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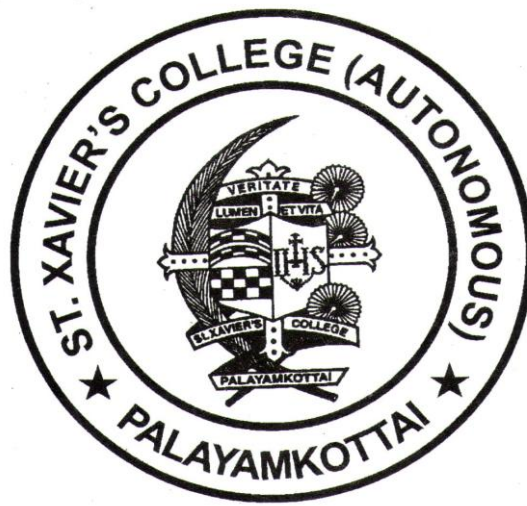
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Veritate Lumen et Vita
(Light and Life through Truth)



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THE DYNAMICS OF FRAGMENTED NARRATIVES: LIMITING EFFECTS OF CULTURE

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Abstract

Narratives are essentially understood as ‘_stories’, but they have a role which is more complex and more engaging in creating conditions for consciousness. In this globalized world, it has been made possible to establish a global economy at a larger scale, thanks to the force of science and technology. The political events that are shaping our perspectives today have made us accept and reconcile with the fact that even global political calculations are also made possible. It is still impossible to have a global political consciousness. This paper proposes to look at the reasons from diverge perspectives why it has been impossible to create a kind of global consciousness in political level. Towards creating a global political consciousness, one needs to encourage narratives from multiple perspectives. Fundamental questions of race, belonging and community that are raised through narratives help us develop consciousness which needs to have a humane understanding of the world beyond boundaries. But, it is also important to realize that narratives are not just what has been narrated. There are also narratives which go un-narrated, suppressed, unknown and silenced. These suppressed, fragmented, unorganized, illogical and deeply confusing narratives can be understood only through the contexts which rendered the victims voiceless or mute. This paper examines the scope of such narratives in creating consciousness and it also explores why narratives can not be understood from universal perspectives.

Keywords: Narratives, Culture Memory, Fragments, Race, Community, Belonging.

Narratives are not merely stories, but they are reflections of cultural understanding of the contextual realities. They are cultural practices which underline the transactions that occur in our society in different patterns and they create in subliminal levels collective consciousness of the nation. The fictional realities are created based on the every day interactions among individuals at personal, social, cultural and political levels. This process happens deeply below the level of consciousness and this results in the formation of sediments for cultural values. The world of realities is interpreted through the stories that created and narrated. These narratives form the very basis of one’s values and foundations of

one's life. The perceptions about the world and the influences that provoke one's action are deeply connected to these narratives.

Narratives are cultural ways of understanding, critiquing, debating and more specifically questioning issues related to life, politics, state and its apparatus which regulate our lives. Fundamental questions of race, belonging and community are raised through the narratives and these questions and interactions form the basis of one's cultural memory. The book *After Empire: Chinua Achebe and the Great African Novel* edited by Ruth Franklin (2008) observes : _Literature is replete with narratives and that makes it eternally relevant. Literatures are not just luxury for us. It is a life and death affair because we are fashioning a new man'. Arundathi Roy in her *Capitalism : A Ghost Story* stresses that _fiction can say what can not be said otherwise'. Narratives, in Arundathi Roy's words are _ the simplest ways of saying the most complicated things'. This process creates conditions for exploring _ a third space' , which in the words of Homi Baba in *The Location of Culture* (1994) _ a luminal' space through which differences can be negotiated. This process is essentially a social construct and this eventually leads towards protecting cultural, political, economic, ethnic and religious rights.

