oppressed and impoverished sections of modern Indian society.

In *The White Tiger*, through the character of Balram Halwai, the plight of the lower class people of India and the resistance they need to register for survival has been projected. The resistance can be observed in the way he rises from the son of a rickshaw-puller and a taxi driver to the enviable position of a successful entrepreneur getting the respect he would have otherwise not received. Though he used foul means to rise, he tries to prove that only money can bring respect in today's society. The way in which the capitalized society looks down upon and ill-treats him and his family enrages him and his revengeful act brings him to plot the murder of Ashok, the employer's son.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, the judge's cook is the one who has been the victim of capitalistic, colonialist attitude of the judge who himself has been treated in a similar way when he went to England for higher studies.

The following illustrates how the young Jemubhai had an identity crisis and hated himself for being of a dark skin colour when he went to England:

"Thus Jemubhai's mind had begun to warp; he grew stranger to himself than he was to those around him, found his own skin odd-colored, his own accent peculiar. He forgot how to laugh, could barely manage to lift his lips in a smile, and if he ever did, he held his hand over his mouth, because he couldn't bear anyone to see his gums, his teeth. They seemed too private. In fact, he could barely let any of himself peep out of his clothes for fear of giving offence. He began to wash obsessively, concerned he would be accused of smelling, and each morning he scrubbed off the thick milky scent of sleep, the barnyard smell that wreathed him when he woke and impregnated the fabric of his pajamas. To the end of his life, he would never be seen without socks and shoes and would prefer shadow to light, faded days to sunny, for he was suspicious that sunlight might reveal him, in his hideousness, all too clearly."(Desai, 49)

Later in the same story we observe that both Sai and the judge who is now older, exhibit the privilege of being able to wait for things to be done for them, while those who are poorer than they are must work. Thus the cook is victimised.

"The cook had been disappointed to be working for Jemubhai. A severe comedown, he thought, from his father, who had served white men only." (Desai, 63)

Thus the oppressed in turn becomes the oppressor.

Another instance to show this:

"The tight calendar had calmed him, as did the constant exertion of authority. How he relished his power over the classes that had kept his family pinned under their heels for centuries—like the stenographer, for example, who was a Brahmin. There he was, crawling into a tiny tent to the side, and there was Jemubhai reclining like a king in a bed carved out of teak, hung with mosquito netting. "Bed tea," the cook would shout. "Baaad tee." He would sit up to drink." (Desai, 61)

The judge harasses the cook in his imitation of the imperialistic attitude that had been served on him back in England. Though humiliated himself, he treats his own servants with the same attitude. His complete separation from both British and Indian cultures shows the lasting and deeply harmful effects of colonization, even after it is no longer in effect. Sai's father's job is an illustration of the whole family's opportunity for globalization. He is recruited by the Russians, but he had also had a job in the Air Force which allowed him to travel, which could perhaps be one of the reasons that Sai says she is interested in travelling.

The accident that takes Sai's parents' lives adds to the misfortune of the family. Even though it would be easier to consider globalization entirely responsible for the circumstance, each generation, from the Judge to Sai, has experienced misfortune due to colonialism and the consequent globalization.

John McLeod in the chapter 'The Nation in question' of his book, *Beginning PostColonialism*, mentions that "although the myth of the nation might function as a valuable resource in uniting a people in opposition to colonialism, it often does so by ignoring the diversity of those individuals it seeks to homogenize – created out of gender, racial, religious and cultural differences. Many once-colonized nations have struggled with the internal differences that threaten the production of national unity. This does not simply reflect a political failure on the part of the newly independent nations, but perhaps reveals a problem *inherent* in the concept of the nation itself. These historical changes have acted upon the ways in which the nation is theorized." (McLeod, 103)

The characters of Balram Halwai and the Judge Jemubhai are good illustrations of the above statement. The two writers have actually presented the same concept of the nation in their own ways. While Balram is the victim, Jemubhai becomes the postcolonial emulator of colonialism.

Though Balram utilizes every opportunity to show his devotion to his master and gradually wins his favour, he is still not treated well by him. His loyalty is evident when he declares:

"I would drive whenever they wanted, as faithfully as the servant God Hanuman carried about his Master and mistress, Ram and Sita." (Adiga, 46)

But the irony is that as a reward of his honesty and loyalty, he is compelled to confess the crime committed by Pinky Madam. Balram becomes one of those numerous drivers and servants who are forced to take obligation of the crimes their masters have committed.

In this regard, Balram rightly says:

"The jails of Delhi are full of drivers who are there behind bars because they are taking the blame for their good, solid middle-class masters." (Adiga, 169) Further, the writer states: "Doesn't the driver's family protest? Far from it. They would actually go about bragging. Their boy Balram had taken the fall, gone to Tihar jail for his employer. He was loyal as dog. He was the perfect servant." (Adiga, 169) Thus Balram finds himself trapped by the bars of class, caste, and poverty.

The novels explore the fact that the underprivileged sections of this country have been consigned to the periphery, being exposed to various forms of exploitation by innumerable forms of hegemonic forces. But unfortunately they are not aware of the exploitation; even if aware, they may not dare to rise in protest against it. Here, Postcolonial criticism shows how the colonial powers are discriminated on the grounds of race against certain people and the struggle of post-colonial discourse extends over the areas of gender, race, ethnicity and class.

Along with Post colonialism, another very important force, Globalization plays a vital role in the oppression of the under-privileged in both the novels. According to critics, the impact of Globalization on culture is more pronounced and discussed widely than its economic and political impact. Globalization leads to Cultural Homogenization which refers to the reduction of culture diversity through the diffusion of a wide array of cultural symbols not only physical objects but customs, ideas and values. The process of cultural homogenization in the context of the domination of the Western (American), capitalist culture is also known as Americanization, McDonaldization or Westernization and criticized as a form of cultural

imperialism and neo-colonialism. ("Wikipedia") The issues of multiculturalism, identity crisis, uprootedness, dislocation, displacement from particular culture & space play a pivotal role in this context. These issues are visible in the selected novels through the characters: Balram Halwai in *The White Tiger* and Biju & Jemubhai in *The Loss of Inheritance*. The instance of the plight of the drivers that has been mentioned earlier is an evidence of this. He also says: "We have left the village, but the masters still own us, body, soul, and arse." (Adiga, 169)

The writer also points to the impact of globalization on Indian cities like Delhi which are fast-moving in terms of economic and political development on one side, but Capitalism that has set in as a counter-impact of this, has its own dark side like prostitution, pimp racket, scandalous attitudes of men, etc. The following instance makes this point clear:

"That Sunday, I took Mr. Ashok's permission, saying I wanted to go to a temple, and went into the city. I took a bus down to Qutub, and from there a jeep-taxi down to G.B. Road. This, Mr. Premier, is the famous "red-light district" (as they say in English) of Delhi..... Now, G.B. Road is in Old Delhi, about which I should say something. Remember, Mr. Premier, that Delhi is the capital of not one but *two* countries—two Indias. The Light and the Darkness both flow into Delhi. Gurgaon, where Mr. Ashok lived, is the bright, modern end of the city, and this place, Old Delhi, is the other end. Full of things the modern world forgot all about—rickshaws, old stone buildings, the Muslims. On a Sunday, though, there is something more: if you keep pushing through the crowd that is always there, go past the men cleaning the other men's ears by poking rusty metal rods into them, past the men selling small fish trapped in green bottles full of brine, past the cheap shoe market and the cheap shirt market, you will come to the great secondhand book market of Darya Ganj."(Adiga, 250-251)

Adiga uses the words 'The Light' and 'The Darkness' to emphasize the shift in culture in the two parts of the city.

In *The Inheritance of Loss* also, Desai points to the attitude of nonchalance of the society with regard to the sorry state of the poor and impoverished sections of society. While speaking about some books in the library, Sai says: "Worst are those who think the poor should starve because it's their own misdeeds in past lives that are causing problems for them. . ." (Desai, 200)

"The fact was that one was left empty-handed. There was no system to soothe the unfairness of things; justice was without scope; it might snag the stealer of chickens, but great evasive crimes would have to be dismissed because, if identified and netted, they would bring down the entire structure of so-called civilization. For crimes that took place in the monstrous dealings between nations, for crimes that took place in those intimate spaces between two people without a witness, for these crimes the guilty would never pay. There was no religion and no government that would relieve the hell" (Desai, 200) and this is an offshoot of the Gorkha Liberation Movement in Kalimpong at that time.

Thus, the Colonial/Imperialist attitude existing Post colonization, Globalization and Capitalism collectively create a major impact on the characters in both the novels.

Further, Diaspora is another influence that can be traced in *The Inheritance of Loss*; it is Biju, the son of the cook whose life tells us about the struggles of migrant labourers in a country like USA. Even though the father feels proud of his son working abroad, his state of a cook remains unchanged and his son doesn't get to accomplish his dream of earning well and establishing himself in the US as he is moved from one workplace to another very frequently. His dream of a secure future is defeated by the harsh reality. The diasporic pull of the homeland is visible in his context and the writer's own affiliations and afflictions are felt by readers through this. The fact that Desai was a diasporic writer and could have experienced similar pangs of anxiety and homesickness is revealed. Though Biju doesn't think of the reasons why he left India, the pull of home is exceptionally strong because he wants to be in a place where people value his cultural heritage and where he is loved by someone. He becomes nostalgic and the Great American Dream which attracted many immigrants fails to impress Biju.

The state of immigrants has been depicted in the following: "But it WAS so hard and YET there were so many here. It was terribly, terribly hard. Millions risked death, were humiliated, hated, lost their families—YET there were so many here. (Desai, 189) Later it is mentioned how empty and hopeless Biju starts to feel: "Year by year, his life wasn't amounting to anything at all; in a space that should have included family, friends, he was the only one displacing the air. And yet, another part of him had expanded: his self-consciousness, his self-pity—oh the tediousness of it. Clumsy in America, a giant-sized midget, a big fat-sized helping of small. . . Shouldn't he return to a life where he might slice his own importance, to where he might relinquish this overrated control over his own destiny and perhaps be subtracted from its determination altogether? He might even experience that greatest luxury of not noticing himself at all."(Desai, 268)

Jasbir Jain, in his essay, "The New Parochialism: Homeland in the Writing of the Indian Diaspora" purports the fact that, as opposed to a diasporic writer, the Indian writer has marginalities to contend with,

project and foreground : "His position vis-à-vis the hegemonic powers abroad is one of resistance (and not acceptance). His subject-position in his own country locates him differently. ....The writer in him is continually contending with political realities, dissensions, ideologies and national crises." Then, he speaks about the diasporic writers and states that: "Time and again diasporic writers and theorists have been assailed for being inauthentic, for misrepresenting Indian reality, for catering to the market forces and several other reasons of the same kind...The narratives of the diaspora are framed by memory and distance and motivated by a desire to construct their own reality. For the culture back home their writing fulfils a role similar to that of an "Introduction" to a translated text. It sets out the parameters and the principles for interpreting the text, for decoding it, and as such it limits the text. It occupies the space in between the text and the reader, a space which does not necessarily belong to it. To say the least, the political and literary concerns in India are different from the ones which concern the writer of the diaspora. While the individual's right to his experience and memory is indisputable – the political purpose (and influence) of literature cannot be sidelined. Increasingly, the terms which have entered critical discourse are being defined by the West, words like Transnational, Hybridity, Transborder etc., fixing us in a slot not of our making." Then, he raises questions which add meaning to the analysis of the discussed texts: "How many of us are willing to accept them uncritically? And how many of us are carried away by their power and surrender to them without sparing a thought as to how they have been constructed?" (Jain, 61-69)

Since the writers Kiran Desai and Aravind Adiga are considered to be diasporic by some critics and Indian writers by others, it may well be assumed that the observations of Jasbir Jain are partly true and this orients us to think of these novels in a new direction, Postcolonial and diasporic.

John McLeod in his book, *Beginning PostColonialism*, states in the chapter 'The Nation in question' that Homi Bhabha's essay, "DissemiNation : Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation" asserts that there can never be any one, coherent, common narrative through which a nation and its people can be adequately captured. The nation remains a site of heterogeneity and difference. Narratives which claim otherwise can do so only through the marginalization of certain groups, yet even this claim will be undone by the disjunctive temporalities which they cannot help but create. (McLeod, 120)

The narratives of Adiga's *The White Tiger* and Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* substantiate the statement McLeod makes about the oppression of the marginalized. The characters of Balram Halwai and the judge's cook are examples of postcolonial resistance in myriad forms. While Balram registers his resistance by committing crimes to reach his goal of becoming a rich man, the cook is just a meek receiver of the oppression by the imperialist judge, the oppressed-turned oppressor. While one accepts being servile, the other tries to overpower by criminal methods. Balram's transformation from a modest peasant to a provoked individual capable of murder in pursuit of his own success is remarkable. At the same time, Judge Jemubhai's colonial mentality, his continued attachment to the west despite undergoing conflicts himself and the causes that led him to this situation are noteworthy. Thus, both the characters display very diverse and far-fetched reactions to the same postcolonial attitude proving that resistances vary in different situations.

It may thus be concluded that both the texts offer a substantial and impressive account of the variety of postcolonial resistances registered by the oppressed.

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# Gender Perspective in the Novels “God of Small Things” and “Stree”

*Sathyavani Gandham*

## **Abstract (12pt)**

The age-old social barriers were very strong and it was impossible to break them at a stretch. After the gender revolution in 1970s, in Indian literature writing by women about women has become a socio-political act. Indian women writers have deliberately sought the novel as their medium of expression with a strong element of protest. They compressed the situation of the modern woman and their writings reflected a variety of shades, colours and visions of gender. Most of the research work have been done on English, Hindi, Urdu, Panjabi and other language fictions but not on Southern Languages i.e. my mother tongue Telugu in English. Hence, decided to look at the Gender perspectives in the Telugu & English novels of South Indian writers. The focus of this paper is to explore the gender perspective in the novels of Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things* (1992) and Ranganayakamma's *Stree* (1997). The protagonists of the novels are seen struggling through different phases of transformation. These novels portray the picture of the transformation of gender perspective.

Suzanna Arundhati Roy, born on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1961, is an Indian author best known for her novel The God of Small Things (1997), which won the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 1997 and became the biggest-selling book by a non-expatriate Indian author. She is also a political activist involved in human rights and environmental causes. The book keeps all the promises that it makes. Roy donated the prize money she received, as well as royalties from her book, to human rights causes. Prior to the Booker, Roy won the National Film Award for Best Screenplay in 1989, for the screenplay of “In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones”. In 2015, she returned the national award in protest against religious intolerance and the growing violence by rightwing groups in India.

Ranganayakamma, born in 1939 is a leading Telugu feminist-Marxist writer and critic. She was born in Bommidi village near Tadepalligudem in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. She passed Secondary School Leaving Certificate examination in 1955. She could not continue her studies because her parents could not financially afford to send her to a far-off college. The most outstanding feature of Ranganayakamma's writings is that she writes in the most lucid manner, and even her opponents acknowledge this fact. She won the Andhra Pradesh Government Sahitya Academy Award for the novel *Balipeetam* in 1965. However, since she came into contact with Marxism, she started opposing awards, whether governmental or non-governmental.

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## Introduction

Society lays down the patterns of life for a man and a woman much before they take birth by conceiving fixed identities for them. In a patriarchal society like India, due to the stereotypes, hierarchies and polarization in the men and women's relationship occur, by which they seek to understand themselves as well as others. Female were allocated marginal space as the men have an upper hand and being positioned in the center of social organizations. Human tendency to rule and control and think in terms of binary parameters of superior/inferior, culture /nature, normal/abnormal etc. attributes the less privileged characteristics to women that are being existing on the peripheral space of society.

'Gender' is a concept which gained much importance among all the sectors today. In the Modern lexicon, it is an intensely challenging word. In the sixth edition of Dr. Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1785) 'gender' is defined as the grammatical practice of classifying nouns as masculine, feminine or neuter. It could also mean 'a sex'. The verb 'to gender' is also used as a synonym for the sexual act: to beget, to breed or to copulate. In the nineteenth century, sexuality emerged as an object of scientific and popular knowledge. A process of Social construction resulted in to the gendered identities and experiences by which gender became a central idea to our self-experiences as well as of others. (Jean, 1997).

### Biographical Note of the Authors

**Suzanna Arundhati Roy**, born on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1961 in Shillong, Meghalaya in India. She is one of the most prominent Indian English writers, who have tried their hands at novels, screenplay writing, essays etc. She also is a social activist. She has spent her childhood at Ayemenam in Kerala and incorporated her childhood memories in her debut novel, *The God of Small Things* which she began writing in 1992 and completed in 1996. Rajyashree Khusu Lahiri in one of her research papers describes it as, "a taboo-breaking protest novel," she also adds, "out of a sense of complacency at having rid the society of discrimination based on caste and gender." (Dhawan R. K., 1999). Arundhati Roy is also a social activist, environmentalist, a political analyst, a critique of terrorism, and a supporter of minority culture.

Her work 'The Cost of Living' (1999) which is a critique of Indian government's nuclear policies. She also has written *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* (2004), *Strange Case of the Attack on Indian Parliament* (2007) and *The Shape of the Beast* (2008). Arundhati also has worked for T.V. and films. She has written screen plays like *Annie Gives it those Ones* (1989), *Electric Moon* (1992), *The Bunyan Tree, Damage: A Film with Arundhati Roy* (2002).

The God of Small Things (1997), which won the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 1997 and became the biggest-selling book by a non-expatriate Indian author. The book keeps all the promises that it makes. Roy donated the prize money she received, as well as royalties from her book, to human rights causes. Prior to the Booker, Roy won the National Film Award for Best Screenplay in 1989, for the screenplay of "In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones". In 2015, she returned the national award in protest against religious intolerance and the growing violence by rightwing groups in India. She has won many recognitions and prestigious awards for her writings apart from Man Booker Prize; in 2002 the Lannan Foundation's Cultural Freedom Award, in 2004 the Sydney Peace Prize, in 2006 Sahitya Academy Award for her collection of Essays "*The Algebra of Infinite Justice*" and many more. She is the first Indian woman writer to win the prestigious Man Booker Prize for her novel (Prashant, 2017).

**Ranganayakamma**, was born on 21st September, 1939 Bommidi village near Tadepalligudem in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. Her mother was Lakshmi Narasamma and father was Lakshmi Satyanarayananayya. Her father published a caste-oriented small-scale magazine titled *Padma Nayaka* at a small printing press that he owned in *Tadepalligudem*, a proximal rural town in Andhra Pradesh. She passed Secondary School Leaving Certificate examination in 1956. She could not continue her studies because her parents could not financially afford to send her to a far-off college.

Ranganayakamma is a leading Telugu feminist-Marxist writer, Progressive Thinker and critic. In the very early phase, she wrote for a magazine edited by her father. The themes of her fiction revolved around the folklore fantasies involving princes, princesses, demons and the like. Her first story to use a social theme was *Parvathamma* (the name of the principal character in the story) published in 1955 in the then popular magazine called *Telugu Swatantra*. Before her marriage, she wrote a couple of short stories and a long story *Palleturu* (The Village). With the theme to oppose a popular tradition prevalent in the Telugu community and the other southern Indian states of arranging marriages between close relatives such as the cousins. Her first and most popular novel *Krishnaveni* (name of the principal character in the novel) appeared in the then popular weekly magazine called *Andhra Prabha* for several months. The most outstanding feature of Ranganayakamma's writings is that she writes in the most lucid manner, and even her opponents acknowledge this fact. She wrote the novel '*Stree*' in the year 1965 and till today it was published 11 times

and it was modified accordingly for 9 re prints. The main theme under which the novel built was "Socialization Process".

In 1965, the then *Sahitya Academy*, the literary organization of the state of Andhra Pradesh, conferred on Ranganayakama a prize for the best novel for *Balipeetham*. She accepted the award as she was unaware of the political undercurrents that govern bestowing such honors at that time. She declined several offers of honors and awards by various organizations and individuals after enlightened by the Marxist thinking.

In collaboration with two others, Ranganayakamma translated two important books by Charles Bettelheim, a French Marxist economist: (1) China since Mao, and (2) Cultural Revolution and Industrial Organization into Telugu. She remained an unyielding critic of the religious scriptures like Ramayana (Wrote '*Ramayana Vishavruksham*' which is translated into English in 2004), Mahabharata and Vedas (Ranganayakamma.org)

### **The God of Small Things – Characters**

The main characters of the novel are Ammu, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Rahel, Pappachi, Chacko, Estha and Velultha.

**Ammu & Velutha:** The first character **Ammu**, a middle-class bourgeois woman belongs to a reputed Syrian Christian family from Kerala, a divorcee with two children, she is the female protagonist of the novel. Though she is educated and articulate, she is the victim of marriage that did not work out. She marries a Bengali Brahmin in open defiance of her family. Her husband turned out to be not just a heavy drinker but a full-blown alcoholic with all of an alcoholic's deviousness and tragic charm. "There were things about him that Ammu never understood. Long after she left him, she never stopped wondering why he lied so outrageously when he didn't need to particularly when he didn't need to" (P.40). Her husband used to inflict beastly treatment on her to the extreme end of satisfying the carnal pleasures of his boss, so that his job remains secure. This painful situation forces Ammu to divorce him: "Drunken violence followed by post-drunken badgering" (P. 42) and she returned to her parents in Ayemenem along with her dizygotic twins-Estha and Rahel. This return deprived Ammu's social position and prestige, of every kind. She is treated as an unwelcome guest in her very own house where she was born and brought up.

Ammu is a lady with great self-confidence and she often outwits her own oxford educated brother, Chacko even though she was deprived of the opportunity to study and have an exposure like her brother. According to Chacko who is always bent on marginalizing his own sister – "Ammu had no Locusts standi" (P.57) and that "Ammu, Estha and Rahel were millstones around his neck" (P.85)

"Ammu learned to live with this cold, calculating cruelty... she did exactly nothing to avoid quarrels and confrontations. In fact, it could be argued that she sought them out, perhaps even enjoyed them" (P.182). The repeated rejections of Ammu by her own kith and kin compels her to seek emotional refuge in **Velultha** - a low caste or 'untouchable' carpenter. A clandestine love-affair develops between the two resulting in furtive sexual encounters which is in violation of the traditional norms of the Syrian Christian society. Because of her moral transgression the church also refused to bury Ammu. "Rahel thought she looked like a roman senator. Et tu, Ammu! She thought and smiled, remembering Estha!! (P162). Thus, "Ammu died in a grimy room in the Bharat lodge in Alleppey... She died alone. She was thirty-one. Not old, not young, but a viable, die-able age" (P.161). In the long run, Ammu is disowned by her society, separated ruthlessly from her children and faces a lonely death (Nanda, 2012). Through their trajectories of personal involvement in different issues, the interrogation of the structures of caste, clan and gender in both implicit and explicit manner, Ammu had observed rightly and said "Thanks to our wonderful male chauvinistic society" (P.57).

**Mammachi & Pappachi:** The second character of the novel is "**Mammachi**", mother of both Ammu and Chacko. She is an artistic personality. She has the skills of playing the violin. When her music teacher praises her exceptional talent before her husband her music lessons are stopped abruptly because of the fear that his wife may surpass **Pappachi**. He "insisted that a college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl" (P. 38) regarding the education of Ammu. Pappachi had been an Imperial Entomologist at the Pusa Institute. The year he retired, he had risen to a rank equivalent to Director, Entomology (P. 48-49). Mammachi possesses the adept business skills and starts a pickle factory all by herself after her husband's retirement from the government service, but her husband Pappachi "would not help her with the pickle-making because he did not consider pickle-making a suitable job for a high-ranking ex-govt. official. He beat her every night for no apparent reason with a brass flower vas, the beatings weren't new. What was new was only the frequency with which they took place" (P. 47).

After Pappachi's death Chacko, her son took over the factory from her and in losing her factory Mammachi was marginalized in terms of both clan and gender. She was made a sleeping partner. According to Chacko's philosophy "what's yours is mine and what's mine is also mine" (P.57). Mammachi however does not resist her tyrannical son, she concedes to his "Men's Needs" as Chacko flirts with "pretty women who worked in the factory" forcing them to "sit at table with him and drink tea" (P.65) much to the dismay of

his own mother. She describes it as: "*He can't help having a Man's Needs*" (P. 168). However, unlike Ammu, Mammachi never questions the conditions and accepts the reality passively and with a strange 'resilience' in her character. Her acquiescence is a defensive gesture of her story sense of 'endurance' to undergo the torture and trauma without speaking it out (Ibid. P. 3, 2012).

The third female character, **Baby Kochamma** is the sister of Pappachi, who is another maltreated victim in the novel. She receives the shock of her life when her dream of marrying father Mulligan, an Irish priest gets shattered. To win him, she converts herself to Roman Catholic faith but ultimately, she is a failure and starts living in isolation in the Ayemenem house. Baby Kochamma had "lived her life backwards, as a young woman she had renounced the material world, and now, as an old one, she seemed to embrace it. She hugged it and it hugged her back" (P. 22). Taking the death of Sophie Mol, daughter of Chacko as advantage, Baby Kochamma conspires with the inspector and puts Velultha behind the bars, where he is severely beaten to death because Baby Kochamma "focused all her fury at her public humiliation on Velultha" (P. 82). This attitude of negativism is perhaps due to the unjust and malicious treatment meted out in her life, 'the fear of being dispossessed'. She felt that she had the "fate of the wretched Man-less woman" (P.45). Amitabh in his analysis about Baby Kochamma's character opines that, "It is a pity that she submits in the name of decency and honor to the very sexiest, casteist and communal prejudices that have stood in her way and denied fulfillment to her" (2005, P.62) Thus like Mammachi, Baby Kochamma also apparently submits to the patriarchal social norms without any hesitation but if closely examined she puts up a line of implicit resistance against the biased socio-political and economic order in the post-colonial India (Ibid. P. 3, 2012).

The fourth female character and through which all the story was narrated is **Rahel**, one of the dizygotic twins and daughter of Ammu who is deprived of conventional parental love. She lives with the stigma of a mixed parentage, both religious (as her father was Hindu and mother was a Syrian Christian) and ethnic (as father was a Bengali and Mother is a Keralite). She has a hard time in School and was expelled three times from the Nazareth convent and refused to be co-opted by the school. She considers Velultha to be a father figure with whom she uses to play. "She knew his back. She'd been carried on it. More times than she could count" (P.73). When Rahel discovers about the sexual liaison of Ammu with Velultha, she locks herself in the bedroom. Being the victim of a dysfunctional family, she fails to connect with the people around her and lacks self-confidence. The most unnatural act of social transgression committed by Rahel is her incestuous love for her twin brother Estha- which is perhaps her implicit resistance toward the social order. "Rahel watched Estha with the curiosity of a mother watching her wet child. A sister a brother. A woman a man. A twin a twin" (P.93) The only person with whom Rahel has harmony, an empathetic link is her own twin brother Estha, eighteen minutes her senior. Their personalities balance each other like the two halves of a circle; complementing each other.

She is a girl with an active imagination. For instance, when she feels scared, she imagines that Pappachi's moth is crawling on her heart with icy legs. While attending Sophie's funeral, she imagines Sophie Mol turning over in her coffin. Like a lost soul Rahel wanders in her life. She takes up architecture program in Delhi without any thought or interest, there she meets Larry McCaslin the researcher, marries him and goes to the U.S.A. She drifts into marriage, "Like a passenger drifts into an unoccupied chair in an airport lounge" (P.18) But soon divorced and returns to Ayemenem, her birth place. Like Ammu, Rahel at a young age also learns to dream and imagine and like her she is ultimately disowned and rejected by the society.

**Chacko** is the son of Mammachi and Pappachi, also brother of Ammu. He was a self-proclaimed Marxist (P. 65) He describes his father as an 'Anglophile' (P. 52). He used to prevent Pappachi from beating his mother. Mammachi often said that Chacko was easily one of the cleverest men in India (P. 55). Chacko registered Mammachi's large pickle making kitchen as a partnership by making her a sleeping partner and invested in equipment. He christened the factory Paradise Pickles & Preserves. Chacko was also divorced but he is a biological father of Sophie Mol. Though he knew about his family conditions, without his family's knowledge, he married Margaret Kochamma. He was the true symbol of male chauvinistic society as Ammu opined.

**Estha, Esthappen** is Ammu's twin son and Rahel's twin brother. He had always been a quiet child and his silence was never awkward. Never intrusive. Never noisy. It wasn't an accusing, protesting silence as much as a sort of aestivation, a dormancy, the psychological equivalent of what lungfish do to get themselves through the dry season. Overtime he had acquired the ability to blend into the background of wherever he was (P. 10). He occupied very little space in the world (P. 11). He finished school with mediocre results and began to do the housework to sustain himself. Estha was enfolded by the quietness, it rocked him to the rhythm of an ancient, foetal heart beat with which he withdrew from the world over years (P. 11-12). After Ammu's death, Estha is sent back to his father and the twins face the pain of separation. Thus, they spend their childhood in an altogether different manner, learning "how history negotiates its terms and collects its dues from those who break its laws" (P. 55).

### Stree – Characters

The characters of the novel belong to two generations either it is women or men.

**Sharada, Annapurna, Savitri and Kameswaramma** are the first-generation women – who are deprived of education, doesn't have any decision-making capacity in the family and remains as the oppressed symbols for male chauvinistic society.

**Padmaja, Parvathi, Sujatha, Rukmini, Janaki, Vasundhara, Suseela and Rani** are the second-generation women – who have education, awareness about the conditions of the society, self- decision-making power and looks like the symbols for empowerment in transition phase. These second-generation women again could be divided into three categories.

Among these Second-generation women '*Padmaja*' is the only women (a progressive women) who designs her life on her own and crosses all the boundaries set by the society with her logical thinking, self-confidence and values. She is the representative of the phase of "transition to transformation". The second category women among the second-generation women are Parvathi, Sujatha and Vasundhara, they limited themselves to the transition phase and they changed their lives according to their convenience where society wouldn't have much objection to their living style. This attitude of these women shows lack of self-confidence and courage to fight against the societal norms. The third category women among the second-generation women are Rukmini, Janaki and Suseela remains as the descendants of the first generation because they have limited access to education, undergone early marriages, development of insecurity towards life made them representatives of the oppressed category women of the patriarchal society.

Among all the women characters of the novel, **Kameswaramma** is the only first-generation women, who mould herself according to the circumstances and learns to accept the time being changes and struggles a lot in and out. She accepts all the changes that happened in her life in transition phase and as well as in transformation phase too.

**Padmaja**, a self-confident and courageous woman, though she born as a normal girl child in Brahmin family, she became a special personality with her logical and progressive thinking as she grown up. In her childhood Padmaja started showing inquisitiveness on various aspects related to religion and society. In her childhood she uses to ask her father, questions like:

- What is the reason behind sprinkling water around the meal plate in brahmin custom?
- What is the basis to divide the human beings into four varnas?
- Does women shall be under ignorance?
- What is Society and where does it exist?
- Does women shall be deprived of education?

Her father Eshwara Somayaji gave her freedom to take the decisions on her own regarding education but he can't cross the societal norms in case of marriage. She acquired professional degree in Medicine and married George Williams, her co-medico by expressing her complete opinion to her father. By this act she crossed all the social, caste, regional and global barriers. With her ideology she influenced the people around her but she couldn't make much difference.

**Eshwara Somayaji, Chalapathi Rao and Ramanadham** are the first-generation men – who are true representatives of the patriarchal society, gives utmost importance to the societal norms by making them as their individual values. Though **Vijaya Shastri, Raghu Babu, Suryam, Ramam and Chandra Sekharam** belong to the second-generation, they continue to be the representatives of the age-old patriarchy by living in a confined conventional approach. **Eshwara Somayaji**, is also a brahmin orthodox in nature. He is a Tahsildar, though he practices all the Brahminic traditions and customs without fail. Whenever his daughter Padmaja shown curiosity towards social aspects and gave a logical explanation with scientific reasons, he started re-thinking over certain issues. He completed bounced by his daughter's logic. He encouraged his daughter for higher studies keeping aside all the social norms of that particular time and also changed his thought pattern to some extent. But, when Padmaja expressed her love towards George Williams, an Anglo-Indian, who believes in Christianity and hailed to India from western countries, he couldn't cross the social barriers in that issue and he doesn't have the courage to oppose the society. Therefore, he asks his daughter to go away from home and marry George. He seems to be a true transformer of certain social aspects apart from all the characters of the novel. He changed his ideology according to the time to some extent only.

**George Williams** is an Anglo Indian, the society where he grown up is completely different and promoted free thinking in him. He has a broad mentality which makes his personality extra-ordinary. He respects Padmaja's personality and encourages her towards her goals. He is totally different from Indian Society and its traditions/ customs.

### Gender Perspective in both the Novels

**Socialization Process** - both the novels depict the socialization process at various levels i.e. within the Indian society, at regional level in India and global level. The difference in socialization process at Indian

regional level and global level could be seen among the male characters of the novels. The difference in socialization process at within Indian society and also at regional level could be seen among the female characters of the novels.

**Influence of Patriarchy on Men and their Psyche** – the male characters in the both the novels are the true representatives of the Male chauvinistic society. The age-old ideology of patriarchy reflects in their every vein and acts of psyche. Pappachi, Chacko, Vijaya Shastri, Chalapathi Rao, Suryam, Ramanadham (though he is a teacher) stood as the icons for the male chauvinism of Indian Society. Velutha and Somayaji are of transformative, though they are influenced by the patriarchal ideology. George doesn't have any influence of patriarchy on him as he belongs to a different society at a global level.

**Breaking the Boundaries** - Ammu has an illicit relationship with Velultha, Rahel indulges in a sexual relationship with her own brother. They have shown assertion and aversion to the socio orthodox society. They break the moral norms of the society and indulge in sexual freedom. Male chauvinism and gender biasness are the major hurdles in Ammu's life. She has been confronted with patriarchy since her childhood.

After divorce, she comes back to the hell of Ayemenem with her twins. She along with her kids gets humiliation because "die-vorce" means dead (Sujatha, 2018). Ammu and Chacko both are estranged but Chacko receives a warm welcome and becomes the inheritor of the property and his profligacy is recognized as "Man's Needs" (P. 168), whereas Ammu is treated as a "Veshya" (Prostitute). She doesn't neglect her bodily needs and assert herself. "She wanted her body pack" (P. 222).

**Gender Discrimination is clearly evidenced** - The female characters of both the novels are torn between traditional boundaries and modern free zones. Both the writers through their novels, have beautifully affirmed that a woman too, is a living entity not an appendage of man. She is an independent being, who is bestowed with the capacity to tread her own path to salvation.

**Lack of Freedom of the Female** – the freedom of the women is controlled by the men of their family as well as society

**Marginalization of Women** - Both the novels depict that the fight against gender oppression leads to resistance against caste, class oppression and stimulates anti-colonial thoughts. Such rebellious attitudes are vividly expressed through the marital and inter-gender relations.

The main characters of both the novels defy oppressive and repressive social and political structures. Though they do not succeed in bringing about any noticeable change, they make a bold attempt towards realization of their dreams. Their efforts towards subalterns may not be deliberate but their actions definitely contribute to the liberation of subalterns.

Both the novels depict women as subalterns, some of whom try to confront the existing social inequalities in order to bring about a change. Though they lack articulate voice of the members of other groups in Indian society, they challenge the existing local, regional and global inequalities prevalent in the society. They question the structures of caste, class and gender in all respects merely by their personal involvement in different issues.

## Conclusion

To conclude, Women's rights and the politics of gender and sexuality – is the most significant in terms of the plot and thematic centre of both the novels. According to Roy, the small things mean the victims of socio-political, economic, cultural practices, women, Dalits and children who are placed in the position of second sex. Women are considered the private property and always taken them for granted. The same is reflected in the novel of Ranganayakamma's Stree too. Both the writers have illustrated various gender perspectives in a very striking and comprehensible manner in both the novels. Both the novels reflect the undesired sufferings of women. Roy and Ranganayakamma delineated the plight of women in a male dominated social set-up and strongly supports the female cause through their novels.

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# The Symbiotic Illusion: Analysing the mother-daughter relationship in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's short story "The Word Love"

Reema L. Kotian

## Abstract (12pt)

The uniqueness of the mother-daughter relationship can be attributed to the high levels of emotional intensity and ambivalence that it is characterised by. Also, it is the one lifelong relationship that comprises of a conflicting mix of powerful feelings of mutual attachment and at the same time a desire to gain autonomy by psychologically breaking free. This conflict in the mother-daughter relationship is further compounded when they are physically situated far apart in different countries and social settings. The differences in the cultural values and norms, due to the daughter residing in a host country which is more liberal in its cultural outlook can have a strong impact on the mother-daughter bond.

The short story that has been selected for analysis is titled "The Word Love", taken from the book *Arranged Marriage*, the American award-winning collection of short stories written by diasporic South Asian writer Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The story is essentially about a young diasporic Indian Bengali woman's excessive emotional attachment to her widowed mother who lives in India and how this relationship is both a source of strength and frustration for her, hindering her ability to sustain an intimate relationship with the man she loves.

This paper aims to analyse the story using the theory of "the symbiotic illusion" proposed by the psychoanalyst Hendrika C. Freud in her work *Electra vs. Oedipus* which explores the deeply complex and turbulent relationship between mothers and daughters and puts forward the notion that women are in fact more preoccupied with their mother in contrast to Sigmund Freud's conviction that the father is the central figure. Hendrika Freud puts forth her theory on the basis of numerous case studies and her own extensive clinical experience.

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The first and the most interesting aspect of this particular short story of Divakaruni's is that she doesn't assign names to the principal characters of the story – the daughter and the mother, which clearly brings to the fore, the fact, that this is a story that is universally applicable to mothers and daughters all over the world. The story begins by giving us a glimpse of the feelings of guilt and the inner turmoil that the narrator is experiencing as she goes over and over in her mind the various ways in which she could break the news about being in a live-in relationship in America, with a white man, to her extremely orthodox, conservative mother who lived in India.

Oscillating between conflicting feelings like confession and repentance on one hand and anger and defiance on the other, the narrator constantly hears her mother's voice whisper within her ever since she had moved in with her boyfriend, that her decision was a mistake. Wodak and Schulz opine that changes in social norms as well as an increase in the variety of choices available to young women today contribute to increased

uncertainty within them as their mothers symbolise the very traditional model that they want to reject in their quest for liberation especially with regard to the factor of sexual freedom. (14)

Through the narrator's fond memories of her mother and her childhood, we are able to see the reasons for her attachment and loyalty to the latter. Having become a widow, when her daughter was just two years old, the narrator's mother had "taken off her jewelry and put on widow's white and dedicated the rest of her life to the business of bringing [her] up" (58). In her silent moments of nostalgia, the narrator often recollects the fragrance of her mother's hair which would curl around her face as she sat on her lap and learnt to write, of how they would bathe in the Ganges and then sit on its banks savouring delicacies prepared by her mother, of her mother's face bright with happiness at her high school graduation. Having lost her father at an extremely young age has resulted in the narrator's life being strongly intertwined with only one other individual – her mother.

We can observe that the lack of a father's presence in the narrator's life has inadvertently contributed to the mother-daughter relationship getting stronger. As Hendrika Freud observes,

When the father is emotionally or physically absent and will not or cannot intervene to break through a mother–daughter bond that is too intense, when in the mother's experience he plays no role as her child's father, when the mother seeks her fulfilment in the child, the mother–child dyad will not become a triad. The oedipal phase or triangulation, wherein the child must recognize that it is not alone in the world with its mother, will be achieved inadequately or not at all. (12)

The selflessness with which her mother had dedicated her life to her is one of the key factors which is responsible for the narrator having internalised the altruistic model that her mother represents while simultaneously developing an identity of her own. Thus, despite her rejection of the traditional values imbued in her by her mother, the narrator is unable to overcome her attachment to her mother whom she deeply loves.

Even the features of her face which so resemble that of her mother further intensify her sense of guilt. This illusion of being one with her mother which the narrator experiences is explained by Hendrika Freud as the "symbiotic illusion". She refers to it as the "the mutual psychological involvement that leads to extreme interdependence" preventing the development of autonomy or individuation within the child which is an essential prerequisite for further development of any sort. She also states that such an illusion can be encountered at any age. (10-11)

Indulging in sexual pleasure with her partner always comes at the price of being beset by guilt post the act. The narrator particularly remembers how she had secretly gone to watch a movie with her girlfriends when she was in college as her mother didn't approve of it. Word had gotten around to her mother and the narrator had arrived home from college the next day to find a suitcase full of her clothes on the doorstep along with a note addressed to her by her mother that she preferred not having a daughter to one who disobeyed her and brought a bad name to the family. Having sat on the doorstep all afternoon under the curious glances of passers-by until midnight when her mother had finally opened the door and taken her in, the narrator remembers how her mother had washed away the numbness of her feet by dipping them in warm water with boric soda and wiping them with soft towels. The narrator shudders at the thought of what her mother would have to say about her present situation where she was living with and having sexual relations with a man she wasn't even married to.

Guilt is often an extremely strong feeling entangled along with love and anger in a mother-daughter relationship and is felt more strongly by the daughter because the mother's notion of appropriate behaviour is often more particular for the same-sex child as the interdependence between them is stronger (Wodak and Schulz, 46). Also, the protagonist's awareness that her mother has single-handedly raised her despite all odds also contribute to her submissiveness and lack of rebellion with regard to her mother's conservative mentality and strict upbringing. For this too we can see an explanation provided by Hendrika Freud as she analyses the behaviours of daughters raised by single mothers,

Daughters especially run the risk of becoming the only source of consolation for a desperate and helpless mother. This will make them swallow normal irritations and keep them from articulating any criticism, which may thwart their development, particularly during puberty. The inclination that girls already have to feel solidarity with their mothers will hereby be reinforced. Thus, it can occur that the second separation–individuation phase that adolescence provides may slip away from them. (49)

Freud also says that though single mothers like divorcees or widows do raise their children in a healthy manner there is a tendency especially when the child is a daughter to view her as an extension of oneself. Hence there is a greater chance of such a relationship developing into a symbiotic illusion as there is the absence of a father-figure to present a different point of view and stimulate independence in the child (49-50). This is seen in the case of the narrator too where she often remembers how her mother would often tell her how they only had each other in the world.

The narrator's mother calls her up weekly once, every Saturday morning and despite her efforts the former is unable to tell her the truth. Initially, her fear of her mother finding out about her relationship is so great that she rushes to the phone every time it rings and sleeps next to the bedside extension to prevent any chances of her partner picking it up accidentally. But she gradually relaxes, as subconsciously somewhere deep inside she wants her mother to find out. The fateful event does happen when her mother calls her up early on a Tuesday morning to inform her about her cousin's wedding being arranged and the call is picked up by her partner.

The narrator's attempts to explain her choices and reason with her mother come to no avail as the latter breaks off all contact with her – not picking her calls, changing the telephone number, not accepting and sending back her registered letter. The mother even goes to the extent of changing her will, sending across a strong message to the daughter that she has disowned her completely. This sends the daughter, whose world had always revolved around her mother and whom she loved from the very core of her being, into a slow, gradual, downward spiral into depression. Fingerman categorises the narrator's mother's response to the situation into the destructive behaviour variety which is seen in mother-daughter relationships. These include "verbal or nonverbal actions" which are done with the express purpose of insulting, hurting and inducing guilt in the opposite party. (152)

Once the narrator realises that her choices have deeply hurt her mother, she is unable to derive any pleasure, through physical intimacy which leads to a gradual estrangement with her partner. Lawler refers to one of the common "cultural constructions of sexuality" which views that its free expression is the only way for one to comprehend one's true self. But this is often difficult for women for whom heterosexual relations are blemished by guilt which is a legacy they inherit from their mothers. (98)

The narrator's depression drives her to a point where she even contemplates suicide. These masochistic tendencies linked to guilt feelings are explained by Hendrika Freud,

Masochism is closely linked not only to aggression but also to the taboo around sexuality. Taking pleasure in one's own body can be a source of painful fantasies when a girl has the feeling that her pleasure with a third party will be at the expense of her mother or will hurt her. Such a daughter believes that when she does not make herself entirely available to her mother, she is not a good daughter. Once this idea has taken root, it may actually cause the daughter to abandon all erotic desires. (86)

Her live-in partner initially tries to comfort her, but he is unable to understand the deep attachment that the protagonist has for her mother and fathom the reason as to why she can't let go. Apart from this he is also unable to understand that the narrator comes from a non-Western background where a lot of importance is given to human interdependence and family and community connections.

The narrator's partner's inability to understand her attachment towards her mother, her feelings of guilt and his opinion of it as irrational behaviour probably stems from the differences in psychological development between the male and the female child. Boys at a young age are pushed away by mothers and encouraged to be different. Thus, they are able to renounce their attachment to their mother in a socially sanctioned way in order to develop their masculinity. But this doesn't happen in the case of girls where they are encouraged to continue being dependant on their mothers, who are more reluctant to let them go (Wodak and Schulz, 8). This does have its psychological ramifications,

Separation does not play the same role for the girl as it does for the boy, nor is it for her a required condition for developing a healthy sexuality, as it is for him. Separation often comes into being only partially, without it necessarily having any negative effects on the girl's development. When separation either does not occur at all or else is radical, the result will be pathological. (Freud, 76)

Finally, the narrator's partner confronts her with the blunt truth that it had always been her mother whom she had truly loved and never him and storms out of the house they shared. Thus, it is clear that the pathological result of this lack of separation manifests itself in the protagonist's inability to sustain her relationship with her partner once her bond with her mother comes under jeopardy, reinforcing Freud's view that the mother-daughter symbiosis hinders triangulation or the acceptance of a third party.

Towards the end of the story, the protagonist goes for a walk in the rain, where her thoughts finally clear, washing away all inessentials. She sees the word 'love' in a whole new light, realising the need to live for herself and carve out a new beginning breaking off all ties with the past. Finally, towards the end of the story we see that the protagonist does achieve separation from her mother, but not without suffering extreme psychological distress and complete repudiation from her mother. The story ends on an ambivalent note with the protagonist making the decision to move out and live for herself, but not before leaving the reader with the awareness that she would live with a hollowness inside her, which may or may not heal with time.

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# Sita - The Progenitor of Feminism

**Roopa Manjunath**

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## Abstract

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Since time immemorial, women have been fighting against patriarchal society and against discrimination, stand up for their rights, viz. not to be abandoned to the menstrual hut, refusing to defecate in the open any longer, right to education, etc. The study aims to show the resistance of women in such a society. In the ancient days of Ramayan and Mahabharath too, women have been cast into stereotypes and subjugated. Ultimately, they rise against male dominance and become role models for the daughters of the coming generations. Sita is an epitome of exquisite beauty, intelligence, compassion, valor and courage to stand up for what is morally right. Chitra Divakaruni's 'The Forest of Enchantments' is a tragic love story of Sita, the protagonist of Valmiki's 'Ramayan', remarks on "women's struggle to retain autonomy in a world that privileges men". Sita is strong and refuses to be taken for granted after compromising twice with Ram - during the 'fire by trial' at Lanka, and when she was wrongly banished by Ram to suppress the gossip-mongers about her stay in Lanka with Ravan. After accepting Luv and Kush as his sons, in spite of his trust on Sita, Ram wants her to undergo another fire trial to convince his subjects on her chastity. Not many women can stand up for their rights even today as Sita did. In conclusion, unless we empower our women, our country will not progress. Women are pillars of the society - the roots of the tree which stands tall.

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"Feminism is a moral self-reflection, conquering inner fears and realisation of selfworth....it doesn't abandon values or relationships, but creates new ones." - Jasbir Jain<sup>1</sup>.

Since time immemorial, women have been fighting against patriarchal society. They have been uniting to fight against discrimination, to stand up for their rights - right to education, the right to respect one's privacy, not to be abandoned to the menstrual hut, refusing to defecate in the open any longer, and not be vulnerable to the lecherous men lurking outside in the dark, to be a sure victim of rape and sexual harassment.

In a patriarchal society, men hold predominant power - in the political arena, social arena, in the families as the father figure. Even though women form more than half the population of men in the country, their situation is grim - they have been subjugated in the name of religion, culture and tradition. They have been denied freedom in all places, including their homes. Even though women are granted 33% education in certain fields. Attention must be paid on overcoming rigid caste hierarchy and repression of women.

The study aims to show the resistance of women in a patriarchal society. Since the ancient days - days of the 'Ramayan' and 'Mahabharath', women have been cast into stereotypes and subjugated. The two important characters of these epics - Sita and Draupadi, resist the dominance of the patriarchal society. They are intelligent, courageous and refuse to surrender to authority without seeming to do so. Sita is looked upon as a goddess, a role model for all women because she was perceived to be meek, docile and subservient to the wishes of her father first, and later her husband. Draupadi is headstrong but was forced to enter into a polyandrous arrangement. She is fearless and determined to confront anyone for justice. Reading between the lines, we can sense the inner struggles of these women to rise against stereotypical male dominance and thus become role models for women of all times.

Feminism is a global movement, not restricted to one nation. In the West, Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Adrienne Rich and Elaine Showalter propagated the feminism movement which pushed for equality of women in society and the need for articulation on women's rights in the hitherto male bastion. It is multicultural and diasporic in nature and is unique to different cultures and nations. For example, Indian culture and American culture are vast and incomparable, though we may come across a few parallels at times.

We grow up listening to the oral folk tales and instances from our great epics which instils a sense of tradition, culture and ideology in the young minds to draw an image of an ideal man or woman. Sita is an epitome of exquisite beauty, intelligence, compassion, valor and courage to stand up for what is morally right. Draupadi tries to gain power over men and flaunts it openly and leads a polyandrous relationship. She is egoistic to the core. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni showcases these two powerful women from a feminine point of view in her books 'The Forest of Enchantments' and 'The Palace of Illusions'. We get glimpses of these women as being strong, bold and rebelling against stereotypical culture in a subtle manner. 'The Forest of Enchantments' is a tragic love story of Sita, the protagonist of Valmiki's 'Ramayana'. It is a remark on "women's struggle to retain autonomy in a world that privileges men."<sup>2</sup> Sita is strong and refuses to be taken for granted. This is seen in many instances in the epic - sometimes she speaks aloud, at times the thoughts are not expressed aloud.