Narratives are not always expected to be linear, clear, coherent and understandable. They are at times deeply confusing, incoherent, complex and complicated. There are gaps and pauses and jumbled up sequences which make narratives a hotchpotch. The readers are challenged to hop back and forth in the timeline to understand the deeply embedded structures. Arundathi Roy's *Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is a text wherein the author has exploited the structures in such a way to offer clues to the readers to understand the inner world of confusion and chaos. SedicChrombe , a South African author of *My Journey from Apartheid* underlines the complexity in his rendering of personal stories of suffering and torture.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established to look into the cases of violation immediately after apartheid came to an end in South Africa. It records the testimonies of the victims, and those records are _narratives disfigured and dis-narrated' in the words of SedicChrombe. Of the countless number of victims, only a very few have turned up to narrate their stories in their collective responsibility, and those narratives too have gaps and pauses. They are a part of cultural memory as they carry the sediments of the cultural consciousness.

There are also stories untold. The victims do not come forward to narrate their stories for the obvious reasons of fear, disorientation or deep psychological wounds. When a victim

does not narrate his/her story, the victim, himself or herself becomes a story. Such stories are to be identified and debated for creating consciousness for better world. Sometimes, victims are dead and gone but the traces of their lives such as bones and tombs do the narration. Examples of such un-narrated stories are found in the fictions which were written based on Truth and Reconciliation Report. The fictions, Michael Ondaatje's *Anil Ghost*, Boris's *The Book of Bones*, David Paker's *Truth Commissioner*, Zoe Wocombs' *David Story* and Gilian Slovo's *Red Dust* emerged out as deep and complicated narratives which were recorded in the TRC Report.

Achille Mbembe, Cameroonian political theorist, talks about stories of oppression in his research and brings to light a pattern that abusive powers would employ to suppress the voices. *Anil's Ghost*, which is written under the Srilankan Civil War contexts *The Book of Bones*, which deals with Rwandan Massacre, *Truth Commissioner*, which explores multiple truths, *David Story* which touches upon post-apartheid conditions, and *Red Dust* which narrates fictional tale based on true events are few examples of fictions having fragmented narratives. Achille Mbembe uses his socio-political theory to discuss at length such narratives. Some narratives are reconstructed by 'reading bones' as in the case of *Anil's Ghost*, some other narratives are reconstructed by 'reading the tombs' as in the case of *The Book of Bones* and a few other narratives are reconstructed by 'interpreting the silences' and 'reading the marks of injury' on the bodies of the victims. While examining the cause of death by recreating their lives, an argument about the nation is made. The State which is a larger power body, engages in political management of human population through their exposure to death. Achille Mbembe, in his theory of Necropolitics brings to public consciousness the dangerous process of political management of life and death done by the States.

Necropolitics is a socio-political theory which identifies and makes arguments against the use of socio-political power. Achille radicalizes Foucault's *Biopolitics* and goes to the extent of remodelling his theory in line with existential realities. The political calculation of life and death by creating categories of people is what defines the core of his theory. Narratives are suppressed when voice is stifled and when movement of large groups is restrained. This leads to the control of space, pauperization and precarization of people. These two strategies are adopted to create conditions of poverty and uncertainty in people, which will eventually result in death and destruction. Apart from these, wars, genocide, refugee camps and ecocide are also adopted to carry out large scale destruction. This arbitrary power that regulates human life by advancing death is very dangerous as it leads to total elimination. The question that has to be raised here is that how positive, power over life that

States can enjoy, become a deadly form of power. Achille attempts to answer this disturbing question by stating that human masses are eliminated in the name of protection and survival of a nation or a people or a class or a civilization.

Fragmented narratives offer us clues to understand the context of victimization and abuse of power. Unfortunately such narratives are not heard for the obvious reasons. The oppression experienced by the displaced and disgruntled people are expressed through language which is incoherent and deeply confusing. This is because of the failure of structural semblances in linguistic levels which clog the experience and expression.

Homi Bhabha in his *Location of Culture* touches upon this condition and asserts that the first condition of categorization is exclusion of those ‘unwanted or hated’ for political reasons. Those are termed as ‘possible dangers’ or ‘threats’. Security is the lens through which it will be seen if a person is an insider or an outsider. Again, the differences and identities are formed through the lens of security and so security has become inadvertently a cultural apparatus. The subjugation of life to the power of death, biological division of human species and offering justification of the extermination of those considered inferior are angles that are to be explored in the fragmented narratives.