Ram, the male protagonist of the great epic 'Ramayan', who lives by his ideals, is ready to go into exile for fourteen years to help his father King Dasharath keep his vow towards Queen Kaikeyi. Sita followed Ram and Lakshman willingly to the forest. She rebuked him when he refused to allow her to go to the forest with him, stating that as his wife she would accompany him everywhere - "the throne, into war and to the forest." She further adds that her place is beside him only, she wouldn't be a burden and could take care of herself. Hence, she followed Ram everywhere like a docile, meek lady, but with a rebellious spirit. Ram is all for rules, while Sita is for emotions. So they balance the scales; "he aligns, she understands".<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, Queen Kaikeyi and Satyabhama accompanied their husbands to war when it was needed. In one of the battles fought by King Dasharath, his chariot's wheel got loose and Kaikeyi valiantly put her hand in the spoke, took the chariot to a safe place, nursed the wounded king and was back into the battlefield and emerged victorious. This shows her valor and instincts as a warrior. Even the helpless Draupadi, the polyandrous heroine of 'Mahabharatha', fought her own case suo moto when Yudishthir gambled away everything in a game of dice with Duryodhan and laid a stake on her in order to win back his material wealth. He is defeated and Draupadi is dragged into court and thoroughly humiliated when the Kauravas attempt to disrobe her. Everyone present in the court of Hastinapur watched the event in mute spectatorship. Even though Draupadi had five husbands, none could come forward to rescue her. In fact, Karna, who nursed a grudge on her for having rejected him earlier, calls her a 'whore' to settle scores. This incident shows that a woman who 'speaks up' in a patriarchal society is made to suffer. Ultimately, King Dhritarashtra begs for her mercy when she curses the Kauravas and he returns all that was taken away from the Pandavas. She is the only character in Indian mythology who showed anger and fought for her rights with vengeance. Draupadi epitomises a woman of strong will power and determination. Here, her true feminist power is at the forefront. "It is laudable that she stands up for herself and speaks out against the male perpetrated injustices in a court presided over by the most powerful kings at that time." Sumana Singh<sup>4</sup>. All these incidents help glorify the valiant feminists of the past. In the present society too, in many families women are expected to be docile, subservient and listen to the men in the household, failing which she is made to suffer. There are victims of the evil dowry system too who die a thousand deaths every day in the hands of the husband and his family. It requires a lot of courage on the part of these women to stand up for their rights and refuse to be treated as doormats.

Our epics 'Ramayan' and 'Mahabharatha' showcases many women who face different levels of subjugation in the patriarchal society. "Draupadi deconstructed the notions of chastity and sati; Sita of power and motherhood; Kali, of violence; Puru's young wife, of sexuality." Jasbir Jain.<sup>5</sup> Sati system was rampant in our country, especially in the northern parts of India. Women who lost their husbands were expected to jump into the funeral pyre. This was done for various underlying reasons.... the belief was that if the widow would immolate herself, she would be reunited with him in heaven by performing this heinous act. At times, these women would be tied to a stake at the edge of the pyre to prevent her escape. If in case she tried to run away, she would be caught and forcibly thrown into the fire. Since polygamy was followed, at times scores of young women would be forced to jump into the fire and kill themselves. Doing so would also lessen the burden of taking care of the women - financially or otherwise. After a long period of resistance of women towards this evil system, Raja Ram Mohan Roy ensured the Sati system was legally abolished in the country. Sadly, on August 7, 2002, in Panna District of Maharashtra, 65 year old Kuttu Bai was pushed on the burning

pyre of her husband by her two sons who wanted to grab the family property. Such atrocities against women still occur, but the strong arm of the law penalises the accused.<sup>6</sup>

In India, wedding rites are symbolic - its roots go back to the agricultural practices of the ancient days. The man is the farmer who plants the seed and the woman is the field where the seed germinates. Thus, marriage has been considered as a solemn ceremony. Child marriages was a common norm - even Sita was married to Ram when she was very young. This system was widely followed in the country. Many women protested as the children were immature both physically and mentally. Renuka Choudhary lobbied in favor of women and ensured that the Government of India pass a bill which clearly states that girls should not be below 18 years of age and boys below 25 years at the time of marriage.

All over the world married women are identified through symbols viz. a ring on her finger, head covered with the pallu, rings on her toes, mangalsutra, etc. In the 'Ramayan' lord Indra who lusts after the pretty Ahalya, takes on the guise of her husband sage Gautama and conjugates with her. When the sage realises this, he curses Indra and turns Ahalya into stone. So when offering prayers to Agni, women ensured that they wore a string of beads around their necks, vermillion in the parting of the hair, rings on their toes to inform Indra not to try any tricks on them like he did with Ahalya. This was also one of the methods women employed to safeguard themselves against the lecherous men.

During Sita's exile with Ram, she found the forest to be enchanting. Being the daughter of the earth, she could equate with nature where there is no exploitation and selfishness and one grows by helping others grow. Being the daughter of King Janaka, she was expected to find happiness through thoughts and not materialistic things. Hence she happily spent thirteen years in the forest until the fateful moment of the sexually aggressive Shurpanaka's arrival. Shurpanaka, used all her magical prowess to seduce Ram, but to no avail. Instead, she faces Lakshman's wrath who cuts off her nose and sends her screaming into the forest. She vows vengeance against the three of them and rushes to her brother Ravan, the Lord of Lanka. Ravan feels that he has been shamed and stripped of honour by the sons of the Raghu clan.<sup>7</sup> Ravan decides to abduct Sita in order to avenge his sister's humiliation. He takes on the guise of a sage, and his trusted aide Marichi takes the guise of the golden deer. Sita is enchanted by the sight of this 'golden deer' and forces Ram to capture it for her. She even compels Lakshman to go to Ram's rescue when they 'hear' him shouting for help. She is blinded in her desire to possess the 'golden deer' and fails to heed Lakshman's words of caution; instead she accuses him of harbouring unfair thoughts about her. i.e. trying to claim her in the absence of her husband Ram. Such instances, where the brother marries his sister-in-law after the death of her husband is common in certain societies. A deeply hurt Lakshman draws the 'lakshman-rekha' around the hut and warns Sita not to cross the line, concerned about her safety. "The mythic metaphor of the lakshman rekha functions as a general principle of control and boundaries....it records Sita's accountability to patriarchy."<sup>8</sup> In modern times, women are punished for crossing the imaginary lines (lakshman rekha) imposed on them through societal norms. This brings to mind a quote by Maya Angelou, a civil rights activist -"You may not control all the events that happens to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them." Thus, Sita steps out of the line and is abducted by Ravan, the hermit in disguise. This later ends with the annihilation of Ravan. In Uttar Pradesh's Asara village, girls above 16 years of age are put within the boundaries of a 'lakshman rekha'. The men consider subjugation of women as their birth right. Women under 40 years of age are restricted from going to the weekly bazaars without male escort, they have to keep their heads covered at all times, interaction with members of the opposite sex is prohibited, and they are not given access to television or mobile phones, have to stay indoors most of the time.<sup>9</sup> Failing to adhere to these norms invites the wrath of the men who abuse them. Many of the rape victims are women who have spoken against male-dominance at one point or other in their life.

Not many women can stand up for their rights even today, barring a few exceptions. Kasturba Gandhi sacrificed many desires and was sexually abused by her husband M.K.Gandhi many times. He shared his bed with many young women to test his self-control, including spending many nights with the 16 year old wife of his grandnephew Kanu Gandhi.<sup>10</sup> Even Bollywood is famed for its casting couch and many leading ladies had to give in to the carnal desires of the directors and producers for a role in their movies. Those who resisted found themselves ostracised from the film fraternity. Though some victories have been gained, a lot more needs to be attained. The "Me Too" campaign shows how women are treated as objects of carnality. These victims have learnt to speak up now, thanks to the support from various groups and the social media to voice their atrocities - it is the voice of resistance towards patriarchal dominance. Finally, tilting the scales in favour of women, the Government of India has passed a bill to protect women against domestic violence, and protection against sexual harassment at workplace. Also, indecent picturisation of women in media is prohibited.

When Sita is forcefully taken to Lanka by Ravan, she refuses to step into his palace and reside as his concubine, and prefers to stay in the bower, beneath the Ashoka tree. Ravan comes to meet her and gives an

ultimatum - he would wait for 10 months for her to give in to his demands, failing which Shurpanaka would wreak havoc on her. She refutes his advances and he doesn't touch her. Emily Dickinson's poem 'The Soul Selects Her Own Society' aptly describes Sita's resoluteness:

The Soul selects her own society - Then - shuts the Door - To her divine Majority - Present no more -

Unmoved - she notes the Chariots - pausing - At her low Gate - Unmoved - an Emperor be kneeling Upon her mat -

I've known her - from an ample nation - Choose One - Then - close the valves of her attention - Like stone -

Sita could be imprisoned physically but not mentally. Ravan begins to admire Sita's resolute and uncomplaining nature, and her tolerance to the abuses rained on her by the rakshashis guarding her. Ravan visits Sita more often, not as a captor, but as a King and a staunch devotee of Lord Shiva. He sings his compositions on Lord Shiva. Sita is unmoved by all these things and doesn't even look at his face. But as Devdutt Pattanaik reiterates, "Many who hear the story of 'Ramayan', unlike Sita, fall prey to what psychologists call the Stockholm Syndrome (falling in love with one's captors like hostages who start siding with the hijackers) and start appreciating the qualities of Ravan even though he uses force to drag a woman into his house and keep her captive by force."<sup>11</sup>

As a feminist, Sita is already strong and the world needs to perceive this strength. Finally, Ram slays Ravan in a fierce battle and after Vibheeshan's (Ravan's brother) coronation as the king of Lanka, he calls for Sita. She receives a jolt when Ram refuses to take her back, questioning her chastity, for she has been living in Lanka for almost ten months unchaperoned. He sets her free, stating that she could choose to go wherever she wanted and with anyone she wished. A distraught Sita, appearing calm and composed, decides to undergo a fire-trial - agni pariksha - to prove her chastity. She naturally emerges unscathed and victorious. Even Draupadi goes through a fire trial every time she moves from one husband to another. This is seen as a purification ceremony - it is now a ritual and plays a critical role in shaping Indian society. In many villages down South, women, and a few men, walk over a bed of burning embers to appease the Gods for favors bestowed upon them.

Ram, the ideal king, believes in delivering fair justice to all. He wants to lead a blemish free life and set an example for his subjects. He confides in Sita, "In my kingdom, everyone will have a voice, no matter how humble he is." Sita wants to ask, "What about the women?" - she is sowing the seeds of feminism for the future generations to follow.

Once a washerwoman confides with Sita that her husband has deserted her because he suspected her fidelity even though she tries to convince him that she had been to her friends' house to assist the mid-wife in delivering the baby. Sita is agitated at this unfair treatment and questions the justice in this act. In a country like India which boasts of being the largest democracy in the world, women are still abused at different levels - the purdah system, domestic violence (for not getting dowry, giving birth to a female child), abortion of female foetuses, etc. needs to be eradicated. Though individuals have been contributing in their fight against male dominance, women are still suffering. In Rajasthan, 'Jauhar' was abolished to give women the right to live. When the Mughal invaders defeated the many kings in Rajasthan, the women from the royal family and the upper class, jumped into the jauhar kund in order to save their honour from these invaders. This was no small act. It took a lot of will power on the women to take such drastic actions.

After the coronation of King Ram, people in Ayodhya started gossiping about Sita's chastity, suspecting the identity of the father of the child she was bearing. Upon hearing such talk, Ram decides to banish Sita from his kingdom. He acts in a clinical fashion, devoid of any feelings as a family man. A heavily pregnant Sita is tricked into banishment and is sent to the forest. While trying to live up to the expectations of the society and its norms, women give up their identity, and in doing so, find a void within themselves which is not easy to fill. Sita is aghast when Lakshman tells her about the unfair justice meted out to her, but he too is helpless. As Barbara Warren points out, it only proves that "a woman's grievance against patriarchal society is rooted in that society's insistence that she be satisfied with a primitive, semiconscious level of existence."<sup>12</sup> Sita, who loved nature, prefers the jungle to an intolerant society.

Even today, many Indian women are subjugated in their marital homes and their spirits broken. These women have learnt to subordinate themselves to the male ego for they are totally dependent on them. It is considered that she should accept his abandonment of her and her children without any questions (like Sita did). In Indian society, it is not the wife, but the mother who reigns because she "strengthens the umbilical cord during childhood" which becomes the only way of gaining status in the family.<sup>13</sup>

Sita raises her twin sons Luv and Kush single-handedly. When the boys are about ten years of age, they defeat King Ram and his brothers when they come in search of the 'Ashwamedha' horse which the boys have in their captivity. Sage Valmiki takes the boys to Ayodhya and Ram accepts them as his sons and future kings of the empire. Sita is overjoyed to be invited to Ayodhya, but once again fate delivers a severe blow.

Ram, in spite of his trust on Sita, wants her to undergo another 'fire trial' to convince his subjects of her chastity. She defies Ram in the open court, berates him for his mistreatment of a woman and a queen that Sita was. She releases a flood gate of emotions hitherto unexpressed, refusing to be a part of the society which did not respect her. She is no longer meek but is a trailblazer of strength and courage. Refusing to subject herself to the fire trial, she calls upon 'Mother Earth' who takes her into its womb. Thus our epics give us contradicting views about the position of women, be it their feminine leadership as divine goddesses, or servile women dependent on men.

It is heartening to note that in India, women have learnt to break the shackles of the society to claim equality at all levels. It can be Smt. Indira Gandhi, first woman Prime Minister, Dr. Prathibha Patil, first woman President, Kalpana Chawla - first Indian woman to go to space, Anandibai Gopalrao Joshi - the first Indian female physician in 1887, etc. The Supreme Court of India amended the Hindu Succession Act to grant women equal inheritance rights for ancestral and jointly owned property.

Sita, the progenitor of feminism is a dynamic character. As Richa Bhattarai rightly sums up, she is a dutiful and courageous daughter, a protective sister, loving, obedient and helpful wife; she is a skilled healer, counsellor, a strong parent for her sons. She is a nurturer and advisor who loves adventures. She revels in her own being, sensitive towards pleasure and grief, and most importantly, she is dignified. She is the original feminist.<sup>14</sup>

In Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's 'The Forest of Enchantments', we see the transformation of Sita from a meek woman to a rebel and trailblazer. We need to teach our daughters to imbibe strength like Sita, and teach our sons to treat women with dignity, as equals. We need to carry within us Sita's strength and vulnerability.

Our epics teach us lessons to be followed in our every day lives. We need to take only the positive aspects and stop blaming women for all the family feuds. Let us change our perception and treat our women with the respect they deserve. As Michelle Obama rightly points, "No country can truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contributions of half its citizens."

In conclusion, unless we empower our women, our country will not progress. Women are the pillars of the society. A woman is the root of the tree which stands tall.

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# The Politics and Poetics of *Porattukali*: The Unheard Voice of the Dalits of Kerala

**Haritha Vijayakumaran**

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## **Abstract**

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*Porattukali* or *Porattunadakam* is an art form authentic and exclusive to the Palakkad district of Kerala and has been in existence for around one seventy years. Yet it is foreign to even the rest of the population of Kerala. The state is no exception to the pervasive caste system that exists in India which has segregated not only her citizens but also their art forms. This satirical form of theatre developed by the *Panar* community of the state is believed to have been the springboard for many other better known art forms of Kerala. The *Panars* along with communities like *Cheruma*, *Chakiliyar*, *Kurava* etc were labelled as untouchables and kept out of the mainstream society of Kerala and were denied access not only to the resources necessary for survival but also the art forms of the privileged society which were almost fully tied up with the proceedings of the temple. *Porattukali* represented the different untouchable communities of the region and the joys and sorrows of their day to day life. Separate acts known as *Porattu* were devised for each community to be represented, celebrated and criticized. Since these people were kept out of the temple premises they were called *puram janam* or “outsiders” from which the term *Puramattam/kali* is believed to have been derived; *puram* means outside and *attam* means an act or performance. Each act was designed, acted and spoken/sung from the perspective and in the tone of the caste that it represents. Each act is separate and whole on its own and is dedicated to the “lower gods” who were not worshipped by the upper caste people. Through satire, songs, gimmicks, slapstick, dance etc. the performers reveal to the audience the origin, history and ways of life of each community and also explain the difficulties that they face in day to day life. *Porattukali* is an art form that is rich both aesthetically and content wise and yet has been pushed so far in to the periphery that it is disappearing altogether, the paper aims at preventing that; it intends to bring out the politics and poetics of this art form which not only needs to be revived urgently but should also receive the global recognition and accolade that it deserves.

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About one seventy years ago, the *Panars* developed a form of satirical theatre which represented the untouchable community and the joys and sorrows of their day to day life. They formed separate acts known as *Porattu* for each community to be represented, celebrated and criticized. Since they were kept out of the temple premises they were called *puramjanam* or “outsiders” from which the name *puram attam/ kali* is believed to have been derived, *Puram* means outside and *kali/attam* means performance. Each act was designed, acted and spoken/sung from the perspective and in the tone of the caste that it represents and its practitioners had to be content with only representing and not resisting because during the period of its emergence criticising the upper castes no matter how subtle or shrouded would have proved fatal to both the performers and their audience.

Each act was separate and whole on its own and was dedicated to the “lower” gods exclusive to each community like *Kali*, *Kooli*, *Kandakarnan*, *Mookan*, *Chaathan* etc. The communities represented include the *devdasi*, *Pookari* (flower lady), *Chaklyirar*(cobblers), *Mannan* (washerman) *Thotti*(scavengers), *Cheruma*, *Kavara*, *Ezhava*, *Kushava*(Potters), *Mappila* (a sub-caste in Islametc. which include not only the people who

were the natives of the region but also the people who arrive there at different seasons of the year for trade and in search of odd jobs. Through satire, gimmicks, slapstick, dance, song etc. the performers reveal to the audience the origin, history, tradition and ways of life of each community and also explain the difficulties they face in day to day life. Interestingly, all *Porattu* except that of certain communities like *Kusava*, *Ezhava* etc. is played by both male and female representatives from the community which help us look at their life from both perspectives. And a character, central and common to all the acts is the *chodyakaran* who is the English fool, the Sanskrit *vidusaka*, *Sootradara* etc. all rolled in to one. Formerly a part of the Madras province, the Tamil influence in the lives of the people in Palakkad is undeniable,

this influence is evident in *Porattu* also which seems to have borrowed abundantly from Tamil theatre traditions like *Therukoothu* which can be considered the proto form for *Porattukali*. The staging, accompaniments and performance are very similar, primary examples being the accompaniment of music troupe for both performances, the presence of the *sootradara/jester* known as *kattiyakaran* in Tamil, the interlacing of songs and speech etc.

The brilliance of the art form lies in the fact that it has no written script, rules or prescribed methodology except the ones that have been furnished through repetition and that the success of the show depended solely on the performers' skill to improvise and come up with spontaneous songs and poems related to the context. However, this is not surprising, considering the fact that its practitioners were denied education, despite which, they were able to create an art form more vivacious, meticulous and relatable than the existing art forms of the time.

Over time, different troupes started including contemporary and relevant social issues as a part of their performance like the *Porattu* of the 60s led by Palanthoni Krishnan that focused on the friction between the Zamindars and the tenants in the region. Many troupes also focus on other social issues like superstition by introducing the character of *Velichapadu*, who is the Malayalam equivalent of shaman, the mediator between man and god.

The paper aims to bring out the politics and poetics of *Porattukali* which is an endangered art form and whose study can help us make inroads into the general understanding and knowledge about Indian folk arts and also Indian dramaturgy as such. And more importantly, it will help us understand the origin and history of a large number of Dalit communities which have been ignored alike by both academicians and government for very long. The research also aims at finding the reason for its retreat into obscurity and analyse why and how it has been subjugated because it comes from the so-called lower caste and the changes it had gone through since its origin.

Since the art form lacks any written records and script the only way to study is through direct interaction with the precious few performers who still live in the region and also by analysing the performance which is still an integral part of the district's culture.

About two hundred *Porattukali* artists still live in and around the district and are performing separately in ten troupes. They believe that *Porattu* in its present form was developed by Polpully Mayan, who is venerated as the father of the art form. His praises are sung at the beginning of each act.

*Porattu* creates for the "avarna" communities a platform to represent themselves. The *Devadasi* who comes from Tanjore, has come to enthrall the audience with her dance and songs and earn what she can in the form of gifts. The *Pookari* or the flower seller has come from the distant land of Thirupathoor, The *Thotiyan* and *Thotichi*, the *Chakiliyar* and *Chakilichi* are from Sivakasi and have come to town in search of odd jobs. These characters reveal the forgotten common history of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Other characters like the *Mannan* and *Mannathi*, *Cheruman* and *Cherumi*, *Kavara* and *Kavarachi*, the jester are all representatives of Palakkad. Most of the *Porattu* are performed in pairs except few like that of *Dasi*, *Pookari* and *Mathoochi*. And in all *Porattu* it is the female character who appears first, their action revolves around love, separated spouses, lovers' spats etc. but concealed under this seemingly light topics is the ugly realities of their day to day life, like hunger, poverty and the indignity and humiliation they suffer under the upper caste people. Though such accounts are diluted with humour they do not fail to touch the audiences' heart; which for a long time comprised of only the untouchable community. In such a rendering, they found a way to laugh about their sufferings at a time when speaking out about them was out of question and would certainly prove fatal. The female character goes on to enquire about the whereabouts of her husband and turns to the jester for help. As soon as she leaves the stage the male character enters and his problems are more or less the same. In the subsequent act they meet, thanks to the intervention of the jester. They talk more about their community, their history and their day to day life in between fiery arguments that might turn violent, fuelled by the witty jester with lewd comments and jokes. The act ends with the characters reconciling and leaving happily together.

Each troupe has a distinct and unique style and the way they choose to represent their characters might be different, also, the art form depends largely on the improvisation skills of the performer. So, based

on how well they can engross the audience the performance can go very well in to the night or early hours of dawn. The challenges and rarity of such skills prevent young people from taking interest in the endangered art form. Also, there exist lots of misconceptions and stigma attached to both performing and watching *Porattukali*. The art form was naturally marginalised and boycotted by the upper caste audience and was relegated to the realm of “low culture”. Further, the songs and dialogues were rendered in the colloquial language of the lower communities which was raw and “vulgar” according to the high art practitioners and audience who consider its diction synonymous to abuse. Even watching *porattu* is often considered immoral. The lewd comments, sexually charged dialogues and heavy sexual undertones have lead to it being branded as an implicit or softer form of Erotica. Such a misconception prevents lots of folk arts enthusiasts and academicians from noticing the art form and taking it seriously says Porattukali artist Krishnan, the jester and master of a *Porattukali* troupe from Kollengode in Palakkad. He says that his troupe has made a lot of changes to make the shows less “vulgar” though it pains him greatly to deviate from what his own masters had taught him. But this tendency is really worrying because the art form is losing its authenticity in order to cater to the tastes of a “sophisticated” audience.

But Krishnan laments that even after making such drastic changes the present generation shows little or no interest in *Porattukali*. And the payment they receive for the performance is abysmal, while the practitioners of high art forms like *Kathakali* walk away with fortunes after each performance. Though Krishnan’s passion for his art has not waned with time at all he admits that he has to plead with and coax the other artists in to putting up shows as they can easily earn as much with an afternoon’s worth of manual labour. This is one of the major reasons for the present generation’s disdain towards the art form.

He recounts night-long shows after which he had spat blood from the continuous strain and had eventually lost his original voice. However he had persevered because he fears that once he retires, the art form will fall into oblivion. He does what he can to keep it alive and had trained many young girls in his area commendably well, thus bringing in female actors in to this art form which largely revolves around female characters but had no female presence. He talks about how family and friends had tried to turn him away from performing as it started to take a toll on his health. Added to it are the difficulties of staying away from home for days together and yet earning close to nothing, Krishnan had invested more in *Porattukali* than he had ever earned from it and yet, is not ready to abandon this art form which has become a part and parcel of his existence. He laments how the lack of funding and patronage keep young talents away from this dying art form. He goes on to talk about the taboos and stigma associated with it, he himself had performed the first ten years without the knowledge of his family. The dominance of the “high arts” and the partial access the lower castes gained to such art forms lead to the stigmatisation of *Porattukali* and other folk art forms even within the very communities that had produced them.

At a time when folk arts are being enthusiastically revived, remade and redefined in both commercial and academic platforms and have gained enjoy huge fandom, *Porattukali* is yet to garner the attention of such “remakers”, prodigies and academicians. Efforts should start at the level of government to bring it to the mainstream from where the young enthusiasts will surely give the boosting and momentum that it needs. The artists who still perform it also lack awareness about the urgent need to preserve the art form and often tend to drop out when it fails to provide a livelihood. So, spreading awareness should begin at the grass root level and should include both the artists and audience.

Academies can be built for the teaching, practice and enrichment of the art form. Its inclusion in the academic curriculum, at least in the fine arts syllabus will create an increased awareness about the genre and its present state. It can also be included in school, college events and competitions which are big events in Kerala- through which it can find a place in the mind and hearts of the most youngest and active of minds.

The art form once understood in its full capacity and scope is a rich source of study in culture, language, sociology, history and all other branches of humanities. It presents to us the unwritten, unrecorded history of the lower caste people, their origin and life in its fullness. And having originated at a time when Kerala and Tamil Nadu were a single province they make use of a dialect of language no longer spoken yet throbs with a linguistic beauty that warrants a deep and systematic study. Further, it opens our eyes and minds to what it meant to be a dalit when caste based discrimination reigned supreme. The scope of the art form cannot be contained within a single paper or thesis yet this paper aspires to be a step taken in the right direction to bring back this magnificent form of art.

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# A Study of Select Dalit Testimonials

Sruthi Prabhakumar

## **Abstract (12pt)**

All Dalit writings emphasize on the freedom of expression and the truth of experience, being a non-conformist medium. A Dalit autobiography, as opposed to a mainstream autobiography that is aesthetically pleasing in its depiction of the tale of an individual, is concerned with the story of a community. A Dalit life narrative focuses on mapping the disturbing struggles of the collective consciousness of the Dalit community pushed to the margins from ages. While the mainstream autobiographies depict the life and experiences of an individual, the lived experiences of a community becomes the focal point of discussion in Dalit life narratives. This paper aims at looking at two such narrative, namely, Bama's Karukku, translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom and K A Gunasekaran's The Scar, translated by V Kadambari. While Bama's work is the first Dalit autobiography in Tamil by a Dalit woman, the first of its kind that ignited the fire of the production of a plethora of such works after, K A Gunasekaran's The Scar is regarded as the first modern Dalit autobiography in Tamil. The paper tries to look at how, each of these works try to function as life narratives that truly depict the suffering of a race and are invested in conveying the message that true Dalit emancipation can come only with the Dalit's truly realizing their plight and striving for betterment.

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A large part of social history concerns itself with testimonials which are personal narratives by people whose voices were not given spaces in history. A testimonial is a 'voice from below'. Sometimes, Dalit writings were dismissed as quasi autobiographies, written by people from the peripheries of the society. The source of such testimonials are not imagination alone. A Dalit autobiography draws its sustenance from the lived experiences and the memory of those experiences. Such writings defy specific categorization.

A Dalit autobiography is the tale of not an individual alone, but is the tale of a community. It is a testimonial that maps the struggle of the collective consciousness of a community pushed to the margins from eons. This is what marks the difference between mainstream autobiographies and Dalit testimonials. When the mainstream life narratives depict the life and experiences of an individual, the lived experiences of a community becomes the focal point of discussion in Dalit life narratives. This paper focuses on two such life narratives, namely, Bama's Karukku, the first Dalit autobiography in Tamil by a Dalit woman and K A Gunasekaran's The Scar, regarded as the first modern Dalit autobiography in Tamil.

Karukku, Bama's ground breaking book, published in 1992, throbs with the pulse of Bama's experiences and screams with the clarity of her mind. The book is an inscription of her vocal memory. Through the book, she speaks for herself and other women like her. It is a landmark book that ignited many writings of that kind. It speaks of a large section of people, their experiences and memory, the pain of their history. The book is distancing in narrative strategies and completely lack in vehemence. Bama bears the triple burden of caste, class and gender. She tries to make sense of her existence as a woman, Christian, Dalit. She sketches her disillusionment in life, through the novel. She witnesses a gradual collapse of all that she believes in, even institutional religion.

Karukku, speaks of the atrocities faced by the Dalit communities at the hands of the administrative body, which serves the so called upper caste and the Church. The book throws light on the oppression faced by the

Dalit Christians by the Church. While Christianity is devoid of caste segregation unlike the Hinduism, it does not fail in acculturating the casteist prejudices in India. The Dalits that convert into Christianity at the prospect of a better life devoid of the stigma of their 'lower' birth is left disillusioned as the Church does not treat them any better. Within the Church, they are seated separately, not allowed to sing in the choir, and are forced to bury their dead in a different cemetery than the one used by the so

called upper caste Christians. Bama urges the Dalits to educate themselves of their plight and to strive to better it.

Bama is constantly ostracized at every level. She painfully realizes that a law against untouchability does not ensure its eradication. It is practiced inside the doors of churches and outside space of educated people. The practice of untouchability can only be removed by forcing it out of the minds of people. This is where Bama's argument becomes relevant. Karukku is seeped with the minute details of Bama's community. She talks about her physical, mental and emotional pain and how she comes to terms with it. Not every woman she writes of can stand up like she did. She depicts a gentle but strong strength through her work.

K A Gunasekaran's autobiography, *The Scar* (2009), originally written in Tamil, Vadu, is a very powerful testimonial. It marks the indelible scar not in his body, but in his very psyche, as is the plight of several others like him. K A Gunasekaran, belonging to the Paraya caste, sensed the need of documenting the suffering of a community and did so with his seminal work that insisted in the education and emancipation of the Dalits.

The book is of a bildungsroman genre and narrates the dialectical relationship between an individual and his community. Through his book, he tells the tale of a central character, whose development brings about a radical change in the society. Gunasekaran relents the difficulty of the Dalit children in getting basic education, in addition to wallowing in abject poverty. Despite getting to school, feeding on roasted tamarind seeds, the Dalit children were segregated by the office staff of the school which made conditions for them a lot worse. With the revelation of their identities, they were ghettoized. The educational institutions that were expected to instil revolutionary ideas in young minds, instilled narrow casteist parochial ideas. As a child, the dominantly aggressive behaviour of the so called relatively upper caste people shocked him and left a plethora of unanswered questions in his troubled mind. He talks about the strange food habits of the Dalits, another reason that ensured their alienation from the mainstream society. He recalls how he would accompany his aunt to collect slugs and snails from water tanks for food. The aesthetics of mainstream narratives looked down on the food culture and the very starvation of Dalits. People felt that the act of hunger was exaggerated. Subaltern writers like Gunasekaran are against literary representation of stark reality based on mainstream aesthetics as is seen here. He also talks about how he was denied the love of his life as a result of the caste system entrenched in the

society. He also narrates how the Dalits were forced into manual labour on approaching the village officials for such things as a mere signature in the scholarship form.

Through this life narrative, Gunasekaran tries to depict how the cleaner becomes the pollution and how, in the absence of this pollution, the system would stink. He is also concerned with the impact of the Muslim system in liberating the Dalit untouchable system. Muslims that he was acquainted with tried to coexist with the Hindu idol worship and ceremonies. This is where his relationship with the Muslims starts. His village was home to many muslims and many of them were friendly and affectionate towards him, to his surprise as he was not treated the same way by the so called upper caste Hindus. He had meals with them and was a regular visitor in all their homes. He wonders how them treating him as a brethren did not pose a challenge to the repressive caste system.

Gunasekaran's conflict in choosing between Karl Marx and his communist ideology, and Budha and his dharma forms the discourse that is generated by *The Scar*. This is a conflict that is present in every subaltern life. Gunasekaran was focused on questioning how much has communalism helped in eradicating the evil practice of untouchability. His assaulted psyche as a result of the social category he was born into helped him record his experiences. This autobiography does nothing to emulate the individual for the individual plays the role of a representor of a larger community.

Both Karukku and *The Scar* become important testimonials in the fact that they are relevant even in the present day where the lives of Dalits in many parts of India are in a sorry state, where they are to this day kept in the margins, silenced.

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# Resisting Arm of Vruksha Bhairava: A Reading of the Critical Responses to Kuvempu's 'The Shudra Ascetic'

**Veena Devi R.S.**

## **Abstract (12pt)**

The Paper traces the many lives that the character '*Shambuka*' lived in the fictional spaces accorded to him. *Shambuka* is the voice the 'marginalized' caste that is hardly heard in Valmiki's Ramayana. In the other three retellings discussed in the paper, the narrators not only grant them voice but also the agency. Kuvempu in his re-telling restrains Rama from killing *Shambuka*. This radical transformation of the plot received a lot of critical responses .The paper examines the notions of literature and canonicity of Ramayana texts that direct such critical responses. The second section of the paper discusses C.Basavalingaih's modern theatrical adaptation of the play and examines whether the director actualizes or resists the principles propounded by Kuvempu in the play 'The Shudra Ascetic'. The paper draws insights from Julie Sander's idea of adaptation and appropriation as 'texts feeding each other and creating other texts.'

### **Keywords:**

Adaptation,  
Agency,  
Appropriation,  
Resist,  
Marginalized,  
Transformation.

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*Shambuka*, a character in the Valmiki's Ramayana (uttarakanda) experienced many textual afterlives in the fictional spaces of Kannada literature. His caste identity and the act of transgression make it a compelling narrative. Hence it had several reinterpretations and adaptations. In Valmiki's Ramayana Rama beheads *Shambuka* before he finishes his sentence. Varnashrama system denies Shudra the spiritual right to practice penance. However *Shambuka* breaks the taboo and practices it. This transgression leads to the death of Brahmana's minor son. Hence by punishing *Shambuka*, Rama breathes life into Brahmana's dead son.

Whereas in the 8<sup>th</sup> century re-telling of this episode in Bhavaboothi play 'Uttara Ramacharita', Rama hesitates to kill and the beheading is not abrupt. And *Shambuka* also attains moksha and becomes a spiritual being. *Shambuka* takes another life and has another story to tell in 'The Shudra Ascetic', a 1944 play by Kuvempu. The paper examines the critical responses to the play and its conceptual frameworks. 'The Shudra Ascetic' itself is a resistance to the notion of *Varnashrama*, a social order which limits the occupational choices of people thereby restraining them from performing certain cultural acts. Kuvempu's is a radical attempt to deconstruct the notion of Varnashrama and initiate a beheading of 'brahmanical ideology' rather than the 'oppressed' and 'disrespected' ascetic.

The play begins with the conversation between the 'Death' and 'the Vruksha Bhairava'. The Vruksha Bhairava is 'the spirit of the tree, a colossal figure, as huge as tree itself...his numerous arms resembling the boughs of the tree hold line after line of tridents' (Kuvempu 129). At a metaphorical level, Vruksha Bhairava is the creative spirit with multiple narrators (arms) starting from Bhavaboothi to Kuvempu determined to safeguard *Shambuka*. In the very first scene the readers are informed about the imminent death of the Brahmana. Thus, the foreshadowing hints the reader of Kuvempu's resistance to Varnashrama system forced upon people which is articulated and endorsed in the Ramayana. Rama's bramhastra, the solution is to find the 'real culprit'. Thus 'there is a re-definition of guilt and re-identification of the guilty'.(Iyengar90) When

Rama sends 'bramhastra' to find and kill the guilty, bramhastra circumambulates Shambuka in reverence but eventually tries to target the Brahmana who is the real perpetrator of the sin. He had stopped his son from respecting the ascetic. This reversal of values and radical re-writing of an episode in Ramayana created storm in the critical world. As Kuvempu puts it across 'when this visual text got published three years ago, the wind blew, clouds formed and thunder heard and lightening struck in the hearts of readers'. (Kuvempu 35). The play attracted such dramatic and passionate responses in the news papers and magazines.

The paper examines one such important critical response to the text by Masti Venkatesh Iyengar, a contemporary writer. Masti's reading of the text can be perceived as one form of resistant reading to the revolutionary ideas espoused in the text. In his article 'Shudra Tapasvi- a small scene' which was first published in 'Jeevana' magazine and later re-published in 'prasanga' in the year 1946, Masti admonishes the creative act of re-telling of the Shambuka episode.

Masti is averse to the idea of glorifying Shambuka in the conversation between 'Death' and 'the Vruksha Bhairava'. Such glorification according to Masti would take away the elegance of the greatness of 'noble philosophy' of Ramayana. His belief in the 'fixed meaning' of a text guides him to view 'Varnashrama' as a necessity for a functional society. In such a society, he asserts 'It is not just Brahmana who would think why a Shudra should penance but a Shudra might also think why he should do it.' And hence he argues if the text is re-written in another context, the essence is lost. However he politely states how none of the modern readers agree with the idea that Shambuka had no right to penance just because he is born to a certain caste.

On the one hand he dismisses Shambuka episode as an interpolation thereby liberating Valmiki from the authorial burden. And he adds that an attempt to re-write or rectify the perverted old story is like building a house on someone else's foundation and suggests Kuvempu to write new stories. And he objects to the portrayal of Rama's character and Brahmana's character in the play. He alleges that Rama comes across as a manipulator who acts like a friend and makes him the target of bramhastra and Brahmana is unnecessarily portrayed as unwise. However Kuvempu provides a fitting reply to Masti's criticism in the introduction to the second edition of the play. He goes to an extent to dismiss his criticism as a 'collection of opinions' and condemns his justification of Varnashrama as the casteist arrogance rather than an intense faith.

Kuvempu points out the difficulty of weaving new stories which reflect the realities of society as it may lead to court cases against him and hence justifies the necessity to re-tell the Puranic stories. Most importantly he suggests that 'Myths are the subtle symbolic images created to establish the truths of human life' (Kuvempu 43) and directs the reader to look at the text from that perspective. After four years he also writes a critical note on symbolic images in his collection of essays 'Taponandana'. He underlines the importance of the experiential truth and incarnation of ideas through images in the creative process.

Hence the critical responses and exchanges also led to theorizing and clarifying of the basic principles of reading literature. As K.V.Subbanna Points out 'Masti's criticism may seem surprisingly immature ...But should remember this is an important document' (Subbanna 378). It is indeed an important cultural document that contains different forms of resistances to an idea. The changes that Kuvempu brought to the plot reveals his resistance to the hegemonic structures of caste represented in the epic narrative which finds an expression in the play. As Sanders points out 'the inherent intertextuality of literature encourages the ongoing, evolving production of meaning and an ever expanding network of textual relations' (Sanders 14)

Interestingly the play received multiple readings not only of the play but also of Masti's critical response to the play. Rahmat Tarikere documents the major responses in his book 'kannada Sahitya Vagvadagal'. In a nutshell, the responses can be categorized into two types; one that supported Masti's world view and the other who saw it as an encounter between two Indian cultures and creative processes. For instance, Tarikere points out T.N.Shrikantaih's suggestion to not to add poetic imagination to the basic 'rasa' of the text belong to the first category; Poorna Chandra Tejaswi's and Basavaraj Kalgudi's reading belong to the second category.

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Paula Richman, a major contributor to the field of south Asian literary and cultural studies and a Ramayana Scholar analyses a modern theatrical adaptation of Kuvempu's "Shudra Tapasvi" by C.Basavalingaih. Shambuka who was saved from beheading continues to live and find variation in this new fictional space called theatre performance. The following analysis is based on the inputs provided by Paula Richman and the Part I of the performance 'Shudra Tapasvi: Janapada Natakam' (in Telugu) a video that available on YouTube.

Paula Richman states that the play was staged in 2001 at the National school of Drama in Delhi for its Indian theater festival. She further states that Basavalingaih lengthened the duration of the play, involved a substantially larger cast than the original, and incorporated aspects of Kannada folk theatre into the performance. She further adds that Basavalingaih weaves into Shudra Tapasvi theatrical devices from two Kannada folk traditions-Yakshagana and Somanakunitha and dance drama. The theatrical adaptation is an

instance of intertextuality operating in a creative manner. Julia Kristeva's model of intertextuality looks at art, music, drama and literature as a 'living mosaic, a dynamic intersection of textual surfaces' (Sanders 3). This model describes this theatrical experiment in a significant way. Richman looks at such a production as 'actualizing Puttappa's principle of respecting cultural acts of low caste people' (Richman 136).

On the contrary the paper argues that Basavalingaih's rendition is a counter narrative or a result of oppositional reading. The theatre text incorporates the aspects that are missing in the written play. Kuvempu, a creative writer and an academic wrote this play with 'intended reader' in mind. In the preface to the second edition of 'Shudra Tapasvi', he says 'This play is useless from the perspective of performance. It is impossible to enact the great scenes on the 'petty stage' through superficial acting.' (Kuvempu 7). Hence he advises the reader to recreate the same in the mind, which is also a theatre.

The preface in a way establishes his attitude towards theatre and performance. The language employed in the play as Richman states has an elevated register and contains *sanskritised Kannada*. An ideal reader of such a text should have training and ability to re-create the drama in the text. The performance on the other hand resists all these notions. The director incorporates dance-drama, mask of the Somana Kunitha to depict Vruksha Bhairava and humorous narrators. In the Telugu version of the play, of the four Narrators of the play, one of them enters the stage a little late. When asked he says he was helping his wife board the bus. The narrators also use mobile phone, sun glasses on stage. Thus Basavalingaih's rendition resists the idea of 'high seriousness' and 'classicism' of Ramayana tradition which Kuvempu retains in his text.

On the other hand, the linguistic register employed by Kuvempu unintentionally categorises readers into elite and non elite. This language barrier is lifted by employing folk traditions, dance drama and colloquial language. The creative variations of the performance can be seen as yet another radical re-interpretive act of the Ramayana tradition in which 'a text feeds off each other and creates another text'. (Sanders 14). Bhavaboothi of 8<sup>th</sup> century liberated Shambuka's character through attainment of moksha, the 1944 text by Kuvempu did not allow Rama to Kill Shambuka and this modern theatrical performance liberated the play from linguistic barrier and the confinement of printed words. The drama is more inclusive and propounds new principles of aesthetics. However the world view remains the same as envisioned by Kuvempu. As Romila Thapar says re-tellings are not 'simply variations' but 'a deliberate attempt to...present a new point of view'. The paper has identified the two forms of resistance; one is a creative resistance to the social injustices as seen in Kuvempu's text and stage performance. The other is a resistance to the new idea from a conservative point of view as seen in Masti Venkatesh Iyengar's reading of 'The Shudra Ascetic'.

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# Working Class Dissent in Selected Works of Alan Sillitoe

Mohammed Wayez

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## Abstract

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This paper is an attempt to read the Working Class dissent in Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) and *The Loneliness Of The Long-Distance Runner* (1959). Dissent is disagreement, protest and difference of opinion against the authority/establishment. Alan Sillitoe's works speaks about people from the working class background. His protagonists exhibit dissent against the existing political order. Their rejection of the establishment/authority goes beyond personal irritation to become an aggressively working-class expression of grievances. The workers and members of the other classes, their incisive commentaries reflect the feelings of a large number of working class but also the crusading zeal for social reform. The protagonists in both the selected works are young rebels ready to take on the world, joyous, reckless, defiant, they're out to beat the system anyway and anywhere they can.

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Alan Sillitoe is a working class novelist and his experiences in the factories as a wage labourer exposed him to the hardships of the workers and their lives.

*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is his first path breaking work published in 1958. The story of the novel revolves around the routine life of Arthur Seaton who works at lathe factory.

*"The Loneliness of the Long-distance Runner"* is his second published prose work. It describes the conflict between Smith, a young Borstal inmate and the governor which reaches its climax in the long-distance cross-country race.

A literary work is the product of a person, writing from a perspective that is relative to his level of social consciousness, the formation of his personality, which is fundamentally the result of his social conditions and his practical activity within a particular period of socio-historical development. The literary work is, in general, subject to economic and social considerations and in particular to political ones. Literary creations that are produced in a class-divided society express the basic attitudes of one class or another towards life within that society, and consequently, they entail inevitable political implications. Because the literary work is a social product, its aesthetic structure is automatically instilled with political significance. Hence, the prevailing social values and political ideology are either supported or opposed within its framework.

Sillitoe's works are a direct critique of the society; it is not only political in essence, but also overtly political. In an interview in *Etudes Anglaises*, Sillitoe, when asked a question about his political opinions, replies, "It's very difficult to talk about political opinions. I find it impossible to separate them from my work." (36).

Politics begins when the poor workers who are a minority in society do not have any role to play in the authoritarian power society.

Similarly the working class people in the selected works of Sillitoe are opposed to the establishment and the institutions of establishment and are in dissent and disagreement against the government/authority or the place of work such as factory and the authority in general. Dissent is seen in the working class people as they

don't see themselves represented in the government/authority and their grievances and voice is not heard by the authority and their demands/problems remain unaddressed and continue to survive despite their struggle and this turns them to an rebellious attitude towards the government and they become rebels expressing their dissent at times in the forms of anger, frustration or abusing the authority or acting against the rules of the authority.

Swope explains dissent and its effects in a society in his seminal book; "Dissent ferments, rumbles, and boils over in direct proportion to leadership's failure to sense the need for change and to adjust to new attitudes and wants. At first passive, it moves to an active and finally to a violent form. The longer the change is delayed, the greater the split between the leaders and members of an institution, or between institutions. The more insulted the leadership, the more violent the form of dissent will be, and the more difficult the resolution (17).

Robertson defines authority as, "In the sociology of politics authority is contrasted with mere power; authority is being in a position to give an order that will be obeyed because its legitimacy is accepted by those to whom the order is addressed, rather than simply being a command which is backed up by coercion, bribery, persuasion etc". (Robertson, 34-35).

I analyse few incidents from the story "*The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*", analysing life of these people and their attitude towards the establishment.

The working class life of the protagonist Smith is justified in the text in these lines below when Smith says that, "As soon as I got to Borstal they made me a long-distance cross-country runner...because running had always been made much of in our family, especially running away from the police" (LLDR, 7) and we also notice such people thieving from the shops because of situation of poverty and hunger at home.

Conflict, dissent, anger and disparity is seen in words of Smith and between the authority and the prevailing inequality in the society and attitude of the people in authority towards the working classes can also be seen here, "If only 'them' and 'us' had the same ideas we'd get on like a house on fire, but they don't see eye to eye with us and we don't see eye to eye with them, so that's how it stands and how it will always stand. The one fact is that all of us are cunning, and because of this there's no love lost between us" (LLDR, 7).

The pose of authority and oppression by the governor on Smith can be noticed here, "How's the running coming along?"... "I know you'll get us that cup," he says (LLDR, 12). We also find that the willingness of Smith is not taken care by the so called authority but the oppressed is forced to listen to the oppressor.

The dissent and the anger in Smith and wish to go against the desires of the authority can be noticed here, "No, I won't get them that cup, even though the stupid tash-twitching bastard has all his hopes in me"... "And I'll lose that race" (LLDR, 12) and Smith deliberately wants to lose the running race even though he has the talent and caliber to win it and he exhibits his dissent to the authority by not abiding their rules imposed on him and but going with his will and losing the running race.

Similarly, I analyse few incidents from the novel *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, analysing the routine life of such people and their attitude towards the establishment.

Sense of work in Arthur, the protagonist, as in all the working class people and the picture of such people working hard at factories sweating to earn their bread with their labour can be seen here, "Tomorrow is work, and I'll be hard at it, sweating my guts out until next weekend. It's a hard life if you don't weaken" (SNSM, 22).

Arthur in dissent against the government and the factory as the institution of authority on these working class people there and we could his happiness when the factory is blown, "But if they said: 'Look, Arthur, here's a hundredweight of dynamite and a brand new plunger, now blow up the factory,' then I'd do it, because that'd be something worth doing. Action" (SNSM, 40)

The spirit of anti-establishment and dissent in Arthur further can be seen here, "law and order against which he had been fighting all his life in such a thoughtless an unorganised way he could not but lose" (SNSM, 180), here is Arthur's thought on anti-establishment and politically against the government and its policies... "There'd be a revolution, I'm sure there would, they'd blow-up the Council House and set fire to the Castle" (SNSM, 184).

From the analysis of the various incidents in both the texts, we find the protagonists from are from the working class background leading a life in poverty amidst various problems and having a positive note towards life and are happy in the work they do and holding the similar view on the government and are against its various policies and are in dissent against the establishment/government and they express their dissent often in the texts in the form of anger or frustration abusing the government using abusive language when they find oppressed by the government/establishment and when they find themselves victimized by the government or by its policies often. We find the dissent in both the protagonists at personal level and as these individuals are representatives of their class they hold the similar views here for all. There is no such much

impact through their dissent on the local authority/government/establishment or the factory they work in because they express it personally and don't express it in the groups or they don't go on rampage, or strike or lock-outs in groups in order to bring immediate change in society or in the government and their expression of dissent goes unheard by the government/establishment and hence the attitude of the government/establishment remains same towards them. We also notice that the both the protagonists Arthur and Smith are rebels in their best way. These working class people continue to lead their lives with a positive note with their issues and problems as life goes on.

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## Resistance to Patriarchy and Monarchy in Saint Akkamahadevi's Vachanas

Poornima.P.S.

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### Abstract (12pt)

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The woman saint Akkamahadevi who lived in the 12<sup>th</sup> century in Karnataka was on par with the male vachana composers as far as her diction, spiritual knowledge and deep devotion is concerned. Prior to Bhakti Movement there was a strong influence of Vedas and the society was strangulated by the rigid Brahmanical practices. Jainism and Buddhism prevailed for some time and endeavoured to change the society and free it from blind practices where the priestly classes were the mediators between the Almighty and the devotees but in vain. However, at this right juncture from Tamilnadu emerged a movement called Bhakti Movement and spread far and wide and to the entire India. The salient features of this Bhakti Movement are resistance to Vedic practices, belief in one God, mercy towards the fellow beings, due respect to nature, dignity of labour, pursuit of spiritual knowledge, rationality and the like. The woman saint Akkamahadevi believed in all these concepts and practised all the practices preached by the propounders of the new found religion called Lingayat religion, a branch of Bhakti Movement then. Simultaneously, she encashed the milieu of the society to fight against the atrocities meted out to women of her time. She came out of the wedlock with King Kousika and led an arduous life in pursuit of spiritual knowledge. She resisted her society and its practices which abounded in irrational practices. Thus she proves to be a unique woman who could challenge the society she belonged to and remains a model to the present day womenfolk. She fought for women's equality in the restricted society of 12<sup>th</sup> century.

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Literature, as an art form, is affected not only by external determinants but by dynamism within art itself that promotes or impedes change. -Rene Wellek

The history of liberty is a history of resistance. -Woodrow T. Wilson

Subjugation and Resistance are the two words which play a vital role in the power relationship of specific social and cultural contexts. Both try to negatively define the each other in the political, historical and ideological discourses. Here the word resistance has mostly been a consequence of subjugation. Thus, Resistance arises out of utmost anguish against unbearable atrocities unleashed by the hegemonic powers. To seek freedom from the hegemonic oppression, there is a strong and inevitable need for resistance from the subjugated sections in all possible manners. The act of resistance not only demands weapons to conquer the power holds, but it also calls for courage and a vigorous heart to confront the hegemonic oppression and systematic violence. Subjugated victims have been taking various modes to show their resistance against the regime of power structures. A few take pen as a weapon to show their resistance against power dominance. Literature, in this manner, plays a vital role in revealing an individual's resistance against the hegemony through his/her writing.

The Bhakti movement which spread far and wide in India is a typical resistant movement and the literary expressions repeatedly stressed the need to change the suffocating and superstitious practices of the previous

epochs. Although both Jainism and Buddhism tried very hard to refute the significance of the Vedas, Upanishads and Karmakanda theories they could not achieve the expected success by their religious teachers, namely, Mahavir and the Buddha respectively due to the strong clutches of the Brahmanical priesthood. It is at this juncture that Bhakti movement began in Tamil Nadu and spread to other parts of the country within a very short span of time. The precepts of the movement attracted the laity very much since the milieu abounded in rigid practices and too many restrictions on the womenfolk. The Buddha appears to be liberal in his preachings. Nevertheless, when it comes to acquiring mystic knowledge women were denied the access. Hence Bhakti movement gained more momentum which preached resistance to the prevailing social and religious practices and dreamt of egalitarian society.

Every revolution is the child of the milieu of the society. Bhakti movement is no exception in this regard. The propounders of the movement believed strongly that the masses have to be shown a right path to tread which is devoid of superstitious beliefs, blind rituals and interventions of the priestly class. They showed that the Almighty can be seen by each individual through one's work. Hence they introduced the concept, 'Work is Worship'. This implied the dignity of labour which was in contrast with Manu who ordained that the menial jobs should be done by the Shudras and that they should serve all the upper castes in the society. Language is another major issue during Bhakti movement. All the saints during this time tried to reach out to the laity and hence they resorted to the regional languages so that they can understand the mystical experiences in the simplest version unlike Sanskrit which was a privileged language of the elite and Brahmins. Hence the vachanas in Karnataka and religious hymns in other parts of India would abound in metaphors. This enabled the composers to use metaphors of day-to-day life to describe mystical experiences. Now there was no necessity of mediation between the Almighty and the devotee. One could find God in one's service: 'Janathaseva Janardhanaseva'. They believed in one God and, non-violence to the fellow creatures since the flora and fauna around us is the creation of the same Creator. Hurting the fellow animals would mean hurting Him. Instead, they expected mercy towards the animals implying vegetarianism which is the need of the hour. This was again in contrast to the meat-eating practices even among Brahmins. According to Bhakti saints both men and women were equal in the eyes of religion. And the male saints allowed womenfolk to attain mystical height which was denied hitherto. The Bhakti movement did not accept the king as the master of the society rather they believed the Almighty as the only head to the entire universe and all others irrespective their status are wives to Him: 'Saranapathi, Lingapathi' Hence the resistance was extended to the monarchy as well.

The woman saint Akkamahadevi's vachanas share all the above characteristics of the Bhakti movement and explicitly express the resistance to patriarchy as well as monarchy / kingship in the 12<sup>th</sup> century vehemently. She resisted the custom-ridden society which would suffocate the lives of women in the name of Vedas and Brahmanical priesthood, in general and men in the name of kingship in particular. It was a coincidence that she could exploit the milieu of her society thoroughly to assert her identity, become a role model to her fellow womenfolk, reach the mystical heights which was incredible in the previous ages. She is deemed to be the first woman who has the traces of feminism or rather she is the archetype of feminism, not a couple of centuries back but as early as 12<sup>th</sup> century. The men were supposed to be the staunch devotees of the one God they believed in during the Bhakti movement, lest they would fail to retain their wives within the wedlock. Akkamahadevi used this opportunity very well. She not only resisted the patriarchal society but found a parallel society to establish woman's identity: by deeming the Almighty as the eternal husband contrary to the earthly husband. She knew it very well that it was an arduous task to face the patriarchal society once a woman comes out of the wedlock.

The following vachana expresses her deep devotion to her beloved Lord Cennamallikarjuna as the spiritual husband which shows the resistance to patriarchy:

*You came brothers,  
Seeing the beauty of my bare breasts  
And blooming youth,  
But I am not a woman,  
Nor a whore, O brothers!  
Seeing me, who did you take  
Me for, O brothers?  
The face of no other person  
Than that of Cennamallikarjuna,  
Pleases me,  
Look, brothers!*

The resistance to societal norms which a woman was supposed to conform is seen in the following vachana. Nakedness is a way of protesting against the injustice, atrocities, oppressions meted out. Akkamahadevi resorted to the same means to protest against the institution of marriage. In no way she could have convinced her society. It was a forced marriage with the king Kousika.

*The hand earned wealth can be taxed,  
But can the beauty of the body be taxed?  
You can snatch my dress and ornaments.  
But can you snatch away  
The Peace that wraps me round?  
Does one who, being clad in  
The light on Cennamallikarjuna,  
Has shed all shame,  
Need clothes and ornaments,  
O fool?*

Instead of being faithful and loyal to her earthly husband the saint Akkamahadevi prefers to be loyal to her spiritual husband thereby resisting the society and find an alternative to achieve what she aspired to achieve. The concept of spiritual husband was an evasive way to come out of the earthly marriage. Thus she creates a parallel society.

*I loved a handsome youth,  
Formless, deathless and beyond destruction,  
I loved a handsome youth,  
Placeless, infinite, entire  
And without a sign, O mothers!  
I loved a handsome youth,  
Who is birth less, and fearless and bold,  
I loved ayouth  
Who being boundless is immeasurable.  
O Mothers, I loved my husband  
Cennamallikkarjuna passionately!*

The Saranas defied the belief that the king is the master of the state. Instead, they upheld the view that the Almighty is the only master of the universe. Hitherto the womenfolk of the time did believe that the husband is the master of one's homestead. Now, they realized that the Almighty is the only master and they need to sacrifice themselves heartily. The women who came out of the wedlock at the time of Akkamahadevi are Satyakka, Goggavve, and Bontadevi. Akka (she is called so, popularly) describes her marriage with Lord Chennamallikarjuna thus:

*They set a canopy of fire  
Over a pavilion of water,  
And made a sear of hailstone,  
Wearing a tassled chaplet,  
A mad bridegroom came  
And wed a crippled bride,  
They committed me to an endless wedded life.  
They married me to a groom  
Called Cennamallikarjuna,  
O mother!*

The Bhakti movement strongly opposed the Vedas and Upanishads. It was protestant in nature and preferred to stress rationality among the followers. In Virashaivism, a native branch of Bhakti movement in Karnataka, the compositions are called vachanas. Each of these vachanas is verified before the gathered mystics in Anubhava Mantapa, a religious academy where deliberations would go on. The vachanas thus would be documented to pass on to the posterity and were the tenets of Virashaiva religion. The protest against the Vedas and puranas can be discerned in the following vachans:

*The Veda, being read and read,  
Became a bone of contention.*

*The Sastra, being heard and heard,  
Made room for doubt.  
The Agama,  
With its claim to more wit and wisdom,  
Remained a half-wit.  
Presuming that the process of learning is complete,  
The Purana committed again the earlier mistake.  
Oh, where am I?  
And where is He?  
Brahma is nothing but  
The Absolute Void,  
O Cennamallikarjuna!*

The society in which Akka lived did neither approve of her behavior nor her resistance very easily. However, she did not give up her attempts to change the society. She had to face very many challenges all through her life even for her basic necessities like food and shelter. She bore all hardships and achieved what she was passionate about: the mystic height in which she excelled even her male counterparts, namely Lord Basaveshwara and Lord Allamaprabhu. She expresses her arduous task thus:

*When hungry, alms are available in town.  
When thirsty, ponds, streams and wells are there,  
When the body catches cold,  
There are cast off clothes to cover it with  
And for bed to sleep in, deserted temples.  
For my soul's companion  
You are there, O Cennamallikarjuna!*

Thus the woman saint Akkamahadevi documented her resistance to patriarchy and monarchy simultaneously: by practicing bridal mysticism after she comes out of the palace of her earthly husband, King Kousika.

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# Struggle and Caste Discrimination: Dalit, Dalit Writer and Dalit Consciousness in Dalit Literature in India

**K.M.Jayanthi**

## **Abstract (12pt)**

India as a country has many identities. One of which is “the country of gods and goddesses”. This entitlement has given its way to different literatures which is better known as mythologies. Every god, goddess, demon or even the religious institutions in rural, suburban part of the country has different stories. This paper will be looking at the mythologies from the rural parts of north-west Karnataka and south end of Maharashtra. Furthermore the mythology not only becomes a folklore or a story but also paves for a way of living for many tribes and communities. This paper would be exploring and understanding the inter-dependency between mythologies, communities and way of living in the larger umbrella of nature and natural setting. The information obtained is not only from the people thriving in these communities in a marginalised space but also from the religious personalities the community i.e. the Dhangar Samaj. The paper further becomes a quest to understand the choice of containing to live in these spaces by these individuals.

### **Keywords:**

Dalit,  
Discrimination,  
Consciousness,  
Upper Class.

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This paper presents about the struggle and suppression of the Dalits in general, struggle of Dalit writers and Dalit consciousness in Muklraj Anand's novel Untouchable - Struggle of Dalit is immeasurable. In Sanskrit 'Dalit' means broken or scattered in other words termed as Untouchable. It is said the two main problems faced by Dalits are poverty and caste discrimination. Due to lack of economic opportunities they are deprived of poverty. Caste discrimination leads to difficulty in leading a respectable life in society. In India's caste system Dalits are considered to be lowest of the low. It is said that since Dalits are poor and unclean they are considered untouchable. But, is this saying right....an example can be mentioned for us to understand if Dalits are considered to be untouchable for being unclean and poor, what can be the answer for the following incidence..A person who is more educated, more clean, more principled, more pious, more disciplined, well mannered than the so called upper caste was in hunt for a rented house. The person who was in search for a rented house was not aware of difficulties faced by the untouchables in that place. Tenant was happy to have found a suitable house. All arrangements were made and the luggage was shifted to the rented house. But, when the tenant returned home (rented house) after duty hours a bitter experience was witnessed by the tenant can one guess what might have happened? Owner learned from some X person that the tenant belong to scheduled caste, so, before the tenant reached home (rented house) all the luggage was kept out of the gate. The happening didn't take place during Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's period but of the recent years....

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar says untouchability came into Indian society around 400 AD due to struggle for supremacy between Buddhism and Brahmanism.

According to social historical theory caste system was initiated with the arrival of Aryans in India. The aim of this paper is to express the harsh reality of struggle , suppression and torture Dalit faced in their lives. Dalits have faced all torture, since more than two thousand years.

India has witnessed numerous social movement. Among which Dalit Movement is one such movement which has left ever lasting impression as a unified force in Indian history. Different Dalit movements have experienced different ideologies, but all the idealism to assert their human identity. In the mind of all Dalit, there are many questions to be asked- Who is Dalit? What is Dalit to others? What is the difference between Dalit and untouchable? These questions remains unanswered at all ages.

Though Babasaheb Ambedkar and Mahathma Gandhi had ideological differences, both had constructive influence on Dalits in fighting untouchability. From the time of Valmiki Dalits have voiced their longing for social liberation through literature.

The history of the Dalit movement in literature goes back to the 11th century, to the first Vachana poet Madara Chennaiah, who was a cobbler. In modern India, Dalit literature got an impetus in Maharashtra due to the legacy of Jyotiba Phule (1828-1890), Prof.. S.M.Mate (18861957) and Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956). The word Dalit in Marathi means “broken”. It was first used by Jyotirao phule in the 19th century in the context of the oppression faced by erstwhile “Untouchable” caste. In the years immediately preceding and following independence the Dalit movement got a forceful representation with the advent of leaders like Dr. Ambedkar in Maharashtra. It was Dr. Ambedkar’s strident politico-cultural denunciation of the cast system, coupled with his life-long battle to generate a new identity for the oppressed castes, that gave the term ‘Dalit’ a force and currency that it carries to this day. The Dalit movement is a revolt against caste-based oppression and humiliation and a demand for social justice. The Dalit Panther Manifesto of 1972 used the term to include ‘members of scheduled castes and Tribes, neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion’.

The term “Dalit Literature” came into use in 1958, when the first Conference of Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangha was held at Mumbai. The Dalit literary movement gained pace with the active support of Ambedkar’s revolutionary ideals which stirred into action all the Dalits of

Maharashtra. Dalit literature emerged into prominence and as a collective voice after 1960, starting in Marathi and soon appearing in Hindi, kannada, Tamil, and Telugu. Since then , Dalit literature which looks at history as well as current events from a Dalit point of view, has come to occupy an important niche in the body of Indian literary expression. The primary motive of Dalit literature is to draw attention to the relentless oppression of Dalits in India’s caste hierarchy and to inspire the possibilities of their social, economic and cultural development. Since Dalit literature has its roots in the lives of the people who are suppressed , crushed and downtrodden, it is by nature oppositional, with the primary motive being protest and liberation. As such, it has often been compared to African American literature.

Dalit women are subjected to extreme forms of social, economic, physical and psychological exploitation. Like African-American women they are twice oppressed – in terms of gender as well as caste. Since the 1980s , Dalit women have formed their own distinct networks. They preceded the broader Dalit movement in building a nation wide networking the second half of the 1980s. in 1995, the National Federation of Dalit women was formed . The writings of Dalit women writers are based on the lives, experience and consciousness of Dalit women, expressing their anguish as well as demands for justice and equity.

There are many Dalit women writers who revolved to empower Dalit women with courage and strength, to fight for their identity and assert them in a new social order. The first rebellious poet from Maharashtra Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule. She guided her daughter to take education to be self reliant and industrious.

Jyothi Lanjewar , a pioneering Dalit women poet, a well known writer in Marathi literature. Jyothi Lanjewar grew up in a family that had dedicated itself to the upliftment of the downtrodden. Her poetry speaks on diverse themes such as womanhood, motherhood, friendships, human values and love. It speaks of the socio-cultural oppression of women belonging to the poorest strat of Indian society. She comments “My poetry is about humanity and its seemingly endless struggles for survival, for change, for justice, and sometimes humanity happens to be the oppressed marginalized. Jyoti Lanjear highlights Dalit identity and politics have been powerfully conveyed which presents a daughter perception of her mother and her deep admiration of her self – respect, her hard work and commitment to the Dalit cause. The term ‘never’ in the poem ‘Mother” provides the frame work for the contrast between what the Dalit mother can never hope

to possess and the harsh reality of her life. This example shows, in spite of striving hard and sacrificing life Dalit-women could not wear good attire and relish delicious food.

Just like Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, her husband, Savitribai Phule was guiding the women of her time to work hard and learnt the rudiments of knowledge. She also added that everything will be lost, if we are not educated and it is education, which awakens our conscience and is still a sense of humanity, so she says to her fellow sister not to sit idle but should have education so that they can put an end to the misery. Her message to the women of her time is a revolutionary idea of a radical feminist. She says- “You’ve got a golden chance to learn, so learn and break the chains of caste”.

In the nineteen-thirties a number of Indian novelists began to write in English-genuine novelists, that is, for whom the art of fiction was an end in itself and not just a means for communicating other kinds of truth. Fifty years later it is clear that this was a form peculiarly suited to the Indian sensibility and one to which Indian writer have made distinct and significant contribution.

Mulk Raj Anand regarded himself as a rational humanist rather than a Marxist but his ideas on art- he is clearly not a thinker. Anand 's thought may have been his feeling was genuine and his own and his experience of the poor in India and in Britain gave him every warrant for it. His fiction is , of course, exclusively concerned with India. He is passionately involved with the villages, the ferocious poverty, the cruelties of caste, the wrongs of women , and with orphans, the untouchables and urban labours. His writings as an angry reformist way, like a less humorous Dickens and a more emotional Wells of the personal sufferings induced by economic injustices.

Anands characters invariably fall into three classes: the victims who are usually the protagonists, the oppressors, those who oppose change and grogress , and the good man. Under the last category fall the social workers, the labour leaders, all those who belive in progress and can and can see how modern science can improve the lot of the sufferers and help bring about the equality of all men

It was Mahatma Gandhi who had asked Anand in 1930 to write a pamphlet on untouchability but instead of writing a tract Anand wrote this novel which he named Untouchable. The novel

gained its popularity and it was translated into many languages. B.B.C broadcast called it a "classic" .The novel created some trouble for Anand, because of his forceful advocacy of the untouchables and other under-dogs of society he came to be regarded as communist. It can be understood Anand wrote the novel with a purpose, keenly aware that Anand as a champion of the poor, the under-dog, the down-trodden and a great sympathizer for the suffering masses. This was the reason that Anand has been called as a propagandist by some critics. Anand, in his novel describes the life of the oppressed and oppressors. Mulkraj Anand interprets the real India of untouchables like Bakha. He is the champion of the under-dog, a crusader against social distinctions and man made barriers. He is intolerant of injustice of every type. He is a novelist with an inherent social purpose. His main aim is to expose the follies and discrimination of the privileged classes.

Untouchable is a realistic novel and reflects Anand's social realism. It can be intersected on the experiences of Anand . Throughout the novel , it can be witnessed that the injustice and exploitation of the poor and miserable physical conditions, economic exploitation and social injustice to the poor and the outcaste. Through out the novel the struggle of the untouchable ,illtreatment of the upper-caste, dialogues and various emotionally touching scenes such as molestation, chapathi-throwing and insult of Bakha and the embracement witnessed by his family is condemned by Mulk Raj Anand. Since thousands of years of social and class superiority-a feeling which refuses to accept the fact that the untouchable is a human being, but insists on treating him like a sub-human creature, to be ignored or bullied or exploited as the occasion demands. The most shameful situation untouchable faces is that when the temple priest Pandit Kali Nath molested Bakha's sister Sohini, he bows his head low, his eyes are dimmed. The treatment of the betel-leaf seller from whom Bakha buys cigarettes to fling the packet at the untouchable as a butcher might throw a bone to an insistent dog sniffing round the corner of his shop.

Bakha, a human is forced to clean dung and live near dung, untouchable Bakha needs to depend on the mercy of the caste Hindus and for food on leftovers by them . Bakha's father Lakha and Bakha fail to protest against the Hindu's. Bakha accidentally touches a hindu for which he receives sever scold Bakha filled with pain want to run away. But then he realizes that he is

hampered by the age-long barrier of morality . Thus Anand's understanding of the psychology of both caste Hindus and the untouchable is deep and subtle.

Bakha, though young proves intelligent, sensitive and superior to his fellow out castes. He stands superior by accepting the humiliation and hardships to which they are subjected by the caste Hindus who treat them as faceless creatures of dirt.

Thus, with the above analysis, is very clear that even if India stands in a position of developed country, with hundred percent literacy struggle and discrimination of the Dalits/Untouchable cannot be eradicated completely.....

Gandhiji calls untouchability the "greatest blot on Hinduism." He wonders how any man can become an untouchable for another man.

Will this discrimination, pain, sufferings of Dalits and Untouchables be eradicated.....?

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# Expanding the Horizon: Dalit Life and Consciousness in Indian Fiction

Aswathy G. Babu

## Abstract

The Indian English Literature has a marvellous legacy of more than twenty decades. But it is quite appalling to contemplate on the callous representation of caste system in Indian Literature. The conventional Indian writings have denied and disowned Dalits or have blatantly mis-represented Dalits. This representational absence of the life of Dalits is indicative of the symbolic and structural violence against Dalits. We can see that Dalits in many novels are either shrouded in invisibility, or remain insipid characters, their concerns are unvoiced, unseen, and misrepresented. There is also a tendency to subsume Dalit concerns under the rubric of liberal humanism and thereby obscuring the predicament of caste discrimination and subjugation. In spite of the racist and caste biased writing culture, there emerged some significant attempts in the early 1960s to address the issues of Dalit life, caste discrimination and Dalit violence in the Indian literary arena. The early Dalit Literature delegitimized the stereotypes about Dalits to a great extend and well exposed the miserable nuances and compelling struggles of the community. My paper purports to analyse the depiction of Dalit life and consciousness in the selected novels of P. Sivakami and Meena Kandasamy.

### Keywords:

Class/ Caste,  
Dalit,  
Minority,  
Marginalization,  
Resistance.

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Indian Literature abounds in fictional and non-fictional works that reflect and document the social, political and cultural history and aesthetic dimension of India and its myriad population. But a wide majority of these works substantiate and subsume the notions, perspectives and interests of the elite and the powerful sections of the society. It is absolutely abysmal that Indian literary arena has disowned and dismissed the life and consciousness of the ever oppressed, socially segregated Dalit community as well as their magnanimous struggles to overcome the inhuman subjugations meted out to them by the casteist society. The 1960s, however, saw an appreciable transformation in the Indian literary landscape when a section of educated Dalits, primarily those in Maharashtra and Karnataka, articulated the Dalit literature to revamp their history and to reclaim human dignity.

Dalit writings, born out of dismal and despondent experiences, voice the tribulations, segregation, dejection, resistance and revolt of the community and seek social awakening and justice. The poetry, novels or drama delineating the intrinsic life of Dalits were monumental in evoking enthusiasm and vigour among them. The Dalit writers subverted the elite literary culture, exposed the brutish casteism and reconstructed the Dalit identity and dignity. The Dalit literature aims at amending the dominant Brahminical epistemologies through a realistic and valid exposure of the existing hypocrisies and by delegitimizing the stereotypes about Dalits and by portraying the miserable nuances and compelling struggles of the community. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Jotiba Phule initiated Dalit writing and the tradition was imbibed and carried on successfully by the noteworthy Dalit writers such as Sharankumar Limbale, Om Prakash Valmiki, Namdeo Dhasal, Bama, P. Sivakami, Meena Kandasamy et.al.

The contemporary Dalit literature, particularly fiction attempts to inculcate Dalit consciousness through a deep delving into the hegemonic cultural politics and extant historical legacies. Besides being powerful accounts of the legacy of casteism, Dalit writers like P. Sivakami and Meena Kandasamy imagine possibilities for Dalit emancipation, empowerment and social liberation. Palanimuthu Sivakami, the pioneering Dalit women writer in Tamil, unveils the life of Dalits through her powerful writings. All her four novels- *Pazhayani Kazhidalum*, *Anandhai*, *Nalum Thodarum* and *Kadaisi Mandhar*- problematize the miserable life of her community and effectively challenge the hegemony of the social elites. In 2006 she herself translated her 1989 Tamil novel *Pazhayani Kazhidalum* to English as *The Grip of Change*, that eventually became a best seller.

*Pazhayani Kazhidalum* or *The Grip of Change*, a strident Dalit-Feminist novel is deeply concerned with the despondent life and compelling struggles of Thangam, a Dalit widow enduring triple oppression – gender subordination, racial discrimination and economic precariousness. The novel is narrated by Gowri, the daughter of Kathamuthu, a Dalit patriarch. The meek and timid Thangam is denied any share in her dead husband's property or wealth since she failed to bear his progeny. The disowned and impoverished Thangam faces threats from her husband's brothers who constantly demanded sexual relation from her. But she never yielded to their whims and fancies. But the penniless and hapless Thangam is forced to work in the farm of Paramjothi Udayar, an upper caste landlord who brutally rapes her. Udayar repeatedly rapes and exploits Thangam who is muted by her poverty and vulnerability. Thangam epitomizes all those Dalit women who are mercilessly exploited and brutally molested by their upper caste men folk. When Udayar's brother in law has come to know about it, he at once informs Kamalam, Udayar's wife that Thangam has been living as Udayar's mistress. The infuriated Kamalam sends forth her brothers to mutilate and vandalize Thangam physically and mentally. The mercilessly mangled Thangam is not helped by her family or her fellow beings. Not even the womenfolk of her community extend any helping hands to the poor Thangam, who finally gathers all her courage and seeks the help of Kathamuthu to redeem her condition. When approached by Kathamuthu, Udayar had vent out his elite egotism and arrogance: "Ungrateful whore. Even if she was hurt, she was hurt by the hand adorned with gold. A Parachi could never dreamt of being touched by a man like me." (Sivakami 31) This is not an isolated event. The upper caste men hails a false notion that they posses authority upon the body of all the lower caste women, who are expected to be their mere sexual toys. Kathamuthu, however, helps Thangam attain justice only after sexually exploiting her. Though Thangam repeatedly pleads and assures that she has only brotherly feelings for Kathamuthu, he mercilessly molests her and retains her in his own house in order to tame his wives, Kangawali and Nagamani, who are depicted as the representatives of all suffering womanhood. The episode where the Dalit liberator, Kathamuthu sexually assaults Thangam brings a new light upon the pathetic existence of Dalit women, who are dubious and unsafe even within their own community. Thangam is thus exploited not only by the upper caste Udayar, but also by Kathamuthu, a man of her own community. Sivakami was severely criticized for the brutish depiction of Kathamuthu and thereby devaluing her own community. But Sivakami quite candidly asserted that her novel and every character in it are truthful reflections of the poignant life and consciousness of the Dalits, particularly the women of her community. The household of Kathamuthu is a very obvious epitome of the double victimisation endured by the Dalit women. Kathamuthu, a Dalit leader fighting for the cause of his community, is not different from any other upper caste men in his attitude and approach towards women. He maintains a polygamist marital status and has illicit affair with many women. He authoritatively ill treats and intimidates his wives. According to Kathamuthu, women are mere puppets, designed to satisfy the sexual urge of men, and to give birth to children. Kathamuthu's treachery was a horrendous and heartbreaking trauma for Thangam, who approached Kathamuthu to penalize those people who abused her, but she got justice only after yielding to his desires. Thangam becoming a mere body available to any men is throwing light upon the actual plight of many a Dalit women who are but forced to silently endure double oppression within and outside their community. While Kathamuthu's daughter, Gowri, the representative of the emerging, diligent Dalit women, is a foil to Thangam, Kangawali and Nagamani. The entire story is delineated by Gowri who critically condemns her father's patriarchal mentality. Though Gowri loves her step mother equally as her own mother, she is against her father's polygamous existence. She constantly urges Kangawali and Nagamani to revolt against their husband's dominance. She studies strenuously and pursues higher education at the city college in order to escape marriage. At the age of 32, she denounces marriage, which according to her a mere weapon for men folk to extend their authority and dominance upon women. If Thangam is the epitome of victimized Dalit women, Gowri is the representative of transforming, confident, young Dalit women. *The Grip of Change* is a realistic portrayal of the harsh torments, sexual abuses, psychological dilemma and economic impoverishment endured by the Dalit women both within and outside their community. At the same time the novel heralds a new and optimistic world for the Dalit women.

While P. Sivakami is primarily concerned with the Dalit women, their triple oppression and consistent struggles to outstrip the marginality, the young, fiery Dalit activist and writer Meena Kandasamy blatantly delineates the pathetic plight of the ever silenced community through her powerful, debut novel *The Gypsy Goddess*. A critically acclaimed poet, Meena has brought forward a powerful insight into the issues of Dalit identity and the socio-cultural segregation endured by the members of her community through her two collections of poetry namely, *Touch* and *Ms. Militancy*. *The Gypsy Goddess* is a fierce, candid and gruesome narration of a horrid and historical massacre that took place in the village of Kilvenmani in the Tanjore district in Tamil Nadu on December 25, 1968. When the Indian society and media expounded the event to be one of a meagre rebellion between landlords and workers, Meena unravels the caste violence concealed within this cruel carnage in which the entire victims were Dalits. Diligently dividing the novel into four sections, "Background", "Breeding Ground", "Battleground" and "Burial Ground", Meena Kandasamy delineates the events that catered to the shameful and brutish massacre of 44 Dalit labourers including women and children. Though lacking in a precise protagonist, the novel is an explicit and concrete delving into the miserable existence and the consequent struggles of the Dalit community. Meena Kandasamy vividly elucidates the pathetic shades and the subtle nuances in the despicable life of the Dalits in the Kilvenmani village, where every day the Dalit workers wake up before the sunrise, wash their faces in any spill of water and brush their teeth with red bricks. Wearing clean or good clothes may result in inhuman treatment from their oppressive landlords. They had no access to the good quality rice they themselves toil to produce. They had no normal social life - in tea stalls, they should carry their own tumblers or 'serattai'; in cinema halls and buses they are not permitted to sit with the upper caste; and to the worst they are denied access to the public wells and health clinics. To add up to their pathetic condition, some landlords along with their goons intrude to the 'cheris' to loot the poverty stricken Dalits. Ruthlessly the landlords take away the goats, hens, vessels, food grains and the bits of money carefully earned and hidden inside the dilapidated huts of the impoverished Dalits. To further aggravate the situation, the merciless landlords put fire to the shaky roofs and torn clothes.

The punishments meted out to the Dalits for even the smallest of the mistakes are quite dreadful. The landlords punish the women by stripping them almost naked and whipping them by tying them in trees in front of the entire village. 'Saanippal' or cow-dung mixed in water was given to the beaten Dalits. Sometimes, this punishment drains them to death and their dead bodies are silently buried. Police punish the Dalits by making them kneel and walk a few miles on their knees until they have no choice but to crawl. Though they are deemed 'untouchables', the landlords exploit and constantly rape the Dalit women including small girls. But despite all the abominable atrocities the Dalit men survive with their bruised skin and bleeding knees. But the Dalit women who lost their dignity and self respect may often commit suicide.

Owing to unbearable and grave poverty, the Dalit workers persistently demanded a hike in their wages or in the quantity of paddy given to them. But the pitiless landlords kept on rejecting their demands and even directed the shop keepers not to sell anything to the Dalits. Many Dalit children started dying due to starvation and illness. The vulnerable Dalits turned to Communism which opened their eyes, taught them to fight back, gave them the strength to defend themselves and made them realize their own potential. The Dalits went on to strike to get increased wages and to gain their rights. This eventually resulted in the murder of Sikkal Pakirisamy, a communist leader. A huge rally of 3000 people comprising both women and children rallied to pay homage to his death. The murder of the comrade Sikkal Pakirisamy proved to be a flashpoint for the tragedy that followed. The helpless Dalits approached the landlord Ramanuja Naidu for help but he told them that "Hoist the flag of the Paddy Producers Association. Remove the red flag. Report for work this instant" (Kandasamy114). Labourers decided to be loyal to the communists and their red flag and thus to fight against the landlords for achieving their rights. Women like Paappa, Thangamma, and Rasathi take the lead and decide to stand in the favour of those who will protect their honour and respect. The landlords attempted to enforce them back to work. They imposed debilitating fines upon the Dalits, used the police to intimidate them, and savagely assaulted the Dalit women. But the hungry people of Kilvenmani village were resolute in their demands for justice. They are not willing to give up their strikes, until their demand is fulfilled. Landlords ordered not to employ anybody from their village not even women. Gopalakrishna Naidu, one of the landlords, angrily entered the village with many rowdies and weapons. Majority of the Dalits ran into the paddy fields to protect themselves. While some of them took shelter in a hut because they found it to be safer and further they believed in their collective strength and safety in staying together. They united themselves inside the locked door. But Gopalakrishna Naidu and his men set fire to the hut. The poor Dalits unlocked the door and stumbled out but they are pushed back inside. A mother throws her one year old son out of the burning hut to save his life. But the child is caught by the mobsters who chopped the child into several pieces and thrown the child back into the hut. 44 members of the community were thus mercilessly murdered. Most of them were women and children. Two women of them were pregnant. They had been

burned and left unrecognizable, leaving behind no distinct trace. After this inhuman carnage, the poor Dalit children continued to die of starvation. But the media and government brilliantly neglected the issue as mere mysterious deaths.

The novels of both P. Sivakami and Meena Kandasamy unfold the myriad concerns and issues of Dalits such as the poverty, injustice, slavery, inequality, sexual exploitation, hopelessness, economic deprivation, unemployment, revolt, resistance and the innumerable atrocities committed against this oppressed community. They are not only narrating the complex resistance of the Dalits against the landowners or the ongoing protest of the communists and Dalit activists but also earnestly struggling through their works to bring forth a massive social change whereby an individual would not be identified by his caste. Thus their novels can be hailed as powerful beacons to guide the marvellous journey towards a revolutionary social change.

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# Muslim as The Other: A Reading of Abdus Samad's Novel Do Gaz Zamin (Two Yards of Land)

Syed Imtiaz Jukkalkar

## Abstract (12pt)

The social, political and economical status of Muslims in our country has been deteriorating. The *Sachar Report* confirms it that compared to all other communities in India, Muslims are the most backward. If we look back into history we find the partition of India and creation of Pakistan affected badly on lives of Indian Muslims. The novel *Do Gaz Zamin* amalgamates history with fiction. The great leaders like Gandhiji, Pt. Nehru, Sardar Patel and Jinnah played vital role in shaping the modern India and Pakistan. The novelist realistically portrays the effects of the decisions of these leaders on the life of common Indians particularly Muslims and the way Indian Muslim turned into the other. The generation which has endured the pains of partition is not alive today but the effect of it is seen in the backwardness of Muslims.

### **Keywords:**

Partition,  
the Other,  
Indian Muslim,  
Political Opportunism,  
Khilafat Movement.

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Abdus Samad is an Urdu writer whose novels such as *Do Gaz Zameen*, *Mahatma*, *Khabon Ka Sawera*, and *Dhamak* proved milestones and enriched contemporary Urdu literature. He was awarded *Sahitya Academy Award* in 1990 for his literary contribution. His novels deal with the politics of twentieth century India. The novel *Do Gaz Zameen* records the history from the rise of *Khilafat* movement in India, Partition of India and creation of Pakistan in 1947 and liberation of East Pakistan resulting into establishment of Bangladesh in 1971. The novel *Do Gaz Zameen* portrays the impact of the politics of the subcontinent on the life of commons in general and Muslims in particular. The title of the novel *Do Gaz Zameen* reminds us the patriotic poem of *Bahadur Shah Zafar*, the last Mughal King who was imprisoned at Rangoon, now called Yangon in Myanmar. His all kith and kin were slain before his eyes after his defeat in 1857 mutiny against the Whites. He writes:

*"kitna hai bad-naseeb Zafar dafn ke liye  
(How unfortunate is Zafar! For his burial)  
do gaz zamin bhi na mili ku-e-yar men.  
(Not even two yards of land were to be had,  
in the land of his beloved.)" (Zafar)*

The narrative is weaved around three generations of Shaikh Altaf Hussain a *Zamindar* of Bihar Sharif, a village in Bihar. He was an ardent follower of Maulana Mohammad Ali, and Bi Amma, the pioneers of *Khilafat* movement. In those days in the villages people used to sing:

*"Boli Amma Mohammad Ali Ki  
(Mohammad Ali's Mother Says)  
Jaan Beta Khilafat Per De Do"  
(Son, Sacrifice Your Life for Freedom)  
(Translated by me, 01)*

"The *Khilafat* movement was an agitation by Indian Muslims, allied with Indian nationalists, to pressure the British government to preserve the authority of the Ottoman Sultan as Caliph of Islam after World War I." (Minault) Gandhiji read the Muslim mind and later he turned successfully the *Khilafat Movement* into Indian National Freedom Movement. Consequently, all the Muslims became the followers of Gandhiji. As the novelist says, "in those days there wasn't any difference between Hindus and Muslims." (Translated by me, 03) Both the communities struggled to make their motherland free from the shackles of Europeans.

After Shaikh Altaf Hussain death at age of forty, the responsibility of the family carried out by his son in law Akthar Hussain, the central figure of the novel. He was a lawyer and he had two elder brothers in law Sarvar Hussain and Asgar Hussain. Akthar Hussain participated actively in the freedom movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. He balanced successfully his family responsibility and his political life. Many times he was sent to jailed. His elder brother in law, Sarvar Hussain was an ICS and the younger Asgar Hussain after his B. A. was aspired to become a lawyer and achieves his aim in course of time. It was an integrated and well established family. As time passes, the change in politics of the nation affects the family as well. The novelist yoked together- the family of Altaf Hussain and the nation. The novelist investigates the psychology of Muslims of that time as he writes, "that was a new era of national integration, the political power of Muslims was turned into struggle of freedom movement." (Translated by me, 06) The Muslims in the Indian subcontinent were an integral part of politics and society at that time.

As the nation approached close to the freedom, political opportunism started deepening its roots by pouring suspicion into the minds of Muslims that the Congress would get freedom with the help of Muslims and later they would turn the Muslims into the other. The Muslims would have no other way but to lead life of slaves. The other justification was that the Muslims ruled India and how was it possible that after independence they would be ruled by others. It was a welcome thing for the Britishers as they had adopted divide and rule policy right from the beginning of colonization of India. The fear of Muslims to be turned into powerless minority led to the establishment of Muslim League. The second and final step which turned the Muslims into the other is the publication of Nehru Report. The rejection of "separate electorates to ensure that minority groups could elect their own representative... the representation of Muslims in the central assembly will be reduced from one third to one fourth." (Ali) And further the denial of "the federal form of Government in favor of a Unitary one ... division of power between center and Provinces but the Residuary powers will be vested in Center." (ibid) Consequently "Muslim League came to front as a powerful organization." (Translated by me, 09) Indian politics and society underwent change as it was Congress verses Muslim League, a Hindu verses a Muslim. The novelist writes:

**"Those who were not firm and whose habit was to join the stronger group became leaders of Muslim League ... the positions of those Muslims who were firm followers of Congress was pathetic. Congress was the best organisation which incorporated all - Hindu fundamentalists, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians. The constituencies were identified on the basis of religion. In Hindu dominated area, Muslim leaders were worthless and in Muslim areas nobody took notice of Hindu leaders."** (Translated by me, 09)

The next development in Indian politics was the rise of *Hindu Mahasabha*, as a reaction to Muslim League. As India approached close to freedom, communal politics was on the climax on the Indian soil. "The village *Biharsharif* was of mixed population. There were Hindus, Muslims and *Harizans*. Muslim Zamindars were more in number but majority of the population was of Hindus." (Translated by me, 23) In the neighbouring area Hindu *Zamindars* were in majority. There were *Rajputs* and *Bhumihars* as well. The workers in farms were Muslims. The writer wants to point out here that most of the Muslims in Bihar were not *Zamindars* but workers on daily wages. Further, the novelist peeps into social condition of the state of Bihar by pointing out that the *Zamindars* were very unjust. They inflicted injustice such as destroying the huts of low caste people, abduction of beautiful young girls. But the village *Biharsharif* was kept safe from such unjust *Zamindars*. Akthar Hussain built a house at Ben, a town close to Biharsharif. The house was named as Ben House. The family of Akthar Hussain also fell prey to the communal politics. His two brothers in law joined Muslim League. They actively participated in it by organizing large gathering at their ancestral home at Biharsharif. Akthar Hussain was invited to join but he didn't participate in it. He devoted his whole life to the Congress party and its principle of Hindu-Muslim unity. Akthar Hussain, the mouthpiece of the novelist represents the Muslim minority in India after independence. As elections approached three candidates from three different parties contested the elections viz. Congress, Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha. In the Muslim dominated area, the candidates of Muslim League own the election and from Hindu dominated area candidates of Hindu Mahasabha own the election. Akthar Hussain worked hard to campaign for Congress candidate. His two brothers in laws went to the opposite camp of Muslim League. After the election, the unified society of the area was disintegrated between Hindus and Muslims. The novelist reports

us that in the area of *Punjab* and *Bangal* there were many communal riots erupted. The district of *Noakhali*, now in Bangladesh and *Calcutta*, now Kolkatta were caught in the fire of communal violence. Gandhiji visited the affected areas. He invoked the people to maintain peace through his prayers and people took oath of national integration. Unfortunately at the same time, the rural area of Bihar was caught in the fire of communal violence. Thousands were killed in the violence. "Maulana Ayub Ansari, a congress leader was murdered by the rioters. Many tried to convince the rioters that Maulana was a secular" (Translated by me, 27) but now Muslim is the other for them. The novelist describes the harrowing deeds of the rioters:

**"Many Muslim dominated villages were cleared. The dead bodies were scattered. Only the strong willed persons are able to enter the villages. Thousands took shelter in camps."**  
**(Translated by me, 27)**

The rural area of Bihar could not stay unaffected for long. The Muslims at the villages prepared themselves to face death. The men embraced each other. Women were asked to jump into the wells to save their chastity. Children were made to sit to read Quaran. It was decided that men will fight and women will commit suicide and children will be sent in service of Allah (God) through the *Pul Sirat* sword way. (27) In other words children will be killed so that they can meet easy death. One night mob attacked and almost all the Muslims in the villages met death. As our nation was approaching close to freedom, Indian Muslim was turned into the other.

"India got freedom but before it, Pakistan was created."(Translated by me, 34) Most of the supporters of Muslim League understood that now "their stay in India is just impossible." (Translated by me, 35) Asgar Hussain and Survar Hussain decided to migrate to Pakistan. Both of them sold their property at whatever price they got and left India, the land of their birth, the land where their ancestors were buried. Thousands of Muslims migrated to Pakistan. Many of them were looted and murdered in the way. But Akthar Hussain and his family stayed in India firmly. He has full faith in the secular principles of Congress. In the days of crisis he continued his work for the Congress party. But the status of Muslims deteriorated. The communal riots and partition resulted in social and economic depravity of Muslims. The secular principles of Congress and the constitution extended the helping hands to them. But regaining the previous status is just impossible. The economical depravity of the Muslims further deepened as they were "losing the cases of custodians." They had to prove to the government that the property under their control is their own. Indian Muslim was turned into the other on his motherland. Those who migrated to Pakistan could not meet their relatives in India but communication through letters continued. "After Indo-Pak war of 1965, for several months the communication through letters was cut off." (Translated by me 33) Muslims were even tortured psychologically. On the basis of their relations with the Indian migrant Muslims in Pakistan, they were looked upon with suspicion. "Their protector Jawaharlal Nehru left this world." (Translated by me, 133) Sometimes Muslims were even called Pakistani. The novelist writes:

**"Now Muslims were blamed but there was no one to defend them. They were called Pakistani. The Muslims reacted to the tease in such a way that the onlookers used to laugh and teaser used to enjoy."**  
**(Translated by me, 133)**

Even Muslims like Aktar Hussain who opposed partition were under suspicion. "One day Akthat Hussain was preparing to visit the village Biharsharif, police invaded his home. The police was informed that there was a transmitter in the house and important information was provided to Pakistan." (Translated by me, 134) The police searched every corner of the house. They found only the letters of migrated relatives. It was a great blow to Akthar Hussain. The news spread like fire in the bush. Akther Hussain locked himself in his house for several days. For the first time Akthar Hussain felt insecure in his own country.

There was considerable rise in unemployment. Even educated Muslim youths were unemployed. Akthar Hussain's son Hamid requested his father to recommend him for government job. But Akthar Hussain was very principled. He was against recommendation. One day he came across Chammu uncle, one of his old acquaintances. He was working at Calcutta. He informed Hamid that there were ample opportunities at Dhaka in East Pakistan. He also told him that he can help Hamid to migrate to Dhaka. After a year Hamid went Calcutta and with the help of Chammu he migrated to East Pakistan. There he worked in a jute factory. He established himself in good position. During the days of struggle, a native Muslim Badrul Islam, helped him to find job. Later he married Nazeena, the daughter of Badrul Islam.

Hamid used to write letter to his father, Akthar Hussain and received every time encouragement and blessings. But his happy life doesn't last long. The natives of East Pakistan had several grievances against West Pakistan. They complained :

**"People from West Pakistan were dominant in government sector. The country was ruled by military and the production of East is carried away by the West. The natives of East have to sleep empty stomach."**  
**(Translated by me, 135)**

After elections, it was crystal clear that the two parts of Pakistan think differently. The politicians in West Pakistan warned the government and the migrants to support the West Pakistan. At last “military was sent to East Pakistan and violence began.” (Translated by me, 136) Within some days situation changed lakhs of people crossed border and took shelter in India in relief camps. Bengalis formed a revolutionary group called *Mukti Bahini*. The migrants including Sindhi, Punjabi, Bihari were returned to their native land. (137) Hamid’s family was caught in such a critical situation. After some days his father in law was arrested by the military of West Pakistan. Hamid with his wife and children was forcefully taken away by the members of *Mukti Bahini*. Thousands were murdered. The novelist describes the horrors of death as:

**“All the migrants are kept alive. Every night some men and women are selected. They are made to stand in a row then shot dead. Many migrants used to beg to kill them as waiting to die is more painful than death.” (Translated by me, 142)**

Hamid and his family fortunately escape from the clutches of death and reach to Calcutta with the help of Chhaku uncle. Hamid after staying for some days at Calcutta, visits his father Akthar Hussain in Bihar. He finds the whole family disintegrated. Before some years he was the native of India but now he is a migrant. He cannot stay in India for long as migrant. The only way as Chakku uncle suggested him is to migrate to West Pakistan. He cannot go directly to West Pakistan from India. He can reach his destination via Nepal. Chakku uncle once again helps him. He migrates to Karachi and stays for some days at his uncle Sarvar Hussain’s house. He begins a new life and within some months everything gets normalized.

The novelist adopts epistolary technique for further narration. Akthar Hussain writes to his son Hamid who is now resident of Pakistan. In the letter Akthar Hussain not only comments on the life of Muslims in Indian but also the development in Indian politics, devoid of idealism. Akthar Hussain says:

**“The Muslim of the Indian subcontinent has been suffering physically and psychologically. I think Almighty has fixed this time for his test... happy time won’t be there in the life of Muslims hereafter. He has to implement the learning he received though scriptures and his forefathers... he may be the resident of India, Pakistan or Bangladesh, if he understands the conditions he is placed in, he will outlive.” (Translated by me, 187)**

Further, Akthar Hussain points out that life of those Indians who migrated to Pakistan is also not easy. He also quotes Mustafa Jatoi, a political leader of Pakistan who says, “the migrants should be pushed in the sea.”(Translated by me, 187) The migrant Muslim from India is the other in Pakistan as well. He suggests his son to adopt full heartedly the land of Pakistan and not to worry and lose the happiness in life. (ibid) He further says, “now Indian Muslims don’t have any fear of communal violence, they learnt to face them. They know that they have to live and die here only.” (Translated by me, ibid) The Congress party has used Muslims as vote bank but the Congress has also supported the broken Indian Muslims after partition. (189) He thanks Gandhi, Nehru and Maulana Azad for making them resident of democratic India. The vote is the most powerful weapon for Muslims in India. Otherwise Muslims would have lost everything. (ibid)

Commenting on the present Indian society, the writer says, “Now societies are formed on the basis of religion. Neither a Muslim resides in Hindu area and vice versa ... Think of the dreams which we saw while fighting for freedom and the results we are confronted with now.” (Translated by me, 198) For a Muslim to love his motherland is part of his faith and to fight for motherland is worship. (198)

#### Notes

**Bhumihars** are a Hindu caste mainly found in Bihar the Purvanchal region of Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh, and Nepal. The Bhumihars claim Brahmin status, and are also referred to as Bhumihar Brahmin. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhumihar>)

**Pul Sirat** is, according to Islam, the hair-narrow bridge which every human must pass on the *Yawm ad-Din* ("Day of the Way of Life" i.e. Day of Judgment) to enter Paradise. It is said that it is as thin as a hair and as sharp as the sharpest knife or sword. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pul-Sirat>)

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# Who is a Hero? : Visualising Dalit Politics in Indian English Graphic Fiction

Amrita Sneha L S

## Abstract (12pt)

This paper tries to analyse how epic tradition and history writing are subverted and reconstructed in the factual graphic *Bhimayana: Incidents in the Life of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar* (2011) written by S. Anand and Srividya Natarajan collaborating with the artists Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam. As the title implies the work involves the journey of B.R. Ambedkar and subverts the epic convention of associating 'yana' to classic heroes like Rama. While mythological Rama engages in fights with asuras Ambedkar battles against caste prejudices in Indian society. The process of subversion is evident in pictorial characterisation of Ambedkar as well. There is an image in which Ambedkar's full facial profile stands above submissive partial faces of Gandhi and Nehru substantiating the prominence of Ambedkar in Indian history. Though the work is fragmentary and non-linear it does possess epic like features. It provides the frame narrative of contemporary youth debating on caste reservation and the oral narration of Ambedkar's contribution to dalit movements in India. *Bhimayana* is rich in images of nature and animals similar to the natural description and anthropomorphism in traditional epics. Just like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* which incorporate the story of Valmiki and Vyasa the final chapter of *Bhimayana* introduces the modern Pardan Gond art and the discrimination faced by the tribal Vyam couple particularly in the balcony image. The graphical representation of *Bhimayana* is crucial as it deviates from photographic precision and rectangular panel division establishing unique dalit language in non-verbal form. As a historical re-telling *Bhimayana* challenges the political and geographical construction of Indian nationalism foregrounding dalit elements.

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The idea of nationalism is synthesised by narratives. The historical narrative plays a crucial role in constructing the identity of a nation. So the process of writing history and the concept of selecting 'useful past' is significant. If a historian writing on Indian history during the first half of twentieth century selects colonialism as 'useful past' then all other events not related to colonialism are neglected. That is why a school student in India who is familiar with Champaran Satyagraha (1917) and Chauri Chaura incident(1922) is not aware of Mahad Satyagraha (1927). All the three events are named after localities in which these took place. Often the first two incidents associated with Gandhi are prioritised over Mahad Satyagraha, referred as 'Dalit Declaration of Independence', organised by Ambedkar who is no less than the former leader. The identity of subaltern imposed on dalit community in social realm is same as that of the representation in the historical text. Here lies the significance of the narrator of history. What history represents is dependent on who represents it. The identity of the narrator is crucial. So when a dalit articulates history the criteria of selection changes. This fact makes the production process of *Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability*

(2011) relevant. It is a graphical work written by S. Anand and Srividya Natarajan collaborating with the artists Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam. They are from marginalised community and got united to produce a work based on Ambedkar's writings and speeches for Navayana, a publishing house founded in 2003 with anti-casteist motto.

*Bhimayana* is an attempt to reconstruct Indian historiography. It employs comic form to depict a serious historical narrative. In this way it subverts the compatibility between form and content. It makes use of different modes to achieve this subversive effect. To narrate dalit trauma it adopts epic conventions. The power of narration lies in the way in which it subverts the very convention. *Bhimayana* challenges the selective valorisation of epic, its attribution of sublimity and grandeur to upper community. As the title implies *Bhimayana* involves the 'yana' or journey of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956), a dalit by birth, unlike classical epics in which 'yana' is the monopoly of privileged heroes like Rama. It asserts the view that a dalit too can be an epic hero and possesses the right to travel. The first three 'books' of *Bhimayana* represent three different journeys in Ambedkar's life. The division of the work into 'books' rather than chapters hints to massive epic division. These 'books' portray Ambedkar's family trip to Goregaon in 1901, job related travel to Baroda in 1918 and journey to Daulatabad with his colleagues in 1934. When he travelled he witnessed the worst in people. He was denied water and shelter, the necessities of life, and he experienced untouchability not only from Caste Hindus but also from Parsis and Muslims. He came to realise that the notion about 'pollution' is not restricted to Hinduism but an epidemic phenomenon devoid of religious bounds. Journey as a metaphor brings the protagonist to self-realisation. Ambedkar realises his identity as restricted to dalit despite being a well-educated and physically imposing personality. He recognised his 'karma' to give voice to the voiceless as a speaker and writer. The image of Ambedkar with microphone and multiple speakers establishes his authority as an orator who leads to the enlightenment of the mass symbolically represented with the sprinklers on listening men and women. There is another image in which Ambedkar branches out as a tree with many faces and hands engaged in writing. Ambedkar did intellectual battle against caste prejudices in Indian society unlike mythological Rama who waged martial fights against asuras. As an epic hero Ambedkar exerts his power through his narrative voice and desires the dalit struggles to be carried out in peaceful manner. In spite of his efforts historical narrative of dalit is choked with blood and violence. Unlike conventional epic heroes Ambedkar does not glorify or philosophise loss of lives but emotionally associates with the victims. This enhances the moral importance of Ambedkar in Indian historical narrative.