Achille, in his 2003 *Lecture on Necropolitics*, argues that creation of death-worlds or the status of living-dead are processes through which political management of life can be effectively done. There are three factors which determine the creation of death-world namely Necroeconomy (market forces deciding our lives and death), Necropolitics (political masters or the State which decides the ‘space’ to be granted) and production of death in a large scale (read as State terror). In this large scale production of death lies so many untold stories and dis-narrated narratives. Political and social contestation will be viewed from the point of view of ‘interference’ on the administration of state. In his *Exit from Democracy*, Chapter ‘Relations Without Desire’, Achille talks about this dangerous phenomenon in detail. When States can’t tolerate political and social contestation, they will encourage ‘shared violence’ by which weapons and licenses maybe given to agencies and people to kill. In a society possession and non-possession of weapons defines one’s social value, social bonds are understandably destroyed and power can be acquired and exercised only at the price of another life. In *Anil’s Ghost*, Michael Ondaatje portrays this trend by relating the State’s excesses to ‘helpless enforced conditions’ to silence people in order to accord them the status of living –dead.

In *Truth Commissioner* and *Red Dust*, one can find the instances of predation of natural resources, which is also one of the processes of production of death in large scale. The

exploitation of natural resources and displacement of indigenous people, the advancement of different modes of killing and offering different moral justifications are ways in which small doses of death that structure the everyday life of individuals towards elimination of human population are carried out. The era that one can think and understand has come to an end. One needs to explore different ways of talking about these violations. Compartmentalization has to come to an end and it reduces the importance of real problem. There is a connection between climate change and caste, capitalism and internationalism, caste based violence and economic diversity, history and politics and silence and violence.

Now, the question of how such experiences of oppression can be narrated. The narratives which are linear are not capable enough to carry the deeply disturbing expressions. Achille captures this view in his lecture stating that ‘dis-narrated’ narratives narrate the experiences in a language which is beyond boundaries. It is also argued in *Critique of Black Reason* that there are cultural imprints which determine the nature of narratives. Negotiation of differences in a language which is mutually intelligible and values which are commonly shared are conditions which might facilitate resolution of conflicts. The cultural way of understanding is crucial and this understanding is highly complicated as different cultures view ‘narratives’ in the framework of their own cultural moorings.

Michael G. Barnhart in —*Getting Beyond Cross-talk*’ refers to certain aspects of narratives which normally go undebated. Narratives do have some underpinnings that are to be culturally appreciated. Cultural way of understanding calls for culturally sensible arguments. This goes against the spirit of universal understanding of narratives. If universal values are to be negotiated in the context of conflicting cultures, we need to create scope for a third space, which is not only imaginary but also transitional. Narratives are to be subjected to cultural contexts which act as forcing functions. This suppression can also be called ‘fragmented’ narratives. Gayatri Spivak is of the opinion that the third space that one creates to interact, relate and connect is transitional in nature. The liminal and imaginary space has created conditions for interaction which is to be culturally limiting.

Fragmented narratives are expressions beyond oppressive forces. Paul Smit in his essay ‘Political Responsibility of Teaching Literature’ raises the question of ‘narratives’ which are subjected to cultural interpretation. He quotes the context of literature teaching and puts forward some fundamental questions about the purpose and values attached to the teaching process in general and literature teaching in particular. He says that teaching is essentially a part of system of reproduction for society. It depends on the agent’s ability to hierarchize, discriminate, by way of reading recognizing, appreciating various legitimated cultural

markers and symbols. The novels *Anil's Ghost*, *The Book of Bones*, *Truth Commissioners* and *Red Dust* are examples of the cultural contexts which frame our understanding of these novels. Paul Smit quotes Gayatri Spivak when he talks about how text has to be negotiated in a classroom. A text is a cultural code which has the power to influence and alter the social relations which subsist in the classroom. When a text is negotiated in a foreign pedagogical situation, it naturally assimilates into that cultural capital and this assimilation is 'very natural' for the fact that the cultural interactions between the conflicting cultures decide and influence 'the understanding' of the readers. A text has to be looked at not only from the point of view of cultural historian, but also from the point of view of literary critic and both these roles interact and critically interrupt. In other words, when a foreign text is brought into a classroom, it has to be necessarily alienated. Any text is not at home is a pre-requisite to understand it. When a text is negotiated in the classroom, we create scope for secondary literature, which is not just a receptive activity, but a productive process in compelling sense. This production of secondary literature is technically called 'fragmented narratives' in the words of Gayatri Spivak. This has been possible because of the force of 'resistance'.