The question of morality is evident in the critical debate between Ambedkarite / Gandhian principles. *Bhimayana* seeks solution for the question, who was more 'serious about equality'. It claims Gandhi was more concerned with de-colonisation and he was distant from dalit predicament which is obvious from his disapproval of allotting separate electorates to dalits in independent India. What Gandhi discarded was the subject of priority for Ambedkar. *Bhimayana* cites the historical instance when Ambedkar was the spokesperson of the 'depressed class' in the Minorities Committee of the Indian Round Table Conference in 1931. So Ambedkar was a leader who stood for the reclamation of rights of the denied, a universal moral cause. This fact establishes Ambedkar's stature over Gandhi. There is an image in which Ambedkar's full facial profile stands above submissive partial faces of Gandhi and Nehru substantiating the prominence of Ambedkar in Indian history (Fig.1)

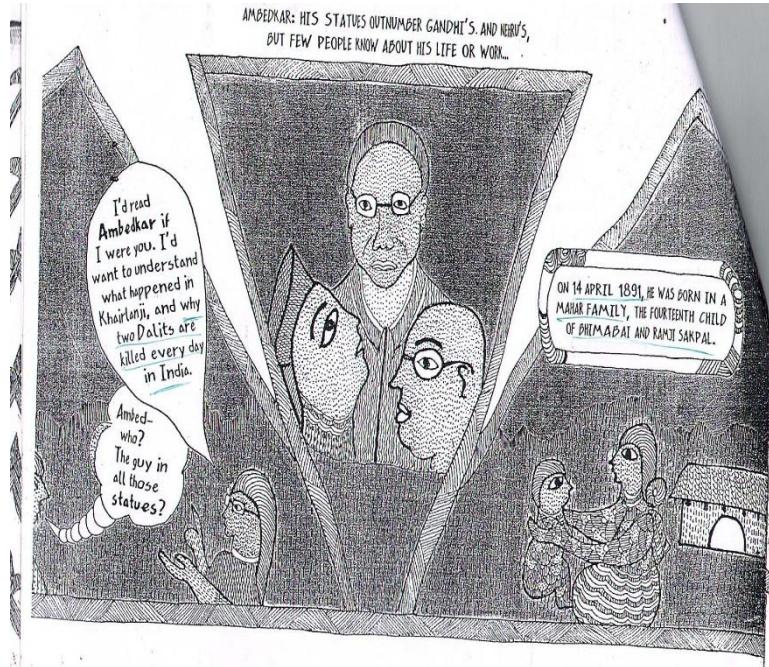


Figure 1. *Bhimayana*, p 14.

As a graphical narrative, *Bhimayana* consists of many interesting images of Ambedkar. There is an illustration in which Ambedkar and his followers take a dip in river along with Buddha, the symbolic representation of the Mass Buddhist conversion in 1956, a few months before the death of Ambedkar. It resembles the final act of 'moksha' or salvation sought by Rama and his subjects in the river Sarayu. As eponymous heroes though these kinds of similarities can be drawn out between Rama and Ambedkar, the latter is more similar to the epic character of Ekalavya. The first 'book' of *Bhimayana* shows the discrimination faced by Ambedkar in school from teacher, like Ekalavya whose talent was destroyed by his guru Dhrona. *Bhimayana* reminds the reader about Ekalavya and such victims of trauma in epics.

Apart from characterisation *Bhimayana* follows other epic like features. It provides a frame narrative and an authoritative narrative voice. *Bhimayana* opens with the image of contemporary youth debating on caste reservation as frame narrative and female narrative voice describing the whole events of dalit trauma starting from 1901 to 'recent past' in non-linear fashion. In midst of non-chronological events of Ambedkar's life it provides proof for the contemporary occurrence of dalit alienation through the newspaper reports on honour killing, denial of water to dalits, dalit murder for demanding wage etc. Adding to the temporal violation it transgresses spatial configuration too. Instead of panels and technical precision it represents the illustration in irregular shapes and gutter space. This narrative strategy represents history of trauma as continuous entity. The continuity is enhanced by including 'The Art of *Bhimayana*' as the final 'book' in the same comic representation as that of the text. The final one introduces Durgabai Vyam narrating on her personal experience of working along with her husband Subash Vyam on the modern Pardan Gond art for *Bhimayana*. Hence the work selects tribal art form limited to Central India to illustrate the nationalist history challenging the dominant art conventions. The first person narration on the discrimination faced by the couple for their tribal identity is relevant. The instance of hierarchy is illustrated by the landlady in balcony addressing the artists standing on ground. (Fig.2)

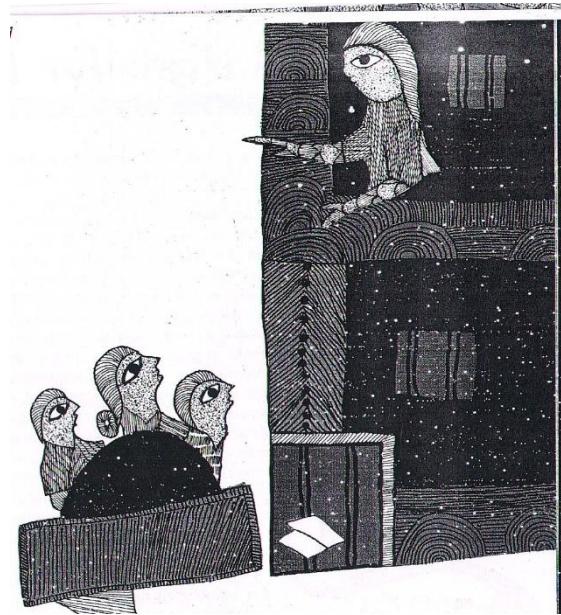


Figure 2. *Bhimayana*, p 99.

*Bhimayana* is an interesting narrative on subaltern as it submerges both dalit and tribal trauma.

*Bhimayana* speaks on behalf of the Other not only in terms of caste and tribe but analyses history by representing woman as dominant force. The female narrative voice and Durgabai speaking as the representative of Vyam couple is appealing. The depiction of anthropomorphism is relevant. The water pump is illustrated as a helpless woman who is unable to provide water to dalit while the bench in frame narrative is shown to be a woman with open hair depicting change in the strength of woman. Along with anthropomorphism, *Bhimayana* can be considered as a text rich in natural images. Like the mythological double headed Garuda in epic, there is an image of triple headed bird in *Bhimayana*. (Fig.3)

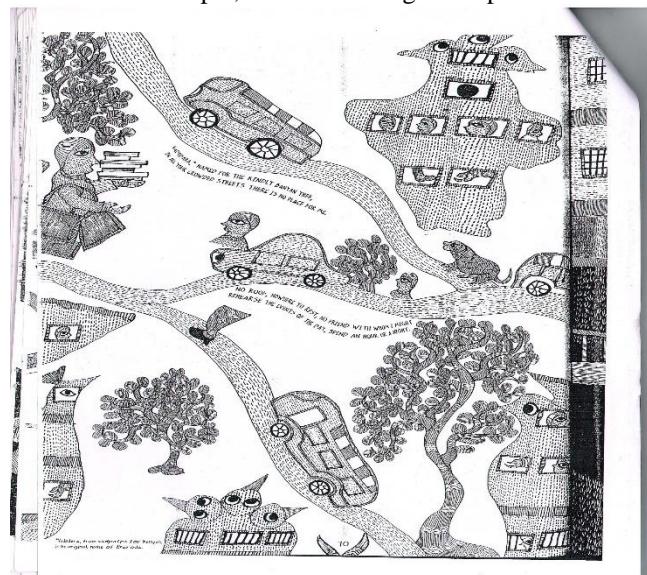


Figure 3. *Bhimayana*, p 70.

The bird with stretched wings resembles the geographical map of India. Flying bird, the metaphor of freedom, articulates the notion of nation dalit aspires to be a part of, not the present nation where dalit feels as fish out of water. The recurring metaphor of fish asserts this fact. Use of images of animals can be associated with the predicament of dalits. Dalits are often treated like animals and sometimes inferior to

animals. Also these images follow a specific pattern. Herbivores and carnivores represent dalits and caste hindus respectively. The division is prominent in the structure of speech bubbles- bird bubble for dalits and sting bubble for others. So *Bhimayana* subverts the features of epic to narrate the story of its hero whose 'heroism' is juxtaposed with history.

*Bhimayana* focuses on the concept of dalit/non-dalit binary in conventional historical narratives and subverts it. As an alternative historical narrative the strength of *Bhimayana* lies in reconstructing the illogical binary framework and pointing it back to the dominant narratives of nationalism. *Bhimayana* is a selective narrative on Indian history but its objective of reclamation of the right of self-narration for the subaltern establishes it as a text upholding the ethics of historiography.

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# Writing Dalits: A Critical Reading of *Season of the Palm*

Mahadeva Swamy N N

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## Abstract

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The novel *Season of the Palms* was originally written in Tamil in 2001 by Perumal Murugan, who is an important contemporary Indian Tamil writer. It was translated into English by V. Geetha in 2004. The novel *Season of the Palms* is widely acclaimed and well-read across India which predominantly deals with Dalits who belong to lower caste in Indian social stratification. Perumal Murugan who is a non-Dalit has depicted Dalits' pains, sufferings and discriminations in his writings.

What is Dalit Literature and who can authentically write about Dalits' problems and if Dalit consciousness is there in the text written by non-Dalits – these questions have been widely debated and discussed in Indian academia. However, Perumal Murugan's writings are worth readings which explore subaltern/marginalized communities' problems, particularly on caste issues in India.

The main objective of the paper is to critically reading the novel *Season of the Palms* with regard to representation of Dalits. It aims to study how a non-Dalit writer's narrative is different than a non-Dalit writer. To interpret the novel, the theories that are written by Dalit writers and critics will be studied.

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The main objective of this paper is to critically read the novel *Season of the Palm* to study representation of Dalits. It aims to study how Dalit characters have been represented in the novel and it also studies whether those Dalit characters have individuality or not. The paper aims to study how Perumal Murugan's narrative on Dalits is different than Dalit's narrative. To interpret the novel, the theories that are written by Dalit writers and critics will be examined.

### Introduction:

The novel *Season of the Palm* was originally written in Tamil in 2001 by Perumal Murugan, who is an important contemporary Indian Tamil writer. It was translated into English by V. Geetha in 2004. *Season of the Palm* is widely acclaimed and well-read across India which predominantly deals with Dalits who belong to lower castes in Indian social stratification. Perumal Murugan, who is a non-Dalit has depicted Dalits' pains, sufferings and discriminations in his writings. He has said that caste is like a god who is omnipresent everywhere. All of his novels are set in rural Kongu region (Kongunadu) which reveal day to day lived experiences of ordinary people who live in villages where issues of caste, gender and culture are rigid and complex. *Season of the Palm* has portrayed various marginalized communities, particularly Dalits who have been considered as untouchables in our society. Daisy in the essay titled *Hoping against Hope : A Discourse on Perumal Murugan's Season of the Palms* opines that 'This novel adds another important dimension to the concept of *Dalit literature*, in that Dalit literature is not necessarily the compendium of creative works by *Dalit* writers only. (Daisy, 12)

The novel has sketched exploitation of Dalits by the upper caste people who own all the means of production in our society. It uncovers gruesome reality of Indian villages where caste plays a key role. Since his writings are realistic which address contemporary issues, he has been praised as 'the most accomplished

of his generation of Tamil writers' by Caravan. Perumal Murugan is a non-Dalit writer who has written many works which deal with issue of castes.

India is a country of villages where caste system plays a pivotal role in social/public life. K A Guna Shekaran's opinion as quoted by M S S Pandian in his essay *Writing Ordinary Lives* is "whichever village you enter, the first question that is asked is what caste you belong to?" and 'in our country, village is caste, caste is village' With a sense of irony, he adds "Gandhi loved villages a lot". (M S S Pandian, 37). In villages caste practices are deeply rooted. The victims of caste system (Jaati Paddhathi) are Dalits who belong to lower castes and who have been considered as untouchables since time immemorial. The caste system which is cancer for our society has divided Indian society into many castes and sub castes. Despite many social reformers –from Buddha to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar – worked relentlessly to eradicate caste system which is evil, even in this 21<sup>st</sup> century caste is exist, which has been hampering all social and economical development. Dalits who live in the bottom of our society are the victims who were denied of basic human rights and education for ages. It is Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who is the sculptor of Indian Constitution, studied extensively on caste system and attempted to organize Dalits to bring changes in their lives by giving equal status in India. As a result, in 1950's Constitution of India drafted by Dr. Ambedkar has recommended educational and employment opportunities for all including all depressed classes. The constitution abolished the practice of untouchability and said that all are equal under the law. Even though the practice of untouchability was officially abolished in 1950, even today the practice of untouchability remains same which is very much visible and reality in rural India than towns and cities. The stigma and prejudice towards Dalit communities by upper caste people are still prevalent; as a result, Dalit movements and Dalit literature emerged to resist against inequality and injustice that these communities are meted out for ages. Dr. B. R Ambedkar who is Dalit himslef has written many books and initiated social movements to fight against caste and social inequality. He became inspiration for Dalit panthers/ Dalit activists and Dalit writers. Dalit movement and Dalit literature emerged together in Maharastra in the beginning of 1970's , gradually it spread across India. The people who are involved in Dalit movements were writers as well. For example, in Karnataka, Dalit poet Siddalingaiah and Devanuru Mahadeva were active in both Dalit movement and literature in 1980's.

The etymology of the term 'Dalit' can be traced to the root word 'dal' in Sanskrit, which means to crack, split, be broken, scattered, crushed, destroyed and is understood in all the Indian languages that are derived from Sanskrit.( Kumar,3) Earlier Dalit communities were called as Athishudras, Namo Shudras, Panchama and Harijan and other derogatory terms but the word Dalit was used by Dalits for their own cultural and collective identity. Raj Kumar, who is Dalit scholar has opined that 'the term 'Dalit' came to be used in public discourse towards the end of the nineteenth century. It was Jotirao Phule (1826-90), one of the pioneers of the non-brahmin movement in Maharastra, who was supposed to have used the term 'Dalit' to describe the conditions of the outcastes and untouchables as oppressed and exploited people who were maltreated by the upper castes'.(Raj Kumar, 4).

Many Dalit scholars have theorized what does 'Dalit' mean. Sharan Kumar Limbale, who is one of the well-known Dalit critics and writers opines ' harijans's and neo-Buddhists are not the only Dalits, the term describes all the untouchable communities living outside the boundary of the village, as well as Adivasis, landless farm-laborers, workers, the suffering masses, and nomadic and criminal tribes.(Limbale,30) Limbale's definition appears to have included all the oppressed people as Dalits whereas Raj Kumar who is another Dalit scholar defines Dalit as ' Dalit is a political term which symbolizes the relatively new identity of a group of people who were earlier known as 'untouchables'.(Kumar,1) Since untouchability is a inhuman and distinctive form of discrimination which lower caste Dalits experience in their day to day life, I instead of using Sharan Kumar Limbale's inclusive term Dalit, prefer using the word Dalit for lower caste people who face untouchability and discrimination because of their castes. In this paper Dalit who face untouchability in social/public life are considered as Dalits.

Before 1970's many upper caste writers had written about Dalits in their writings. Premchand, Shivararama Karanth, U.R. Anantha Murthy and other upper caste writers wrote about Dalits in their writings but in their writings Dalit characters were treated as passive, helpless. Non-Dalits writers attempted to give poetic justice to their writings; therefore, their writings have not paid much attention to Dalits' real problems instead their writings have addressed surface level problems. The non-Dalit writers writings' main objective was to change the heart of upper caste people (change of heart). Opposed to these upper caste writers narratives, Dalit writers started writing their lived experiences which are realistic and authentic experiences. They have been highly influenced by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's writings, speeches and social activities. The writers counter non -Dalit Writers' representation of Dalits by exploring Dalit's lived and real experiences.

Dalit literature is a distinctive form of literature which explores Dalits problems and lived experiences. Many Dalit writers have written autobiographies, poems, short stories and novels. Compared to other forms of writings, autobiography is an important form of writing which recodes authentic and lived experiences of

Dalits who painted their pains and wounds of their lives. Baburao Bagul, who is well-known Dalit writer and critics said that 'Dalit Literature is human literature'. Sharan Kumar Limabe opines that 'Dalit literature is precisely that literature which artistically portrays the sorrows, tribulations, slavery, degradation, ridicule, and poverty endured by Dalits. This literature is but a lofty image of grief. Recognizing the centrality of the human being, this literature is thoroughly saturated with humanity's joys and sorrows. It regards human beings as supreme, and leads them towards total revolution. (Limbale,30).

Dalit experiences and Dalit consciousness both are crucial elements in Dalit writings which distinguish Dalit writers writings from non-Dalit writers' artificial writings. Dalit literature is purposive which aims to educate both Dalits and non-Dalits regarding the issue of caste and its impact on human civilization. Dalit literature is influenced by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's ideology; therefore, it longs to give self-respect and self-dignity for Dalits whose dreams and aspirations were crushed in the name of caste and untouchability for ages. It is literature of a person who lives in the margins in our society.. Self-respect and Self-dignity which Ambedkar advocated in his writings and activities are the inspiration for both Dalit literature and Dalit movements. Hence, Dalit literature is distinctive in its nature which explores inhuman ill-treatment of Dalits by upper caste people and resists the inequality and injustice. By and large, in Dalits writings, protagonists of stories belong to lower caste who experiences inhuman ill-treatment and they consequently rebel against oppressor and inequality and attempt for social movement/transformation and seeks for caste-less and egalitarian society.

#### **A study of the novel *Season of the Palm***

The novel *Season of the palm* is set in a village in rural Kongu region (Kongunadu) in Tamilnadu. The protagonist of the novel, Shorty, is a Dalit who is hired as a bonded labor by village upper caste land lord. The novel mainly revolves around five Dalit children characters named Shorty, Belly, Stonedeaf, Stumleg and Tallfellow. These children who belong to lower castes are hired as bonded labors by their village upper caste land lords who belong to Kongu Vellar community. These lower caste children herd sheep and graze them every day. The children work hard in their masters' houses and graze sheep and do all the work restlessly but in return they get very less money/wages. They even don't get sufficient food to eat in their masters' houses. The masters frequently abuse, beat and starve the children without providing food. These children struggle to find food to quench their hunger and they search for fruits and toddy in forest to satisfy their hunger. Since they are working as bonded labors for the money their poor parents borrowed; the children, being helpless, have to work as labors. If they run away to home, the landlords go and threaten their parents to either return the money they borrowed or send their children back to work. The poor parents, helplessly send their children to the work. On the other hand, the novel has also represented Dalits as hard-working people who are more productive and who are very close to nature. In addition to this, the novel, spread light on domestic animals whom these Dalit children look after entire day which gradually develops an attachment between the children and the domestic animals. The novel depicts humanistic values that working class people have.

Perumal Murugan mainly writes about marginalized people who live in rural side and he also explores the problems/social evils that are prevalent in villages. He predominantly writes about issues pertaining to caste/gender and culture. Poverty, economical inequality and exploitation and exclusion are the main themes of the novel. Since Murugan has extensively written on ordinary people and has brought subaltern issues into public domain, his writings are appreciable and he is a dutiful writer. However, the way he has depicted issues of caste and representation of Dalits need to be critically studied in order to get the meaning of his writings; because, there has been a discussion in Indian academia whether non-Dalit writers write about Dalits problems authentically or not. Perumal Murugan is a non-Dalit and how he has represented caste and Dalits should be studied.

In the novel, Dalit characters have been named Shorty, Belly, Stonedeaf, Stumleg and Tallfellow which are nick names given based on physical features of those characters whereas domestic animals such as goats given proper names such as, Nedumbi, Mollachi, Vellachi, Soozhiyan, Konnakkalli, Monduvalli, Arakathan etc. Self-identity and self-dignity are important elements that Dalit critics and writers advocate while writing/discussing Dalits. But, though Dalit characters are protagonists of the novel, they have not been identified as dignified individual characters. The novel by giving proper names to animals have semi-humanized them whereas Dalit characters have been dehumanized. By and large, in Dalit writings Dalit characters would be given proper names but the novel lacks the proper names. The novel seems to have presented that Dalits are ill-treated than the animals but such writings quite opposite to what Dalit writers think about Dalit characters in Dalit writing. For example, in Dalit literature the protagonist should be Dalit, should be rebel and revolutionary. But, the novel has represented Dalits in other way which cannot be accepted realistic representation of Dalits.

The novel *Season of the Palm* seems to have majorly dealt with economical inequality rather than social inequality. As for as Dalits are concerned untouchability is their main enemy which has dehumanized and

haunted Dalits for ages. By and large, in Dalits writings' caste discrimination and untouchability are the predominant theme, but the novel *Season of the Palm* has not addressed untouchability deeply, instead it focuses on economical disparity. The novel also presents untouchability as flexible practice which is used by upper castes people according to their own conveniences. For example, in the novel, Stonedeaf's mistress makes Stonedeaf to enter house and clean the vessels and secretly gets household work done by Stonedeaf.

"Stonedeaf's Mistress usually keeps the door leading to the well shut and bolted. This is the door that the Master uses to come into the house. As soon as Stonedeaf finishes her shed and yard work, her Mistress motions to her to come into the house. Once she is inside, Stonedeaf is made to sweep and mop the house, and wash the vessels". (Murugan, 46, 47)

Similarly, Shorty and his master's son, Selvan, sleeps together on the same cot irrespective of their different castes. The novel represents untouchability is a mental notion/concept which can be challenged and broken.

"Dai, Come up here. Sleep on the bed with me."

No, Master.'

I am asking you to...Come.'

'Promise you won't tell your father.'

'Look, I am telling you to come up here. Will I sneak on myself?

Get up and put your head on this side, next to mine.'

Selvan's tone is sharp. Shorty gets up and lies down next to Selvan. They hold themselves stiffly and carefully, not wanting to touch each other. All is quite now. As the night hours pass and the dark slowly gives into the grey of dawn, the space between them dissolves. They lie together with Selvan's sheet thrown across both of them". (Murugan,135)

In the above examples, the practice of untouchability has been ridiculed by the author as it is a mental concept which can be challenged. But in Dalit writings' the practice of untouchability by the upper caste people is the main source for their pains and sufferings which they have depicted in their writings. Because, even today untouchability is a reality which Dalits experiences in their day to day life.

In Dalits writings pains, dreams and aspiration of Dalits can be identified but the novel *Season of the Palm* has narrated economical exploitation of Dalits by the upper caste people. The novel is about economical problems that the Dalits experience. It has also depicted that how Dalits are victimized by the upper caste people for their own benefits. Dalits are represented as objects which are used by upper caste people. But Dalit literature which is influenced by Ambedkar thought always attempted to give individuality, self-respect and self-dignity to Dalit characters. In Dalits writings, Dalit characters are not passive, they are bebal and question the inequality.

Moreover, the novel also spread light on creativity and intelligence of Dalits. Dalit characters have been represented as productive people who work hard. The concept of labor and productive and production are Marxist concepts but Dalit writers who are influenced by Ambedkar ideology treat human being has central to all and give them special attention in their social and individual identity.

Perumal Murugan who was influenced by Marxist and Leninist movement. Even though he has written about Dalit and caste system, the novel appears to depicted Master-Slave relationship and economical inequality. He majorly focused on economical inequality in his novels rather than social inequality that is there in between lower castes and upper castes people. Perumal Murugan has attempted to portray that Dalits are poor because they don't own means of production such as land and property. He has brought western class system and attempted to localize with Indian caste system. Since both are class and caste system are product of different social and economical conditions, foreign class system and economical equality cannot be the solution for Indian Dalits who have been socially excluded from mainstream Indian mainstream society. For Dalits, social equality is the primary concern and then economical equality because if there is a social equality then it gradually leads to economical equality. But economical euqlity cannot protect Dalits from the practice of untouchability and caste discrimination. Therefore, I believe even though Perumal Murugan's *Season of the Palm* has mainly dealt with Dalit problems, it particularly addressed economical problems. The novel seems to have represented economical inequality between bourgeois upper castes people and proletariat Dalits than social issues/ inequality such as caste discrimination and disastrous untouchability that Dalits writers mainly address in their own writings.

To conclude, the novel *Season of the Palms* has represented Dalits as objects who have been exploited by upper caste landlords. The novel majorly focused on economical inequality rather than social inequality and the practice of untouchability. The novel seems to have represented Dalits as highly ill-treated in our society than the animal. I think this kind of representation of Dalits is problematic because the body of Dalit literature came into existence to question the unrealistic representation of Dalits by non-Dalit writers who

either romanticize or idealize Dalit problems. But Dalit writers have always attempted to depict realistic and lived experiences of their lives. It could be the reason why Dalit and non-Dalit writers representation of Dalits frequently surface in Indian academia.

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# Gender and Sexuality: Study of the Drag Queens

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## **Abstract**

The concept of sex and gender has been prevalent in the society since a long time. Although the terms have been used interchangeably in the past but in the recent times the meanings of the words are definitely pointing to two distinct concepts. Whereas “sex” refers to the biological differences between a man and woman, “gender” on the other hand refers to the roles that are being assigned to them by the society. Gender is rather a more complicated term than sex as it may not always line up to their particular sex. These people thus fall into the category of transgender or rather gender-nonconforming. Although the matter of study here is the heteronormativity in our society and the impact it has on the masses. The paper aims at establishing the influence the “other” gender has on the society and how it has created a stir by revealing that gender identity is something that is socially taught in private and public space. The concept of Drag Queen here is used in a way to break the shackles of heteronormative guidelines and show how gender identity is only a mere construction which can be deconstructed anytime. The paper aims to reveal the very idea of self-identity and how society moulds people to fit in.

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## **1. Introduction**

Although the etymology of the term “Drag Queen” is unknown and seems quite new, but the concept has been there since the onset of the theatres. It is noted that Shakespeare has actually coined the term *drag* referring to the cross dressing in plays. Men dressed up as women were used in several fields of entertainment in order to achieve the effect of comedy which in turn gave birth to the culture of drag queen. At first the concept of drag queen was used a device to mock females and the aspects of femininity but later on it was used in the LGBT communities as a lighter mode of entertainment. The drag queen ostentatiously dresses up in women’s clothes, who often use exaggerated makeup mainly to entertain. Drag queens are closely related with gay men and gay culture but different in their sexual perceptions and gender identities. Some of them perform drag as profession and others as a way of life. Doing drag is a way to bring out their individual self to mainstream performance. Drag queen community tries to bring in front their ideas of gender and sexuality through their performances. Drag is a costume usually associated with extremely bright and vulgar dresses, shoes, and accessories. The Panzy Craze where places were drag was performed. The drag queens performs by lip syncing to famous songs and there are many films which portray the actual drag life. It was by early 1900s drag as a community came into front. In 1911, Julein Elton’s *Fascinating Widow* portrayed cross-dressing when homosexuality was outlawed. Drag continued to grow in 1950s and 1960s. Shelter was provided to the drag performers because their families were against the concept of drag. By 1966 clearly 500 drag performers established their identity in USA. Sabina was one of the oldest drag queen, who organised multiple drag pageants. She was the first leader of the gay communities. It was in the later parts of 1980s that drag queens became the part of the mainstream culture and were slowly acknowledged by the

public. Although to the very ordinary eyes the concept of drag is a mere concept of entertainment but below the surface the drag race symbolises the stereotypes of the society and the misconceptions of gender identity at large. The drag art merely does not include the dressing up and decoration parts rather is composed of many more elements that are of utmost importance. It can be noted that the drag race in the history had suffered much of resentment and were targeted for raids. Although after the long riots of 1969, the Drags brought together the LGBT community and in turn gained their respect in the society which provided them with a special place in different events.

### **1.1 Drag as a subculture**

The reign of RuPaul saw the rise in the status of the drag queens. The drag race through media has gained a subsequent amount of attention which has in turn led to the representation of the queer in an incredible way. The roots of the drags have been socially accepted with all its diversity. With the onset of the television show of RuPaul, Drag Race, it has become more of a cultural phenomenon. The contestants of this television series has brought forward the fact that drag is the artful manipulation of the social by-products of gender. RaPaul says that “Drag is really about reminding people that you are more than you think you are- you are more than what it says on your passport”.

The history of drag queen can be traced back to Shakespeare’s romantic comedy *As You like It* where in order to know Orlando and woo him Rosalind disguises herself as Ganymede. Rosalind’s disguise offers her the benefit to know Orlando from the perspective of a man. A drag queen’s roughness includes both a stage presence and a desire to shock the audience. Together these elements undermine the authenticity of femininity. The drag subculture in Australia has seen numerous ups and downs. Although the festivals in Australia are including shows and pride walks for all the “other genders”, the most notable of them was the show called *What a Drag*. The exhibition was made lively and more vivid by the inclusion of the “outrageous” costumes which were designed by the local drags. The exhibition brought into light what it felt like in the early era to be denied of the social position and highlighted the journey of the drag race from the time when there was no scope to publicly acknowledge one’s characteristics as a drag and it all had to be done secretly or through female friends, or wives. With the opening of the Melbourne version of Sydney’s *Les Girls troupe* this subculture gained wider acceptance. It can thus be inferred that the advertising material of the same was clearly aimed at a broader audience. By the mid-1990s Stephan Elliott’s hit film *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* took drag squarely into the mainstream.

According to Dick Hebdige, a British sociologist and theorist, working-class members undergo exploitation from the ruling hegemony and with them suffers the younger generation as they are unable to protest. As a result of such exploitation these youngsters develop a distinct style and practices which establish them as a separate identity which in turn is recognised as a subculture by the media .He determined that subcultures are “subversive to normalcy”. Drag’s initial effort in subversion can be found in the general conversion from masculine representation to an amplified version of feminine exteriority which thus proves it as a subculture from the Hebdigan point of view. Since the fundamental traits of the drag race meet the subcultural standards, it is now considered as a bonafide subculture. What makes the subculture more interesting is its inclination to create its own vocabulary and expression. These are carved originally by the drags themselves as a form of art. For example, “kickii” means hang out and “dish” on a certain happening between friends; this act is most commonly known as “clocking the tea”. A biological woman is often referred as a “Fish” in drag. To go “fishing” refers to a sexual relationship with a woman. To have sex with another drag queen is to “Ki Ki”. When a queen lets her makeup settle on her face, she uses the word “cooking.” To wittingly and flamboyantly pick out one’s flaws in a derogatory manner is pointed out by the word “read” or “throwing shade. Although it is a simplified version of the mainstream dominant culture, but drag proves to exemplify the societal construct of its parent culture.

### **1.2 Drag as a Sex Revolt**

Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* clearly brings to the front the difference between sex and gender. The natural given identity and the socially acquired identity. She analysed the drag queens in respect to her performative theory of identity. She claims that gender identity is rather the product of the performance of an individual. According to her the masculine or feminine identity is produced on the basis of everyday actions which is a destructive notion and has nothing to do with the inner essence. Soul according to her is the prison of the body, and not the other way around as was widely held in western culture. Gender can be termed as a cultural agent that predominantly operates on the body and interlinks the concepts of masculinity and femininity and the identities of heterosexuality and homosexuality.

The drag race basically questions the very basic notions of the society and denies the stereotypes that have been present in the society since the old age. Gender definitely is an illusion. According to the drag race

femininity is a mask that can be removed as well. The race aimed at deconstructing and dissecting the concept of gender and its role in the daily life. They aimed at proving that female impersonation is a feat in exemplifying the outrageousness of superficiality. Not only does gender determine sexuality but also through its presence brings concepts like power, acceptance, and function in existence. Gender is a peculiar concept, one which when strays from its intended projection represents the mind-set of the society, people in such situation get both fascinated and disturbed. The journey of Drag queens essentially shows how the concept of other is so much prevalent in the society that it holds the power to marginalise and victimise.

Gender is thus a notion that is taught and is artificial and indeed has nothing to do with a man's sexuality. In Ronald Barthes's *Mythologies* he has argued about how the difference between the male and the female is so consciously and unconsciously being constructed. In one of the chapters "Toys", he argues that even through such innocent objects gender identity and role is assigned to the different sexes from an early age. Toys such as the cars, tanks, doctor kits are given to the males whereas the females are provided with kitchen toys and Barbie dolls restricting them to the confined space of patriarchy. In a way these toys are used to prepare the sexes for their probable future and are taught not to disobey the norms of society.

The drag race denies the heteronormative guidelines of the society and by denying so they themselves create a stable reality in which stereotypes have no place. By exaggerating the feminine look the subculture proves that impersonating the other sex and becoming like them is easy and thus shaming the rigidity of gender identity. It can hence be noted that behind every successful society is a revolt that has changed the way the preconceived notions were looked at.

### **1.3 Drag as an Art**

Drag is not only ironic form but also a high performance art which combines complex facial reconstruction, fashion and bodily transformation in order to create an aesthetic of a gender. It definitely is bringing to the front the cosmetic revolution and allowing the "other" sex to achieve what was yet to be achieved. They have acquired the freedom of discovering the areas which were not visible to the ordinary eyes. In order to create a rounded persona it is mixed with performance, music, sometimes dance, and quite often, conceptual ideas or shock tactics. RuPaul's *Drag Race* has changed the face of the art form since her manifesto song *Supermodel*. It seems that now queens are a lucrative investment. The impact of *Drag Race* is immense yet beyond television. There is an army of devoted fans of this show and has definitely boosted up the confidence of thousands of amateur queens around the globe inspiring them to slip into heels and a dress. When a man wears 'female' items of clothing, it is considered immoral while women can freely wear supposedly 'male' items flaunting their equality and shaming gender prejudice at the same time. It certainly is a stereotypical behaviour of society which reveals that equality and equity are terms to argue upon. Drag queens on the other hand empower femininity by empowering female clothing. Major art exhibitions, like the Whitney Biennial in New York, and performance programs, like "Contemporary Drag" at NADA New York has identified drag as their major influence. It also serves as one of the themes in the new show "Queer British Art" at Tate Britain. Drag queens like Candy Darling and Mario Montez are filmed by Andy Warhol. The recent drag programming at NADA New York was centred on more traditional and ancient ideas of drag, and was influenced in part, by the recent explosion of a new generation of drag queens in Brooklyn. In the U.K., for example, Victoria Sin uses her drag persona to critique the expectation of feminine labour. Samuel Douek is a drag performer, a filmmaker, and an artist. He has recently graduated from the Royal College of Art, and has presented his work in both cabaret venues and galleries, as part of his work around queer spaces. If one thinks about drag as the practice of performing gender, sexuality, or other fixed societal roles, then in a way, we're all doing drag, all of the time. As long as it deconstructs identity categories, it is still drag. And according to curators like Lew and Gordon, today, amid an oppressive political climate, it's a more relevant means of expression and creativity than ever. It was drag queens, and 'houses' of other genderqueer and non-binary people of colour, who introduced Madonna, and the rest of the world to Vogue-ing. DRAG: Self-Portraits and Body Politics is a free exhibition at the Hayward Gallery which features the work of more than 30 artists who have used drag to question identity, class, gender and politics, from the 60's to the present day. Artists like Marcel Duchamp and Claude Cahun used drag as a form of expression in the early part of the 20th century. These exhibitions juxtapose more traditional representations of drag in art against self-portraits by a younger generation of contemporary artists embracing drag as an art form. Drag is part of this culture, this is why it is subversive: at once it shames mainstream culture and parodies it to deconstruct its systems of oppression and codification. These exhibitions also aim to present a multitude of voices exploring the cultural shifts that have occurred around drag performance since the 60's. With a focus on photography but spanning a variety of other media, Drag is also accompanied by a programme of tours led by drag performers.

In his book *Drag Diaries*, Jonathan David focuses on two old origin points: ancient ceremonies and Japanese theatre. David opined that cross-dressing was widely documented among the Aztecs, Incas, and Egyptians, among other great civilizations of the past, and exists today in tribal ceremonies around the world.

*In Drag: A History of Female Impersonation in the Performing Arts*, Roger Baker wrote that drag was evidently present in the Greece drama where masked actors played Hecuba and Clytemnestra. Religious stories were recreated and were eventually dramatized. As performance transitioned into a world of more traditional theatre spaces and Shakespearean soliloquies, these ideals continued to be upheld. If the young boys who joined drama troupes had a suitable face and a slim body, then their first assignments would be in female roles. As a matter of fact, men portrayed the first appearances of Shakespeare's most iconic female characters. The first Lady Macbeth might have been Alexander Cooke, and a young man called Robert Gough is frequently named as the first Juliet, and also as the first Cleopatra. Although other female impersonators existed, the drag queens were still considered as an integral part to the new and gay-friendly spaces that began to pop up. The modern iteration of the drag queen developed in these underground clubs over the next handful of decades. There are many more historic queens: Australia's Dame Edna, Pepper LaBeija and Flawless Sabrina who have managed to get a huge number of followers and fame. The drag queen is not quite as much of a punchline, or a garish creature to shine a spotlight on. There are documentaries too where LGBTQ history is being documented in ways it had never been depicted before.

The film *Paris Is Burning* offers so much more than that. These subjects prominently prove what it means to be a drag queen. To be self-assured and to wholeheartedly have an unshakeable faith in oneself.

Marking a new kind of liberation was the movie *Wigstock: The Movie* in 1995. It gave society the look at a safe space for art, love, and self-expression. Drag performers can be seen here truly expressing themselves in a secure and unencumbered way.

## 2. Conclusion

It can therefore be assumed from all the above that has been written that not only parent culture. It is not something does the Drag race portray themselves as a part of the culture that dominates the society but apparently it is the child of the parent culture, a product of the society that was suppressed for ages and yet could not be concealed by the so called sane minds of society. The journey the drag race has embarked upon is sure remarkable. Not only do they drive their energy from their flaw but also at the same time fiercely reject the mainstream shaming of identity. As seen the origin of Drags date back to the times of Shakespeare and ancient Greek plays which give them the power of superiority and the authority to end the injustice that they were subjected to for a long time. It can also be noted that with the emergence of media, the Drag race has extended its reach to almost all the parts of world thus connecting to each other. By questioning the very concept of sex and gender it has provided the new generation a different perspective of self-identity. Not only has it empowered the ones who were marginalised and shamed but at the same time allowed them to announce their identity with much courage and fierceness providing them the license to live. People are now able to re-evaluate other societal constructs by dismissing gender as an intrinsic facet of humanity and are therefore capable of responding to something truly honest within. Drag queens are no more just a part of the popular culture rather are a part of the world that claims to provide equality and equity to everyone irrespective of the background they belong to. The culture and nature of Drags witness the evolution of the society that has broadened its gaze and broken the shackles of stereotypes in order to embrace the new. The power of the Drags lie within their ability to reconsider and reconstruct the society. They have proven to be ironic in the state of superficiality, entertaining yet educating the society that neglected their existence for quite a long time. By amplifying the level of labelling things drag queens consume a negative trait of the mainstream culture and make it their own ironic characteristic. Drag is an essence that makes the dichotomous entities a powerful spectacle by harmonising them.

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# Translating Macbeth: DVGundappa Political Ideologies

S.Kathyayini

## Abstract

The paper makes an attempt to understand, the choices made by the translator as to what to translate, and when, and how to translate, acquires an urgent political dimension that cannot be disowned. Particularly in contexts where free thought and expression, in diverse forms, is a political act. If the translator is not given the choice to translate of his choice it would be strangling the liberal spaces. Translator must choose his text, and have specific reasons for wanting to render it in another tongue. Transporting the formal integrity, stylistic nuances and intellectual wealth of the source text is of the essence, as exposure to writing in other vernaculars is a formative factor in the growth of each bhasha. and how literal translation is a recreation in the soundscape of Kannada language called for the invention of a new syntax altogether.

This paper tries to concentrate on the translations done during the colonial period into Kannada literature from English. If we examine the role played by translations in Kannada literature, one is struck by the crucial function in the projection of new horizons. We understand the standardization of literary language took place through translation which is remarkable. The process of Translations from source language to target language is dictated by shifts in literary sensibility. Translation during the colonial period was domesticating the original text to the target language (Kannada). The poetics of kannada language had already constituted by the vernacular cultural history. The readership was familiar with the adoptions and it was novel way of translating the source text literally. So it was DVGundappa the kannada translator who took the bold step of translating Shakespeare's text as it is the literal translation.

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## Introduction

The idea of foreignizing the text in the process of translation implies certain translating strategies. These strategies operate in a culture where centres of power exist. Literal translations can flourish only in languages which were "freer, in which innovations and

deviations are tolerated to a greater extent. The study also gives proof that literal translation in kannada literature was rarely seen. With this type of literal translation there is an attempt to resist the hegemony of English and the cultural values embroidered into the English texts. Therefore the translations produced during this period favoured the reading class and to reproduce the hegemony of the prevailing value system, popular taste, the literal translation clearly address the chosen few, largely the creative writers, who were limited at that point. It also emphasizes the fact that the translators are a part of the society a product of the complex institutional framework, which authorizes them enables and legitimizes them. In a way literal translation works out of the orbit.

## Translating Macbeth: D.V.Gundappa Political Ideologies. Why translation

It becomes important to know that the translator is supremely powerful and may empower the translation with a linguistic nationalism and instrument of resistance, which may reinforce borders rather than annihilate them.

The translator is armed with internal knowledge he is bilingual and is supposed to have acquired intimate knowledge of both SL and TL. He is also conscious of his power over the text as well as aware of this responsibility. He knows at what point the border is crossed and how best to plant a foreign seed in the native soil. The 19th cen Shakespeare translator was on the one hand the colonizer's depute and on the other hand a cultural ambassador as well as an agent of Subversion, therefore translation of the English dramatist the task was not easy at all. It was found that translation more often worked like barbed wire fencing across cultures. The translator crossed borders not to erase them but to mark them afresh on the cultural map.

The availability of translated texts of mainstream British narratives to the educated middle class Indians must have lessened the desire to take trouble to read the originals. It also must have given them the opportunity to develop a sense of self-gratification for accessing a text across the border and transgressing into the white colonizer's territory. The sc certainly acquired an indigenous look through trans-creation. The politics of translation as an inter-cultural exercise paved the way towards the decolonization of the hard. The accession of agency in a linguistic

nationalism is the subtle appropriation of Shakespeare who was more precious to the British than the empire.

Who were the translators?

Why did they choose these texts for translation?

What were the modes of documenting the dynamics and texts in print form? What were the methods of translation adopted to bring them into an alien language? What functions did such translations perform in indology? What role did such translations play in constituting orientalism and nationalism? What were the consequences of translating/ canonizing such text in the Indian language culture societies?

If multiple translations of the text have appeared over a period of time what prompted the subsequent translations? Do the subsequent translations play the role of critiquing the earlier translation? If yes how?

The drama in the 19th century revolutions and conquest war time coronation

The age has brought about an interest in voices for years were silences. These voices have of late been given centre stage.

#### **The main motives behind translating Macbeth: selection of the text**

#### **The first would be that the play Macbeth is the shortest of all the tragedies of Shakespeare.**

For an Indian writer translating a Shakespeare text the satisfaction of having attempted a difficult task would have been commingled with a subtle, unarticulated consciousness of power, a feeling of gratification at the thought of having appropriated the colonizer's product and indigenized it, because cultural transfer is an integral part of translation. In translating an alien culture into one's own realm of knowledge the consciousness of difference, the difficulties erecting bridges led to adaptation and Indianized versions of Shakespeare. Here DVG prefers to literal translation.

DV Gundappa states that "It is my intention to represent the world of Shakespeare as far as possible as it really is and not merely to tell a story. It is my effort to retain the names used by Shakespeare, the atmosphere created, his descriptions on the whole his representations of the world as it is. I believe that this is necessary for the enhancement of Kannada literature and sensibility of Kannada people and for broadening their vision of the world. If human civilization and peace are to last, it is of foremost important that the different races of the world attain a world vision". In order to achieve this "The West should read the Epics of our country Ramayana and Mahabharata sympathetically as we must acquaint ourselves with their poetic tradition."

**With literal translation it was an attempt to appropriate the colonized and the colonizer text, culture and the language.**

To enhance the position of Indian national pride by creating an equivalence in language and challenging the language of the English.

To create an awareness that it was the notion of equality.

#### **A small introduction to the plays of Shakespeare translated to Kannada to name a few.**

The Navodaya Period of Kannada literature is marked by the high tide of the nationalistic spirit, and by this time Kannada language had found a strength of its own. Hence it was possible for the second-generation translators to come face-to-face with the alien culture through faithful translations and receive it without the fear of domination.

These faithful translations were also motivated by liberal & humanist ideas &paved way for the plurality of cultures. The third-generation writers of the Post- Navodaya went a step further and produced freer

translations and created adaptations in a language closer to the spoken idiom and it is this generation that has given several successful translations of Shakespeare in Kannada.

Kannada Drama was influenced by Sanskrit and English drama. The earliest adaptations of Shakespeare in Kannada was by ChannaBassappa in 1871, ‘The Comedy of Errors’, “The Merchant Of Venice”, by Vasudevacharya Karur, as Surat Nagarada Shreshti, Bassapa ShastriOthello as Shurasena charithre, SrikanteshGouda Macbeth as PratapaRudra Deva in 1895, & Parimalarjuniya MidSummer’s Night Dream, Puttana’s Hemachandra Vilasa (King Lear) Laxmanrao’s ChandiMardana (The Taming of the Shrew). They were adaptations in prose and the sole intention was to provide entertainment to the public, hence they neglected the subtler poetic aspects of Shakespeare.

**DVG opines that these translations which were adaptations were masking the identity of the Kannada literature and does not help in creating a worldly view to the Kannada readers if adaptations of the play were to be continued. It was a deliberate and a conscious act of translation done by DVG in order to achieve his objectives.**

What kind of drama got prominence flourished what kind of entertainment was offered, was the theatre filled meant for whom, drama must deal directly with a context of human souls, it does not flourish while there is actual absorbing the attention of the multitude; but when the dramas were unliterary dramas so called literary drama was plainly unacceptable, proving itself pitifully ineffective whenever it chanced to be put on the stage. That they were seeking success by improving the mere mechanism of play-making and in that they both were willing to sacrifice everything else to sheer ingenuity of structure.

**Talk about the dress what should Lady Macbeth wear**

**So DVG says it is definitely not abiding by the norms of translations but to resist the act of adaptations and challenge the literal translations.**

However, the literary translation of drama presents varied problems that are especially complex to solve. This paper will explore the importance of presenting the colloquial quality of colonial plays giving particular emphasis to dialectical, idiolect, and lexical problems and considering the areas of characterization and consistency in the context of literatures where cultural equivalences may be nonexistent in the target language. Intellectuals perceived the supreme task for the people to be the recovery of the national sovereignty and independence.

**If a language has to flourish translations are important, at this point translations cannot be ignored says DVG**

**Translations is a process of building a language and literature, Fitz Gerald Omarkhayyam translation helps to understand the worldview.**

**To introduce the concept of TRAGEDY into translation which was novel to Kannada literature. Karna and Dhuryodhana**

**Even in our puranas we have instances where kings fought for the kingship, power, women, for greed, revenge, lust it can be Indra, nahusha, Ravana, Kichaka, Dhuryodhana, Bheema, Alexander, Timur, had not escape from the clasps of hunger for power. It had affected countries, communities, common man, then there might be a war autocracy, revolt tyranny, blood shed, it is a feast for hungry wolves. So the objective is better not to provoke these desires which can result in disaster.**

**The concept of supernatural elements and the function was novel in Kannada literature**

**Next talking about the language DVG says that all varieties of Kannada in order to equate the English language. But the translator is trading a new path so it lends for the development of the language.**

The translations of Shakespeare in Kannada can be categorized into literal translations and sense-to-sense translation in this DV Gundappa falls into the first category in translating Macbeth he has made use of all varieties of Kannada language and thus with a introduction he has proved his objective. Ramachanra Deva points out that, “The language used by DVG is the major problem in his translation which was not readable and that was the failure as a translator. He points out. He was using the grammar against the rules and trying all types and variety of Kannada language this was the major flaw in DVGundappa’s translations of Macbeth and Jack Cade which was not popular at all and even the stage directions was not taken into considerations. The purpose of translation was rightly identified by DVGundappa that is need to change in political field but this was not reflected in his translations and thus BMSri English Geethegalu Becomes a milestone in Kannada Literature and marks the beginning of the new Kannada language as ‘Modern’ or called as standard Kannada, which is used by all the Kannada speakers in Mysore-Karanataka” Rama Chandra Deva. “Shakespeare in two Cultures.”

### **Political ideologies of translating Macbeth**

Macbeth is one of the tragedies of Shakespeare and if this is translated it would have wider readership, this could be one reason for translating Macbeth. Second reason could be that, when we look at the political affairs of other princely states namely indore, alwar, nabha, Patiala,Bhopal, cooch,bihar,bharatpur, cuthch,khairpru, Kashmir,jumnagar,baroda,Hyderabad were the states ruled by the princes, who had the benefit of modern education and had travelled in Europe and America, these prices were also the recipients of appreciation from the paramount power-but this one side of the story. These states were groaning under the inequities of personal absolutism, because autocracy would always lead for the popular feeling of rebellion among the common man. While the paramount power has pledged for nonintervention and threatened for intervention if they think there is gross misrule, or if the misrule has reached the gross level.

### **Supremacy and the merits of Democracy**

The superiority of this system may be briefly pointed out thus-

It can induce every citizen to devote some attention to the problems of the country and think in terms of the life of his fellow citizen as a whole.

It can discover and bring the best faculties available among the people to the service of the state in the shaping of its larger policies and affairs.

It can encourage among the people the habits of self-organization and self-discipline for promoting what they consider objects of common well.

It can promote habits of enquiry and study and raise the general standards of knowledge and ability among the citizens.

It can bring the shortcomings of the administration promptly to light and ensure their rectification and prevention.

More than all, it can ensure that the desires and aspirations of the people are reproduced as faithfully and fully as possible in all the policies and programs of the government.

In one word responsible government alone can enable the people to realize in practices the identity between their own fortunes and those of their state. No other system offers such an

incentive to active public spirit. It does not mean that the earth has been converted into heaven its path is strewn with thorns and its enemies are not only many, but also asked.

Nevertheless, it does not suffer by comparison with its rivals inspite of all its failures and dangers, it is the one system that can give a value to individual life and community. And the preference for it in India will last at least so long as England herself does not think of discarding it from her own life.

### **Conclusion**

Translation is named as most vital function of articulation, with a different culture, with different language and different vocabulary and genre. It is a means to express the hitherto unexpressed and invisible. To identify that a work of literary translation must be an affective choice: how a translator must choose his text and have specific reasons for wanting to render it in another tongue. The translator understands which text has to be translated, and when, acquires an urgent political dimension that cannot be disowned. Particularly in contexts where free thought and expression, were considered to be against the norm. DVGundappa with the objective of introducing the self –government/ responsible government tries to use the literal translation of Macbeth whether his objectives were received correctly needs to be further investigated.

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# A Child: Inside and Outside the Text

**Manoj Jain I**

## Abstract

Literature plays a significant role in giving a voice to the oppressed section of the society. The primary interlocution of Resistance literature focuses on subjugation, intrusion, and colonization in diverse forms and spaces. In contemporary times, we see that the critics are attempting to assert Children's literature to be on par with the main stream Adult literature. On the other hand, the critics even explain how the whole process of producing children's literature is done for an assumed 'child', who is treated as a passive entity. The paper would question certain preconceived notions that prevails among critics, who label children's literature to be only didactic and simple in nature, which does not comprises any complex ideas and is a utopian project. The paper would highlight that the concept of 'child' and 'childhood' is a construction and derivative. The study intends to deconstruct the presumed notions and convictions that exists, predominates, and curbs the notion of children's literature and the assumed 'child'. The paper attempts to analyze Nicole Helget's *The End of the Wild*, a children's novel, to demonstrate and emplace the arguments. In conclusion, the paper will bring forth the shifts in vision of 'child' and 'childhood' and how a child is influenced by various cultural and social components.

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In the realm of academia, whenever there are discussions and debates about 'child' or 'childhood', inevitably and complyingly, the image of 'a Romantic child' comes to the mind. The literature produced during the period of Romanticism, in the history of English literature, is much fascinated with the idea and depiction of 'child' and 'childhood'. As Thacker and Webb note:

It is often claimed that the image of the romantic child has been a key point of reference for the birth of children's literature since the beginning of the nineteenth century. ... It is impossible to consider Romanticism without addressing the centrality of childhood and the development of a literature specifically for a child audience, but equally impossible to discuss children's literature without investigating the complexity of the debates. (2002: 13-14)

Therefore, it is inevitable that the concept of child is fore grounded in the period of Romanticism, and the period had several romantic dimensions of portraying child and childhood.

The eminent British Romantic writers such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Blake or Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American transcendentalist have predominantly portrayed the concept of 'child' and 'childhood' as being in close relationship with the nature. It can be seen;

[f]rom Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, through the poetic contemplations of Wordsworth and Coleridge, the idea of childhood innocence and promise is indivisible from Romantic responses to rationalist thought, revolutionary politics, class and gender shifts, the growth of industrial economy and the transformation of the natural landscape. (Thacker and Webb 2002: 14-15)

Wordsworth and Coleridge depicted a child as the simple, wholesome and innocent aspect of man in the natural world. Wordsworth portrayed child as pure and honest and who is engrossed within its own world. As Thacker and Webb point out, Ralph Waldo Emerson holds the "view of children as models of a

transcendental response to American society, the idea of the child is central to any culture's conception of itself" (2002:13). The modern contemporary Children's literature, for example J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, surpasses and supersedes the marginalized and restricted concept of child and literature produced for it. The relationship of a child to the writings produced for it is very unique and differs from one text to another. According to Hunt, Children's books shares a curious bonding with childhood, which may be a highly unreliable guide about the concept of childhood because childhood is a diverse entity. Each writer conjures the childhood that they then address. (Hunt 2009: 51) In other words, every writer addresses the child according to its own imagination, without taking the actual child into the picture. It also explains that individual childhoods are strongly affected by the cultures around them, which also includes childhood imagined by writers of children's books. This indicates that children's literature has a symbiotic relationship with childhood. The children's books give an image of childhood that would be different from reality.

The notion/image of romantic child which is represented through the writings of Wordsworth, Blake, and Dickinson, has had, and even now has, a powerful hold on the imagination. Whereas, until the 20th century child rearing and education, in the western context, had been dominated by Christian view point: angelic and devilish. There are certain similarities between the Romantic and Christian point of views. Both the notions demanded the adults to treat the child as a being who need to be protected, who is vulnerable, innocent and need to be directed. Albeit, today the popular Christian view point and Romantic image is still with us, many writers, critics and authors have surpassed the boundaries of representing the child in diverse forms. Today children are seen as the vanguard of a new digital society. Digitalization is one of the important characteristics to define 21st century, which has contributed to a drastic change of childhood. The present children through the access of electronic gadgets, mass media, social media and internet have easy access to a wide variety of debates such as crime, homosexuality, the women's movement, and other issues of "the adult world." This shift, social and historical, in visions of childhood makes it clear that 'child' and 'childhood' are social constructions that emerge out of various cultural components such as race, culture, gender, time and class.

In order to understand Children's literature and the concept of child constituted through its literature, the study has undertaken a survey of the definitions of Children's literature and the child/childhood. In 'Children's Literature', it is not just the term 'literature' which is problematic to define but on the other hand the term 'children' is equally challenging to define. One of the important children's literature critics and writers, Karin Lesnik-Oberstein in her essay, "Essentials: What is Children's Literature? What is Childhood?" in *Understanding Children's Literature* edited by Peter Hunt, points out that in the process of defining 'children's literature', the label consists of two constituents – 'Children' and 'Literature'. When these terms are considered within the label they completely qualify each other or can be said to complement each other. Both the constituent terms are specialized ideas and not necessarily need to relate it to the other disciplines. But, Lesnik-Oberstein also remarks that critics use theories from different domains to counterfort their opinions.

The concept of 'child' and 'childhood' is not only dynamic but is shifting, depending upon a number of factors such as society, culture, and history. Though 'Children's Literature' has been defined exhaustively encompassing various components such as the body of the literature, substance, nature, readership, authorship, and alikes it has no one single definition. As Reynolds observes:

Even though the term 'child', 'childhood', 'children' and 'adolescence' are regularly used in relation to children's literature, there is no monolithic version of any of these terms or a single vision of childhood behind children's literature. (2011:29).

In other words, Reynolds definition brings forth the argument that there is not a single definition which would help to understand and discuss the children's literature in one particular angle or viewpoint. Accordingly, the British theorist Jacqueline Rose elaborates on the idea by stating that children are segregated on the different grounds such as class, race, gender and ethnicity. It functions within the frame of culture and society where;

children's fiction rests on the idea that there is a child who is simply there to be addressed and that speaking to it might be simple. It is an idea whose innocent generality covers up a multitude of sins... *Peter Pan* stands in our culture as a monument to the impossibility of its own claim – that it represents the child, speaks to and for children, addresses them as a group which is knowable and exists for the book. (Rose qtd. in Hunt 1999:17)

Rose's argument focuses on how the whole process of writing and publishing is done for an assumed 'child', who is treated as a passive entity. Further, to elaborate and to vividly explain the idea of child being treated not as an active agent, within and outside the text, the study brings in the argument of David Rudd. In the essay, "The Development of Children's Literature" Rudd suggests that the concept of child is a derivative, that the children's text catered to our very understanding of 'child'. Another critic, Perry

Nodelman comments that the children's books are always purchased by the adults and not by children, it is as same as the process of writing books for children by the adults, with the conviction that child is dependent and everything needs to be done for it. He labeled it as the 'cultural phenomenon' in which adults lead to decide things for children on the basis of their ideas, beliefs and assumptions about what the children must read and like so indirectly the authors must write which would appeal the adults and not children.

Initially, the aim of the Children's literature was considered to be didactic whereas it has undergone a change in the present and is no more viewed to be in restrictive sense. Peter Hunt, in his essay, "Introduction: The World of Children's Literature Studies" has observed and explained that children's books are complex and which may be slightly uncomfortable corollary. He even states that children's books are potentially subversive and children may be able to study 'against' the text and it would raise the question on simple cause and effect argument.

Emplacing the importance of the literature produced for the children, Rebecca Lukens vehemently argues that though the degree of literature produced for the adult and child vary, but it is of same kind and if the same critical standard is not applied to it and then it acquires the inferior position compared to adult's literature. The Lukens point of evaluation about the children's texts highlights the marginalization and pejorative mindset of the people, who think rather assume that children's fictions are easy reading and there is not much need to probe into the text because there may not be underlying themes and topics to be unraveled. As Perry Nodelman has noted that "unfortunately, many readers approach texts with the idea that their themes or messages can be easily identified and stated in few words...." (Nodelman qtd. in Hunt 1999:8)

Kimberly Reynolds in her book *Children's literature: A Very Short Introduction* notes how the literature written for children is crucial in exposing, familiarizing, imparting the essence of the world and mould the aimed audience to adapt the ways of lives for the future. Children's literature;

plays a powerful role in shaping how we think about and understand the worlds...important carriers of information about changes in culture, present and past.(Reynolds 2011: 4)

In the process of reading and understanding the literature, children also get to know about different cultures, which may or may not be describing their immediate or known surroundings. In *Understanding Children's World*, Peter Hunt explains the different implications of the Children's Literature that those books;

are used for different purposes at different times... for inculcating general (or specific) social attitudes, or 'good' for dealing with issues or coping with problems, or 'good' for reading in that 'literary way which is small part of adult culture, or 'good' for dealing with racism...and most books do several things. This is not a scale where some purposes stand higher than others – it is a matrix where hundreds of subtle meanings are generated: what you think is good depends on you, the children, and on what you're using the book for – and every reading is different. (1999: 11)

To encapsulate the complete argument about the process of defining children's literature can be well understood in the words of Peter Hunt that "Children's literature is an amorphous, ambiguous creature; its relationship to its audience is difficult; its relationship to the rest of literature, problematic" (1992: 1). From the above discussion of the various eminent critics and writers, it sets the platform which sheds the light on how a 'child' and the 'literature' been produced for it has been treated in a passive and marginalized manner respectively. On the contrary, the child portrayed in the past is much different compared to the present. With the advent of technology, urbanization, formal education and judicial laws regarding the children safety and so the complete notion of the child and childhood has undergone a remarkable change. Earlier the child was seen as naïve, innocent, unaware, and uninformed. Whereas the present child is not unaware or uninformed, due the modern education, electronic media, gadgets and various books, a child is able to comprehend 'adult' debates and if possible voice out its view point and opinion on topics such as sex, gender, death, emotions, war, education, gadgets, science, and technology. This suggests that the society in which the child is nurtured marks the difference in it, which also indirectly highlights the point that childhood is a social construction. The societal elements/ aspects such as community, culture, relationship, family, emotions, values, peer group, class, caste, traditions and gender constitutes in conjuring a 'child/hood'.

The paper attempts to analyze the novel, *The End of the Wild* written by Nicole Helget, which would aid to grapple with and envisage the attempts of resistance made by the child protagonist and even juxtapose the pejorative notion that envelopes the children's literature as a genre of literature.

The novel *The End of the Wild* is a story about Fern, a sixth grader in the fictional town of Colter, lives in poverty. Since the death of Fern's mother and youngest brother, she along with her two younger siblings stay with her stepfather, who struggles to hold a job, on the other hand Fern's grandfather attempts to gain custody of the children. Amidst Fern's personal issues, a hydraulic fracturing operation contributes additional changes; fracturing offers steady and much-requisite income for her family and others but will also result in

the demolition of Fern's forest. She aims to win the Colter STEM Fair, an annual science fair, through her project on woods near her home, and spreading awareness about the resources that would soon be destroyed.

At a very early age, fern loses her mother and a younger brother and now her grandfather wants to take the guardianship of her along with her two siblings for which he takes the legal help. Miss Tassel, an officer from Child Protective Services (CPS) conducts the investigation regarding with whom the children would like to stay. During the investigation, Miss Tassel asks certain questions to Fern about her stay, goals and father:

"Fern, when you think about the kind of adult you want to be someday, the goals that you have, do you think Toivo is the father who can help you achieve those goals?"

"Fern?" she says.

What kind of an adult do I want to be?

The kind who cares about family.

The kind who can take care of her family.

The kind who works hard and has dirty fingernails and a stocked cupboard to show for it.

The kind who is smart and has a good job, may be as a science teacher like Mr. Flores or a marine like Toivo.

"Yes," I say. "I can reach those goals with Toivo as my dad." ( Helget 2017:205)

The conversation between the officer and Fern indicates even though fern is very young, she is able to comprehend the situation, without any inhibitions. She is able to speak her mind and it also indicates that Fern is very much aware about the reality: broken family, poverty, and death. Despite the fact that her grandfather is a wealthy man, she doesn't wish to leave her step father and be with the grandfather. Many a times the grandfather makes an attempt to allure the children through the (expensive) gifts or anything else but Fern denies accepting it most of the times and stops her younger brothers too. She is aware that her grandfather does not like Tovio, he had not approved his daughter's (Fern's mother) marriage too with Tovio. Fern is able to rational how her grandfather every time makes an attempt to assert in the public that Tovio is not a responsible father but Fern stands strong and discourages, in a polite manner, such acts. Fern is able to sense the Class distinctions:

"Probably that (buying stationery for project) wouldn't be a big deal to most people. But it wasn't too long ago that buying little things like those wasn't possible in our household" ( Helget 2017:211)

On the other hand, we see Fern understanding the plight of Alkomso, her school friend, who is not accepted by everyone in the school because they do not belong to Colter but migrated from the other place:

...we have a lot in common. Neither of us has a phone. Neither of us listens to the music everyone else does. We both (Fern and Alkomso) have unusual families." (Helget 2017:67)

Another incident where we find the child protagonist, Fern voicing out her opinion, protest against Tovio joining the Kloche Industries, which is responsible for fracking. Constantly, Fern ponders that:

Toivo thinks I don't understand the constant itch of being poor, how it's always a buy biting your back in a place you can't reach. I do, though. Every morning, I'm the one darting my eyes over the cupboard, refrigerator, or freezer, gnawing my know-how for what to feed all of us. I don't complain about that. So why does being poor bother him so much? So much that he'd go and work with the polluters? (Helget 2017:163)

The above thoughts shed light on the righteous thinking of Fern. It is a strong indication that she is not just sensitive towards her family but even towards environment. She senses with the coming of Kloche, the city is filled with peril: the Millner's woods will be destroyed. Later, When Miss Tassel understands Fern is a highly robust and matured girl advices her, for not being angry with Tovio, that:

"I'm gonna tell you something because you're smart and I think you can handle it,' she says. "It's wonderful to have principles. But adults have to eat theirs all the time when life gets on them. You can't be so hard on people, Fern" ( Helget 2017:210)

Fern was determined to protest against Fracking project, which would result in a Millner's woods doom day. She always had a thought that "*Somebody should make a list of all the good food to be found in these woods*"(Helget 2017:75) For the Colter STEM Fair, shen does a project on Millner's wood through which she will attempt to conjure the awareness among the citizens about the significance of the woods and the resources which are available only in that wood:

"And I do try to think that maybe, just maybe, someone will like my project enough that they'll think it's important to save Millner's woods, too." ( Helget 2017:212)

At the end of the Fair, though Fern could not win, she wins to achieve her ultimate goals: the issues between grandfather and Tovio resolved and safe guard the Millner's woods:

Last fall, aftyer the STEM fair, the *Colter Crier* ran a big article about fracking, Millner's woods, and Mr. Flores. Since then the twon has put a moratorium on Kolche's wastewater pond. *Moratorium*,I learned, means " a pause while we think about." (Helget 2017:257)

In conclusion, it can be inferred and highlighted that how the Helget's novel supplements children's to locate and identify themselves with the character who triumphs, although the character appears to be powerless. In the everyday routine, children's lack control of things because adults become the deciding authority. Children may not only feel punitive but are even prone to become susceptible, when they are expected to be "seen and not heard." Another argument the paper pointed: children's literature as a genre resists against marginalization compared to the adult literature. The paper would argue that the fact adult also takes pleasure in reading the books as that of the children is an indicative of its wider implications. This leads to question the very concept of 'child', which is constituted by its differentiation from 'adult'. In the contemporary times the whole notion of the 'child' and 'childhood' has drastically transformed, hence it results in the revival and shift in the genre too. The paper attempts to voice that child and children's literature are constantly subjugated to the pejorative notions and hence there is a need for progressive framework on our parts as a reader and a critic too.

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# The Trajectory of War and its Responses, through Poetics: from Antiquity to the Nuclear age.

Dr.Ancy Eapen

## Abstract

War poems capture the darkest moments in human history. From ancient poetry to modern free verse, war poetry explores a wide range of experiences and human response to war. Some poems celebrate victories and glorify the brave soldiers who have died in conflict. Some poems mourn losses of land and loved ones: sagas of displacement and dispossession. There are also poems where the poet reports atrocities committed upon the weaker sections of society. War Poetry became a significant genre in English Literature after the First World War. Poets such as Sassoon, Owen and Rosenberg wrote about the grim realities of trench warfare. These were soldier-poets, who were in the frontlines of battle. It is World War I which produced War Poetry that was different from the earlier romantic poetry of poets such as Tennyson's "The Charge of The Light Brigade", or Rupert Brooke's "The Dead." The First World War evoked a spectrum of literary responses, ranging from enthusiastic patriotism for war to the disillusioned absurdity of the "maniacal blast". This paper traces the change witnessed in the attitude and perception towards war, from the early times to the most contemporary war, such as the one in Syria witnessed since 2011. A selection of poems taken from Britain, America, and Syria, has been made to cover the spectrum of experiences: of those who have been involved directly or indirectly in war. The stylistics of poetry changes from the organized, romantic, lyrical verses of the Victorians to a more intense, stark, symbolist poetics in keeping with the themes of trauma, suffering and death in the wars of the nuclear age.

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## 1. Introduction

War is crucial to the formation of collective memory: in victory or defeat, in its glories and losses. The memory of war has helped to build community, either through shared trauma or shared victory. It can mould the imagination of a people or nation, provide a shared history around which the political community can unite. Conversely, war can also function as an issue of contention in which memories of loss can be used to dramatize socio-economic and political divisions. History has recorded documents of wars fought over the years. Literature explicates war through creative writing: poetry, drama, novels and short stories, as also films and documentaries. Great conflicts and revolutions have been the background for famous works such as *Iliad*, *Gone with the Wind*, *War and Peace*, among many others.

## 2.Trajectory of war and war poetics:

The earliest record of war poetry is a poem "Enheduann" which was written by a priestess from Sumer, an ancient land, now in Iraq. The poem was written in 2300 B.C. She wrote about war in these words: *You are blood rushing down a mountain,/ Spirit of hate, greed and anger,/ dominator of heaven and earth!*

A millennium later, the famous Greek poet, Homer composed his epic poem on the Trojan War and the warriors who fought the long war in his poem “The Iliad.” Poems about war has played a significant role in promoting patriotism and nationalist fervour..

In the epic Greek poem *Iliad* Homer narrates the ten long years of the Trojan War, the exceptional shrewdness of Odysseus, valour of Achilles and the great deeds of other lesser heroes. This prolonged war, fought between Greeks and Spartans inflicted heavy casualties on both sides. The lines from the epic poem, quoted below, expresses the great tragedy of lives lost in wars, more effectively than ordinary prose:...*great fighters' souls/.. made their bodies carrion/ feasts for the dogs and birds.*

There is a poem written in the Old English period by an unknown Anglo-Saxon poet that describes the warriors brandishing swords and clashing shields. The title of the poem is “Battle of Maldon” and it chronicles a war fought in 991 A.D. The poetics of this poem was so powerful in articulating heroism and nationalism that it dominated war literature in the western world for a thousand years. It started the idealistic and romantic concept of war. The soldier was considered a very noble person who would gain glory both in this world as well as in after-life. So the young soldier, dressed in uniform and riding to the battlefield acquired a glamour which lured many young women to marry gentlemen officers.

From the medieval times it has been customary for poets to write lyrics and set it to music which would be sung or played when soldiers head to war or return home victorious: the soldiers would march to the rousing beat. With decisive meter and stirring refrains, patriotic war poems were written to celebrate and inspire. One such example is Lord Tennyson’s poem, “The Charge of the Light Brigade.” The Charge of the Light Brigade was a charge of British light cavalry that was led by Lord Cardigan against the Russian forces during the Battle of Balaclava on 25 October 1854 in the Crimean War. Tennyson happened to read about this incident from two articles that appeared in *The Times* in November 1854. He penned the poem just six weeks after the tragic event, on December 2, 1854, it was published on December 9, 1854. In the poem the poet emphasises the valour of the cavalry in carrying out the orders bravely, regardless of the outcome<sup>1</sup>. *Half a league, ... onward, All in the valley of Death/ Rode the six hundred.* Tennyson signed this poem as ‘A.T’ instead of his full name because being Britain’s Poet Laureate he could not have expressed his views so openly. This poem which is a favourite of school recitations to this day, ironically narrates the tragedy that could have been avoided. Such are the dynamics of war, where the soldier has to follow orders from officers who are fallible themselves. Many lives have been lost due to a wrong decision. Tennyson, however, consoles himself as well as Victorian England with these words: *When can their glory fade?/O the wild charge they made!/All the world wondered./Honour the charge they made!// Honour the Light Brigade,/ Noble six hundred!* However, the twentieth century wars which began with the First World War have changed the responses and perspectives about war, due to the severity and magnitude of wars.

While in Antiquity, war would inspire and generate entirely different dynamics of memory and pride, the wars in the modern period have produced deep hurts and scars upon the collective memory of nations and communities within the nation. Since creative writings always reflect the times, we see the change evident in the war poetry written after the First World War. In fact the very genre of War Poetry has its beginnings in 1930s, when the great volume of war poems largely penned by soldier-poets, as well as civilians involved indirectly in the war, expressed their feelings through poetics.

A poem written by James Thomson (1700-1748) “Rule Britannica” became the basis of a national anthem of the country. At the end of every stanza, the refrain was repeated: *Rule Britannia, rule the waves/ Britons never will be slaves.* This poem, became a standard song that used to be popularly sung during British Military celebrations. Francis Scott Key (1779-1843) an American poet was an attorney who wrote the words that became the United States national anthem in 1931. The poem titled “The Star Spangled Banner” describes “bombs bursting in air” and celebrates America’s victory over British forces.

Historically, poets were not soldiers. Homer, Thucydides, Tennyson, Yeats, Emerson, Hardy, Kipling, never participated in conflicts themselves. With some few exceptions, war poems were written by trained writers who observed war from a safe position. But all this changed with the first great global conflict- World War 1 of 1914 to 1918. It was a time when active military service was considered the duty of aristocracy or the upper middle class of society. Siegfried Sassoon a soldier-poet belonging to a wealthy Jewish family in England enlisted in the army, in 1914. Same was the case with Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, Noel Coward, Ford Madox Ford and John Cowper Powys. Rupert Brooke was a distinguished cricket and football player as well as a scholar. When the First World War broke out he received a commission to join the Royal Navy. This young man like those of his age was full of the romance and idealism of warfare. Brooke’s wartime sonnets that were brought out in 1914, won him immediate fame. Unfortunately he died of an illness before taking part in the big war. His poem, “The Soldier” begins with the familiar lines: *If I should die, think only this of me:/ That there's some corner of a foreign field/ That is forever England.* Brooke’s poem expresses an idealism which is in sharp contrast to the later poetry of trench warfare written by Sassoon, Owen and several other soldier-poets. Perhaps it would not be wrong to call the Great War a literary war, in that, it was fought on the English side by many men with a classical, intensely literary education.

Apart from the presence of the Oxbridge elite in the defence forces, there were also soldiers who were products of good education from Workmen’s Institute and other forms of adult education. This explains the vast amount of literary writings that came out about war experiences, both during and after the war: an estimated two thousand poems were published in this period alone. Catherine W. Reilly has counted 2,225 English poets of the First World War of whom 1,808 were civilians. A reason for this abundance of war literature can be attributed to the modern period that included war as subjects for literary writings. Earlier this was not so. War was mostly reported in a sketchy manner in

newspapers. This was the case with France, Spain and Italy during the period of Civil War, French Revolution etc. The only exception was Germany which witnessed nationalist revival in the 1809- 1814 period through some novels and a great deal of verse.

In the early weeks of the war, British poets responded exuberantly to the conflict by voracious writings. Rudyard Kipling's "For All We Have Are" evoked a lot of comments. Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon were poets, whose war poetry expressed their anger at the futility of war.

Some of the poems Owen wrote, while engaged in trench warfare are realistic and passionate. "Dulcet et Decorum Est," "Insensibility," "Anthem for Doomed Youth," "Futility" and "Strange Meeting" were all written at the front. Owen died in action at the young age of twenty eight. It was his friend Siegfried Sassoon who got the poems published posthumously. Both Owen and Sassoon wrote against the prolonged warfare between countries. For the first time in the history of this literary tradition, War Poetry began to describe and narrate the grim realities of war, directly from soldier-poets.

Sassoon's poem "The Death Bed" was inspired by his dear friend's death in the hospital ward. In the poem, Sassoon describes the pain the soldier suffers from his wounds with a metaphor of a 'prowling beast'. *...then the pain/ Leapt like a prowling beast, and gripped and tore/His groping dreams with grinding claws and fangs* (l 28-30). The registry of words: 'gripped', 'tore', 'grinding', 'claws' 'fangs' used by the poet, conveys the intensity of the soldier's agony, as also the cruelty of war that inflicts such pain on the brave youngsters. Sassoon himself was hospitalized during the war in 1915. His neurosis was diagnosed as being one caused by shell firing. Sassoon rallied sympathy for his comrades fighting a meaningless battle by writing to the Parliament about ending the long conflict. His sarcasm regarding the futility of war is well expressed in these closing lines of the poem. Sassoon employs abrupt words, to convey the death of the wounded soldier: *So he went...* Here Death is seen as a welcome place of 'safety' to the one in pain. This is in sharp contrast to the Romantic war poems that would hail the death of a soldier as one of victory for the country and an after-life glory for the war 'hero'. War poetry of the 1914 moves away from the earlier poetics of a slow, lyrical and melodious rhythm, extolling the great qualities of the brave heroes who fought and died, or who returned victorious, to a harsh and jarring poetics, abrupt lines and terse syntax to speak about the futility and tragedy overtaking millions on the battlefield. Unlike the classical and the Victorians, modernist poetry does not find consolation in an after-life reward. On the other hand there is angst and despair in war poetics after 1914. For the first time War Poetry begins to show explicit anti-war sentiments. The change regarding the perspectives of war, as well as the responses to it, is evident in the poetry of the Modern period since the 1911-12. Modern poets, such as Eliot and Yeats were already looking at a bleak future.

Alun Lewis, Sidney Keyes, and Keith Douglas were those young budding soldier-poets who left the world before their time. Among the three Keith Douglas was considered the best. His detached account of the battlefield is evidence of gifted poetics of potential greatness. In How to Kill? he writes: *Now in my dial of glass appears/The soldier who is going to die./ He smiles, and moves about in ways/ His mother knows, habits of his./The wires touch his face: I cry NOW. Death, like a familiar hears/ And look, has made a man of dust/Of a man of flesh. This sorcery/ I do. ....* This poem describes the process of the killing of an enemy soldier in a very matter-of-fact manner—he has made a dust/ Of a man of flesh. There is a cynical attitude towards the enemy as well as a nihilistic attitude towards deterioration of the human body after death. The nihilism was the spirit of the age: the response to an advanced technological warfare that killed millions in the First War and many more in the Second World War.

War poet, Wilfred Owen who has been credited with some of the best British war poetry of World War I, wrote his poems over a period of one year, between August 1917 and September 1918 before dying in action, in November 1918, at the young age of twenty five. One of the best pieces to date is his poem "Dulcet et Decorum Est" where he expresses his sarcasm and anger at the irony of war and the romantic ideals of warfare that was encouraging more youths to enter the armed forces in Britain. We see his views clearly expressed here: *Bent double, like old beggars under/ sacks,/ Knock-kneed, coughing through sludge,...Men marched in sleep. Many had lost their boots./ But limped on, blood-shod. All went/ lame; all blind;/Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the/ hoots Of gas –shells dropping softly behind.* Notice the pathos that marks the condition of the soldier who fights at the front lines of battle. The simile "like old beggars" carries with it anger and sadness expressed through harsh descriptions like, "bent double," "Knock-kneed," "trudge," "limped," "lame," "blind," "drunk with fatigue," "deaf." Here is a lexical registry that would be more appropriate for poor, sick, old and shelter-less people, and not to warriors. The weariness of the four years of war is very effectively conveyed by Owen through this poem. These were not actually the poor or sick people of Britain; these were all youths from very good families, educated and wealthy in their native regions, now turned "old beggars" by war. At the end of this poem, Owen gives a warning to Britain as well as the entire world: not to encourage their youngsters who get carried away by the rhetoric of War to enter in such conflicts blindly or influence by the idealism of patriotism: *My friend, you would not tell with such high zest,/ To children ardent for some desperate/glory,/The old Lie: 'Dulcet et decorum est/ Pro patria mori'* (The quote is from the Roman poet Horace: "It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country") According to Owen this is the lie that needs to be understood by the world in the future years and this can prevent another global conflict from taking place.

In June 1982, during the decades long civil war between the Muslim majority and the Christian minority in Lebanon, the Israeli forces crossed the border under cover of darkness and entrenched themselves in a siege outside the capital city of Beirut. The Palestinian poet Mahmud Dharwish wrote a series of prose poems about this offensive: *MemoryforForgetfulness*. It is an extended reflection about the invasion, as well as the role and responsibilities of writers in times of war. When politicians and publishers alike demanded poetry about the incident Dharwish argues that "its galling that we should be ready during these raids to steal time for all this chatter[...] that we should be doing this at a moment in which everything has stopped talking." These lines express the poet's objection to an occasional poetry of

war. It is an echo of Bertolt Brecht's opinions half a century earlier, which mourned poetry's disconnection from a world in which the Nazi Party was rapidly consolidating its power. In his poem "To Those Who Follow In Our Wake" Brecht writes: *What times are these in which/ A conversation about trees is almost a crime/ For in doing so we maintain our silence about so much wrongdoing?*

Theodor Adorno expressed similar thoughts a bit more directly in 1948 stating that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric". However where Theodor and Brecht imagine poetry as an almost complicit silence in the face of historical injustice, Dharwish locates poetry within history itself. He argues that "Beirut itself is the writing [...] Its true poets and singers are its people and fighters, who do not need to be entertained or spurred by a lute with broken strings." Dharwish's stand is one of active participation of the writer /poet in war where War Poetry becomes "lived poetics" as against the romanticized war poetry of some earlier poets: from the classical to the Victorian age. The aesthetics of war poetry reaches far beyond the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the Classical poet Virgil who was the poet-historian of the Trojan War. He calls upon the muse for assistance to fit language to its military subject, in singing, as he says, of "arms and the man". In doing so, he gives an understanding of "the causes and the crimes" of that conflict, through poetry.

According to Christopher Kempf in his essay "The Art of War Poetry" the relationship between war and its poetic representation is one of the newest, and most significant challenge facing a twentieth century poet. It began with the war poets Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Wilfred Owen who were soldier-poets of the First World War; it continues to be the inspiration for the many victims of the present Wars: terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, the Arab Uprising in Syria or the cross-border wars between India and Pakistan. War poetry has become a genre that has gained popularity and credibility among the readers for the depiction of ground realities. The soldier-poets wrote poetry, sometimes, even while being in the trenches and waiting for orders: used their poetry as an outlet for their feelings of angst, despair and fear for their lives. Readers and publishers agree that no conflict has ever been so closely linked with the poetry and literature of its age than the First World War.

However, not all poets responded to war by writing directly about it. For instance, Yeats had predicted a global conflict in his poem "The Second Coming" written in 1916, when he wrote: *Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,/The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere/The ceremony of innocence is drowned;* Later when Henry James asked Yeats to write a war poem to be included in an anthology to raise money for the Belgian refugees. In response he penned a dismissive little lyric "On Being Asked for a War Poem" which he told James, was the only thing he could write on the subject "till bloody frivolity is over: *I think it better that in times like these/ A poet's mouth be silent, for in truth/We have no gift to set a statesman right.*

In the global, 'total war' of 1939-45, that saw the Holocaust<sup>2</sup>, Blitzkrieg<sup>3</sup>, Atomic bombing<sup>4</sup>, virtually no poet was left untouched by the war. The same was true for the civilian conflicts and revolutions in Spain and Eastern Europe. The conflicts that swept the world from 1939 to 1945 produced an extraordinary body of poetry. Like the military action, the literature of the Second World War witnessed a phenomenal literary writing from all over the world. The long ominous build-up to war had been expressed in poems of fear and foreboding by poets such as Bertold Brecht who fled from Germany in 1933. W.H.Auden, witnessed the struggle against Fascism and fled from Spain to America. His poem "September 1, 1939" expresses the helplessness of a human in the face of conflicts and the 'blindness' of the world leaders to prevent war. He writes, "*Defenceless under the might/ Our world in stupor lies.*"

War poetry is not necessarily 'anti-war'. It is, however, about the very large questions of life: identity, innocence, guilt, loyalty, courage, compassion, humanity, duty, desire and death. Its response to these questions, and its relation of immediate personal experience to moments of national and international crisis, gives war poetry an extra-literary importance. In Britain, poetry once again became a very popular genre to express extreme emotions generated by the ongoing war which had a far greater magnitude and impact than the First War. This time civilians along with soldiers, women along with men wrote great poetry. While the genre of War Poetry which was officially declared in 1930s consisted of male writers as well as male soldier-poets, the Second World War brought out some women poets. The American literary critics held up a text written by a woman poet named Marianne Moore as the single, exemplary war poem. This poem, "In Distrust of Merits" was called "the best of all war poems" by W. H. Auden. The poem gives a very candid opinion about soldiers and warfare. The rhetorical question reveals the ultimate futility of conflicts in the present age of nuclear armament. The present-day war results in exodus of refugees fleeing their homelands, seeking shelter in other countries. Many die of illness and other hardships and never survive to begin a new life. The poet Marianne Moore questions the rationale of war in her poem: "In Distrust of Merits"; *To the fighting-it's a promise- 'We'll never hate black, white, red, yellow... Jew..,(I 41-44).* The poet mourns for the dying and despairs that their death has not taught the world a lesson of peaceful co-existence. She called those who caused war: *hate-hardened heart, /O heart of iron/ iron is iron till it is rust/There never was a war that was/ not inward; I must /fight till I have conquered in myself what/ causes war.* (I 69-73).

In 1933, Adolf Hitler, became the Chancellor of Germany. He immediately began to prepare for war. German rearmament was in violation of the Treaty of Versailles which Germany had signed at the end of World War I. Hitler annexed Austria and invaded Czechoslovakia in 1938, invaded Poland in 1939. Great Britain and France declared war on Germany. The war of the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, Japan, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria) against the Allied powers (Great Britain, and its allies, France, China, Denmark, Greece, Norway, and Yugoslavia) began. The United States joined the Allies in 1941. Alexander Kimel, a Holocaust survivor, who survived the Concentration Camp, by running away, in 1941 lived to write some powerful poems. His poems: "I Cannot Forget" consists of two poems. The first poem he has titled "The Action in the Ghetto of Rohatyn, March 1942" and the second poem is "The Creed of A Holocaust Survivor." The poetics employed by Kimel is simple, and harsh,yet realistic. He does not cover up the reality with flowery language, instead he writes: *Do I want to remember?/ The peaceful ghetto, before the raid: Children*

*shaking like leaves in the wind./Mothers searching for a piece f bread./ Shadows, on swollen legs, moving with fear... how can I forget? (1 1-7).*

The corpus of Holocaust poetry is vast and unparalleled by all the War Poetry written to date. The poetry voices the sufferings and cries of a race that was subjected to inhuman tortures: killed cold-bloodedly in point-blank firing, suffocated to death in gas chambers or tortured to death in concentration camps have told the world their sufferings through their fellow sufferers who somehow survived to tell their stories. Alexander Kimel is only one of the many poets and writers who have written about the Holocaust.

Recently the world witnessed the poetics of an eight year old Syrian refugee who along with her family got in Britain. Amineh Abou Kerech and her family fled Damascus in the Arab Spring in 2011. When violence flared they fled Syria and moved about for four years, before finding shelter in Britain. Her poem "Lament for Syria" is the cry of every refugee who has been forced to flee their country, leaving all their wealth and property behind, and wandering homeless, starving, weary and sick. The terror and violence in which many innocent men, women and children became victims is the story of conflicts all over the world in the twenty first century. The voice of this young poet recalls those days when her family was fleeing Damascus towards Egypt after the Arab Spring conflict broke out in Syria in 2011. For a whole year they wandered in strange countries, until finally being sheltered as refugees in Britain. Her passion is seen in these lines: *I'm trying to design a country...Where soldiers don't walk over my face.* Her poem describes life in Syria after 2011: *a land where people pick up a discarded piece of bread/ so that it does not get trampled on.* The love for Syria shines brightly through the simple, naïve poetics of this young girl: *Oh Syria, my love/ I hear your moaning.../ I left your land and merciful soil/ And your fragrance of jasmine/ My wing is broken like your wing.*

War Poetry speaks for the dying brave soldier killed in action as well as for the families fleeing from cities occupied by conquerors, invaders or mercenaries waging a war of a different kind. There are also writings from the survivors about gruesome deeds and inhuman conditions at the war zones. PTSD (Post traumatic stress disorders) is the latest challenge to war survivors. A collection of poems titled "27 American Iraq and Afghanistan War Poets" records the poems of twenty seven individuals who have directly or indirectly got involved in America's war in Iraq and Afghanistan. One such poet, Benjamin Busch, an American writes in his poem, "Madness in the Wild" how "...people lose their mind,/ The frantic old woman clutching a doll and kissing its face,/The man, parading down, a street, yelling premonitions,/The veteran, knocking at his own door,/ searching for home/ They may not know they're adrift, but we do" (l 8-11).

This would be the significance and relevance of War Poetry in literature. As the world gets caught up in more hostilities, children and adults equally, will articulate it in verse more eloquently than perhaps any other genre.

### 3.Endnote

1. The British Commander Lord Raglan had intended to send the Light Brigade to prevent the Russians from removing the guns which had been captured from the Turks who had fled when defeated. This was a task for which the Light cavalry was well suited. Unfortunately, there was a miscommunication in the successive commands given by different officers, and the Light Brigade was instead sent on a frontal assault against a different artillery battery that was well trained and equipped for defensive fire. The Light Brigade was caught under direct fire, the gunners were scattered, and they were forced to retreat immediately. The assault ended with very high casualties for Britain without any decisive gains.
2. The Holocaust was the worst of the war crimes to have ever occurred in the history of the modern civilisation. It was a genocide where Nazi Germany, aided by collaborators, systematically murdered some six million European Jews. It constituted two-thirds of the Jewish population of Europe, between 1941 and 1945
3. Blitzkrieg is a German word which means "lightening war." It was a warfare strategy that was practiced by the Nazi Party under the leadership of Adolf Hitler. It involved an attacking force, spearheaded by a dense concentration of armoured and motorised or mechanised infantry formations, with close air support, that would break through the opponent's line of defence by short, fast, powerful attacks and then dislocate the defenders, taking them by surprise. The infantry would be supported by air superiority.
4. The United States that joined the war in 1941, detonated two atomic bombs over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, killing 210,000 people. It was done in an effort to stop the increasing assault of Japan upon China and nearby islands and force them to surrender. The dropping of the bombs resulted in the immediate withdrawal of Japanese troops.

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# Kocharethi: Marginalized Voice of the Other

Reshma A

## Abstract

The tribal people are considered and treated as the marginalized and they have been oppressed under the hegemony of dominant culture. They believed that they shouldn't raise their voice against it and they were willing to be abused but when the cultural conflicts arise they started to resist. 'Kocharethi' is one of the first tribal novels by Narayan which portrays the struggles of tribal people. This paper attempts to analyze how the tribal people are oppressed and the challenges faced by the tribal people of preserving their identity, myths and belief.

### **Keywords:**

Oppressed,  
Marginalized,  
Isolated,  
Transition,  
Identity Crisis.

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'Aborigines' or 'Indigenous People' are treated as uncivilized and marginalized. Even though 8.6 percent of our population amount to these tribes while they possess unique cultural identity, they are seen to be isolated from the society. There are many tribal communities in India in which 'Malayarayan' community is distinct from the others. The meaning of the word 'Malayarayan' means 'King of the Hills'. They have followed matriarchy system that later transformed to patriarchy. They worship natural forces, animals and trees. Though they are using Malayalam as their spoken form, they have their own customs. Their literary form was mainly oral, until the latter half of the twentieth century. They have created many indigenous literary products, but they are also overlooked like them. Narayan, a tribal writer, who has written the first tribal novel, 'Kocharethi' which was published in 1998, after ten year search of a publisher. It was later translated by Catherine Thankamma to English as 'Kocharethi: The Araya Woman'. The novel depicts the story of the most ignored Malayaraya community that had lived in Western Ghats in the first half of the twentieth century. The novel unravels the rich culture of the indigenous people which has been a marginalized one. Narayan portrays the story of the tribe which he belongs to and their transition to modernity. Non tribals treated them as uncivilized and illiterate. Narayan wanted to rectify it with his writings as he is a cultural devotee. Not wanting to be low categorized, Narayan wrote his debut novel, 'Kocharethi' as a response to the dominant society. The first half of the novel picturizes the indigenous culture, customs and latter about their transition. This paper attempts to anatomize how the tribal people are oppressed and the challenges they face to preserve their identity, beliefs and myths.

The novel delineates the early half of twentieth century, the transition from colonial to post colonial. 'Kocharethi' is about the lives of Kunjippennu and Kochuraman. Kochuraman, a 'vaidyan' (medicine man), who cures diseases as a service. Kunjippennu, the daughter of Ittyadi Velichapadu and the partner of Kochuraman, is dauntless and through her we witness the first transition. She was reluctant to marry her maternal uncle's son Narayanan and married the orphan Kochuraman from a different clan. The younger generation welcomes the cultural changes at a level. Her brother Kunjadichan also supports changes. It's clear when he and his father had a talk over Kunjippennu's marriage with Kochuraman, Ittyadi asked "Kunjayicha, we have a custom. Should we be the ones to break it?" Kunjadichan replied "Oh, who cares

about customs these days!"(15). He also responds when he compelled to follow his father's path as a velichapadu, "Do you feel anything, brother-in-law? Once father dies, I'll dig out these idols and throw them in the big stream."

Malayarayathies who carry sickle are stalwart and courageous. They are ready to kill anyone who tries to abuse them. When Narayanan tries to molest her, Kunjipennu responds: "Umm. That hope will turn sour. See this sickle? You won't touch me while I'm alive. This is Varikkamakal Ittyadi's daughter, don't forget." (11). Our attention strikes at another instance when we see how 'Kotha' saved her husband 'Kodutha' from a bear. Kunjipennu was valiant enough to break the unwritten tribal laws. She didn't spend her 'theendari' period (menstruation period) in 'eettallera', instead spend in southern varandah. But we feel it was long forgotten when she is old. She tries to come back to the customs and instructs her daughter Parvati too. Though the tribals accept and celebrate changes, they believe in their culture which their hearts want to hold on to.

The novel Kocharethi is proliferated with unique tribal practices like birth ceremony, puberty etc. Women are treated as unclean during puberty and maternity periods and they have to live separate in 'Eettappera'. Younger generation is not ready to follow all pick practices. When Kunjipennu asked her daughter about the 'Kokkuri'( a half-inch-long piece of flattened gold strung on a black thread-a symbolic marriage after a girl starts a period; her muracherukkan( maternal uncle's son) ties a kokkuri, a symbol of marriage). She replied "Am I cattle or something to tie a rope around my neck?".(160).

Kochuraman realized that traditional practices were being disposed of and Kunjippennu marked the beginning. He believes that 'Knowledge was the Goddess Saraswathi..Would not the Goddess be polluted?... 'Kochuraman consulted Kochupilla Aashan's advice. He replied "...As for theendari , the monthly does demand certain restrictions. Parvati is a virgin. Vidya is Saraswathi but the Devi is also a woman. She too will have theendari. All these are a matter of belief. There are girls studying in high school and college, there are mature women who teach or do other jobs. They do not absent themselves from work during theendari time."(160).

The first transition begins with language. Though they have certain oral language practices, they welcome the changes in language. They accepted Kochupilla Aasan and he tries to change their dialect from Malayalam. Being a Malayalam teacher and scholar of Vedas he also accepts the change. When Parvati studies English he asks:"Do the coconut and areca palm bear fruit in English, daughter?"(157). The tribals accepted upper caste names as a result of transition.

The malayarayas were God fearing and were willing to do anything for the temple, that too without payment. The land lords and money lenders misused them by knowing this. Once Kunjunni said:"...Arayar are not cheats; they are a hardworking a lot. But they lack knowledge and experience. They're God-fearing too. Bend them but do not break them. They can be terrible."(117) The non tribes realizes their strength that the tribals are little aware of.

Money lenders, polices and land lords abused and tortured them for pepper and other forest goods. In the first half of the novel we could see how they misused their illiteracy and commitment. This novel portrays the dark side of untouchability . They were not allowed to enter the temple until the Temple Entry Proclamation. Till then they were permitted to do offerings only. The arayar can enter and draw water from Thampuran's courtyard but could not touch upper castes.

The non tribals and forest officials abused physically and mentally by knowing the strength of the dusky healthy people. Kunjunni Pilla said to Kocheepan once:" ...If the Arayar were even slightly literate they would be just like us. They are not socially backward in any way. They are nature's children, strong and healthy. I told you all this so that you treat them with circumspection." (118). The Arayans were willing to be abused. But latter half we see how they are reacting against this. When Devasia and Chetty tried to attack Kochuraman and 'Kunjrukkan ' Kochuraman said:"Kochanaare, I owe you nothing. And don't try to frighten me into giving you money.."(110). When Kocheepan and men came to pluck pepper as lease dues, Kunjppan's family, including his Arayathi and children reacted. We see how the old man reacted when Pappan Pilla tried to abuse him. He responds:"Pillecha, if you want to protect your bones run. This isn't local stuff." "I have fathered six like him. I've been traveling ground, selling oxen for the past thirty years. I won't tolerate extortion."(109).

Colonization is also discussed in this novel. The non tribals treated them as marginalized and were oppressed under their rule. Second half of the novel witnesses the spread and influence of Christianity among the Malayarayan tribes. The arayar's were ready to convert for their better life .

Arayar's were prepared to accept the good without losing their cultural values. They were ready to be oppressed. Though they accept changes, we see how they are attached with their customs. Parvati got educated and slowly departs from her tribe. Being a medicine man, Kochuraman was not able to cure his own disease and consumes soda powder to cure stomach ache. Later he had been admitted and is recommended for a

surgery, but later Kunjipennu and Kochuraman escape from the hospital considering surgery as a cause of death.

We feel the cultural hegemony of the upper class over the values, customs and traditions of the oppressed people. First half they are willing to be abused and in the second ,they experience identity crisis which emerges when their cultural beliefs hurt.

Though Narayan is an advocate of his tribal customs and values, he is ready to accept the changes only for uplifting their standard. According to him the tribes are considered as uncivilized and illiterate. Through this novel he unravels the oppression they had been experiencing and the way how they resisted against it.

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# Contextualizing the Identity of Dalit Women: A study of Baburao Bagul's 'Mother'

Anju A

## **Abstract**

Dalits epitomizes a community of 170 million in India constituting 17% of the population. One out of every six Indians is Dalit, yet due to their caste identity, Dalits often face discrimination and violence which prevent them from enjoying the basic human rights and dignity promised to all citizens of India. Dalit women constitute a lower segment in Indian society and suffer from dual disadvantages: (a) of being Dalit, i.e., from socio-economic and cultural marginalization and (b) being women i.e., from gender-based inequalities and subordination. They have to tussle harder to secure the basic requirements of life. In my paper, I am trying to address the problems faced by Dalit women, especially by a Dalit widow woman. I attempt to explore the condition of Dalit women vis-a-vis the short story 'Mother' by Baburao Bagul. By contextualizing the life story of the main protagonist I will try to address the question of the identity of Dalit women.

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The mainstream Indian literature until recently was very partial in representing Dalit life. Even if they have written something, it will be based on their imagination. According to Limbale, "Dalit literature is a movement. Dalits see their literature as a vehicle for their pain, sorrow, questions and problems" (105). The ability of savarnas to express Dalit consciousness on the basis of their imaginative power is true only in a limited sense. Because Dalit literature is that which is written by one who is Dalit by birth, which is filled with rebellion and rejection and which gives expression to Dalit consciousness. So the upper caste writings tend to be sympathetic in nature, they could not transcend their own caste position to draw an authentic picture of Dalit life. Their reformist liberalism almost always portrayed the 'untouchable' as an object for pity and sympathy. So this void was filled with the beginning of writings by Dalit themselves, thereby they are able to depict their own lived experiences.

The emergence of Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra during the 1970s, rejuvenated the creative urges of Dalits. It was persuaded by the Black Panther Movement in America. Its impetus paved way for the emergence of writers like Baburao Bagul, Anna Bhau Sathe, Namdev Dhasal, and many others.

As it is produced out of the Dalit consciousness, the nature of this literature subsists in a dissent against the suppression and humiliation faced by the Dalits in the past and even at present- in the framework of Varna system. For hundreds of years, Dalits have been underlying at the rockbottom of this social pyramid and they are even negated of their basic human rights such as drinking water from public lakes and wells and they are not allowed to use public streets. The untouchable was required to have a black thread either on his wrist or around his neck, as a sign or a mark to prevent the Hindus from getting themselves polluted by his mistake (Ambedkar 214). In his book Annihilation of Caste, Ambedkar also mentions about the predicament of Dalits in Poona:

The untouchable was required to carry, strung from his waist, a broom to sweep away from behind himself the dust he trod on, lest a Hindu walking on the same dust should be polluted. In Poona, the untouchable was required to carry an earthen pot hung around his neck wherever he went- for holding his spit, lest his spit falling on the earth should pollute a Hindu who might unknowingly happen to tread on it. (214)

Even though, Dalit men are discriminated by the society, the condition of Dalit women is worse. "In India, where the practice is rampant despite the existence of legislation to stop this, 1600 million Dalits, of whom 49.96% are women, continue to suffer discrimination" ( Mittal 33). By labelling the Dalit women as 'impure' and hence untouchable, they are being deprived economically, socially and culturally from the mainstream of the society.

Hindu hierarchical system of caste is divided into four strata: the Brahmins (priestly caste), the Kshatriya (warriors), the Vaishyas (traders) and the Shudras (menial task workers). Below this caste ladder comes the 'untouchables' (Panchamas). Among the untouchables, the stature (status) of women is further weathered and closely linked to the concept of purity.