Resistance to the text that informs us and elides our social relations is an act of agency. The subject position that a text enjoys has to be replaced with the contexts of reading and the participants in the process of meaning making. They co-create the meaning by drawing wealth of experience from their own social and political lives. This also results in 'reacting to the texts' through writings which are not only critical but also deeply reflective. This is how structures of the texts are fragmented to subvert the 'the all-powerful texts' to a process of compelling interpretation. This implies that there is no universal narrative. A text has to be grounded to the context of interaction and here to contextualize, a text is not to go the context which has created the text in focus but to bring the text to the present context where it has been placed, read and interpreted. Pedagogy of humanities as an arena of cultural explanation has to be compelled to question the explanation of culture.

To sum up, narratives are influenced by factors which are social, political, religious, cultural and ethnic. Humans weave stories and through which they create fictional realities. These fictional realities determine our lives and hopes, and all our interpretations of the world of experiences are based on the fictional reality. Every text has a narration and often the most powerful narrations are the ones which have not yet been told. Even untold and un-narrated narrations too have significance and impact in our lives. In human history, narrations that are told are layered in several underpinnings. Theories help to understand narratives and guard one from the 'all influencing' totalizing narratives. Universal narratives are difficult to

understand as there are limitations of cultural understandings of specific contexts. As a result of this, one cannot have global political consciousness. Although, global political calculations can be achieved through common discourse practices, global political consciousness is still onerous to understand. Let the narratives be always limited by cultures which can be incoherent, illogical, unclear and complex. These limits that culture imposes on the narratives make the stories ‘own and real’ and ‘ever compelling’. Any act of insertion of the universality into fragmented narratives will create partial and ‘incipient de-nationalism’ as system of representation, interact and interrelate in opposite direction.

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WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE: VOICES, VISIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

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Abstract: This article examines how the literary portrayal of women has evolved through the triadic lens of the Muse, Mentor, and Mystic. This approach shifts the roles of women from inactive archetypes to proactive agents of transformation. Women have historically been identified by legendary motifs or marginal voices or archetypal figures that circumscribe their agency, such as Aphrodite the temptress, Penelope the patient wife, and Medea the vengeful mother. However, modern English literature and English translations have begun to resist, reinterpret, redefine, and recreate these stories, placing women not only as objects of mystery or inspiration but also as producers, mentors, and voices for the voiceless. This research shows how women authors have moved from the periphery to the centre of literary discourse by closely examining works by Margaret Atwood, Toni Morrison, Arundhati Roy, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and translated works by Clarice Lispector and Olga Tokarczuk.

Keywords: Archetype, Muse-Mentor-Mystic, Female Voice, Femininity, and Margin to Centre.

Introduction

For centuries, women in artistic endeavours were limited to the roles of muses, peripheral voices, or mystical archetypes, whose autonomy was restricted by mythological and patriarchal narratives. Margaret Atwood says, "You are a woman with a man inside watching a woman." Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar contend in *The Madwoman in the Attic* that "women have been objectified as the 'Angel' or the 'Monster,' both projections of male desire and fear" (17). This dichotomy consigned women to either mere inspiration or hideous insurrection, hence constraining genuine female subjectivity. These archetypes, from the patient Penelope waiting for Odysseus to the destructive Medea to the ethereal muse who inspires male creativity, have been used in stories to restrict women's power while also supporting the moral or mythological frames created by male writers. This shows how myth has acted as a "patriarchal script," giving women just a few parts (Gilbert and Gubar 23).

These depictions, firmly rooted in literary traditions and cultural awareness, have led to what Adrienne Rich refers to as the "radical disinheritance" of women, in which "the power of naming has been denied to women" (Rich 20). Women were allowed to be in tales, but they were not typically allowed to write them. If they did, their voices were

generally seen as secondary or unimportant. Hélène Cixous asserts, "Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing" (Cixous 877). This demand for *écriture féminine* highlights the need for women to not only exist in literature but to actively influence its discourse.