In ancient India (3200-2500 B.C.) the caste system was non-existent since even the most learned men were god householders and had varied occupations. The women of ancient India were just as superior as men in learning, education and intellect. The choice of her mate was according to her own wishes and marriage was practised after the coming of age. She attended parties, competitions and religious functions as she wished. (Quoted in Arya 41)

The creation of a number of Hindu religious books including the Manusmriti, and the strict compliance to them by the Brahmins, led to a society in which equality between men and women was far from existent (Quoted in Mittal 33). Dr B R Ambedkar, an architect of the Indian Constitution, also makes it very clear in his article title The rise and fall of the woman that the root cause of suffering for women in India are these so-called Hindu religious books (Agarwal- quoted in Mittal 33). Books like Manusmriti divide people into stratified caste system and promote inequality between men and women (Thind; Agarwal). According to Manusmriti, women have no right to education, independence, or wealth. It not only justifies the treatment of Dalit women as sex objects, and promotes child marriage, but also justifies a number of violent atrocities on women, as can be seen in the following verses (Agarwal; Manusmriti):

A man, aged thirty years, shall marry a maiden of twelve who pleases him. Or a man of twenty-four a girl of eight years of age. If (the performance of) his duties would otherwise be impeded, he must marry sooner. (Manusmriti IX.94)

By a girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently, even in her own house. (Manusmriti V.147) Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence. (Manusmriti IX.3)

Women have no right to study the Vedas. That is why their Sanskaras are performed without Veda Mantras. Women have no knowledge of religion because they have no right to know the Vedas. The uttering of the Veda Mantras is useful for removing sin. As women cannot utter the Veda Mantras, they are as unclean as the untruth. (Manusmriti IX.18) A Brahman, Kshatriya or Vaishya Man can sexually exploit any Shudra woman. (Manusmriti IX.25- Quoted in Mittal 34)

Even the killing of a Dalit woman is explicitly justified as a minor offence for the Brahmins: equal to the killing of an animal (Manusmriti). Even killing is being justified! Dalit women can be called as "Dalit among the Dalits" or "downtrodden among the downtrodden" (Channa, Mencher 258). Unlike the Dalit men, they are 'thrice alienated'- on the basis of class (poor), caste (outcaste), and gender (women). They face multiple oppression that violates their economic, political, social and cultural rights. They have to face multi-faceted violence like verbal abuse, physical assault, sexual assault, rape etc. Agonizingly, Dalit women had to suffer violence even within their home too.

Baburao Bagul was one of the prominent voices from Maharashtra, a pioneer of modern literature in Marathi was born in Nasik on July 1930, the period during which Ambedkar's anticaste movement was gaining momentum. Bagul's appearance on the literary scene was a breakthrough- he challenged the prejudiced views of Brahmin writers on Dalit literature. In 1963, when Bagul's magnum opus, Jeeva Mi Jat Chorali (When I Concealed My Caste) was published it was like a bomb on the Marathi Literature. His second short story collection, Maran Swast Hote Aahe (Death is Becoming Cheaper, 1969) is another seminal work that secured his position as one of the greatest writers in the language of Marathi.

According to Jyoti Lanjewar, "scorching life experience is the price of Dalit literature" (188). The experience of life expressed in Dalit literature is so spirited, its agony so mind-distressing. Dalit writers depict their realistic experiences. "They express their feelings in their literature. They do not create literature

with urbane readers in mind. Their effort is to transport the aesthete- readers to their own level of experience" (Limbale 118).

The condition of Dalit widow is worse than that of a Dalit woman. They are alienated fourfold ways: due to class; caste; as a woman; as a widow. "In India widows are treated as untouchables," says Bindeshwar Pathak, the founder of Sulabh International (Bhowmick and Radhakund) "They have to give up everything ... and live a life of isolation," says Pathak. Hinduism gave identity to a woman only on the basis of binary opposition of patriarchy. i.e., as a girl, 'daughter' of a patriarchal father, in youth; 'wife' of a patriarchal husband; and as a 'mother' to a patriarchal son. Her existence after marriage is associated with her husband. When he dies, she became a tool of gaze for other males. Dalit males exercise their power on the Dalit woman. As they are not able to use power in the society, they find women as place to shower their frustrated outbursts. In my paper I attempt to study the identity of a Dalit women, especially that of a Dalit widow. Is Dalit woman a separate category? Do they have typical problems as compared to other women in our society? What are the challenges before Dalit women? Do we treat an upper caste widow and a Dalit widow alike? How do they differ? Do they have same experience of motherhood? Is there any difference in motherhood based on their caste? Whose experience of motherhood is universalized? Do we able to hear their voices? Plights? Is there any upliftment possible for them?

During the feminist movement of the 1970s, the category of 'women' was imagined collectively, based on their being oppressed by the fact of their womanhood. With such generalization occurred the exclusion of women based on their race, caste and class differences. Typically the people involved in such movements are university educated women from upper caste backgrounds. Hence it's their experience become universalised, there by alienated the 'other'; experience of Dalit women were completely overlooked.

Baburao Bagul's short story deals with the life of a Dalit widow, who resides with her son Pandu. She is not given a name, may be for universalise her experience. Thus she is not having an identity of her own unless as a mother of her son. She as a woman have no space of her own. It is linked with roles of patriarchal society. Through this character Bagul project the violence that the Dalit women faces in her life.

Dalit husbands retaliate against their own oppressed position by performing violence against their wives. This violence assumes the form of verbal abuse against women, and it is often accompanied by physical assault. In all these cases, as far as a Dalit husband is concerned, the violence takes on a strong patriarchal dimension, using wife as his own 'property'. Here Bagul points out such a situation in which Pandu's father, the husband of mother in the story, who is being diagnosed with tuberculosis, had no option than letting his wife go outside to seek a job. He used to blame her for his disease, his joblessness and his losing strength. He used to call her as 'slut'. She had to work at the construction sites, hauling bricks and cement. After a day's hideous work, when she returns home, he would follow her, watch her every movement. And "he would strip her and examine her feet, her thighs, her breasts, her sari and blouse and would carefully scrutinise her lips and cheeks. His eyes would constantly seek proof, proof of her infidelity, proof that she was indeed an adulteress" (Bagul 214). The only sin committed by her is, she ventured the outward domain to support her family from being falling apart. Another deteriorating comment made him was "your sari looks as if you've won it in a hurry, your hair's coming loose, and where were you slut?"(214). Furthermore, "he would search her again for the money he thought she was earning the easy way, and when he found nothing, he would taunt her. Giving it on credit now, are you?"(214).

Another curse for Dalit women is their beauty. Limbale in Outcaste says that:

To be born beautiful among Dalits is a curse... Masamai was beautiful and she suffered for it.  
She was divorced by her husband, after which Hanmanta enjoyed her and then deserted her...  
how long would she go on being a woman without a man? People who enjoy high-caste  
privileges, authority sanctioned by religion, and inherit property, have exploited the Dalits of  
this land. (Limbale 37-38)

This is the situation with Pandu's mother as well. In order to assert full control over her body, her husband tried to make her unattractive. "His blows were always aimed at destroying her full-blown beauty. He hoped she would lose a lot of blood, become lame or deformed, ugly and so, in spite of his ebbing strength, he would aim at her face, her nose, head, and eyes" (Bagul 214). He used to call her 'temptress, witch'. Physical torture also sometimes reach great extends. "One night, she suddenly woke up from a deep sleep to find him beating up the iron tongs in the fire; he had taken away the clothes from her body. He wanted to brand her marked boy with hot iron" (215). This constant effort of the male figure to vandalize the female reflects the male ego's constant attempt to control the female body. Then we can see that she tried to take revenge on him by demanding her 'conjugal right'. "She knew he was indeed close to death, hoping to this hasten it" (215).

After the death of Pandu, she became an object of gaze for other males. "She had suffered immeasurable torment after his death. Men were drawn to her; she did not want them. They tried to rape, and their women waged a war of slander against her" (215).

The same suspicion is being repeated in her life. When her son grew up, her son by following the path of her husband, viewed from the viewpoint of his father.

Years later, in order to provide for son, she had to work hard. Throughout those years, she has resisted the advances of other men and kept away the better future only for her son. But finally she understands that all her sacrifices were vain. She says that, "Son, you called me a whore. You hurt me more than your father ever did" (217). She was beautiful and after her husband's death, she says:

Mohammed Maistry was prepared to make over his car to me if I agreed to marry him; Walji Seth would send a fifty-rupee note through a messenger every Saturday night and ask me to go over to his bungalow; and even Dagdu was prepared to give me his lifesavings. I could have lived a merry life, but I gave up everything, son. I lived for you, hoping you'd grow up, be my support, but you have betrayed me... (217)

She was completely betrayed by her son only because she was a different independent mother, who had to work for her son. So she was not able to be with him, not able to shower love just like an idealised mother does.

The story begins in a classroom setting, where the class teacher recites a poem about a mother. The children remembered the warmth of the mother's lap; the only place where they felt secure. The teacher's voice had a soothing melodious mood which transported them into a new joy. "The children, usually quite indifferent to school smiled happily through their unkempt hair; their muddy faces shone with a strange wonder" (209). Pandu starts thinking of his mother as "Vatsalya Sindhu"- a river of motherly love and benediction. He felt like "the heavy burden he always carried on his shoulders lifted somewhat and he was a child once again, wanting to shout, to run and wave his arms about in joy" (209). Here Bagul describes about mental and physical torture that was faced by Dalit children. After hearing this poem. The hostility that he usually felt towards his classmates abated somewhat. He sat watching them at play and benign smile slowly came to his face. Smile on his face was completely unbearable for upper caste boys. So that decided to attack him. They said, "Don't touch Pandu, any of you. My mother says Pandu's mother sleeps with the mukadam like this..." (210), this is how Pandu was psychologically tormented and how the upper caste children exploit the innocence of Pandu by injecting poisonous thoughts against his own mother. The Dalit children are always the target of the mischief of the higher caste children. Dalit children have to face discrimination and even untouchability in school. Here Pandu is told that his mother is having a relation with the overseer. His young mind starts thinking that he was to face humiliation because of the acts of his mother and he is infuriated.

Pandu's face burned with shame and anger. He felt a demonic, murderous rage rising within him. He could have killed them, murder them all in cold blood. It was good to think them lying together in a pool of blood. It was short-lived joy, however. He remembered that he was an orphan, now that his father was dead, and his mother an unprotected widow. He was afraid that Dagdu, their neighbour, would pick fight with his mother, try to strip her sari....Rage gave way to infinite helplessness and he felt spent. (Bagul 210).

They all preoccupied with the traditional concept of motherhood. Mothering has long occupied a central place in debates about women's positions in society. Feminist perspectives have asserted that motherhood and mothering are not natural for women but that they are historically, culturally and socially constructed. Normative expectations that define what is 'proper' mothering are imposed upon them by the mainstream society. The proportion of households headed by women has increased world-wide, redefining women as providers rather than dependents. But this redefinition has many contradictions related to the reasons for women becoming heads of households and the renegotiation of gender roles and expectations in 'families' and in society. 'Adequate' mothering becomes an impossible task for many. The demonization of lone mothers is particularly strong in relation to the adequacy of their mothering. According to Silva, "Regardless of her own personal needs, socio-economic conditions or husband/partner, the mother must always subject herself to the ideal"(10). These views are very familiar. But what sort of mothering do these ideas produce? The view that it was ideal for women to stay at home. "Social definitions of women have historically been ambiguous about whether to treat women as wives and mothers or as workers" (25). Carol Smart argued that:

Motherhood is not a natural condition. It is an institution that presents itself as a natural outcome of biologically given gender differences, as a natural consequence of (hetero) sexual activity, and as a natural manifestation of an innate female characteristic, namely the maternal instinct. The existence of an institution of motherhood, as opposed to an acknowledgement that there are simply mothers, is rarely questioned even though the proper qualities of motherhood are often the subject of debate. (37)

On the other hand we need to expose the construction of dominant normative constraints that create certain categories of mothers as bad or inadequate because they are perceived to fail to live up to the ideals of motherhood that are imposed through mainstream norms.

In Foucaultian terms:

The calibrations of good motherhood; initially they covered mainly physical matters of diet, warmth, immediate environment, and physical development. Later these calibrations were extended to include the immense realm of the psychological care and nurture of the child. Thus the good mother was no longer simply the one who fed and cleansed properly, she would be inadequate if she failed to love properly and to express this love in the correct fashion.(Smart 46)

Chithra Sinha in her essay Images of Motherhood: The Hindu Code Bill Discourse in India says that “the identity of motherhood thus completely overshadowed all other identities of Indian women and as a result, the Indian woman was raised in a culture that trained her to be an ideal mother from early childhood.” (21)

Being a poor helpless and above all a Dalit widow adds her burden. After her husband’s death, she became subjected to an object of male gaze for neighbourhood and workplace males. She became a sexual object before the voyeuristic activities of male. She turn out to be an erotic object. She has to face physical assaults from her neighbour Dagdu, overseer etc. “The men stripped her bare in their minds” (Bagul 213). There is a common saying that you often hate what you can’t have. Similarly Dagdu, when rejected by her, started calling abusive words at her.

The whore of a slut! You’re shameless enough to make the rounds of the shops with that pimp, with your child sitting alone at home! If that was what you needed you only had to tell me-I’d have obliged. And here I’ve been burning with desire for you, all these years....But now....  
(Bagul 212)

Why does the society not allowing a widow to have a normal life? She is a lone mother after the death of her husband, inorder to move on with the life, she need to go out and work. Does it means that she is impure? Only because she wore a good saree and dressed well, can u label her as a ‘bad’ mother? Her oppression is double folded as she is a Dalit widow. As far as upper caste Hindu women is concerned, they usually won’t have the monetary problems. Instead they have to follow certain rituals and rules and they are not even allowed to look at any men’s face. Their locomotion is being restricted with the laws of Manu. Reena Patel aptly quotes from Manusmriti regarding the rules that an upper caste Hindu widow is supposed to follow in her book Hindu Women’s Property Rights in Rural India: Law, Labour and Culture in Action: “Let her rather emaciate her body by living upon pure flowers, roots and fruits, but let her not, when her husband is dead, even to pronounce the name of another man...let her live a life of austerity, strictly observing the rules of continence, and foregoing all sensual pleasures until she dies.” (Patel 84)

Hence the upper caste widows are ‘safe’ in their home, but the socially vulnerable Dalit widows are often exploited by sexual hungered males. Inorder to satiate their sexual pleasures and lust, they are made victims. The life of Dalit widow is always problematic. Their identity is always determined by the societal norms. In the last part of the story when mother in the story tried to escape from the firm grip of the overseer, she was not able to escape. “She was trying desperately to escape from the bear-like hug of the overseer. But like a person stuck fast in a quagmire, she found release impossible...” (Bagul 218).

Social exclusion, lack of effective legal protection and socio, economic and social exploitation has kept the Dalit at sub human living condition for centuries. Baburao Bagul portrays the harsh realities of life of the subaltern people and he also shows the struggle of women. His stories show the external as well as internal conflict faced by the Dalit women.

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# Pariyerum Perumal and Pedagogy: The Indian “caste” room

TV Kaushik

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## Abstract

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Pariyerum Perumal directed by Mari Selvaraj and produced by Pa. Ranjith came as one of the major disruptions in the recent Tamil cinematic landscape. Pariyerum Perumal has a large part of its cinematic narrative set in the modern Indian classroom. Apart from a complex set of other issues, it also presents the trammels of the Dalit community inside the Indian classroom. More importantly, it presents the possibilities of change within and through the classroom.

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### Keywords:

Dalit,  
Resistance,  
Bilingualism,  
Tamil Cinema,  
Savitri Bai Phule.

It is not surprising that in the movie most of the education happens when the Savarna teacher is absent. The savarna gaze and worldview of the teacher are juxtaposed with the Dalit gaze and worldview, using several cinematic techniques. With the use of symbolism, carefully crafted dialogues, varying positions of the camera, a cinematic narrative representing the various aspects of the “Indian” classroom is provided for the Tamil audience to deal with.

As a cis-het savarna man brought up in an urban setting and teaching English to mostly students from privileged backgrounds, I wish to study the implications the movie has for a viewer like me. The movie forces dominant caste people to face the superficialities of the ideas of merit and the dire outcomes of the rigidly structured Indian classroom, rife with differences of Caste, class, gender and religion. How this educative process is made more effective through the skilful use of aesthetic devices will also form the crux of the paper.

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### 1. Introduction

In the preface to “Who were the Shudras?” Babasaheb Ambedkar notes that critics warned him against venturing into the study of Indian religion and religious history. The reason they state is his lack of mastery over Sanskrit. (Ambedkar 11) Upper caste cisgender heterosexual men have used their monopoly over language and resources to question, trivialise and dismiss the scholarship of those who don’t share their social location and/or views. If it was Sanskrit before, today it is English. English is thoroughly monopolised by the dominant identities. (Shepherd) English for various historical and geopolitical reasons has come to play the role of the language of knowledge, opportunities and Human Rights. A monopoly over this language is hence a monopoly over the right to a dignified life. A section of the anti-caste activists over the last century have fought vociferously for the right and need to learn English.

The modern Indian classroom has been a battlefield for several reasons. Democracy, resistance and assertion of the marginalised and affirmative action by the state have forced the Indian classroom to accommodate students from different communities where identities and worldviews are constantly clashing. There are attempts to keep marginalised students out of educational institutions itself, through different socio-economic setups, inadequate educational opportunities at the school level and later on with all possible attempts to thwart the proper implementation of reservations. This apart, once the students manage to enter these classrooms after having braved a lot of struggles, several other mechanisms are used to further humiliate them.

Pariyerum Perumal, directed by Mari Selvaraj and produced by Pa. Ranjith, depicts these different forms of humiliation faced by the lower caste students and exposes the upper caste mind-set that orchestrates this. The paper is an attempt to focus on the instances where the Savarna English teacher stands exposed and how the Tamil cinema audience is forced to now recognise this hierarchy within the Indian Classroom and engage with it.

## **2. Language and Indian politics**

The Imagined Community of India, is a Union of different communities with diverse worldviews and lifestyles. The farce of the Right has been the lack of imagination to perceive/accept that we have communities and not community. Each community has several identities as part of its socio-political life. The master identity is that which adequately encapsulates most of these identities. (Oommen 221) In mainland India, on most occasions, it has happened to be the caste identity that plays this role of a master identity. Class, gender, sexuality, disability, language have worked with Caste identity to impose different forms of hegemony over the marginalised.

Language and Nationalism are very closely linked. (Anderson) In the process of constructing the Nation of India, Hindi was propagated as the language of integration, in the process marginalising several other languages. The idea of the formation of states based on languages has been considered and re-considered several times. INC raised the demand in 1921. The Linguistic Provinces commission set up in 1947, in its report did not recommend the linguistic reorganisation of states. The JVP committee too did not recommend it. But by 1954, when due to popular public opinion the State Reorganisation Committee was set up, the recommendation was in favour of linguistic states. (Oommen 230) "The language problem" in the socio-political arena persists till date.

## **3. Language and Indian Education :**

The year the Linguistic Provinces commission submitted its report, the University Education Committee was set up under the chairmanship of Dr RadhaKrishnan. Of the several issues it had to resolve, one predominant issue was that of the medium of instruction in educational institutions. After a long explanation of the various possibilities at hand, it recommended that all students learn three languages - their regional language, the Federal language (Hindi, which was conveniently slipped in) and English, the international language of science and development. The committee showed a strong bias for Sanskrit, only to realise in less than half a century that English would take the place of Sanskrit. The upper caste people work systematically against the lower castes picking up the language and the opportunities that go with it.

Regional languages are not preferred as media of education today. (Jayaraman) English is preferred by students and parents who see it as a way out of poverty and a way towards dignified and empowered life. In different states, especially the non-Hindi speaking ones, this proposal of a tri-lingual setup was not taken or implemented seriously. What we see instead is a strong growth of a bilingual culture. The regional language along with English is the strong preference. Even as students want to learn English, they are not of the opinion that abandoning the local language will do the trick. The idea instead is that through the local language, the bridge that leads to English could be crossed. The growth of self-help books, "Spoken English" classes through the local languages stand testimony to this growth of bilingualism. (Jayaraman) The easy use of words from one language in another without sticking strictly to the linguistic rules of any language further confirm the ease with which this bi-linguistic culture is growing. Teachers refusing to stick to this culture in order to enable the easy learning of English, intentionally or unintentionally, contribute to the monopoly over English by the Elite upper castes.

## **4. Pariyerum Perumal and Pedagogy**

Caste discrimination continues to thrive in myriad forms, a few blatant and many subtle. Discrimination through and in education is one prominent means through which the superiority of the upper castes is maintained and reemphasized. Starting all the way from the mythical story of Ekalavya, we see the toxic expectations of the upper caste "Gurus". Being meek, staying at a distance and trying to pick up whatever

one can from that distance, revering the “guru” and giving whatever he asks as “dakshana” is the ideal lower caste student. Any deviation is strongly censured. Pariyerum Perumal, the movie, apart from depicting other aspects of caste discrimination, lays emphasis on the different kinds of discrimination that go on in the classroom, especially using the weapon of English.

#### **4.1 Class, English and the Upper Caste Teacher**

In 2007, the Thorat Commission was set up to look into the allegations of Caste based discrimination at AIIMS. In the summary of the report, the very first point addressed is the lack of support for SC/ST students to pick English up. (Republic of India) 84% of the students, when enquired in safe atmospheres, expressed the need for remedial classes for English. One can easily see this situation in many colleges and universities in India. Pariyerum Perumal depicts this plight in all its different aspects. An Upper Caste teacher starts dictating notes in his class, expecting the students to take them down, without any consideration for the possibility that there would be many who won’t be able to do it. He picks on Pariyan, the protagonist and shames him in class for all he has written in his notebook is a series of “0”s. (39:02-42:38) That he has to plan remedial classes for him and others who are not privileged to know English isn’t something that the teacher feels obliged to do. In another instance, when he doesn’t understand what is going on in class because it is in English, he asks his friend Anand what they can do, he says they have to sit aside and watch the others excel until they too learn English (00:21:46-00:00:22:02)

Another teacher lectures on the case of Raja Nandakumar. This was the first hanging of an Indian by the East India Company. Because Nanda Kumar accused Warren Hastings of bribery, he, later on, brought charges against Nanda Kumar that lead to what the British Parliament itself termed “judicial murder”. Here is a classic case of those in power misusing it and their “networks” (The Chief Justice who convicted Nanda Kumar was Warren Hastings schoolmate) to work against those who question them, This is the exact situation of legislature and judiciary today. Pariyerum Perumal is a victim of this setup. The trial is of more importance to him than to anyone else in the class, but it is an irony that it is taught to him in a way that he doesn’t understand. The only way he understands is because of the translation done by a friend sitting next to him. This translation should have been a part of the pedagogy of the teacher. Her failure to do it is Pariyan’s loss. (00:20:43-00:21:45)

In the song where he introduces himself and his community, we see snippets of the classroom where they all study. They are all happy only in the absence of the teacher and English. Classroom as a space, teacher as a human being and English as a language only come across as means and symbols of humiliation, thanks to how those in power have structured it for decades. On the other hand, we see the “classroom” near his house where a local person is teaching the children from the locality. The classes happen with the background music of joyousness and the absence of dominance resulting from Caste. In a short scene, we see a classroom that is more ideal than the one that Pariyan deals with. (00:24:48-00:28:02)

The teacher is confronted by a student who thinks it is humiliating to be taught the basics in English. Just to establish his supremacy, the English teacher calls her to the front and asks her to write her address on the board. She misspells several things, including “colony” and becomes the butt of the class’ ridicule. Pariyan is caught laughing and is asked to tell a few words that begin with A. He lists the names of his friends and people he knows, for instance, Anand. The teacher is angered at this and asks him and his friend to leave the class. Despite knowing they struggle with English, the teacher gives them homework that they can’t do. After all this, they return to the class with much shame. The unempathetic self of the savarna teacher becomes evident here. Yet again we see the institution fail him and his friend, Jo, agree to help him with the homework. Pariyan tells his friend that they should clear the English exam with her help only. (00:28:04-00:32:48) Soon we find out that he passed his 10th and 12th exams also with the help of well-wishers and not the teacher who did her/his duty well. (00:45:05-00:47:04)

What Pariyan carries with him is not the responsibility of his self or of his family but the aspirations of the entire community. It is this that threatens the Caste Setup and disturbs the upper caste people. This is why towards the end we see that the savarna teacher is rooting for him to be suspended. But the Principal, who identifies as a cobbler’s son, pardons him saying that it is better to support him and have him die fighting than not support him and force him to commit suicide. (01:54:00-01:56:20) The identity of the Principal at this point is important because we see that the institutional murders of many lower caste students, including Rohith Vemula, happened under the noses of upper caste Vice-Chancellors.

#### **4.2 Bilingualism**

As noted earlier, many students who have difficulty in understanding the prescribed texts, prefer guides, material in local language and notes given by professors that summarise the text list down the key points. Pariyan too is delighted to know that all study material is available in Tamil and that he can even write the exam in Tamil. (00:24:00-00:24:30) It has to be noted that this preference doesn’t at any point mean an unwillingness to learn English. It is only a means through which they can eventually learn in English itself.

The attempt to exist with both of these languages is quite evident in modern day Tamil Nadu. In the movie, we see Anand playing the popular game of FLAMES, but with the names written in Tamil. When we notice on the top of his notebook, we see the words “*Councillor thunai*”. (Councillor is on our side) This is not only a comment on those who have misplaced beliefs about where power truly exists, but also about the ease with which English and Tamil seem to co-exist. We see that in the movie also, eventually, Pariyan passes his English papers too. This is an indicator of the efforts he put in to learn English despite the institution refusing what his legal right is. (02:07:00-02:07:13)

National Education Commission (1964-1966) popularly known as the Kothari Commission, suggested that all teachers in higher education be bilingual, in the sense of speaking both the regional language and English, and the students be equipped to read study material both in the regional languages and English. (qtd. in Jayaraman 110). Notwithstanding the other disagreements that one might have with this commission, this particular suggestion was reflective of the desires of the majority of the students. Pariyan’s demand that the teacher teach in Tamil is an echo of the demands of thousands of students who have been systematically denied access to English. In another scene, his friend, Jo, asks him why he doesn’t just keep quiet if he doesn’t like English. To this, he says that he, in fact, likes English but the teachers who taught him didn’t know enough to help him. This situation gives us one half of what the Kothari Commission suggested - a willing student who’s ready to learn English. However, the teacher who is supposed to be bilingual is absent. Here we get a glimpse into the kind of teacher training that’s provided, the nature of recruitment of the teachers and more importantly their attitude towards students. More often than not, it is the other Dalit teachers who have to bear the entire workload of helping the students who require the extra help. In the movie, we see this character exemplified in the form of the Principal who tells Pariyan that he was a cobbler’s son and he stands by what Pariyan thinks is right.

#### **4.3 Humiliation in the classroom**

Babasaheb Ambedkar recollection of his painful experiences in the classroom remains like a fresh wound for the community when we see how lower caste students are treated in the classroom after so many decades. Pariyan sits alone in the last bench, whereas the upper caste men and women sit in the front bench. This spatial arrangement is similar to how Indian cities and villages ostracise the lower castes. His college mates too identify his caste by asking him where he comes from. (00:18:38-00:18:47)

In the classroom, his communication is different from those of the others. This becomes the reason to ridicule him in public. Teachers and students alike fuel this humiliation. It is normalised to introduce oneself with the name of one’s village. This is a subtle practice through which the caste of each student is roughly ascertained. They also tell Pariyan that he is not to call her teacher and should instead address her as “madam”. This too becomes the reason for all of them to laugh at him. (00:19:15-00:20:35)

#### **4.4 English and Education as Emancipation**

In the movie, education, especially English, is clearly seen as the means to emancipation. At this point one also is reminded of the very first word of Dr Ambedkar’s popular slogan - “Educate, Agitate, Organise”. Acknowledging the growth of student politics and further centralising the focus on education, Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd now proposes the slogan “Read, Write, Fight”. Right at the beginning of the movie, we see Pariyan’s mother tell him that he should study very well. (00:14:13-00:14:15). Before the exam the heroine Jo is shown to be writing Shree Rama Jayam. He dismisses it off and goes back to studying.(00:55:55-00:56:15) This is on the lines of what several anti-caste activists have emphasised over the centuries - discard the superstitions of the Hinduism and seek emancipation through Education.

The movie stands apart in how it handles English as a language and culture. Movies have popularly depicted English and English speaking people as morally loose and a threat to the ethos of the country. To take one instance, Gautami’s role as Bhanu and even Shakti’s role in the first half in *Thevar Magan* is portrayed as a disturbance to the village setup and their culture. The west and English have been popularly demonised. Panchavarnam is forced to learn English in order to please her husband. *Dhool* serves as another example. Here English movies are depicted synonymously with pornography. The protagonist learning English is for the sake of flirting with the heroine. *Boss Engira Baskaran* also shows us a hero who is trying to understand English in order to get close to his lady love.

Pariyerum Perumal differs drastically from this culture of demonising English. While the other movies draw little or no attention to the failures of the education system that lead to a sizeable number of Indians being unacquainted with English, this movie exposes all of it in great detail. Jo, a dominant caste woman offers to help him. Their relationship grows stronger through the process of her offer and his choice to accept it. Whereas in most movies the relationship between a man and woman is shown to be one that distracts them from studies, here it is quite the opposite. Through English, their relationship grows strong. (00:49:51-00:55:54) However, the unwillingness of the institution to aid the Dalit student shouldn’t be forgotten because of the beauty of this relationship.

When troubles for him increase in the college, we see him sitting alone in the classroom, because despite everything, he envisions classroom as an emancipatory and soothing space. After Jo also fights with him and leaves, the classroom is suddenly empty and the board is now filled with “0”s as his notebook was in the beginning. This for him indicates the complete loss of meaning-making. (01:12:50-01:15:12) All human beings are gone and now it is just him and the spectre of his dog, Karuppi, inside the classroom that has failed him. (01:15:14-01:15:24)

#### **4.5 Students' resistance**

Lower caste students who are constantly disturbed and humiliated by the dominant caste people resist in subtle as well as overt ways. When people of Pariyan's community get to know that upper-class seniors and classmates are troubling him, they offer to confront them. Pariyan dissuades them, not wanting to choose that path. He chooses to fight within the class room, instead.

One of the first instances is when he doesn't understand what is being taught in class because it is in English. He gets up and asks the teacher to explain things in Tamil. But she takes offence, humiliates him saying if he doesn't understand he should leave the class. The rest all pretend to understand because they do not want to be humiliated in public. (00:22:03-00:22:28)

He is beaten up by men of the upper caste and he manages to escape without much harm. Two different sets of people from his own community offer to beat the fellows up. (01:36:30-01:41:20) But he chooses to fight within the classroom. He inscribes his name on the second bench in the classroom and sits there, a place that he has been denied all throughout his life. The upper caste students are now forced to sit in the last bench. Parallelly, the teacher is teaching “Constitution and Legal Position” (01:41:25-01:42:40)

After his father is humiliated by the dominant caste men, he decides to kill them. His mother stops him, asking him to even drop college. At this point, he tells her that he won't drop out and would finish studying. He again chooses a different battleground to take on the dominant caste men.

But the dominant caste men don't let go. They target him several times and the last time we see it happen is when Pariyan is almost killed by an old man who claims to murder people to ensure the caste setup stays intact. He is laid on the railway tracks, bringing to mind the way Gokulraj's body was found on the tracks near Pallipalayam in 2015. Pariyan gets off the track, fortunately, again with the spectre of Karuppi there when he needs her the most. A few minutes from then, when Jo's father and his relatives try to kill him, he hits them all, stands on the car and chastises him. He asserts that he will study as he likes and nobody can stop him. (02:20:10-02:22:24) We thus see the myriad ways in which he sticks to his identity as a student and asserts his voice.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The movie has been censured by a section of Dalit activists saying that the movie presents a benevolent approach to caste atrocities with Dalits being magnanimous and not as assertive, angry and perhaps as militant as required. (see Adhvaidha) Upper caste movie critics' response to this movie and contrasting response to more militant movies like *Kaalaa* and *Kabali*, does support this argument. But, it is not the upper caste people's responsibility or right to be the judge of who the “better” Dalit is, whose movies and politics are better. As an upper caste English teacher, I have only tried to understand what the movie makes the upper caste community deal with. As long as Upper caste people fail/refuse to realise the hegemony and oppression they propagate through these ways, they will continue to be impediments in the struggle against the Caste system.

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# The Politics of Choices and Selections:A Postcolonial Reading of Selection Day by Arvind Adiga

**Shyla Abraham**

## Abstract

Intrinsically integrated into the web of global capitalist economy, post – colonial Nations are never completely independent –both intellectually and culturally. Sovereignty and autonomy are mere euphemisms that help in diverting attention from the elitist nationalism and ideology that now hold sway over the decolonised states. In the era of consumerism and materialism, human enterprise and individuality are relegated to the back alleys of the society. Every fibre, every superstructure, every dogma that constitutes the essence of a Nation stands contaminated by neo colonist thought. Arvind Adiga, in his works has tried to explore the diverse dimensions of this corruption and has used the power of his words and works to engage with it. His work Selection Day ,a story that revolves around two boys and their father's dream of using Cricket , a direct import from the colonial past and in the words of the writer himself—"game that has become the spearhead of the new Indian capitalism" to bail himself out of poverty .Adiga traces the fall out of such an enterprise which leaves the two boys scarred by the expectations and gruelling discipline they were subjected to and which robs them of their childhood and makes them unfit to accept the vicissitudes and reality of life to the extent of not being able to align or comprehend even their sexual and personal identities. The paper attempts to evaluate the farreaching repercussions of such a commodification of childhood and human intellect on the society at large through a close reading of the text.

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## Post colonialism and the Indian Society

Post colonialism emerges in "an environment of institutional sanction for counternarratives... notwithstanding its potential for challenging the system, it ultimately participates in a system of selections and elisions that replicates the technologies of power it is charged with exposing" ("Marginally Off Center" 278).

India tryst with a new dawn of independence began in the year 1947. However her engagement with colonial ideologies and elitism continues to this day. The colonialists left the Nation deeply entrenched in the mire of a global capital economy which further intensified in the 1990s with her foray into the neo liberal economic market sinking her deeper into a capitalist, consumerist and subsequently a neo colonial society totally subjugated by the hegemony of the materialistic forces of a capitalist philosophy that coloured all the superstructures of the society. The sentiment of Nationalism and the subsequent growth of the nation became infused with the elitist attitudes having roots in these materialist and consumerist dogmas.

The Cambridge historian Anil Seal, whose 1968 Emergence of Indian Nationalism described nationalism as the work of a tiny elite reared in the educational institutions that the British set up in India.

This elite, as Seal put it, both "competed and collaborated" with the British in their search for power and privilege

Thus with the country taking on elitist overtones, the society began a pattern of development –both in terms of culture, which may be defined as the standardised and transmitted patterns of thought and action, which are common to a given population ( Individuation in Indian Society: From Collective Identity to Individual Identity: Victor S. D'Souza Source: Sociological Bulletin, Vol. 55, No. 2 (May-August 2006), pp. 281-299) and in terms of a free market and neo liberal economic policy ,which turned the Indian society to a completely lopsided and asymmetrical entity. Corruption which is begot by a capitalist outlook began to rule the roost .In such a scenario ,the political administration slowly but surely turns into an oligarchy with fascist leanings and the country begins to lean towards a situation where in the business tycoons and Multinational corporates take over the entire nation leaving the society divided sharply into the haves and the have-nots .Unemployment ,breakdown of the domestic market ,erosion of moral values ,consumerism and elitism ,communalism and fanaticism coupled with radical polarisation –all by products of a western neo-colonial hegemonic ideology is fast threatening to overwhelm the cultural milieu of the Nation. .... This violence-laced tendency to abridge the public space essential for the staging of new experimental creations of the human mind and spirit from which society may select the genes for its future advancement, are ill portents and have serious implications to sustaining the cultural integrity of India (Growing Culture Deficit of Contemporary Indian Society, Vinod K. Gaur Source: Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 44, No. 21 (May 23 - 29, 2009), pp. 1518)

## **2. Arvind Adiga and Selection Day**

Adiga a novelist par excellence has sought to ponder over these inequities and inequalities that has defaced the cultural ethos of the nation through his writings. The winner of the prestigious Booker prize for his debut novel The White Tiger has in his next novel Selection Day and subsequent works continued to dabble in and debate these issues by ripping open the underbelly of the Nation's societal ethos to expose the corruption and callousness that lie underneath the glamour of projected GDP growth or India's inclusion in the elitist hub of the world. Selection Day chronicles the life of two young migrant boys chaperoned by an overambitious father who leaves no stone unturned to convert them into cricket champions because he sees a way out of poverty and a life of obscurity in cricket .In the words of Adiga himself, "There's always been a fair amount of money involved in cricket in India. But what has happened in the last two decades is that, ironically, this game that in some ways began in England and was, if you will, an aristocratic backlash against emergent industrial capitalism – that game has become the spearhead of the new Indian capitalism, in the sense that cricket is used to sell everything here, from mobile phones to consumer products like shampoo and soap." But as in the case of any capitalist and consumerist venture, the money comes at the cost of human lives and dignity of survival .Both the boys end up as failures –in life and in the game.

## **3. Locating the Individual in the Educational Context**

"If you are planning for a year, grow rice and vegetables;

If you are planning for decades, grow trees.

But, if you are planning for centuries, educate children."-A Chinese Proverb

Education is an enabling attitude that helps in the growth of not only the individual but also serves as human capital that invests in the all-round growth of the Nation. Jandhyala Viswanath, K. L. N. Reddy and Vishwanath Pandit in their seminal study on Human Capital Contributions to Economic Growth in India: An Aggregate Production Function Analysis very clearly state that ".....Education not only imparts knowledge but also changes people's perceptions and expectations of themselves and the society around them." Studies after studies by eminent economists (. Lucas (1988), Romer (1990), Barro (1991)) have very categorically stated the importance of education as a contributor to the growth of the country. However the

sad fact remains that this important sector which is instrumental in laying the foundations of an upright and self-sufficient ecology in the society has fallen prey to the demons of consumerism and elitism. "India has 3 times more schools than China ,but not translating into better education"(TOI,dt.March30,2019) .The report based on the study done by NITI Aayog further goes on to elaborate... "Curriculum lacks relevancy, particularly at the secondary level..." Further the report also throws light on the systemic failure of the Indian administrative and bureaucratic organisation that are in charge of improving the quality of education in the Nation looks into increasing numbers to alleviate issues that hinder the spread of education in the Nation instead of improving the infrastructure or the looking into the recruitment of quality and dedicated facilitators. The drawbacks and inconsistencies that form the core of the educational system stem from the fact that education is fast turning into a commercial and business enterprise that tends to commodify and use the students as products that would rake in money to fill the coffers of the capitalists –it is a common practice for industrialists to foray into the field in anticipation and expectations of huge profits.

.....neo-liberal economic reforms have seen an expansion in the role of the private sector in education. Many of the recent initiatives in policy reforms mark a transition in the history of higher education in independent India - from a system embedded in welfare statism to a system partially based on quasi market principles and finally to a system based on a neo-liberal market philosophy...(Higher Education Policy in India in Transition Jandhyala B G Tilak Source: Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 47, No. 13 (MARCH 31, 2012), pp. 36-40)

With the rapidly increasing commercialisation and commodification of education, the sad fact remains that talents and aptitudes of learners remain untapped forcing learners to take a beaten path or profession that is designated by the society as being “elite”.

...I wanted to be writer.... I wanted to write a great novel about Mumbai.... the principal said, playing with her glasses,(page-84.Selection Day)

However, this trend has a definitive debilitating effect on the psyche of a learner. With the ideology of elitism creeping into the sector, education tends to break the confidence and self concept of the child rather than build it up .English medium schools following the tenets of the Macaulian tradition of “creating a group of Indians, Indian in blood and colour but British in spirit” churn out graduates “who are elitist in attitudes and demeanour and capitalist in principles”-people who see education as a stepping stone to creating a better materialistic lifestyle and a ladder to economic progress rather than a means of improving and inculcating

social and human values. Such situations warrant a dangerous trend which tend to be accelerated and propelled by societal, parental and institutional pressure wherein human potential and human talents get sacrificed on the altar of populism and materialism.

In this context, Education and the system therein has a seminal influence on the way a student conceptualises his or her identity which in the long run can be have negating influence on his productive ability. Identity organises the experiences of the mind and empowers humans to view themselves as objects and to develop self-feelings and attitudes toward themselves and create a niche or space for themselves which helps them grow as individuals and contribute to the society.

Both Radha and Manju were extremely talented cricketers but totally eclipsed from the realities of life and were teenagers who could not see anything beyond winning in the sport –a concept which they internalised due to the indoctrination by the father and like horses with blinkers move along in the path or the role they are expected to perform Even though, Manju shows great interest in being a scientist and in studying wildlife too – his father dissuades him from exploring his potential since he is very much aware that such a passion will not beget much money since it is not a mainstream profession .Cricket on the other hand gives a person a sure-fire way to instant fame and money . It is a way out for the people coming from poor backgrounds to alleviate their status in life –thanks to the commercialisation of the game and the great popularity wielded by the new business venture in cricket-the IPL or the Indian Premier League wherein big corporate houses and business tycoons buy cricketers paying a huge amount in return for the marketing rights. Adiga calls attention to the fact that in today’s society, Education and qualifications merely quantify a person’s profile rather than his persona.

“.... Every cricketer in Tamil Nadu has a degree in engineering....so let’s go to America for college Cricket in the postcolonial Society

With money and business becoming irrevocably tangled with the cricket, which is after all a mere game, the sport itself has been invented and reinvented to cater to populist demands. One day matches, the twenty-twenty game, formation of leagues with huge investments and sponsorships-all turn the game into a lucrative business enterprise and as with any business is a “filtration system that sucks in strong wrists, quick reflexes and supple limbs from every part of the city, channels them through school teams, club championships and friendly matches for

years and years, and then one sudden morning pours them out into an open field where two or maybe three new players will be picked for the Mumbai Ranji Trophy team.”

Adiga dwells on the fall out of such a venture –the toll it takes on the psyche of the children-they are made to train hard and long,at the expense of their childhood and dreams. Even though both Radha and Manjunath were prodigies, they were not allowed to explore their individual identities and are forced to follow the mandates and live up to the expectations of the pushy father, ambitious talent scout (Tommy Sir) or avaricious sponsors(Anand Mehta). They were always under constant pressure to excel.

The situation gets compounded if they fail to live up to these expectations or even buckle under pressure. The failures or the players who can’t make it to the team are discarded and labelled as useless commodities. This attitude can have devastating effect on the players – Radha tried to murder Deennawaz, the player who had made the cut and got selected to the Under-19 team.His dream shattered, the boy ended up a near vagabond living off his brother,. Manju on the other hand gave up his dreams of becoming a scientist and suppressed his homosexuality and turned into a coach after playing as a non-celebrity in a celebrity team.

Javed another aspiring and equally talented cricketer could afford not be a slave to such emotional debauchery being born into a rich family-it is the poor who find themselves in cages, but he too lost his direction and focus in life.

#### **4. The Game of Education**

The menace of pressurising the teenagers to excel either in cricket or in academics has a debilitating effect on the psyche of the youngsters-those unable to make the mark are left out in negative spaces bereft of any agency or avenues to channelize their fears and frustrations leaving them exposed to violent and volatile reactions. While Manju ran away on the day of the Selections, his brother tried to murder the boy who outplayed him-both of them finally ending up lost in the streets with little or no contact with their father .Adiga laments that success in today's world is defined in terms of the money that a person makes "Without understanding what capitalism means, we've vaulted straight to post-capitalist decadence".

#### **5. Conclusion**

"Progress often turns out to be a glaring inequality, rationality becomes selfishness and the pursuit of self-interest, and individualism comes to mean unbridled greed."(Sudhir Kakkar)

The novel Selection Day explores the politics of new India's quest for freedom and progress through the various "Selections" that she makes in her effort to reach the goal -be it fiddling with the cultural ethos ,migration to cities in search for social progress, adopting the language and educational choices of the West, overlooking tradition and the reality of the plurality that is India-Adiga critiques these developments through his portrayal of Mohan Kumar , migrant from "the poorest end of a poor taluk," failed husband, unsuccessful chutney salesman and father to teenage cricket prodigies Radha and Manju who embodies the moral and cultural debacle of the modern Neo colonial society. The delusional nature of the world bereft of the presence of women, love, humanity and driven by conniving and unscrupulous men who could even gamble with their scruples and relations to achieve their selfish targets make up for the essence of the modern society. ....Mohan Kumar had smirked "We are no more unmanacled than that elephant....Here, we can't even see our chains."(Selection Day ..page32)

...You could hear it already ,the whispering and the bargaining, the lies and corruption: it has just begun, and before the sun rises again, India will be sold and India will be bought ,many, many times over. Tommy Sir could smell, shit in the night air...(Selection Day,page139)

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# Vidheyen - A Study of Dominance and Subservience

**Mrinalini Ranjan**

## Abstract

Low caste people are categorized as slaves and they were denied all their rights. They lived for their masters by forgetting their lives and identity. Here an attempt has been made to analyse Adoor gopalakrishnan's film Vidheyen and Pondan mada as a voice against the oppression. The character, a loyal and obedient slave Thommi had been made under the master Baskara Pattelar and not been treated as a human. We see his suppressed emotion and vulnerability. The film Vidheyen is an adaptation of Zacharia's novella 'Baskara Pattelarum Ende Jeevithavum'.

### Keywords:

Feudal Violence,  
Suppression,  
Backward Class,  
Marginalized,  
Slave

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### 1. Introduction

The 'Baskara Pattelarum Ente Jeevithavum', a novella by Malayalam writer Zacharia is the basis for Adoor Gopalakrishnan's, 1993 Malayalam film Vidheyen. The theme of the film itself is the power and domination which the master (played by Mammootty) shows upon his slave Thommi. The plot gives the idea that how the landlords at that time treated his slaves. Thommi is a Christian migrant from Wayanad, who migrated to Karnataka and where he becomes the slave of Baskara Pattelar, a cruel, dominant, narrow minded, selfish, aggressive landlord.

The story of Zacharia is narrated by the slave Thommi, where he describes from the very first moment he saw his master Pattelar. In the opening scene itself we are introduced to the master where he insults and mocks Thommy, by calling him dirty words, and where he pulls him down and spits paan on his face. From there itself we can see the tyrannical attitude in Pattelar's behaviour. Pattelar has decided to make him his slave and frightens Thommy by showing his gun and power. There are some people around Pattelar for supporting all his cruel deeds and laughs at whatever he does.

The first day itself Pattelar shows his true colour by raping Thommi's young beautiful wife and treating Thommi like a dog. But, Thommi though he is not literate or powerful, he is not ready to accept the cruelty of Pattelar. Even though he is a slave he is intelligent, that is why he answered to Pattelar's question that his wife was not beautiful. Though he has a slave mentality, he does not like his wife being assaulted. That is why when seeing his wife cry he burned with anger and says that he will kill Pattelar. Even if he is a slave, a poor, backward class, marginalised man he had his own pride and self respect. Just like all other men he wanted to look after his wife, he loved his wife he wanted to keep her dignified. But slowly unknowingly he was obeying his master. He felt very happy and honoured when Pattelar gave him a job at the toddy shop and gave Thommi and his wife new dresses.

Here Thommi had to accept his fate. In the beginning we can see that Thommy didn't like Pattelar's tyranny but slowly Thommy surrendered to Pattelar, because for Thommy Pattelar becomes both his saviour and devil at the same time. Even if Thommy wanted to avenge the dishonour happened to his wife, because

of the need to survive, he had to keep quiet. Slowly Thommy becomes Pattelar's slave and had to be a part of all the crimes Pattelar committed.

If we look at Pattelar's life style also we can see that he has a beautiful loving wife. She criticised Pattelar and she was not happy in his actions. She scolds at him in a situation where he misbehaves with another woman. Pattelar was fed up with her caring and controlling behaviour. Whatever crimes this satanic Pattelar does, deep inside his soul he was somewhere afraid of his wife Saroja, or he loved his wife. That is why when he wanted to kill his wife, he says that she should never understand that it was he who killed her. She shouldn't die with that pain in her heart. When finally one day he killed her using a towel and stopped her breadth, we can see the psychological problems that this satanic heart had. He was continuously asking Thommy that whether she was able to understand who killed her, because at that moment she held his hands. Then Pattelar is followed by his guilty mind. He again and again asks Thommy that if she recognised him.

This was the only situation or incident where we can find a small heart this devil like figure has. That it was the situation or circumstances which made him a bad man, the company which he had, where they gave him toddy and women and tempted him to do all the crimes. Because in the film there is a communication between two men that Pattelar was damaged by their people itself, that he was a good man at first. There are incidents that the people who are with Pattelar are motivating him to misbehave with women when Pattelar thinks it might be a problem. So the people around him are exploiting his weaknesses in abusing women and having toddy.

Pattelar's feudal violence is revealed when some people gathered in front of his house. He was sitting just like a landlord and giving orders. He was commanding and when he got angry he violently attacks the man. In another incident when Thommy's friend comes in search of his brother Pattelar disrespectfully treats him and cruelly beats him. This is the best example of bourgeois attitude in his behaviour.

Thommy's relationship with Saroja – Pattelar's wife is a peaceful. Thommy has great love and respect towards his Saroja's akka. Saroja Thommy and Omana – all of them are victims of Pattelar's cruelty. When Pattelar tries to kill Saroja, and when he misfires and get hit to Thommy, Thommy feels happy that Saroja akka was spared. When hospitalised he dreams that he was sleeping in the laps of Sarojakka. Pattelar suppressed all these people around him. His relationship with his wife is also cold. But when she was killed Pattelar was just behaving like a psycho. He had some psychological problems just like Lady Macbeth, in the Shakespeare's famous play Macbeth had. Some kind of fear and guilt was following him.

This is the story of an obedient slave who blindly trusts his master and obeys and whatever his master commanded. Baskara Pattelar the cruellest and most selfish tyrannical landlord shamelessly approaches all ladies including Thommi's wife. Pattelar was becoming a curse to the society. He is sinner than sin. Thommy a symbol of marginalised, suppressed, his illiteracy leads him to become a slave of his master. It is only in the climax that both of them become equals. In the forest both of them dress same have food from the same leaf, same food, there pattelar had to see him as his part. When Pattelar got killed at first Thommy was confused and cries, even if he helped others to kill Pattelar. But then he feels free from all bondage of oppression. Pattelar and Thommy are two sides of dominance and subservience.

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## Dislocation of Life and Nature in *Marakkappile Theyyangal*

Aardra V.S.

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### Abstract

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*Marakkappile Theyyangal* is a Malayalam novel by Dr Ambikasuthan Mangadu who is noted for his environmental and social concerns. Set against the backdrop of globalization, the novel portrays the struggles of both humans and nature when they fall victims to the cultural and social encroachment upon their physical and mental realities. The novel reiterates the need to preserve a harmonious bonding between man and nature against the capitalist cravings and desires. Umbichi, the female protagonist of the novel becomes symbolic of the nature itself when she is being subjected to exploitation and subjugation. The present paper is an attempt to analyze how colonial capitalism marginalizes the people of the third world countries and culturally demarcates them as the 'other' and sensitize the issues emanate from this.

**Keywords:**

Dislocation,  
Colonial capitalism,  
Power,  
Nature/Culture,  
Resistance.

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The world has witnessed the pangs of colonialism over the centuries. There were several colonizing countries like England, France, Spain, Portugal etc. but among them England was the largest imperial power which ruled the world literally. India too was once a colony of Britain till the attainment of freedom in 1947. Colonialism has left behind its traces on us and still we experience it though in a different form. We internalize some of its aspects without realizing that it may hamper our cultural psyche and we fall victims to the neocolonialism. *Marakkappile Theyyangal* by Dr Ambikasuthan Mangadu is a novel that portrays the coming back of colonialism to our land and how the people are culturally effaced.

Dr Ambikasuthan Mangadu is a notable Malayalam writer who has always shown his environmental concerns and social commitment through his works. He is a renowned environmental activist too. *Enmakaje*, *Marakkappile Theyyangal*, *Randu Mudra*, *C.P.Achyuthamnenonum Malayalavimarsanavum* etc. are some of his famous works. *Enmakaje*, translated into English by J.Devika as *Swarga* played a pivotal role in bringing the Endosulfan issue before the public. *Marakkappile Theyyangal* is his first novel which talks about the life of the fishermen community and how tourism takes its toll upon them.

The novel opens with the coming of Krishnan Kutty to Mrakkappu coastal region to know more about the death of his friend Lawrence which he suspects as a murder. The reader understands that Lawrence is an environmental activist who raises his voice against the exploitation of the land under the name of tourism. The novel unfolds the other characters - humans, gods and dead. The central figure in the novel is Thamara, aka Umbichi, an orphan looked after by Ankichi whom she considers as her grandmother. She becomes a representative of the marginalized natives and many a time symbolic of nature itself. Among the human characters Nariyambadi, Kundaran, Kalyani, Mahima etc. lie in the bottom of the power structure being the marginalized class. Through the striking depiction of the godly characters like Kuttichathan theyyam, Brahmarakshassu, Ankichi (who is dead and has become a theyyam) etc. the author speaks volumes about the displacement brought by neocolonialism. These gods are portrayed as roaming around since they are evicted from their natural abode. The novel also presents an array of characters like Kindithottam Pathmalochanan,

Manmohan, Vasudevan, Giridharan and Lohithakshan, the representatives of bureaucracy and politics, who work according to their capitalist ideology and are the neocolonialists and centres of power.

Umbichi's struggle for existence shows the extent to which she is made a subject though she resists it throughout. She is depicted as bold and beautiful unwilling to submit herself to the changing norms. She is even ready to act against the interest of the village court by giving shelter to the foreigners who are looted by the villagers. When she is summoned before the court she boldly faces all the questions. She says, "I can't expel those helpless people. My grandmother didn't teach me that. If it's wrong before the eyes of the court I can be expelled"(55). Through the convincing answers she puts down Kalyani's insistence on her expulsion from Marakkappu. She faces all the setbacks in her life like the demise of her husband Alanthan on the third day of their marriage and the death of Ankichi following that. When there is a threat to her survival at Marakkappu she seeks the help of Lohithakshan, the land assignment officer for getting the title of land. More than her existence she is worried about what may happen to the Gods who reside in her place. She cleverly evades the propositions of Lohithakshan to sleep with him but bribes him for the title of the land. She falls victim to the plot of Lohithakshan and team ( Kindithottam Pathmalochan, collector Manmohan, tehzildar Vasudevan , Managing director of tourism development corporation Giridharan )and is gang raped by them. The rape of Umbichi is symbolic of the encroachment of the land by the imperial powers. Lohithakshan who loots Umbichi and fools her by not giving the title which is indicative of the exploitation the marginalized class faces under imperialism.

Right from the beginning of the novel the name that one hears is Lawrence. Though he doesn't appear as a full-length character in the novel, his presence is felt throughout the novel. His was the voice first raised against the cultural invasion of the land but he was silenced by the invaders. The name of Pokkiliyan, a freedom fighter, is also referred to in the novel. Like Lawrence he also doesn't make a direct appearance. What we know of Pokkiliyan is through the words of Krishnan Kutty and Umbichi because Pokkiliyan doesn't speak to anyone and he is in his mysterious shelter and never comes out. It is said that Pokkiliyan was a true patriot and devotee of Gandhiji and joined hands with the freedom struggle movement. After independence nobody is concerned about Pokkiliyan and he fails to get adapted to the changing political scenario where people like Kindithottam come to the forefront. Kindithottam is crazy for power and ready to loot the land for his material benefits. He stops speaking and gradually gets erased out of the memory of people. The people treat him as dead and give him food during the *srardham* (paying homage to the dead). The silence of Lawrence and Pokkiliyan speaks volumes about the troubled time going to be experienced by the natives of Marakkappu.

The novel uses many myths and cultural symbols to reiterate the uniqueness of the place. The myths of Cheema who becomes Nangachoor Bhagavathi, Moovalamkuzhy Chamundi, Kuttichathan Theyyam etc. are presented which are part of the rich oral tradition of the land and they all point to the victory of the downtrodden over the upper class. The holy wooden board that Umbichi gets from the sea (significant due to the divine presence of theyyams in it) is used as a strong cultural symbol which she preserves till the end risking her life. The Kamballoor fort which stands as an epitome of culture and history now witnesses the cultural conflicts and rootlessness. The excavator that destroys the houses at Marakkappu is nothing but the clutches of the imperial powers that put the lives at stake. One is reminded of Oodgeroo Noonuccal's poem 'We are Going' when the novelist presents how the people are evicted from their native land. Like the bora ground of the aborigines, their places of worship are polluted with food and plastic wastes. With the erection of five star hotels, ayurvedic beach resorts, massage parlors etc. the colonial powers make a come back to the land. The agony of the people who are made strangers in their own land have to submit themselves to those who are in power and are forced to opt a new place which is imposed on them. The people those who are unable to witness this cultural encroachment go insane like Bhojan Velichappadu who finally goes for self penance. Kandothi Ayathar , an agent of God leaves the place as directed by the government.

The gods are also not exempted from the effacement which is evident throughout the narrative. Kuttichathan theyyam, Brahmarakshassu and Ankichi share their anxiety about the dislocation many a time. Seeing the ravages caused by men on Kamballoor fort Kuttichathan theyyam says, "This land belongs to me too" (14). They are worried about where they would go once the land is fully taken over by the tourists and the representatives of the government. They are annoyed by the springing up of five star hotels and resorts lighted with neon bulbs which keep the night out of Marakkappu. They have life (?) only at night and that too is going to be taken away from them.

Marakkappu is described as the land of the dead too in the beginning of the novel. The plight of the natives is implied through this in advance since they are going to join the league of the dead once they are physically and mentally displaced. The suicide of Umbichi by taking revenge upon Lohithakshan gives her a heroic halo. But the reader along with the narrator is perplexed to see Umbichi in her new avatar as a model of the newly built Ayurvedic beach resort at Marakkappu. The reincarnation of Umbichi as a spokesperson to

capitalism and the vested interest of the people who support it is connotative of the struggle for existence by succumbing one's true self. The ending of the novel also points to the cultural dilemma experienced by the natives of Marakkappu. As intended by the bureaucrats and politicians tourism flourishes in Marakkappu and they are in search of the new ways through which more tourists can be attracted to the place. Hence, they decide to set up a stage show where Kerala folk art forms are presented before the tourists. Theyyam becomes one in the list and is going to get performed for the tourists and it is the Kuttichathan theyyam. This metaphorically depicts the decline of this ritualistic art form which has now become a product that is in the global market for money. The theyyam performers belong to two different generations – one who performs it is the representative of the new generation and one who sings the *thottam* (the vocal ballad sung before the commencement of theyyam) belongs to the old generation. It is the singer who bursts out and whose eyes are welled when he has to sing the *thottam* through the microphone and it is apparent that this doesn't make any difference to the young man. The young man seems to have internalized the ways of the present and gets ready for the performance in a mechanical way whereas the old man finds it hard to cope with the changing circumstances where he mourns over his plight which forces him to sell what he worshipped over the years.

The novel can rightly be taken as an example of resistance literature where majority of the characters speak about their struggle for existence and how their lives have been spoiled by the cultural imperialists. Dr Ambikasuthan Mangadu acts as the spokesperson for the marginalized sections of the society by focusing on their cultural dilemmas and conflicts and making the people aware of the invisible shackles of neocolonialism. The novel warns us not to submit ourselves to all that is western by putting all that is ours into oblivion. One of the biggest threats that the world faces today is the standardization of culture which always proclaims the superiority of the west by belittling the east. Though the centre has lost its centrality it always attempts to regain it. So resistances should be offered through different art forms and literature which may make the people aware of the troubled times and this novel undoubtedly does that.

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# Polymorphic resistance in Michael Ondaatje's The English Patient

KavithaM.

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## Abstract (12pt)

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Micheal Ondaatje's in his remarkable Man Booker Award won work *The English Patient*, articulated resistance against oppressions, which are formed, structured, labeled by particular groups to maintain the ego of supremacy. These separations and oppressions are entangled with each another and accomplished directly or indirectly, forcibly or made to accept by normalizing ingeniously. Ondaatje all the way through in his literary work, resisted against War, apartheid, gender disparity, identity, sorting out lives by means of geographical border.

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### **Keywords:**

Separations and Oppressions,  
Apartheid,  
Gender Disparity,  
Identity,  
Geographical Border.

Ondaatje strongly opposed geographical separation, which caused rivalry to establish power and hierarchy. Ondaatje breaks stereotypical representation of white as superior and black in subside position. protagonist of the novel, which was in black due to excessive burn from the plane crash, took the reader's attention. Indian Sikh, a sapper who lead the white men team to dissolve the live Bomb, to be address as 'Sir' by white subordinates. The female character Hana represented against clichéd as reliant, she was the one stayed back in bombed Villa, looked after the burned man.

In this Paper, I would like to explore Micheal Ondaatje's resistance against multiple differences established and trying to normalize even in post colonial and post modern era.

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### **Introduction:**

There is a lot of scholarship associated with Micheal Ondaatje's many perspectives in multifocal works. In this paper I would like to address, how the Ondaatje resisted against manifold unwanted practices, not notwithstanding, but sharply. Ondaatje being lover of humanity, than any particular identity form of religion or country, or creed, elucidates sufferings from the various oppressions. Ondaatje stand firm against systematic, well planed difference, violence and oppression in various degree and combat against in non violent method. His chief focuses on psychological and physical war due to this discrepancy and reciprocated love and compassion by subjects and borderless life are medication for conquer over it.

### **War Free world:**

Firstly, he opposed the war which is transgressing geographical territories. Most of the time war shattered lives physically and mentally, challenges the subject to reshape their physical and mental set up according to the new system thrown by the war. It, through creating polarity and binaries amongst the border, differences the individual identity than global identity to human. It gives contradictory subject position. War triggered forcible invasion and genocide. It is some time it is wish out of the subject, but of political interest. Here in the novel The English patient, due to the war lost their identity and reconstructing past and present. All the four major characters, Hana, Kip, Caravaggio and Almasy i.e The English patient, have displaced in one another reasons due to war. The abandoned Villa, where all four met together, is metaphor of abandonment of life, shattered by war. Nationality and National border, geographical maps caused this war. Even after I world war and there was a cold war between East and West, which resulted in II world war. And Eurocentrism had not completely shed off its psychological urge to reach crest of power. In the novel,

Ondaatje picturised loss of, identity, youth, lives, loved ones, innocence, honor and selves due to unwanted war.

Ondaatje denies the idea of nationality which causes most of the differences and war between subjects. Due to this geographical border, identities of a subject who migrated, or entered another country struggle to go with his own self. Due to this spatial war brought changes in man, created internal and external war. "There is God only in the desert; he wanted to acknowledge that now. Outside of this there was just trade and power, money and war. Financial and military despots shaped the world." (Pg 265). Srilanka born Ondaatje know the painful experiences of war and its influences on personal life and public life. He is arguing that it is all because of feudalism. "The feuds of the world" ( Pg 230) . He visioned that the migration from place to place gives self sufficiency. But the War is curbing that the Global Village concept and developing wider perspective of global citizenship.

Ondaatje visioned that love is panacea for hatredness and love of power. All these four character symbolically indicates that their desire for live and love made them back to life. Hana's daughterly love on Almassy, Caravaggios's concern and care for Hana, Hana and Kips love made them all alive even in the feeble villa. Ondaatje opined that along with love and compassion words have power to made humans look up from war ridden mind. Hana used book to support damaged stairs to go up from hall.

When the novel open, there was uncertain about who all are, because of the war lost their identities. "Who are you? I don't know. You keep asking me." (Pg 5). But through the further narration of Ondatje, we come to know in another way in hopes of life. Unfortunately Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki shattered faith of Kip to stay back and serve for foreign country made him to feel for homeland.

#### **Gender representation:**

"An analysis of the relationships among the male and female characters in Ondaatje's works can be useful in providing a sensitive measure of the changing structures of power and meaning in his work."<sup>\*</sup>

Ondaatje presented Hana, the major female character in the novel as a determined, independent war survival character. Though she was separated from parents, she never emotionally longed for their parents as pampered, protected girl. She is the woman who blossomed out of the war and its effects on her personal life instead of wilt. Out of her personal loss, i.e, she lost her lover and got aborted her baby but never forgets her professional, ethical urges to treat patients as much care as their family members by addressing dying and injured soldiers as Buddy, instead of frightened. Hana was stronger character than other male characters, those who suffered for what they have lost. But, Hana loved her present life though she lost significant characters in life. She admired her nursing profession and considered Almasy as saint and, she as worshipper. "He is a saint. I think. A despairing saint. Are there such things? Our desire is to protect them." (Pg47)

Hana was bit contradictory in compared with usual expectation of female characters, she being a woman of great charm and gorgeous beauty. She cut off her beautiful hair, and removed all the mirrors in the abandoned villa, not to be conscious about her physical appearance. "When she woke , she picked up a pair of scissors out of the porcelain bowl, leaned over and began to cut her hair, not concerned with shape or length, just cutting it away the irritation of its presence during the previous days still in her mind –when she had bent forward and her hair had touched blood in wound."<sup>†</sup> She, rejected of women predestined just as reproductive machine, aborted her unborn baby, because she had lost her lover and in practical not physically and mentally ready to accept that responsibility.

It is felt unusual describing an exotic way of kip's body by Hana, the female character. "[Kip] seems unconsciously in love with his body, with his physicalness, bending over to pick up a slice of bread, his knuckles brushing the grass, even twirling the rifle absentmindedly like a huge mace as he walks along the path of cypresses to meet the other sappers in the village"<sup>‡</sup>. While, Hana ignored her physical appearances, Kip was very conscious of it. Hana was impressed with his long silky like hair.

The male and female character are interchanged from, usually expected characterization. Where Almassy is dependent, Hana is protector as well as bread winner. Even Caravaggio has led his life due to see Hana. Otherwise he would have perished his aimless life after losing his hands in spying for his country on war time. "A man she knew had come all the way by train and walked the four miles uphill from the village and along the hall to this table just to see her." (Pg33)

<sup>\*</sup>Ellis, Susan. "Trade and power, money and war: rethinking masculinity in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* 21.2 (1996).

<sup>†</sup> Ondaatje. Micheal. *The English Patient*, Bloomsbury Publishing. 1992. Pg52.

<sup>‡</sup> Ondaatje. Micheal. *The English Patient*, Bloomsbury Publishing. 1992. Pg79

### **Resistance against apartheid:**

Eurocentrism has been opposed, but not very feral and direct manner. The dominant character of the fiction, Almassy/The English Patient, who is black in color due to severe burns, ruled out the myth about color prejudice in fiction. Ondaatje in polite manner opposed all the way through reconstructing character to break the archetypal expectation of portrayal and tags seized with name, place, and culture. I found, in Ondaatje's work that is mostly about resisting the Eurocentric view of the world, while that it focusing on human relationships and human flexibility when it is matter life. Ondaatje combat against the single identity, which have been tagged with the particular group. "There were rivers of desert tribes, the most beautiful humans I've met in my life. We were German, English, Hungarian, and African-all of us insignificant to them. Gradually we became nation less. I came to hate nations. We are deformed By nation-states." (Pg147).

Individual self has not been existed in schism world . Because polarization has recreated individual in connected with presupposition in mind one has carved one's individuality in collectively through random collection of relationships, names, body image, memories, stereotypes and imaginations.

Kip, or Kirpal Singh, is Indian sapper in the British military. He was mentored by Lord Suffolk and skilled in defusing bombs and saving lives of colonizers of his country. But he had never been comfortable and deep down with his race. For Instance Caravaggio was displeased the way he was humming existing western music. Also Caravaggio thinks, he is too fussy that he washes hands. "He is always washing his hands. Caravaggio at first thinks he is too fussy. 'How did you get through a war?' Caravaggio laughs." (Pg 81)

Kip is a person who has grown self sufficient, to all of them in the Villa. But Eurocentric partiality left in trauma of identity. Though, kip Joined British Army out of his brother will, his ambition was getting shattered by the casting of unseen ill-treatment of him.

Kip, called by the colleagues, instead of his full name Kirpal singh. Earlier he was assumed that it was his nickname. "The sapper's nickname is Kip. 'Get kip'. 'Here comes kip.' The name had attached itself to him curiously. In his first bomb disposal report in England some butter had marked his paper, and the officer had exclaimed, 'What is this? Kipper grease?' and laughter surrounded him. He had no idea what a kipper was, but the Young Sikh had been there by translated in to a salty English fish." (Pg 93-94). It is the remarks out from the 'othernesses' of other race or non Europeans. Here kip's service is not much matter in recognition, than his origin.

"This internal process could be considered to be affected by ideologies. An ideology, according to Louis Althusser, is a 'system of representations' (1971). This system underpins our social and cultural life and mediates between people and their relationship to society as well as their social identities. These representations operate at the level of unconscious desires as well as through an individual's rationality. To explain the process of interpellation, by which people are hailed as a particular subject, Althusser uses the example of a policeman, teacher or priest calling to a person on the street 'Hey you!' As the person turns around, they have become the subject. This hailing takes place in reality at many levels (conscious as well as unconscious callings) and aligns them with specific identities or cultural roles. Ideology in this way constitutes the person's 'lived' relation to the real."<sup>8</sup>

Kip followed his master Shufolk , is expert in defusing bomb. He is self abnegated man. Never mind his life in saving others. But most of the time there was a hesitation by the soldiers to address him 'sir,' (Pg 225). Ondaatje address this issue of apartheid disguised in various forms even in this post colonial as well as post modern time. He called 'International Bastards', those are migrated to other place and never been considered such them as 'ours' by the migrated country. "Kip and I are both international bastards-born in one place and choosing to live elsewhere. Fighting to get back to or get away from our homelands all our lives." (Pg 188)

As in response to this separation, he was addressing the issue that nation and nationality forces to accept nationality and its structures willingly or forcibly. "All of us, even those with European homes and children in the distance, wished to remove the clothing of our countries. It was a place of faith. We disappeared into landscape. Fire and sand. We left the harbors of oasis....I didn't want my name against such beautiful names. Erase the family name! Erase nations! I was taught such things by the desert." (Pg 148)

<sup>8</sup>Spencer, Stephan. Race and Ethnicity. Routledge 2006. (03)

### **Conclusion:**

Ondaatje opposed unwanted wars, apartheid of color, gender. He resisted any disparities in his narration but gentle in manner. And he reconstructed his characters to support his views. By Making all four character survive in broken Villa, and making them reach back to life, Ondaatje succeeded in showing that love for others and life conquer all external ordeals beyond Geographical borders.

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# Voices of Resistance (Un) Heard: With Reference to Baby Kamble's The Prisons We Broke

**Shaiba A**

## **Abstract (12pt)**

History always has a darker side of exclusion. The excluded is always labelled as the ‘other’ and their voice never heard. But history does not always remain the same for the one categorised as the other, humiliated and oppressed is trying to create their own landmark in history resisting against hegemonic ideologies and practices. In India Dalit is one such marginalised group. Dalit women in particular are enduring double oppression and fighting hard to make their mark in the society. My paper is an attempt to bring forth the humiliation and discrimination against the dalit/dalit women in particular by analysing the work “The Prisons We Broke” by Baby Kamble.

**Keywords:**

Dalit Women,  
Other,  
Hegemony,  
Marginalised Group,  
Oppression.

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Indian society is based on the chathurvarnya system, where a hierarchical demarcation based on caste exists. This demarcation places Brahmins as the supreme head and Dalits as outcastes or the ‘other’. Dalits were segregated marginalised and existed only on the periphery of the Hindu society. The prevailing caste system has destroyed their very existence considering them as pollutants. They were treated as untouchables because they were born in the lower caste. They were denied education and basic rights and asked to live in separate colonies in the outskirts of the society.

Kamble’s autobiography *The Prisons We Broke* realistically depicts the agony and humiliations of the Mahar community. The lives of Mahars were no worse than animals. They were made to do all kinds of menial works and suffer all kinds of humiliations for the betterment of the life of their upper caste masters.

“We were just animals, but without tails. We could be called humans only because we had two legs instead of four. Otherwise there was no difference between us and animals.” (Kamble 49)

The Mahars lived on the stale and left over foods collected from the garbage pits. They dressed themselves in rags and were always dirty. They were not supposed to walk on roads used by upper castes. They live in dirt pits on the periphery of the village.

“Our place was in the garbage pits outside the village, where everyone threw away their wastes. That was where we lived, in our poor huts, amidst all the filths!” (Kamble 49).

It was due to lack of education that dalits remained ignorant and were not able to think of the causes of their slavery and degraded status. This lack of literacy and ignorance made them believe in superstitions, false beliefs and wicked religious practises. And this made them to follow all these evil practises with reverence and faith.

The conditions of Mahar dalit women were much worse. They were exploited by the upper caste Hindus for belonging to the lower caste, and were exploited by their own family members for being born as a woman. Kamble in her autobiography bring to the fore the saga and plight of the dalit women. As Maya Pandit states,

"She graphically describes the physical and psychological violence women have to undergo in both public and private space. If the Mahar community is 'other' for the Brahmins, Mahar women become the 'other' for the Mahar men." (Kamble xv)

Kamble portrays the pathetic life of the dalit women and the various restrictions imposed on their lives. The men considered that these restrictions have significance to the honour enjoyed by the family.

"When no one could see even a nail of the women thus confined within the four walls of the house, then this 'honour' became the talk of the town- a byword among the relatives and friends in the surrounding villages." (Kamble 5)

Thus the women were confined within the four walls of their house like a bird in the cage. They also had to work hard to make both ends meet. They had to struggle with their daily house hold chores and also collect fire woods from the forest and sell it to for their livelihood.

The Mahars were not allowed to enter the high caste community. But their entry to this community was possible through the sale of fire woods. They could not tread the regular road used by the higher castes. If they happened to see somebody from these caste walk along the road then they have to cover themselves fully and utter these words, "The humble Maher women fall at your feet master." (Kamble 52)

It was the newly wedded girls that suffered the most. If they didn't show due respect and failed to chant these words out of ignorance and awkwardness then the master would explode with rage. Later the young girls had to face the wrath of their 'sasra' and 'sasu' who would abuse them to their heart's content.

The Maher women lived a wretched, miserable and worthless live. They had no right to dress like an upper caste Hindu. They wore ragged saris in traditional way but had to abide to certain caste rules as how to tuck the pleats.

"Mahar women had to tuck them in such a way that the boarders remained hidden. Only high caste women had the privilege of wearing their saris in such a way that the boards could be seen." (Kamble 54)

The work of women increased when rituals had to be observed. They had to clean the entire house and plaster it with cow dung. All broken utensils and ragged clothes had to be washed and kept cleaned. These Maher women lead a very pathetic life in their husband's houses. They are brutally tortured by the 'sasu'. When the newly wedded bride arrived at her in-law's house she would be asked to prepare two baskets full of bhakris. These young girls of eight and nine years would not be able to pat the balls of dough in proper shapes not be able to put them on the hot tawa. It would be burnt in some places and remain uncooked. Then her in-law on seeing this would shower her anger on this young girl.

"Didn't you think that I'd brought the daughter of a good woman into my house? Look at the bhakris this slut has prepared. She can't even make a few bhakris properly. Oh well, what can one expect of this daughter of a dunce?" (Kamble 94)

The newly married young women suffered the most. Their life became unbearable and miserable due to their sasus. These young girls had no food to eat, no proper clothing to cover their bodies and their hair would remain dry uncombed and tangled due to lack of oil.

Kamble also presents instances in her autobiography of the exploitations that the Maher dalit women had to face from the dalit patriarchal forces. If they do not succumb to the norms of patriarchy then they have to face one of the worst forms of exploitation that is chopping of their nose.

The new young mothers were nursed and looked after by uneducated and untrained midwives. These young mothers had to endure severe pain and most often the mother's condition worsened at the time of delivery. Even after the delivery they were not able to satisfy their hunger. They were not provided with nutritious and hygienic food.

"Many new mothers had to go hungry. They would lie down, pining for a few morsels while hunger gnawed their insides. Most women suffered this fate." (Kamble 60)

Kamble says that the life of the women in the lower castes was shaped by the fire of calamities. These calamities made their bodies strong, but their mind cried out against this oppression.

The Maher dalit women had to undergo many ordeals in their life time and Kamble have evidently portrayed it in her work. These women suffered every torture silently for they knew that their cries or voices wouldn't be heard by any one. They didn't have shoulders to rely upon. It was because of the caste, gender and poverty that they were born into that they have endured all these humiliations.

## Tribal Literatures as Resistance Narratives: A Postcolonial Reading of *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*

Dr. Nazia Obed

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### **Abstract (12pt)**

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In the postcolonial context, resistance literatures mean literary texts produced by the colonized peoples that resist colonial authority. The term could be extended, however, to refer to literary texts that articulate the voices, concerns and protest of any marginalized group against the hegemony of the ruling classes. The tribal communities are among the most dispossessed and powerless subaltern classes in India. Their exploitation and oppression, which began during the colonial regime only intensified in the postcolonial period. The liberalization and globalization which opened up India's economy for global powers led to a mad race for resources like land, water, forest and minerals. An unholy nexus between the capitalists, landlords and the State forced the tribal people out of their land, depriving them of their homes, livelihood, cultural roots and identity. This violent displacement led to mass migration to cities, forcing them to live in slums and streets under extremely harsh conditions. Those who stayed behind are caught between the State and the insurgents. Moreover, there was a deep identity crisis and a sense of homelessness and betrayal among the tribal communities. As a consequence, the tribal movement for equality and justice gained momentum in the last century; the movement forged alliances with the other marginalized groups such as peasants, women, workers and Dalits. Though tribal resistance is mainly a political movement, it has a strong literary component. Tribal literatures not only offer an authentic representation of tribal cultures but also focus on the brutal exploitation and oppression of the tribal populations, and question state atrocity in the name of development. In fact tribal writings are known for their sharp political edge. Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar's *The Adivasi Will not Dance* is a text that poignantly represents the life and struggles of the Adivasis. It is a collection of ten short stories set in Jharkhand that portrays the life of the Santhals, a tribal group. The stories deal with a range of themes such as poverty, impact of mining and industrialization, exploitation, prostitution and social hierarchies. The paper attempts to analyse the strategies employed by the author to articulate the unheard and marginalized voices of the tribals and critique the State that has consistently failed to protect them.

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The Adivasis have been an integral part of the Indian civilization since pre-historic times and have contributed immensely to the rich cultural diversity of the country. In Sanskrit the term Adivasi means “the earliest inhabitants”. The Adivasis have been living in India since at least 2000 BCE, predating the Dravidians and the Aryans. The term “tribal” was devised by the British to refer to the indigenous Adivasi communities. The Indian constitution which recognizes about 700 tribes classifies the aboriginal people as “Scheduled Tribes”. As per the census of 2011, the Adivasis form about 8% of the total population and are spread unevenly throughout the subcontinent. A major chunk of the tribal population lives in the Eastern and North-Eastern belts. Geographical isolation, insularity, harmonious relationship with nature, traditional

knowledge systems, distinct lifestyle, language and culture have been some of the distinguishing features of the aboriginal people. However, in the last century, the centuries old lifestyle and cultural patterns of the Adivasis have been disrupted due to the intrusions of powerful and threatening external forces.

The oppression of the tribal people began during the colonial regime as the British colonizers wanted to exploit the rich natural wealth of the tribal lands. Moreover, the British had deeply ingrained prejudice against the tribal and other wandering communities, as they did not fit into their idea of ideal citizens. G. N. Davy says:

“In India we have learned to look down upon nomadic people because the colonial British did not approve of nomads. The colonial state viewed these communities as ‘criminal tribes’. Those who did not pay taxes to the state were worthy of suspicion, and therefore undesirable.” (12)

Unfortunately the post-colonial Indian State inherited the colonial attitude towards the Adivasis which led to further alienation and marginalization of these people. Since independence the State has been pursuing the policy of assimilation and undertaken several legislative measures to integrate them into the mainstream society. Devy further states that the motive behind the “civilizing mission” of the state, with its fixed notion of citizenship, is to give the citizens fixed addresses so that they could be effectively controlled. Illegal encroachment of huge tracts of tribal land, conversion of forest into farmland to grow commercial crops, poaching and industrialization led to forced displacement of millions of Adivasis from their traditional habitat and systematic erosion of their culture. Post 1990’s the liberalization and globalization policies which opened up India’s economy for global powers precipitated a mad race for resources like land, water, forest and minerals. An unholy nexus between the capitalists, landlords and the State drove the tribal people out of their land, depriving them of their homes, livelihood, cultural roots and identity. This violent dislocation led to mass migration to cities, forcing them to live in slums and streets under extremely harsh conditions, making them even more vulnerable to exploitation. Some tribal zones, especially in the North-East was devastated by insurgency. Those who stayed behind in tribal areas are caught between the State and insurgents, struggling with poverty, deprivation and unemployment.

Popular culture also constructs and circulates denigrating stereotypical images of the Adivasis purely based on assumptions, which are deeply imbedded in our collective consciousness. Interestingly, these images resonate with the European representation of the Orient during the high-colonial period. The relationship between the Adivasis and the mainland can be understood within the framework of Edward Said’s Orientalism. In his seminal text *Orientalism*, Said investigates the Western representations of the North African and Middle Eastern people in historical, anthropological, scientific and literary texts. He uses the word Orient to refer to these places, though in later postcolonial writings, it has been used for colonized peoples in general. In colonial discourses the Orient is represented as exotic, ignorant, naïve, uncivilized and barbaric, establishing an unequal dichotomy between the West and the East. These images, constructed from a position of superiority, are deeply implicated in power politics, and are part of the colonial strategy to dominate and control the natives. Scholars like Joy Pachau have extended this framework to examine the way India has engaged with the aboriginal people. In cultural and political narratives, the tribal people are typically depicted as simple, backward, mysterious and primitive who need to be modernized and integrated into mainstream society through State intervention.

Today, the aboriginal people are among the most powerless and dispossessed subaltern classes in India; they exist not only at the fringes of society but also our consciousness. Due to geographical distance and their distinctive cultures, most people are unaware of the plight of the Adivasis. An indifferent State, corrupt bureaucracy, and onslaught of the materialist forces, have only intensified their suffering and oppression in the last few decades. There is a profound identity crisis and sense of rootlessness and betrayal among the tribal communities. As a consequence, the tribal movement for equality and justice steadily gained momentum; the movement formed alliances with other marginalized groups such as peasants, women, workers and Dalits. Sadly the tribal regions have drawn attention mainly because of the political upheaval and insurgency. The nation is still ignorant about the pertinent socio-economic problems of the indigenous people. Though tribal resistance is mainly a political movement, it has a strong literary component. Tribal literatures, representing the diverse standpoints of the tribal population not only offer an authentic picture of Adivasi life but also focus on the brutal exploitation and persecution of the tribal inhabitants, and question State atrocity brazenly carried out in the name of development. In fact literature emerged as a powerful medium of articulating the unheard and suppressed voices of the tribal people.

Over the years, the Adivasi people in India produced a vast body of writings, as vibrant and diverse as their cultures. However these writings remained largely unknown not only because of geographical inaccessibility but also because they were composed in indigenous languages of the tribal people. Most of these languages are not recognized by the Indian State, and therefore have not received State patronage. In *The Being of Bhasha* G. N. Devy points out that during the British rule languages were chosen for printing in India not on the basis of antiquity, literary production or the number of people speaking those languages; rather printing was made available to those linguistic communities that could provide officials to the British government. After independence only those languages that had been printed gained official status and other privileges. But there are hundreds of languages that are spoken by Adivasis across India which have no official recognition (11). Therefore the literary and non-literary narratives in these languages are unexplored.

Moreover creative writing and publishing industry were dominated by the upper class/caste elite. Hence the Adivasis and their concerns were underrepresented in literature. Even those literary works that had tribal characters portrayed them stereotypically as uncultured, ignorant and backward, lacking any depth. Narayan, in his Malayalam novel *Kochereti*, a landmark in tribal literature, states:

“There were a few of us (tribal writers) who wanted to resist such a biased representation. We wanted to tell the world that we have our own distinctive way of life, our own value system. We are not demons lacking in humanity but a strong, hardworking and self-reliant community”. (208-209)

Therefore for the Adivasi writers, writing is an act of self-assertion; it is a protest against the unrealistic and prejudiced representation of their people in mainstream literature.

In the last few years, owing to the humongous efforts of scholars, researchers, translators, activists and writers Adivasi writings are available to the reading public not only in India but at a global level. Contemporary tribal writers are writing in English and regional languages that have wider reach, that too account for their popularity. Tribal writers such as Laxman Gaikwad, Mangal Ch. Soren, Lummer Dai, Rongpong Terang, Temsula Ao and Narayan have carved a unique niche for themselves, and brought tribal issues to the fore. Adivasi literature is still an emerging area in literary studies and has not received the kind of scholarly attention it deserves. While women's and Dalit writings have taken a firm place in university curriculum all over India, tribal writings have not been able to find a way into the academia on a substantial scale.

In spite of the apathy of the academia and publishing industry, tribal writers continue to write on their own terms and have been able to bring to the world's attention Adivasi communities hitherto unvalued and ignored. These Adivasi writings that resist the combined hegemony of the State and capitalism can be called resistance literature, and constitute an “alternate canon” (Trivedi ix)

Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar is one of the most significant voices in Adivasi literature today. He is from Ghatshila in Jharkhand and belongs to the Santhal tribe. He is also a medical doctor and works at a government health centre in the same region. His writings demonstrate a strong sense of social consciousness; he addresses the issues that confront the Santhals from an insider's perspective. His first book *The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey* (2014) which is centred on tribal life won the Sahitya Academy Yuva Puraskar in 2015. However, he was caught up in a huge controversy after his second book *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* was banned in 2017 by the government of Jharkhand, two years after its publication. The author was accused by some tribal and non-tribal groups of portraying Santhal women “in a bad light”. The issue quickly spiralled out of control and Shekhar was suspended from his job. After a public outcry, however, the ban was lifted and Shekhar was reinstated.

*The Adivasi Will Not Dance* is a collection of ten short stories set in Jharkhand that provide crucial insights into the life and struggles of the Santhals. The stories deal with a range of themes such as poverty, impact of mining and industrialization, exploitation, prostitution and social hierarchies. Santhals are one of the oldest tribes in India with a population of about five million. They are spread over the mineral rich regions of West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Assam, Bangladesh and Nepal. In India they are mainly remembered for the Santhal rebellion of 1855 that took place in the jungles of Jharkhand and West Bengal. The Santhal uprising was an armed struggle against the appropriation of tribal land and forceful eviction of

the Santhals by the East India Company and the Zamindars. Unfortunately, seventy years after independence the problems and issues persist. Consistent land grabbing, industrialization and mining have displaced the once self-reliant Santhal people, and pushed them into an inescapable mire of poverty, disease and degradation.

The title story “The Adivasi Will Not Dance” is a heart wrenching account of the disastrous impact of modernization on the traditional Adivasi way of life. The protagonist is Mangal Marmu, the aged leader of a Santhal dance troupe. He has trained several dancers over the years and performed at various public events. He recalls that he was a farmer once, but had to give up farming, like thousands of Santhals, when their land was taken away by a mining company and stone merchants. The outsiders grew wealthy by exploiting the natural resources of the region and destroying the environment. There is an overwhelming sense of collective loss throughout the story. Marmu asks, “What do we Santhals get in return? Tatters to wear. Barely enough food. Such diseases that we can’t breathe properly, we cough blood and forever remain bare bones” (172). He goes on “It is this coal, sir, which is gobbling us up bit by bit. There is a blackness-deep, indelible-....The trees and shrubs in our village bear black leaves. Our ochre earth has become black... Our children-dark skinned as they are –are forever covered with fine black dust” (174). The blackness metaphorically represents the darkness that has engulfed the lives of the Santhals.

The state of education is equally miserable; the Santhals have to send their children either to free government schools that lack basic facilities or to schools run by Christian missionaries who constantly vilify Santhal religion and try to convert children. They are looked down upon by caste Hindus and abused by Muslims immigrants. The situation has forced Santhals to migrate to distant villages and towns in search of work.

Marmu receives a letter from the government of Jharkhand inviting his troupe to perform at a high profile event, but the nature of the program and venue were withheld. Marmu, who was eager for recognition and money, agreed and started preparing his troupe for the event. In the meanwhile, Marmu’s family fell into crisis. His daughter Mugli was married into a family in the neighbouring Godda district. Her husband and his family members were all farmers. The district administration asked the villagers to vacate their land immediately to make way for a thermal power plant. The Santhals who protested were mercilessly beaten by the police and imprisoned. The government assured the people that the new power plant would provide power and jobs for all. The foundation stone would be laid by the president of India. To his utter shock, Marmu learns that he is going to be performing at this very event. It is ironic that the Santhals are summoned to dance at an event that marks the beginning of their destruction. The agitation against the eviction is violently suppressed by the police and armed forces; and villages are wiped out using bulldozers. But the media, insensitive to the predicament of the tribals, reported only the foundation laying ceremony in glowing terms.

Marmu lacks the agency to fight the power structures. He is utterly disillusioned and hopeless by now and decides to protest in the only way he could. On the day of the ceremony he refuses to perform in the presence of the President, media and the influential guests, sending shockwaves across the crowd. He says:

“...do we have a reason to sing and dance? Do we have a reason to be happy? ...this plant will be the end of us all, the end of all the Adivasi.... These men have forced us out of our villages. We have nowhere to go, nowhere to grow our crops. How can this power plant be good for us? And how can we Adivasis dance and be happy? Unless we are given back our homes and land, we will not sing and dance. We Adivasis will not dance.” (187)

Hence, Marmu becomes the lone voice of thousands of Adivasis who became refugees in their own land. Though Marmu’s dissent is ruthlessly crushed by the mighty State his questions would haunt the people in the audience as well as the readers. It cannot be a coincidence that the Santhal rebellion of 1855 was led by four brothers of the Murmu clan, implying that although individual dissent could be curbed but collective protest cannot be easily suppressed, and that if people unite, they have the potential to overthrow tyranny.

“November Is the Month of Migrations” is the most disturbing and controversial story in the anthology; it is this story that triggered the ban on the book. It is a scathing indictment of the deeply oppressive structures that not only exploit and objectify women but dehumanize them. Every year during November Santhals migrate to Namal, the Bardhaman district of West Bengal to work as agricultural

labourers in the paddy fields owned by wealthy Zamindars. The Adivasis lost their cultivable land because of incessant encroachment into tribal areas; now they have no choice but to work as labourers for pitiable wages. Twenty year old Talamai is among the forty three Santhals who are waiting at the railway platform for the train to arrive that would take them to Bardhaman. She has her entire family with her. Talamai's family converted to Christianity as the missionaries promised education for the children of the converts. However, the promise never materialised, and the children were compelled to work in coal mines and farms. At the station, Talamai encounters a young Jawan of the Railway Protection Force, who offers money and food in exchange of sex. She agrees and follows him to a dark corner of the station. There is a strong suggestion that Talamai has done this before, in fact, she has seen numerous girls from her village selling their bodies for food and money. The author depicts the sexual encounter in graphic details; the tone throughout is unsentimental, clinical and stark. But the purpose of the sexually explicit sequence is neither to preach nor to titillate. Rather, it has a traumatic and numbing effect on the reader. It painfully draws attention to the limits poverty pushes people to. The jawan gives her fifty rupees and two bread pakoras before walking away. Talamai keeps the money and eats the pakoras before joining her family. It is also ironic that the exploiter is a member of the armed forces whose duty is to protect the very people he blatantly abuses.

Tribal literary works, mostly set in traditional tribal areas or urban slums, depict the most dispossessed among the community. Very few tribal narratives dwell on the comparatively privileged Adivasis who lead a comfortable life in distance cities and their issues. With the availability of education and job opportunities, a section of the Adivasis moved to cities in search of better lives. However, life was not easy and they had to cope with the challenge of assimilation into a radically different cultural space. "They Eat Meat" is a rare story as it revolves around the life of an urban middle class Santhali family; it deals with the issues of assimilation and identity. Panmuni-jhi and Biren Soren are a middle aged couple who move to Vadodara in 2000 along with their younger son Hopon as Biren, who is a director with a central government enterprise, has been transferred to the city. Their eldest son Rabi, a medical student, lives in Cuttack. Before shifting to Vadodara they had lived in Bhubaneshwar for twenty years.

They rent a house in one of the posh localities of the city. The house is owned by the Raos, a Telugu speaking couple from Andhra Pradesh. Rao explains to them that people in this city, especially the upper caste Hindus have fixed and rigid notions of purity; anyone who is a non-vegetarian is looked at with disdain.

"Vadodara is a strongly Hindu city. People here believe in purity. I am not too sure what this purity is, but all I know is that people here don't eat non-veg. You know? Meat, fish, chicken, eggs. Nor do they approve of people who eat non-veg." (6)

He informs them that Muslims and Christians live in separate areas, "Cities within a city" (6). He warns them not to reveal their tribal identity to anyone as tribals are seen as impure and also them to give up non-vegetarian food. When the Birens reluctantly agree he continues

"But still we can't be sure. Who holds a grudge against whom. What tensions there are underneath all the civility" (7). The conversation goes on to reveal the invisible yet strong cracks and fissure in the social fabric of contemporary urban metropolitan cities; under the façade of modernity and multiculturalism, deep rooted communal feelings and caste prejudice fester, like cinders ready to explode at the slightest trigger.

Though this comes as a culture shock to the Sorens, they conform to the cultural norms of the place and abstain from non-vegetarian food fearing social rejection. However sometimes they discreetly smuggle eggs into the house. After eating they would carefully wipe out all traces of the egg. The story offers a critique of the intolerance of the mainstream Hindu society that imposes its own inflexible ideas of purity on the tribal people, relentlessly pressurising them to adapt upper caste lifestyle and values in order to be accepted.

"In Odisha, Panmuni-Jhi could be a Santhal, an Odia, a Bengali. In Gujarat, she had to be only a Gujarati." (14)

In two years the Birens are completely assimilated into the society of Vadodara. At this time the infamous Gujarat communal riots break out; the entire city is gripped by communal tensions and panic. One night when the Mohammeds, the only Muslim family in the area, are attacked by a violent mob something highly unexpected happens. While the men watch the rampage mutely, all the women of the locality join hands to protect their neighbours. They attack the mob with household utensils fearlessly and threaten them,

compelling the rioters to withdraw. Later the male members of the neighbourhood guard the Mohammeds's house for several days.

Though the story critiques communalism and caste hierarchies rampant in cosmopolitan cities, it ends with a sense of optimism and hope. It conveys a powerful and much needed message that irrespective of divisions, bias, and fractured inter-community relations, our basic humanity is still intact; and humanity can prevail over the forces of hatred. The story is also a tribute to the humanity, strength and resilience of women. As Gandhi said women are civilization's only hope because it is they who rebuild, with love and compassion, what men destroy.

Tribal narratives play a key role in recovering the histories, experiences and perspectives of the indigenous people. They are invaluable discourses of resistance that question the exploitative political structures and subvert the official narratives of development. However, oppositional discourses have the tendency to homogenize the marginalized. In such narratives the only mode of being imaginable for the subaltern is victimhood; in an attempt to provide agency to the marginalized, often inequalities and oppressive practices within the community are ignored. Shekhar does not fall into this trap. He neither romanticises nor idealises the Adivasis; rather his stories are grounded in reality. Some of the stories in the collection unravel regressive and misogynistic practices among the Santhals like witch hunting, domestic violence and inter-clan rivalry, reminding them that change also has to come from within. The stories discussed above are not meant to entertain, nor to give an anthropological account of tribal life. Their primary motive is to jolt the readers out of their stupor, and sensitize them to the inhuman violence, brutalities and exploitation the aboriginal people are subjected to, so that awareness could be created followed by positive social change that would ensure equality and dignity to the Adivasis.

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# MAUS- A Holocaust Survivor's Graphic Memoir

Dr. Mekhala Venkatesh

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## Abstract

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*Maus* is a graphic novel by American cartoonist Art Spiegelman, narrating his interviews with his Polish Jew father's experiences as a Holocaust survivor. *Maus* can be classified as a memoir, biography, history, fiction, autobiography, or a mix of genres which became the first graphic novel to win a Pulitzer Prize in 1992. It employs postmodernist techniques representing Jews as mice, Germans as cats and Poles as pigs.

**Keywords:**

Holocaust,  
Nazi (Cat),  
Jews (Maus),  
Survivor,  
Trauma Narrative.

The graphic images weave in and out of two timelines using minimalist drawing style with innovative structure and page layouts. In the tale of the narrative present, Spiegelman interviews his father Vladek in New York in 1978–79. Vladek's tale unfolds in the narrative past, which begins in the mid-1930s and continues until the end of the Holocaust in 1945.

Art visits his father from whom he has become estranged and asks him to recount his Holocaust experiences; Vladek has married Mala since the suicide of Art's mother Anja in 1968. Vladek tells of his time in the Polish city of Częstochowa and how he came to marry into Anja's wealthy family in 1937 and move to Sosnowiec to become a manufacturer. Vladek asks his son not to include many incidents in the book and Art reluctantly agrees. Anja had suffered a nervous breakdown due to postpartum depression after giving birth to their first son Richeie, and the couple go to a sanatorium in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia for her to recover. While returning, political and anti-Semitic tensions build and both are captured. After Vladek's release, he finds Germany has annexed Sosnowiec and he is dropped off on the other side of the border. He sneaks across the border and reunites with his wife only to learn that Richeu was poisoned by an aunt with whom he was left. The aunt had killed their son, her family members and herself from being captured by Nazis.

The family migrates to America in 1951, where Art grew up troubled by his tumultuous relationship with his father and the suicide of his mother when he turned twenty. Her grief-stricken husband destroyed her written accounts of Auschwitz. The story switches to 1986, when Art is unable to handle the attention *Maus* receives and finds himself depressed. His psychiatrist Paul Pavel, a Czech Holocaust survivor suggests that, as those who perished in the camps can never tell their stories, "maybe it's better not to have any more stories". Art replies with a quote from Samuel Beckett: "*Every word is like an unnecessary stain on silence and nothingness*", but then realizes, "*on the other hand, he said it*".

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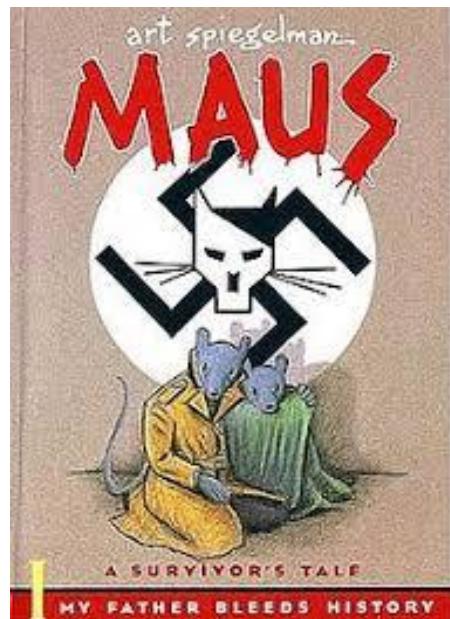
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## 1. Introduction

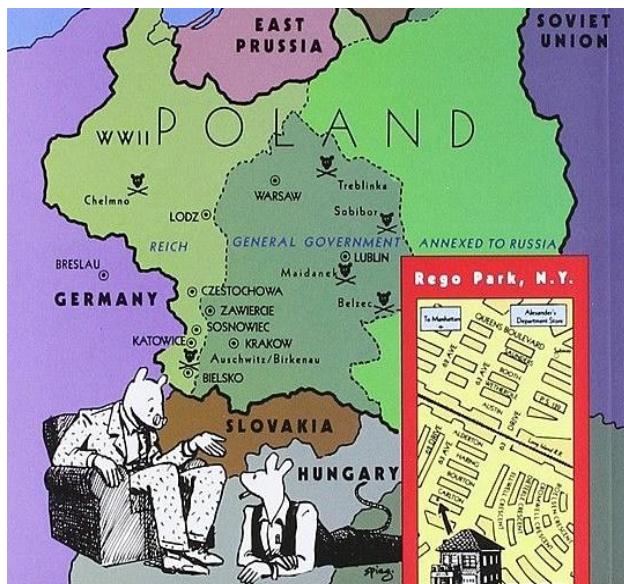
Spiegelman dedicated *Maus* to his first daughter Nadja and brother Richieu, the graphic novel's epigraph quotes Hitler: "The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human."



A three-page strip also called 'Maus' that he made in 1972 gave Art Spiegelman an opportunity to interview his father about his life during World War II. The recorded interviews became the basis for the graphic novel, which Spiegelman began in 1978. He serialized *Maus* from 1980 until 1991 as an insert in *Raw*, a comics and graphics magazine jointly published with his wife, Françoise Mouly, who also appears in *Maus*.

The book journeys in and out of two timelines—in the narrative present, Ar interviews his father Vladek in the Rego Park neighborhood of New York City in 1978–79. Vladek's narrative unfolds in the past, beginning in mid-1930s and ending with World War-II in 1945.

Art Spiegelman is presented as angry and full of self-pity dealing with his own traumas and those inherited from his parents by seeking psychiatric help, which continued after the book was completed. He has a strained relationship with his edgy father and displays little sympathy for his hardships, but shows more as the narrative unfolds. He is traumatized by his mother's suicide three months after his release from Binghamton State Mental Hospital in 1968 where he was being treated for nervous breakdown. He asks for his mother's diaries recounting her Holocaust experiences which she wanted her son to read. Vladek admits that he burned them after her death; Art is enraged and calls him a 'murderer'. Since the suicide of his mother, Art had often asked Vladek to recount his Holocaust experiences. Eventually Vladek narrates his traumatic past on the condition of not including many things in the book.



Vladek's narration begins with his time in the Polish city of Częstochowa, his marriage to the wealthy Anja in 1937, shift to Sosnowiec to become a manufacturer. The couple go to a sanatorium in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia for Anja to recover from a breakdown due to postpartum depression after their first son Richie's birth. In 1943, the Nazis move the Jews of the Sosnowiec Ghetto to Srodula and march them back to Sosnowiec to work. Vladek and Anja send Richie to stay with an aunt for safety.