Introduction

For centuries, women in artistic endeavours were limited to the roles of muses, peripheral voices, or mystical archetypes, whose autonomy was restricted by mythological and patriarchal narratives. Margaret Atwood says, "You are a woman with a man inside watching a woman." Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar contend in *The Madwoman in the Attic* that "women have been objectified as the 'Angel' or the 'Monster,' both projections of male desire and fear" (17). This dichotomy consigned women to either mere inspiration or hideous insurrection, hence constraining genuine female subjectivity. These archetypes, from the patient Penelope waiting for Odysseus to the destructive Medea to the ethereal muse who inspires male creativity, have been used in stories to restrict women's power while also supporting the moral or mythological frames created by male writers. This shows how myth has acted as a "patriarchal script," giving women just a few parts (Gilbert and Gubar 23).

These depictions, firmly rooted in literary traditions and cultural awareness, have led to what Adrienne Rich refers to as the "radical disinheritance" of women, in which "the power of naming has been denied to women" (Rich 20). Women were allowed to be in tales, but they were not typically allowed to write them. If they did, their voices were generally seen as secondary or unimportant. Hélène Cixous asserts, "Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing" (Cixous 877). This demand for *écriture féminine* highlights the need for women to not only exist in literature but to actively influence its discourse.

This article answers that demand by looking at how modern women authors and the female characters they create go beyond these historical limits. Through the triadic lens of Muse, Mentor, and Mystic, it tries to reveal the shifting roles of women not just as passive figures of inspiration or legendary mystery but as sovereign producers, transformational guides, and prophetic speakers. This research posits that contemporary literature increasingly puts women in pivotal roles of narrative authority, cultural criticism, and creative re-envisioning, as seen by the works of many writers such as Margaret Atwood, Toni Morrison, Arundhati Roy, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and

others. This kind of change challenges established binaries and creates a literary space where the female voice is not only heard but also taken very seriously.

Reclaiming the Myth: From Margins to Centre

Contemporary female authors across the globe are methodically deconstructing the entrenched binaries that have categorised women as either virtuous muses or dangerous subversives. Their work shifts female characters from the periphery of myth to the core of narrative power, converting old tales into arenas of resistance and re-creation.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie begins her story, *Purple Hibiscus*, with a simple but powerful act of rebellion: "Things started to fall apart when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion" (Adichie 3). That one act of rebellion marks the start of Kambili's spiritual and narrative agency. She grew up in a strict patriarchal society. Bell Hooks says, "The margin is a site of radical possibility, a space of resistance" (Hooks 145). Adichie's Kambili represents that potential, and her silence becomes a furnace for change.

Arundhati Roy also shows how memory can be a battleground for women's stories in *The God of Small Things*: "It is curious how sometimes the memory of death lives on for so much longer than the memory of the life that it purloined" (Roy 6). Roy depicts women as living repositories of pain and resistance, reflecting Judith Butler's assertion that "narratives make identities legible, and thus politically potent" (Butler 90).

Penelope takes back her own legendary story in Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* when she says, "Now that I'm dead, I know everything" (Atwood 1). Penelope, who was once the perfect example of patient loyalty, becomes an acerbic critic who shows how quiet costs women in ancient writings. Adrienne Rich refers to these actions as "re-vision," which means looking back, seeing things in a new way, or coming at an old text from a new critical angle (Rich 35). Atwood's Penelope achieves just that: she goes from being a passive object to an active narrator.

Toni Morrison's writings also put women's tales at the centre of historical memory. In *Beloved*, Sethe's suffering and troubled history serve as the narrative's central focus: "It was not a story to pass on" (324). Morrison, on the other hand, insists on telling it, giving Black women the power to talk about their own survival and suffering. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar remind us that these kinds of writings are "important counter-narratives to a male-dominated literary canon" (Gilbert and Gubar 24).

The Hour of the Star by Clarice Lispector starts with cosmic roots instead of a human confession: "All the world began with a yes. One molecule said yes to another molecule and life was born" (Lispector 11). Lispector's narrator is both a creator and an observer, mixing existential philosophy with a woman's point of view. Hélène Cixous contends, "Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing" (Cixous 877). Lispector exhibits this by transforming women from story subjects into narrative builders.