To escape the Gestapo the aunt poisons her children, Richie and herself. In Sosnowiec, Vladek and Anja move from one hiding place to the other. Vladek disguises himself as an ethnic Pole and hunts for provisions. The couple arrange with smugglers to escape to Hungary, but are betrayed as the Gestapo arrest them on the train and take them to Auschwitz, they are united after the war ends.

Vladek Spiegelman(1906–1982) after surviving the Holocaust, moves with Anja to the U.S. in 1951. He is presented as miserly, anal retentive, egocentric, neurotic, obsessive, anxious and obstinate—traits that may have helped him survive the camps, but which greatly annoy his family. Among many incidents young Art Spiegelman remembers is once complaining that his friends have left him behind. His father retaliates, "*Friends? Your friends? If you lock them together in a room with no food for a week, then you could see what it is, friends!*"

Anja Spiegelman (1912–1968) is also a Polish Jew. Nervous, compliant and clinging, she has her first nervous breakdown after giving birth to her first son Richie. She sometimes told Art about the Holocaust while he was growing up, although her husband dissuaded it. She killed herself by slitting her wrists in a bathtub in May 1968 leaving no suicide note.

During one of his visits to his estranged father Art finds that a friend had sent the couple one of the underground comix magazines which had published his graphic narratives. Mala had tried to hide it, but Vladek finds and reads 'Prisoner on the Hell Planet', which depicts Art behind bars saying, "*You murdered me, Mommy, and left me here to take the rap!*"

When Vladek narrates his hardship in the camps, he unfolds tales of starvation and abuse, of his resourcefulness, of avoiding the *selektionen*—the process by which prisoners were selected for further labor or execution. Despite the danger, Anja and Vladek exchange occasional messages. As the war progresses and the German front is pushed back, the prisoners are marched from Auschwitz in occupied Poland to Gross-Rosen within the Reich and then to Dachau, where the hardships only increase and Vladek catches typhus.

The war ends, the camp survivors are freed and Vladek and Anja reunite. The book closes with Vladek turning over in his bed as he finishes his story and telling Art, "*I'm tired from talking, Richie, and it's enough stories for now.*" The final image is of Vladek and Anja's tombstone—Vladek died in 1982, before the book was completed.



**1.1 Mapping Graphic Narratives-** Art Spiegelman (1948) developed an interest in comics early and began drawing professionally when he was sixteen years old. Vladek was not happy with his son's involvement in the hippie subculture and when Art bought himself a German Volkswagen it damaged their already-strained relationship beyond repair. Around this time, he read about graphic artists who had made wordless novels and became a key figure in the underground comix movement of the 1970s. In 1972 Justin Green produced the semi-autobiographical comic book 'Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary', inspiring other underground cartoonists to produce more personal and revealing work. Spiegelman acknowledges, "without Binky Brown, there would be no *Maus*". Green asked Spiegelman to contribute a three-page strip for the first issue of 'Funny Animals'. He produced a strip for Short Order Comix #1 about his mother's suicide called 'Prisoner on the Hell Planet' (1973)-a pornographic, psychedelic book of quotations, and dedicated it to his mother.



**1.2 Influences-** Wordless woodcut novels such as those by Frans Masereel were an early influence on Spiegelman, along with Harvey Kurtzman, Will Eisner, and Bernard Krigstein. Eisner's graphic novel, 'A Contract with God (1978)', Gray's comic strip 'Little Orphan Annie' have influenced *Maus*. Art wanted to do a strip about racism, and at first considered focusing on African Americans, with cats as Ku Klux Klan members chasing African-American mice. Instead, he turned to Holocaust and depicted Nazi cats persecuting Jewish mice in a strip titled '*Maus*', the tale was narrated to a mouse named 'Mickey'. Art visited

his father to show him the comic strip which he had based in part on an anecdote he had heard about his father's Auschwitz experience. His father gave him further background information, he recorded a series of interviews over four days with his father, providing the basis of the longer *Maus*. Art visited Auschwitz in 1979 reading survivors' accounts, talking to their friends and family, collecting Polish pamphlets of Holocaust.

**1.3 Comics as Graphics-**American comic books were big business with a diversity of genres in the 1940s and 1950s, but reached a low phase by the late 1970s. By the time 'Maus' began serialization, Marvel and DC Comics, dominated the industry with mostly superhero titles. The underground comix movement that had flourished in the late 1960s and early 1970s didn't garner much acclaim. People still viewed comics as pubescent power fantasies, inferior in mature artistic or literary expression. Will Eisner popularized the term 'graphic novel' to mask the low cultural status of comics with the publication of 'A Contract with God' (1978).

Spiegelman took advantage of the way Nazi propaganda films depicted Jews as vermin. He derived the mouse as symbol for the Jew from Nazi propaganda, emphasized in a quote from a German newspaper in the 1930s that prefaces *Maus*' second volume: "*Mickey Mouse is the most miserable idea ever revealed ... Healthy emotions tell every independent young man and every honorable youth that the dirty and filth-covered vermin, the greatest bacteria carrier in the animal kingdom, cannot be the ideal type of animal ... Away with Jewish brutalization of the people! Down with Mickey Mouse! Wear the Swastika Cross!*"



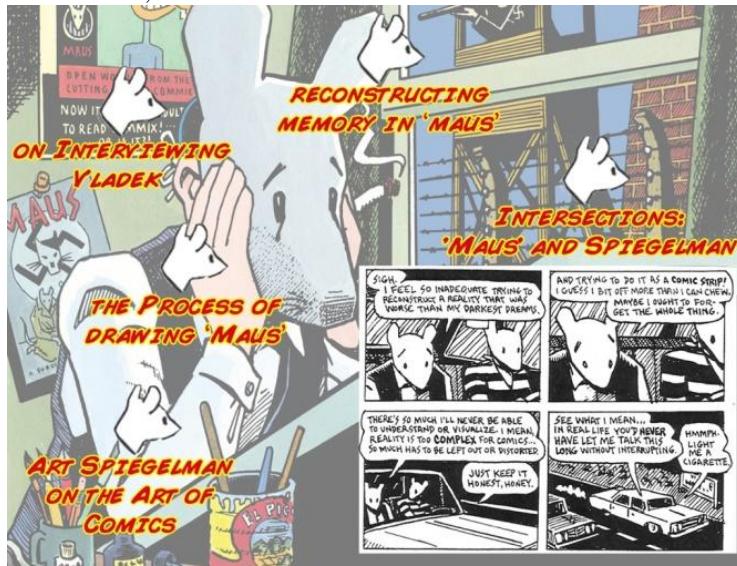
In *Maus*, the characters seem to be mice and cats only in their predator/prey relationship. In every respect other than their heads and tails, they act and speak as ordinary humans. Further complicating the animal

metaphor, Anja is ironically shown to be afraid of mice, while other characters appear with pet dogs and cats, the Nazis move with attack dogs.

Art depicts Jewish characters pretending to pass themselves off as ethnic Poles by tying pig masks to their faces, with the strings showing at the back. Anja's Jewishness is depicted by having her tail hang out of her disguise. This literalization of the genocidal stereotypes drove the Nazis to risk reinforcing racist labels, but Art uses the idea to create anonymity for the characters. Art's perceptions of the animal metaphor seem to have evolved over the book's making—in the original publication of the first volume, his self-portrait showed a mouse head on a human body, but by the time the second volume arrived, his self-portrait had become that of a man wearing a mouse mask.

Art struggled to find a publisher but after a New York Times review in August 1986, Pantheon Books published the first six chapters in a volume called *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* and subtitled *My Father Bleeds History*. *Maus* became problematic for critics and reviewers to classify, for booksellers on which shelves to place them. Art initially opposed many book-length comics being referred as 'graphic novels' irrespective of their novelistic qualities. By early 2000s 'graphic novel' was included as a category in bookstores.

By 2011, *Maus* had been translated into about thirty languages. Art, like many of his critics, worried that reality is too much for comics, so much has to be left out or distorted, admitting that his presentation may not be accurate. When he later wrote on how the story was made; it examines the choices he made in the retelling of his father's memories, for example, when his French wife converts to Judaism, Art's character frets whether to depict her as a frog, a mouse, or another animal. The book portrays humans with the heads and tails of different species of animals; Jews are drawn as mice and Germans as cats and Poles as pigs.



**1.4 Memory-** Hillary Chute analysing *Maus* in her dissertation, 'Comics as Graphic Narrative?' feels that Art's life is dominated by memories that are not his own. His work is one not of memory but of 'post memory'—a term she coined. This describes the relation of the children of survivors with the survivors themselves. While these children have not had their parents' experiences, they grow up with their parents' memories—the memory of another's memory—until the stories become so powerful that for these children they become memories in their own right. The children's proximity creates a 'deep personal connection' with the memory, though separated from it by 'generational distance'. Art tried to keep his father's story chronological, because otherwise he would 'never keep it straight'. His mother Anja's suicide and Vladek's destruction of her diaries memories are conspicuously absent from the narrative. *Maus* is partly an attempt to reconstruct her memory. Vladek keeps her memory alive with the pictures on his desk, 'like a shrine', according to Mala.



**1.5 Guilt-**Spiegelman displays his sense of guilt in many ways. He suffers anguish over his dead brother, Richieu, who perished in the Holocaust, and whom he feels he can never live up to. The added eighth chapter, made after the publication and unexpected success of the first volume, opens with a guilt-ridden Art (now in human form, with a strapped-on mouse mask) atop a pile of corpses—the corpses of the six million Jews upon whom Maus' success was built. He is told by his psychiatrist that his father feels guilt for having survived and for outliving his first son, and that some of Art's guilt may spring from painting his father in such an unflattering way. As he had not lived in the camps himself, he finds it difficult to understand or visualize this 'separate universe', and feels inadequate in portraying it.

**1.6 Racism-**Art parodies the Nazis' vision of racial divisions gradually deconstructing the animal metaphor throughout the book, especially in the second volume, showing where the lines cannot be drawn between races of humans. The Germans are depicted with little difference between them, but there is great variety among the Poles and Jews who dominate the story. Sometimes Jews and the Jewish councils are shown complying with the occupiers; some trick other Jews into capture, while others act as police for the Nazis. Spiegelman shows numerous instances of Poles who risked themselves to aid Jews, also shows anti-Semitism as being rife among them. The 'kapos' who run the camps are Poles, and Anja and Vladek are tricked by Polish smugglers into the hands of the Nazis. Anja and Vladek hear stories that Poles continue to drive off and even kill returning Jews after the war.

**1.7 Language-** Vladek's English, though not fluent, helps him several times during the story, as when he uses it to meet Anja. He also uses it to befriend a Frenchman, and continues to correspond with him in English after the war. His recounting of the Holocaust, first to American soldiers, then to his son, is never in his mother tongue, and English becomes his daily language when he moves to America. Art writes Valdek's dialogue in broken English; for example his days in prison, "*Every day we prayed ... I was very religious, and it wasn't else to do*". The German word 'Maus' is cognate to the English word 'mouse', close to the sound of 'Moses', also reminiscent of the German verb 'mauscheln'- (to speak like a Jew- referring to the way Jews from Eastern Europe spoke German).

**1.8 Style-**Art's use of funny animals, conflicted with readers' expectations who felt comics were too trivial to write about Holocaust, especially as he used animal heads in place of human ones. Animal caricatures have been a part of comics and the underground use them in adult stories. Art blurs the line between the frame and the real world, as when Vladek tells his wife, "*In real life you'd never have let me talk this long without interrupting.*" Humour also helps carry the weight of the unbearable historical realities.



**1.9 Art's work-** Art began by taking down his interviews on paper, soon switched to a tape recorder, face-to-face or over the phone, synthesizing multiple retellings into a single portrayal. *Maus* has 1,500 black-and-white panels, heavy black areas and thick black borders contrast areas of white and wide white margins. It is content driven, with few wordless panels and there is little space for gray. In the narrative present, the pages are arranged in eight-panel grids; in the narrative past, the grids are violated constantly. Characters are portrayed minimally: animal heads with dots for eyes and slashes for eyebrows and mouths on human bodies. Initial edition had oversized cats towering over Jewish mice, but later cat-Nazis were same size as mouse-Jews, avoiding exaggeration and allowing readers to judge. Wanting to give a diary feel, Art drew the pages on paper with a fountain pen and typewriter correction fluid, reproduced at the same size it was drawn, revealing defects in the art. Art's book 'The Making of Maus' is equally if not more interesting than his graphic novel.

**1.10 Responses and Rewards-** Art had already earned a name as cartoonist and editor, but *Maus* redefined comics as a literary genre. *Maus*, along with 'Watchmen' and 'The Dark Knight Returns' changed the perception of comics. Initially, critics showed reluctance to include *Maus* in literary discourse as its multiple identities denied classification under any genre. The Pulitzer committee gave *Maus* a Special Award in Letters in 1992, ushering a greater acceptance to comics. 'The Comics Journal' called it the fourth greatest comics work of the 20th century, 'Wizard' placed it first on their list of 100 Greatest Graphic Novels. Art turned down numerous offers to have *Maus* adapted for film or television.

**1.11 Academic work and criticism-** After Hillary Chute's dissertation on 'Comics As Graphic Narrative' with special reference to *Maus*; academic research have frequently used it as course material in a range of fields: history, dysfunctional family psychology, language arts, and social studies. The volume of academic work published on *Maus* far surpasses that of any other work of comics. One of the earliest such works was Joshua Brown's 1988 "Of Mice and Memory" from the Oral History Review, which deals with the problems Art faced in presenting his father's story. Marianne Hirsch wrote an influential essay on post-memory called "Family Pictures: Maus, Mourning, and Post-Memory", later expanded into a book called Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory. In 2003, Deborah Geis edited a collection of essays on *Maus* called Considering Maus: Approaches to Art Spiegelman's 'Survivor's Tale' of the Holocaust. Acclaimed as an important work of Holocaust literature, *Maus* has made significant contributions to Holocaust studies.

Some Holocaust survivors objected to Art making a comic book out of their tragedy and objecting against the animal metaphor as 'doubly dehumanizing', reinforcing the Nazi belief that the atrocities were perpetrated by one species on another, when they were actually done by humans against humans. *Maus* admirers defend it as the most compelling of any Holocaust depiction, as the caricatured quality of comic art is equal to the seeming unreality of an experience beyond all reason. By placing a factual story in a fantasy comic space, Art

Spiegelman serves us a reminder of racism and its repercussions on future generations.



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# Pricey Confrontation in the Forename of Endurance: A Journey of Resistance in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye*

Geetha Ravi

## Abstract

Racism, slavery, conflicts, subjugation, conquest, suppression and repression are the words which shape the lives of characters that represent resistance literature. The urge for freedom and culture is the forte of the descendants of Africans in America, which led them to be the contributors of literature in different forms. Oral forms such as Spirituals, Sermon, Gospel music, blues and rap are the outbursts of resistance.

### Keywords:

Pricey,  
Urge,  
Forte,  
Sermon,  
Corollary.

Along with the legendary writers who have contributed towards slave narratives, Noble Laureate Toni Morrison's contributions to African American Literature are immense. Her novels, *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye* are ones which present the fact that Slavery is not just an organization; it is an attitude and mind set with its realization in its corollary.

*Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye* are two novels of Toni Morrison which directly focuses on the exploitation of people with the complex of feeling superior.

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Racism, slavery, conflicts, subjugation, conquest, suppression and repression are the words which shape the lives of characters that represent resistance literature. The urge for freedom and culture is the forte of the descendants of Africans in America, which led them to be the contributors of literature in different forms. Oral forms such as Spirituals, Sermon, Gospel music, blues and rap are the outbursts of resistance.

The Harlem Renaissance and slave narratives are the genres which prominently traces the origin with African American Literature. Legendary contributors like Lucy Terry, Phillis Wheatley, Jupiter Hammon, W.E.B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Walter Mosley, Alice Walker and Toni Morrison are the pioneer writers who were responsible for the African American Literature to be in the forefront. African American Literature gained its entry into mainstream as books by Black writers in the beginning of 1970s.

Noble Laureate Toni Morrison's contributions to African American Literature are immense. Her novels, *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye* are ones which present the fact that Slavery is not just an organization; it is an attitude and mind set with its realization in its corollary.

*Beloved* is based on the true story of Margaret Garner. The similarities of the incidents help us to affirm the fact of its origin with the instances like Beloved's Sethe, who kills her daughter as Garner did. The novel addresses the concern whether it is better to endure the injustice of unsympathetic people or fight against them. *The Bluest Eye* also portrays the level of fortitude and resistance against the name of endurance, the idea of ugliness and the belief that black was not valuable was one of the impediments in culture to black people. The novel throws light on the heroic and failed efforts of belligerent Black community. Pecola, being a black, believed she was ugly and her desire for blue eyes is a real and symbolic conflict, and her resultant agony is illustrated by Toni Morrison.

*Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye* are two novels of Toni Morrison which directly focuses on the exploitation of people with the complex of feeling superior. One can find occurrences of situations leading to ill feelings, or

the readers are exposed to many created contradictions in the society, to fulfil their own needs and meet their necessities.

"Beloved is a saga of grit and courage, a chronicle of Fundamental contradictions which always define civilization ; the subtext of the survival instinct, subconscious urge toward domesticity and belonging, and the basic human need to grab emotional and physical sustenance wherever and how so ever possible is also evident in the structure of the novel" but what becomes most significantly transparent in the moving combination of the strength and constraints of a woman who is basically a mother and happens to be a black slave in the society which is bifurcated by dominant racial hatred into sections – the ruler and the ruled, the master and the slave, at a turbulent time of the American history"

The legacy of slavery and life filled with depression are the forte of these novels.

Baby Suggs, Sethe's mother-in-law in *Beloved* lived in their house at 124, Bluestone Road., she sank into deep depression, before she died, life with slavery and loss of her eight children drove her to psychological imbalance. 'Color' played an important role in her last few days of survival, 'bits of brightly colored objects she hoped would alleviate her sadness' she died after Sethe's sons, Howard and Burglar, ran away from 124 after being encountered by a ghost of their dead sister.

Barbara Scharpilo says "There internal resonances are so profound that even if one is eventually freed from external bondage, the self will be trapped in an inner world that prevents a genuine experience of freedom". Sethe herself curtly puts it, "Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownerships of that freed self was another". (95)

The characters in the novel struggle with the problem of recognising and claiming one's subjectivity and it shows how they fail to achieve independently of the social environment.

Sethe's recollection of her mother and her burnt mark on her skin, innocently Sethe asked her to mark her too, her mother slapped her, and she said that Sethe could use these marks to identify her body if she died. Sethe tells the girls that she did not understand why her mother had done this until she had a mark of her own.

"in order to exist for oneself, one has to exist for another"( 53)

The urge for freedom in the character is very clearly depicted through certain unforgettable incidents in the novels. Sethe seeks permission from Mrs. Garner for their wedding, but the white woman only laughed. With nothing to make it official, Sethe secretly sews herself a dress to mark the occasion.

Seethe's hesitates to be recognised as oneself when she runs away from Sweet Home when she was pregnant with Denver, and meets a white girl who helps her when she collapsed in the woods. Amy helps her, "when Amy asked Sethe her name, Sethe told her false name 'Lu. Sethe was afraid of being caught, she could be sent back to Sweet Home."

Slaves were not permitted to marry, because slaves are already contracted to their owners; the prohibition of marriage also prevented the slaves from having a strong claim on their children; children like Baby Suggs was nothing unusual in their lives. 'The name of Paul D and his brother are also a testament to the slaves' all the brothers had the last name of their owner – Garner and they were called as Paul A to Paul F.

The exploitation was so intense, it left Sethe and Paul D wondering if the damaged past could stop them from moving further in life. Sethe fights against herself and her children placing her in the state of isolation from the rest of the community.

The dead child of Sethe appears as a ghost, Beloved, and tries to live in the family which she was deprived of as a human being. Beloved develops a strange attachment to Sethe, although Sethe hates discussing the past, she enjoys narrating stories into Beloved's eager ears, the women has come across the sea, the same ship, the white crew members had raped them repeatedly, but Sethe's mother "threw away" the children she had by the white men. Sethe was kept because she had a black father.

The repeated attack against Sethe by different people in the society speaks of variety maintained in gruesome acts of whites in suppressed lot. White slave owners did everything they could to control the speech of their slaves – those who spoke of deferential tone, had their tongues cut out; Sethe almost lost her life, when she reported to Mr. Garner about the theft of her milk, it caused her to be whipped nearly to death. The forms of song or metaphor were stylized version of venting anger or criticizing, artistic expression becomes a matter of survival.

Paul D and Ella, decide to forgo their real love for the rest of their lives, this news helps her in having a strategy for coping with the pain and love. She suppresses her feelings as Paul D does. "she just flew, collected every bit of life she has made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful. And carried, pushed dragged them..... Away over there where no one could hurt them".

Sethe stayed at 124, began to love her children and believed that her children finally belonged to her; tragedy struck when she saw the school teacher's hat out so the hour one day "killing her children was a way of protecting them from the horrors of slavery she has herself endured a way to secure their safety".

*The Bluest Eye* plot the suppression at a different levels, the daughter, an eleven year old girl, who is black, encounters racism, she feels inferior for her skin. Pecola loves Shirley Temple, believing that whiteness is beautiful and that she is ugly. She strongly feels she can overcome the battle of self-hatred by having blue eyes. "Pecola believes that if she has blue eyes, she would be loved and her life would be transformed".

Pecola's family is the representation of the larger African - American community, it is also believed that the name "Breedlove" is ironic; they live in a society that does not breed love.

Her parents have both difficult lives, father always drinks, her mother is distant, and her brothers run away. Cholly, Pecolas father, was abandoned by his parents and raised by a great aunt, who dies when he was a teenager, he faces strong humiliation from whites; when he married Pauline become a victim of her father and he rapes his daughter.

In the beginning of the novel *The Bluest Eyes* Claudia says "There is no marigolds in the fall of 1941" both the sisters, Claudia and Frieda believed if they grow marigold and it survives, Pecolas baby would survive. Claudia finally explains it and broadens its scope at all African-Americans on the last page.

"I even think now that the land of the entire country has hostile to marigold that year, certain seeds it will not mature, certain fruits it will not bear".

Morrison throws light on the vulnerability of the character in the novel, the challenges Claudia faces and experiences emphasises on the fact of being black and poor she had to face a grave situation. She and her family becomes a victim of the society with a fright of losing everything including the house and being unstable. Pecola fantasizes for new life she decided to have beautiful blue eyes and believes that her life would magically right itself. She aspires to have blue eyes for two reasons, to change what she sees and to change how others see her.

The humiliation at the grocer's store, he looks at her with blankness tinged with distaste; this poor treatment, she interprets as her own fault, she confines to the idea what people treat her is final than knowing herself. With obsession of having the bluest eyes Pecola talks to her imaginary friend to examine everyone's eyes to see if they are bluer than hers, she gains her desired bluest eyes by losing her mind.

Morrison has used two prologues in the story and it seems *The Bluest Eyes* has two endings. One with hopes, Claudia and Frieda selflessly sacrifices their own desires to help Pecola. The second ending is a bleak vision. Pecola craves to have the bluest eye and enters the world of illusion which directly takes her away from the world of reality.

Both these novels, *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eyes* depicts the complex interrelationships of social and interpsychic reality and illustrates the reality of life in poverty stricken African-American community whose socio-economic status is complicated by the politics of race, especially internalized racism. Tony Morrison very strongly focuses on the issue of racist social system which wears down the minds and souls of people.

In the words of Ann Snitow: Morrison twists and tortures and fractures events until they are little slivers. She moves the lurid material of melodrama into the minds of her people, where it gets sifted and sorted, lived and relived, until it acquires the enlarging outlines of myth and trauma, dream and obsession.

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# Gender Discrimination in “Silence! The Court is in Session”

Dhareppa Konnur

## Abstract

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the outstanding Indian Playwrights who has understood the pulse of Indian complexities. He has touched different genres of literature like Essays, Short Stories, Criticism, Screenplay Writing and Drama. He is known for his plays, Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe (1967) and Sakhārām Binder (1972). He has been awarded the Padma Bhushan Award, Sangeeta Natak Akademi Award, Filmfare Award, Saraswati Samman Award, Kalidas Samman Award and Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar. He is ranked with great playwrights like Badal Sarkar, Girish Karnad and Mohan Rakesh.

In Silence! The Court is in Session, Tendulkar has shown the difficulty of a young woman, who is a victim of the patriarchal society. Tendulkar has condemned the follies prevailing in our society. The original name of this drama in Marathi is Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe (1967). Later it was translated in English by Priya Adarkar. The play carries all the vitalities of contemporary life. It focuses on the human mind and detects the ugliness in it. All the plays of Tendulkar are the result of his close surveillance of the life, society and different incidents of his own life.

Vijay Tendulkar's Silence! The Court is in Session exemplifies the male-bigoted monopoly that passes off the name of verdict. The court here is just a metaphor of the patriarchal society where we live. The monological verdict is the final decree, that the women to abide by. The only thing she has to protect with is her silence, as that is the only case with Benare and with Mrs.Kashikar who are ordered to be silent by Mr.Kashikar at regular intervals. The play utilizes meta-theatrical elements such as the play within-a-play to objectively contemplate upon the difficulties of Leela Benare. Vijay Tendulkar highlights: “The co-existence of the observer and the happenings make the reality. Reality becomes reality only when it is seen.”.

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### **A Court trial: Mockery**

‘Silence! The Court is in Session’ presents a metaphorical trial between the humanists and the anti-humanists. It is in reality a mock trial of a bold, simple and straightforward school teacher Miss.Leela Benare. She is cross-examined in the court trial with a mockery. She is charged with an infanticide and having illicit relationship with a married person Prof. Damle hence her private life is exposed. All the other characters like witnesses Ponkshe, Karnik, Rokde, Samant, counsel for the defense and counsel for the crown Mr.Sukhatme and judge , Mr.Kashikar and his wife Mrs.Kashikar all behave in a way of mockery.

Miss Leela Benare is presented as an extraordinary, modern and crucial character in the play. Miss Benare is a young middle class woman of 34 years who is working as a teacher to earn her livelihood. She was loved and appreciated by her students in her school. She was very punctual in coming to the school every morning, carrying out her assignments and her courses. Ms. Benare said to Samant: I had never been behind with my lesson! Exercises corrected on time, not a bit of room for disapproval, I don't give an inch of it to

anyone! (Silence... 4) She admits before Samant, a local villager who escorts the amateur dramatic troupe members to the village hall, that children are much better than the adults. They don't have the blind pride that they know everything. There is no nonsense stuffed in their heads. They don't scratch you till you bleed and then run away like cowards. (Silence... 4) She was a member of an Amateur Theater group which had arrived in a village to perform an awareness raising play on the social and current issues. Ms. Leela Benare was preparing herself for a play titled 'Mock Trial of Lyndon B. Johnson' at Sub-urban Village. She was accompanied by Samant and was enjoying his company. She told him, "I felt even more wonderful coming here with you. I am so glad the others fell behind". (Silence... 1) She introduces all her co-stars of the troupe to Samant in their absence. She sarcastically calls Mr. Kashikar as 'Mr. Prime Objective', Mrs. Kashikar as 'Mrs. Hands that Rocks the cradle' and she further says that the 'Hands that Rocks the cradle has no cradle to rock.' (Silence... 2) Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar were childless and had adopted Balu. According to Benare, they have made him slave: Mr. Kashikar and the hands that Rocks the cradle that nothing should happen to them in their bare house and that they shouldn't die of boredom, gave shelter to a young boy. They educated him and made a slave out of him (Silence... 6). She sarcastically introduced Sukhatme, one of her co-stars of the troupe as: 'An expert on the law. He has such an authority on the subject; even a desperate client won't go anywhere near him! He merely spends his time sitting alone in the barristers' room at court, swatting flies with legal precedents! (Silence... 6) According to Ms. Benare, Ponkshe is 'Hmmm.... Scientist, Inter failed'. (Silence... 6) She called Prof. Damle as: And we have an intellectual too. That means someone who prides himself on his bookish learning but when there is a real life problem, away he runs, hides his head. He's not here today. Won't be coming either. He won't dare. (Silence... 6-7) Benare wanted to live a free life, free from the patriarchal dominance, the conservative and discriminative norms of the society. She shows self-determination, self-assertiveness and cynicism but is also receptive to the conventional norms of integrity of the society. The author has tried to initiate the new form by commenting on the mendacity of the social and ethical standards existing in the society. The below conversation between Benare and Samant throws light on the character of Benare. The Indian Review of World Literature in English, Volume. 5 No.II – July, 2009 [4] Benare: I am the soul of seriousness: But I don't see why one should go around all the time with the long face... we should laugh, we should play, we should feel, we should sing! If we can, if they will let us, we should dance too! Should not have any false modesty or false dignity or care for anyone! I mean it. When your life is over, do you think anyone will give a bit of theirs? What do you say, Samant? Do you think they will? Samant: You are quite right. The great sage Tukaram said that... at least I think it was him... Benare: Forget about the sage Tukaram. I say it-I, Leela Benare, a living woman, I say it from my own experience and perception. Life is not meant for anyone else. It's your own life. It must be only yours. It is a very very important thing. Every moment, every bit of your life is precious... (Silence... 8) The actual play was scheduled to be staged in the night. Character wanted to rehearse the drama, a mock trial and also found it as an opportunity to dig up Leela Benare's past life. Balu Rokde, Ponkshe, Karnik and Samant appeared as witnesses for the trial against Leela Benare. Samant had been forced to accept and act as the fourth witness in the play on behalf of Prof. Damle. Sukhatme suggested the theater artists to make Ms. Benare as the accused in the mock trial. She has to perform the role of a woman who is accused of infanticide. Mr. Kashikar played the role of the judge. Leela Benare was accused by the Judge of the 'Mock Law Court' as: Prisoner Miss Benare under section No. 302 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), you are accused of the crime of Infanticide (foeticide). Are you guilty or not guilty of a fore mentioned crime...? (Silence... 25) Leela replied: I don't like your word at all! Infanticide... Infanticide! Why don't you accuse me instead of snatching public property... ha? I plead not guilty. I could not kill even a cockroach. I am scared to do it. How could I kill a new born child...? (Silence... 29-30) Mr. Kashikar quoted a Sanskrit proverb: "Mother and the Motherland both are even higher than heaven." (Silence... 30) Sukhatme was playing the role of the Counsel of Defense and the Counsel for the Crown. He added: Considering this what would we respectable citizen say if any woman were to take the life of the delicate bundle of joy she has borne, we would say, there could be no baser or more devilish thing on the earth. I wish to establish by means of evidence that the prisoner has done this same vile deed. (Silence... 31) The Indian Review of World Literature in English, Vol. 5 No.II – July, 2009 [5] Benare was smart, educated and good looking but was unmarried. To this, Mrs. Kashikar stated: Anyone who really wants to can get married in a flash... when you get everything without marrying... then they just want comfort. They could not care about their responsibilities. In my time even if a girl was snub nosed, sallow hunchbacked or whatever, she could still get married. It is the sly new fashion of women earning that makes everything go wrong. That's how promiscuity has spread through our society... look how loudly she laughs, how she sings, dances, cracks jokes and wandering alone with how many men, day in and day out. (Silence... 54) Mrs. Kashikar further added with strong assurance that all the unmarried girls are, "a Sinful canker on the body of society, that's my honest opinion of these grown up married girls." (Silence... 54) The play is a strong satire on the hypocrisy of the present Indian middle class society. The

playwright exposes: ...their characters, dialogues, gestures and even mannerisms reflect their petty circumscribed existence fraught with frustration and repressed desire that find expression in their malicious and spiteful attitude towards their fellow being. (Preface VIII) Kashikar, Sukhatme and others formed a group to torture Leela Benare in the mock trial and she was charged as a licentious woman who is always ready to sell her body. She was even charged to have an illicit relationship with her maternal uncle and later with Prof. Damle. Ms. Leela Benare was in love with her maternal uncle at the age of just fourteen but if a failure due to the cultural bounding and limitations. Benare explained in detail the way in which she was abused by her own maternal uncle at the age of just fourteen. Benare said: Why, I was hardly fourteen! I didn't even know that what sin was, I didn't! I insisted on marriage. So I could live and breathe my beautiful lovely dreams openly... But all of them-my mother too- were against it, and my brave man turned tail and ran. (Silence 74) She had failed in the love affair with her maternal uncle. He had exploited her at such a tender age to satisfy his hunger for bodily pleasure. She uttered remembering him that: "Life is a poisonous snake that bites itself. Life is a betrayal, life is a fraud. Life is a drug. Life is drudgery... Life is very dreadful..." (Silence...75-75) The Indian Review of World Literature in English, Vol. 5 No.II – July, 2009 [6] The character of Ms. Leela Benare reminds us of Ammu, the protagonist in Arundhati Roy's 'The God of Small Things'. She is also identical to various women characters depicted by Shashi Deshpande and Anita Desai in their books. They have also exposed the naked realities of women suffering at the hands of the patriarchal society. Ms. Benare studied and established herself as a teacher in a school. She was in love with Prof. Damle, in her young age in spite of her previous failure in a love with her maternal uncle. Prof. Damle was a married man who also wanted to satisfy his bodily thirst and hunger through Ms. Benare. She had become pregnant without marriage and this was a reason that she was discharged from her school. The chairman of the education society, Nana Saheb Shinde also had failed to drop an inquiry against Benare. According to Ms. Benare: Again I fell in love. As a grown woman. I throw all my heart into it. I thought, this will be different. This love is intelligent. It is love for an unusual intellect. It is not love at all-its worship! But it was the same mistake. I offered up my body on the altar of my worship. And my intellectual god took all the offerings and went his way, he didn't want my mind or my devotion- he didn't care about them at all! He was not a god. He was a man, for him everything was the body, for the body? That is all (Silence 73-74). She pleaded in front of Rokde and Ponkshe for marring her but her proposal was denied by them. Tendulkar satirizes on the unjust male dominating society and on the working of Court. Mr. Kashikar, the judge should be free from the prejudice but he was just the opposite of it. He quoted the proverb: "Janani Janama bhumischcha Svargadapi Gariyasi."(Silence...30) This is a mockery on the judge who is talking about motherhood and innocence who himself does not follow what he says. The court allows Prof. Damle to enjoy his married life and does not accuse him for exploiting and abusing the life of a woman. The irony of the mock trial is that Ms. Leela Benare is accused and charged in the court without the presence of Prof. Damle her lover, while the Prof. Damle himself is enjoying his married life and is not at all accused of sexual exploitation and abuse of a woman. I specially mention here housewives because of Mrs. Khasikar's character. This shows the condemnation on the Indian society and the prejudices it carries against women. According to Veena Dass, in her 'Women Characters in the Plays of Tendulkar': It is important here to note that these charges became verbalized only in the absence of Prof. Damle. If he were present, the typical backbiting attitude of the self righteous Indian male would not have helped to reveal the truth. Miss Leela Benare was thrown into the dock and there she remained trying to joke herself, but trapped too murderously by the male vultures around her. Witness after witness, charges upon charges we thumped upon her. The defense lawyer was so frightened and empathetic that he only asked for a little mercy on her behalf. Miss Benare who is on the The Indian Review of World Literature in English, Vol. 5 No.II – July, 2009 [7] offensive at the beginning found herself trapped at the close of the play. (Dass 10) All these characters by Tendulkar except Ms. Benare represents the male dominated Indian society. According to C.Coelho: "In his portrayal of human relations and tensions, Tendulkar depicts the violent tendency of egoistical man and equally self centered society." (Coelho 34) Ms. Benare has been loyal to her profession. She reveals in the final act that she has always kept her professional life away from her personal life. She has justified her role of being a good teacher. Ms. Benare stated: I have just put my whole life into working with the children... I learn from it, I loved it, I taught them well... Emotion is something people talk about with sentiment. It was obvious to me. I was living through it. It was burning through me. But do you know? I did not teach any of this to those tender; young souls. I myself swallowed the poison, but did not let the drop of it touch them. I taught them beauty. I taught them purity. I cried inside and made them laugh. I was cracking up with despair and I taught them hope. (Silence...75-76) The Judge, Mr. Kashikar orders Ms. Benare to abort her child. According to him, to have children without marriage is against the tradition of Indian culture. The judgment passed to Ms. Benare seems to be absurd. Mr. Kashikar said: The crimes you have committed are the most terrible and unethical. The mortality act which you have shown forgiveness for them...through your conduct

was the mortality you were planning to impart to the youth of tomorrow. It must be said that the school officials have done a work of merit in deciding to remove you from the teaching job...There is no forgiveness... No memento of your sin should remain for the future generation. Hence the court hereby sentences that you shall live. But the baby in your womb shall be destroyed... (Silence... 67-68) She screamed to this." No! No! No! I won't let you do it. I won't let it happen, I won't let it happen" (Silence... 76). The character of Ms. Benare also reminds us the Ibsen's heroine Nora in The Doll House. Nora leaves her children and her husband due to the annoyance and dominance created by her husband. She questions the male dominating society and finds her escape. According to Arundhati Banerjee,: "Benares' monologue is reminiscent of Nora's declaration of Independence." (Banerjee 40) Mrs. Kashikar does not help the helpless Ms. Benare in the court inspite of being a woman. She is against Ms. Benare because she is a conventional Indian housewife who has accepted The Indian Review of World Literature in English, Vol. 5 No.II – July, 2009 [8] all the norms framed by the society. She accepted the role of a woman as a beautiful flower to be decorated in a flower pot with no existence and identity of her own. Benare, on the other hand was a progressive contemporary modern woman. She was psychologically and socially tortured but was still starving to search for her existence. According to P. Obula Reddy and P. Pramila Devi: Benare, the important character in the play is as sprightly, rebellious and assertive as the heroine of Shakespearean romantic comedies... Of course, Benare is a lovely spark from the thunder bolt of Tendulkar. She is a modern woman pleading for freedom from the social norms... (Reddy and Devi 36) Ms. Benare is a prey of male chauvinism, used simply to gratify the quench for bodily thirst and deserted at the end to her own destiny. Man has all the rights to be sinful in the society. He can be harsh, notorious and innocent too. All the rights are reserved specially for him. On the contrary, a woman must be deserted, abandoned, ignored, thrown away and should be tainted for her sins. There is no escape for her in our society. She should be brutally destroyed for her actions both physically and mentally. The character of Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar, Ponkshe, Rokde, Sukhatme are the symbols hypocrisy and inferior complex. One can observe a conflict raised by Tendulkar between the real self and the performed self in the play. Tendulkar digs the inner self of all the characters in the plays, how they present themselves and what they actually are. He has identified the role of society in shaping and determining their identities. In an interview, Tendulkar revealed: "This play is a caustic satire on the social as well as legal justice." (Tendulkar 40) Benare represents all the women in India who are suppressed, oppressed and are marginalized. She breaks down during the mock trial because the story of the character in the play she is performing at the mock trial is identical to her own. The last speech of Ms. Benare is skillfully constructed by Tendulkar. It echoes the sarcasm, the irony, sorrow and lampoon present in Indian society. Ms. Leela Benare said: But I was ignorant Instead; I threw myself off a parapet of our house-to embrace death. But I didn't die. My body didn't die. I felt as if feelings were dead-but they had not died either then.... (Silence... 74) Tendulkar has left the play open ended without suggesting any solution to the problem of Ms. Benare. He has signified critical problems like the squalor of Indian Judiciary system, male dominance in the society and the ostentatious institutional social organizations. The play is derision on the middle class probity, where people have all the rights to pass the judgments and Silence is the only alternative left for the victim. The words of Candy Elizabeth quoted in The Indian Review of World Literature in English, Vol. 5 No.II – July, 2009 [9] 'The Introduction of Feminism in our Times' can be the best to conclude. According to Candy:Thus far women have been mere echoes of men. Our law, legislation and constitution, our creeds and codes and customs of social life are all of masculine origin. The true woman is yet a dream for future... (Candy XIV-V) Nari tame Narayani.

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## DALIT LITERATURE - “Who can stop sun rise”

Kalidas K

### Abstract

**Keywords:**

Dalits,  
Exploitation,  
Untouchability,  
Inequality.

Dalit literature is the literature of the Dalits, by the Dalits and for the Dalits. Dalit(oppressed or broken) is not a new word. Apparently it was used in the 1930's as a Hindi and Marathi translation of 'depressed classes' a term the British used for what are now called the scheduled castes. In 1970s the 'Dalit Panthers' revived the term and expanded its reference to include scheduled tribes, poor peasants, women and all those being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion. So Dalit is not caste. It is a symbol of change and revolution.

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**Introduction:** The term ‘Dalit literature’ can into use in 1958, when the first conference of Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangha (Maharashtra Dalit Literature Society). Dalit literature is an important stream of Indian writing in English and other languages of India. It is literature about the oppressed classes and caste of India. A tradition of Dalit writing can be traced to eleventh century writer Cekkilar [Periyapuram]. Modern Dalit writings are founded on the works and ideological insights of Ambedkar, the chief architect of the constitution of India. Dalit writing is in reparably tied to dalit liberation movements in various parts of India. This category of literature become a significant present in the 1960's in Marathi literature and later in Hindi, Tamil and Malayalam as well as English poems, short stories, novels besides autobiographies from the major genres of Dalit expression. These writings formed a collective voice that questioned through articulation of their social reality the kind of writings that made them in visible or distorted their identity. Traditionally Dalits were considered to be beyond the pale of varna or caste system. They were originally considered as panchama or the fifth group beyond the fourfold division of Indian people. They were not allowed to let their shadow fall upon a non- Dalit caste member and they were required to sweep the ground. Where they walked to remove the ‘contamination’ of their foot fall. Dalit were forbidden to worship in temple or draw water from the same wells as caste Hindus and they usually lived in segregated neighbourhood outside the main village. In the Indian country side, the Dalit villages are usually a separate enclave a kilometer or so outside the main village where the other Hindu caste resides. Some upper caste Hindus did warm to Dalits and Hindu priests demoted to low caste- rank. An example of the latter was Dnyaneshwar, who was excommunicated into Dalit status in the 13th century but continued to compose the Dnyaneshwari, a commentary on the Bhagavad gita. Eknath another excommunicated Brahmin, fought for the right of untouchable during the Bhakti period.

**History should not repeat:** Historical examples of Dalit priest include chokhamela in the 14th century. Who was India's first rewarded Dalit poet. The declaration by princely states of Kerala between 1936 and 1947 that temples were opened to all Hindus went a long way towards ending the system of UN touch ability in Kerala. According to Kerala tradition the Dalits were focused to maintain at distance of 96 feet from Namboothiris, 64 feet from Nair's and 48 feet from other upper caste, as they were thought to pollute them. Many similar castes collective with different caste names grouped under the umbrella terms Nair and Ezhava and consolidated their power, Dalits remained fragmented as castes and sub castes. At a large stage in Kerala's history, the elite communities and casts which had earlier consolidated their position through identity politics transformed their accumulated energies into nation building politics and class politics. The

elite classes to promote their own martial and cultural bi as an empowerment they saw as their birth right. Malayalam, accepted by many scholars to have evolved from Tamil roughly in the 9th century has a history of writing that dates back to the 12th century. The aesthetics of Malayalam literature have been over determined by the literary traditions of Sanskrit. Which include ‘sruthi’ (cosmic, subliminal communication) Smrithi (remembered literature, secondary texts), and epics and legends (itihasa purana tradition). Beginning with Kunthalatha said to be the first written novel in Malayalam. Process continued without much difference in perspective. In these works, ‘Hindu spirituality’ was embraced as the sole solution to the complexity of human existence, there by ignoring a dynamic and productive life-world. It was the pain of this group on which the upper-caste Hindu world of leisure was based. The literature produced by upper caste novelists was the by-product of a lethargic lifestyle, far removed from the world of sweat and toil which supported it. Culturally and epistemologically focused on concepts like moksha, nirvriti and anubhooti [spiritual liberation, Fulfilment and Sensual ecstasy]. It is easy to see that dominant literary tradition of the period known as manipravalam had its focus solely on Sexuality and Self-indulgence and was in tune with the luxurious lifestyle of the upper caste of the time, in Kerala. Any movement away from the centre that the ‘grand’ is obligated to make creates a space and platform for the birth of the little. From the 1990’s onwards the Malayalam literary scenario has seen celebrations of the differing and plural voices of the historically marginalized, oppressed, and unrepresented. This not only includes the Dalit discourse but other silenced groups- feminists, environmentalists and religious and sexual minorities. One of the characteristic features of emerged and emerging discourses is its tension with the national imagination. Hence, they seek alliance and constellations with the transnational micro, and the local. Any new movement has to pass through three phases: ridicule, resistance and acceptance. Dalit literature in the world has fast-forwarded to the third phase and is beginning to provide the color and power that only people who live close to the earth can express. The earliest known historical people to have rejected the caste system were Gautama Budha and Mahavera their teaching eventually became independent religions called Buddhism and Jainism. The earliest known reformations within Hinduism happen during the medieval period when the Bhakti movements actively encouraged the participation and inclusion of Dalits, in the 19th century. The Brahmo samaj, Arya samaj, and Ramakrishna mission actively participated in the emancipation of Dalits. While there always have been segregated places for dalits to worship, the first “upper-caste” temple to openly welcome Dalits to their fold was the Laxmi narayan temple in Wardha in the year 1928. Even before Ambedkar, Ayyankali, the leader of the Sadhujan Movement, realized that the leader of the social justice was freedom. Ayyankali's politics was about the emancipation of all the oppressed people and a radical transformation at the whole of society. Sadhujanans formulated by Ayyankali, was the conceptualisation of the broken people (Dalits) locating them as the agents of history, as the production of material wealth. In the context of traditional Hindu society, Dalit status has often been historically associated with occupation regarded as radically impure, such as any involving leather work, butchering or removal of rubbish, animal carcasses and waste. Dalit worked as manual laborers clean in street, latrines and sewers. Encasing in these activities was considered to be considered contagious and banned from full participation in Hindu social life. For example they could not enter the temple, nota school, and were required to stay outside the village. Since 1950, India has enacted and implemented many laws and social activities to protect and improve the socio-economic condition of its Dalit population by 1795, of all job in India. India democratically elected K.R.Narayan, a dalit, as the nation's president. Today there is no such practice like UN touchability; it is observance is criminal offence. However educational opportunities to Dalits in Kerala remain limited.

#### **Representation of Dalit in the Novels and Poems of Dr. Siddalingaiah:**

Siddalingaiah is a leading Kannada poet and public intellectual and the founder of the Dalit Sangharsha Samiti. He has played a powerful role in Dalit movement in Karnataka in the 1970s and 1980s. He has also participated in many agitations. His lyrics which are published as HolemaadigaraHaadu (Songs of Holey and Madiga) are often sung at public meetings and demonstrations. He has published several collections of poetry and an autobiography, OoruKeri(in two volumes). Like all other Dalit writings, Siddalingaiah's writings are also translated into English by many scholars; his autobiography is also rendered in English as AWord With You, World: The Autobiography of a Poet. He has been the Head of the Department of Kannada at the Bangalore University and a Member of Legislative Council. He is currently the chairman of Kannada Book Authority. Siddalingaiah (Born 1954, Magadi, Bangalore) is an Indian poet and playwright writing in the Kannada language, and a Dalit activist and politician. He is credited with starting the Dalit-Bandaya movement in Kannada and with starting the genre of Dalit writing. He is one of the founders of the Dalita Sangharsh Samiti along with B. Krishnappa. In 1988, at the age of 34, he became a member of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly and, in 2006, chairman of the Kannada Development Authority, a post with Cabinet rank that he held until 2008. He has been head of the Department of Kannada at Bangalore University and a

member of the University Syndicate of Kannada University, Hampi. He is acknowledged as a symbol of the Dalit movement and a leading public intellectual and Kannada poet. The atrocities committed by non-Dalit castes against the Dalits even in modern days in spite of laws against such atrocities, trigger vehement anger in the minds of Dalit Intellectuals. For them, literary discourses are no longer the aesthetic entertainments than tools. They use literature to express their anger. Their anger is against the society which has subjugated them. Whenever so-called upper caste people need the service of Dalits they make them enter their homes through the backdoor and in all other times their entry is prohibited.

**Siddalingayya's Ooru Keri** is one of the most important dalit autobiographies in Kannada. I think Siddalingayya's autobiography is important not only because he is an important dalit poets in Kannada. I think his book has a larger importance for dalit literature as a whole. *Ooru Keri* means neighbourhood' roughly, it refers to residential colony anyways. In this respect it is similar to *Vasti* an autobiography by the Marathi writer Vasant Moon. It has been pointed out by many that dalit autobiographies, contrary to other autobiographies, focus on the community rather than the individual. That is, an autobiography also becomes ethography as it were, but one from within. The remarkable feature of this book is that it is less a record of pain and suffering than of joy and success. The reader will perceive the oppression that Siddalingayya and his community go through but the author makes the reader see the power of dalits too. Dalit solidarity, struggle become frequent motifs here. No wonder in his afterword to this book D R Nagraj speaks of the 'power of poorman's laughter'. The reader of this book is repeatedly invited to laugh out at the naughtiness of the protagonist, or his friends, at the humorous side of occurrences. While the narrative does not trivialise the experiences, it nevertheless does not become a record only of the power of victimisers but tells how dalits wrest power for themselves. Importantly it relates the determination and the commitment of the dalits to shape their own life even when they are caught in highly subjected situations.

#### **Siddalingayya's Nanna Janagalu- MY PEOPLE**

*Who die of starvation ,who are kicked till they faint,  
Who cringe before others ,reaching out to hands and feet  
Who keep their hands folded,devotees of those above them ,  
These,these are my people.  
Who plough ,sow and harvest ,sweating in the sun  
Who take rest sighing heavily with fatigue  
Who go about empty-handed ,getting little to eat or wear,  
These,these are my people.  
Who carry dressed stone,raised roofs,build bungalows,  
And get crushed for their pains under the debris  
Who, fallen by the wayside,voiceless ,weep within themselves,  
These ,these are my people.  
Who ,treated to fiery speeches ,are scorched and burnt to ashes,  
Who, for those who feast on sweets with God's name on their lips,  
Stitch sandals and shoes ,these victims of usurers ,  
These ,these are my people.  
Who excavate gold but go without food,  
Who weave fine fabrics, but go themselves bare ,  
Who do what they are told,who subsist on mere air,  
These ,these are my people.*

#### **Siddalingayya as a poet:**

- *Holemadigara Haadu* (1975)
- *Saaviraaru Nadigalu* (Thousands of Rivers, 1979)
- *Kappu Kaadina Haadu* (The Song of the Black Forest, 1982)
- *Aayda Kavithegalu* (Selected Poems, 1997)
- *Meravanige* (Procession, 2000)
- *Nanna Janagalu mattu Itara Kavitegalu* (My People and Other Poems, 2005)

**Conclusion:**Dalit studies has the potential to fundamentally alter the historiographical map of India. The recent recognition by Indian academia of Ambedkar as a philosopher and social scientist who made important contributions to the study of Indian society and history, the surge in Dalit histories in the last

decade all around the academia, especially in the United States, all seem to suggest that a new set of questions are informing research and the study of India.