Olga Tokarczuk's *Flights* is another strong rethinking of female autonomy. It says, "Our bodies are the only things we truly own" (Tokarczuk 97). In a work that examines travel, migration, and anatomy, Tokarczuk argues that women's physique and awareness are fundamental to comprehending humanity. This concurs with Toril Moi's assertion that feminist literature "must incorporate the female body as a crucial site of both oppression and resistance" (Moi 54).

These authors all agree that myths are not static things that we pass down from generation to generation. Instead, they turn it into a live text that can show the many perspectives of women and take back control of the story. They realise Gayatri Spivak's aspiration of empowering the subaltern not only to articulate their narratives but also to reconstruct the historical narrative (Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", 271). These actions of literary reclamation reimagine myth not as a tool of patriarchal control but as a dynamic territory where women's voices are no longer echoes in a male chorus but the dominant melody itself.

The Muse as Creator

In literature, the Muse has always been an unassuming figure, a lovely source of inspiration for masculine artists, but never an artist herself. Modern women authors take this idea apart and put the Muse back in her place as a creator in her own right: a woman who writes, imagines, and crafts the story world instead of just inspiring it. Adrienne Rich makes a strong point when she says, "The repossession by women of our bodies will bring far more essential change to human society than the seizing of power in any other realm" (Rich 55). However, modern women authors completely change this way of thinking by making the Muse an active producer of tales, meanings, and even entire universes.

Penelope doesn't wait quietly for Odysseus anymore in Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad*. Instead, she tells her own epic story, saying, "Now that I'm dead, I know everything" (Atwood 1). Penelope, who used to be quiet and patient, becomes an all-

knowing narrator who takes back her narrative from the Homeric epic. She goes on to remark, "I've always been a storyteller." "Facts aren't everything" (Atwood 3). She rewrites myth via her stories, going from muse to writer, taking control of the tale and changing how her story, and by extension, women's roles in myth, will be remembered.

The Hour of the Star, she says, "I write because I have nothing better to do in this world." And also, since writing is a matter of life and death for me" (Lispector 16). Lispector's narrator, Rodrigo, struggles with the moral duties of being an author as he tries to write a novel about the poor Macabéa. In this context, the Muse is not a passive entity but the origin of existential creativity. The Muse is now productive, not just of narratives but of ontology itself. In this context, invention is an existential imperative. Lispector's female characters, and even her narrators, have an inherent urge to create. They won't just be mute figures in someone else's story.

Toni Morrison, as both a mentor and a muse, says in *Beloved*, "Sethe," he says, "me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow." She shakes her head. "You're your best thing, Sethe. You are," (273), taking back the story of self-worth and power. Morrison writes in *Sula*, "It was a fine cry, loud and long, but it had no bottom and it had no top, just circles and circles of sorrow" (Morrison 174). This shows that women are the ones who shape stories. Morrison's vocabulary becomes the act of creation itself, creating a universe where Black women are both the focus of experience and the ones who form cultural memory. "Our words are not just sounds; they are actions; they have power," Bell Hooks says (Hooks 168).

In *Americanah*, Ifemelu finds her voice via writing: "Why did people ask 'What is it about?' as if a novel had to be about only one thing?" This shows how inventive Adichie is. (Adichie 298). Ifemelu, the main character, realises how powerful her own voice is when she says, "She understood suddenly that a woman's voice is a weapon" (Adichie 176). Ifemelu is no longer just a background figure for men; she is now the main player in her own story. She uses her blog and personal thoughts to talk about race, gender, and identity. This corresponds with Gayatri Spivak's exhortation to "restore the subaltern's capacity to speak and be heard" (Spivak 271).

In *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy reimagines the muse as a poet and a political critic. She writes, "There are things you can't do, like write letters to a prisoner or fall in love with someone you shouldn't" (Roy 180). In Roy's universe, women write poems that are also acts of resistance and create linguistic and political opposition. The muse is redefined as a symbol of independence and intricacy. "He told

her she belonged in a poem but never in the world" (Roy 114). Roy's ladies reject this limit; they want room in both real life and writing. Elaine Showalter says that "Women writers define themselves as creators of meaning rather than passive symbols" (Showalter 13).

In *Flights*, Olga Tokarczuk transforms the muse into a mapmaker for human experience. She says, "Maps are the simplest of all stories." "They tell us how we relate to space, to others, and to ourselves" (Tokarczuk 151). In her stories, women are explorers, adventurers, philosophers, and storytellers who navigate new intellectual and emotional frontiers instead of just being quiet sources of inspiration. This aligns with Judith Butler's assertion that "narrative is crucial for the intelligibility of the self" (Butler 79) and "serves as a mechanism for navigating identity" (Butler 90).

Together, these writers change the Muse from something that men create to something that creates story and meaning on its own. In the new literary universe, the Muse is no longer a quiet and unassuming figure who just exists to service masculine stories. Instead, she is a woman who writes herself and the world into being.

Mentors and Matriarchs

For hundreds of years, the mentor archetype in literature has mostly been male, with characters like Gandalf, Merlin, and Tiresias. Female characters, on the other hand, have generally been witches, midwives, or remote matriarchs whose knowledge and wisdom remained circumscribed and not admired and cherished. Mentorship in literature has historically been gendered, with male mentors directing female characters, often perpetuating patriarchal conventions. Elaine Showalter says, "Women have been culturally conditioned to silence themselves, even when they possess knowledge vital for survival" (Showalter 45). Nevertheless, modern female authors are redefining this image by creating female mentors who serve as both stores of knowledge and active conduits of cultural memory, political insight, and physical autonomy.

In Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Baby Suggs changes the conventional matriarch of the home into a communal leader whose lectures call for radical self-love: "It was not a story to pass on" (Morrison 324). The unwillingness to "pass on" trauma here shows a new sort of mentoring that values healing above never-ending cycles of inherited sorrow. Bell Hooks says that "healing is an act of political resistance" (Hooks 214), and Morrison's Baby Suggs shows this via her spiritual leadership and her dedication to caring for others.

In the same way, Olga Tokarczuk changes the idea of mentoring in *Flights* to

include both mental and physical aspects. "Our bodies are the only things we truly own," her narrator says (Tokarczuk 97). The body itself becomes a place to pass on information, teach, and leave a legacy. In Tokarczuk's world, female mentors teach not only with words but also with their bodies, reminding us that our bodies are texts that can be read and understood. Judith Butler's statement that the body is "a site of cultural inscription and resistance" (Butler 92) is quite relevant here since Tokarczuk's female protagonists own both the story and their bodies.

In Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*, Aunt Lydia has a complicated role as both an enforcer and a subverter of patriarchal rule. She says, "The problem with a woman standing up for herself is that she gets called a bitch" (Atwood 208). Aunt Lydia pretends to support Gilead's government, but she really works from the inside to change it by teaching the next generation of women hidden truths. Her position exemplifies Gayatri Spivak's concept that the subaltern must sometimes "speak in a borrowed voice" to endure and undermine repressive regimes (Spivak 279). Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's main characters also become mentors, especially when they narrate stories. Ifemelu realises in *Americanah* that "a woman's voice is a weapon" (Adichie 176). She asserts, "Culture does not shape individuals." People create culture (*We Should All Be Feminists*, 2014). Ifemelu becomes a guide for those who are trying to figure out ethnicity, identity, and gender via her blog and conversations. Her narrative actions of mentoring correspond with Hélène Cixous's assertion that "writing for a woman must spring from the body as well as from words" (Cixous 880).

In *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy shows how women may help each other in both subtle and deep ways. Ammu teaches her kids how to be strong and enjoy things that are outside the rules of society. For example, "He told her she belonged in a poem but never in the world" (Roy 114). Roy illustrates how matriarchs convey not just traditional survival tactics but also the perilous awareness of violating limits. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar contend that these women "write the body into history" by rejecting silence (Gilbert and Gubar 29).

In these many works, women authors change the stereotype of the mentor and matriarch from a wise woman on the sidelines or a quiet supporter into a major figure of knowledge, power, and transforming counsel. These female mentors are no longer in the shadows; they are living examples of Adrienne Rich's idea of "the re-visionary task of women writing themselves into history" (Rich 37). They educate not just conventional information, but also how to be rebellious, strong, and think of new ways to change the

world.

Mystics and Prophets

Women writers' use of mysticism has historically been seen to be an irrational area, with whispers and visions that patriarchal standards consider too much or crazy. For modern women authors, mystical experience serves as a radical mode of knowledge, a means to articulate realities that transcend the limitations of logical discourse. Hélène Cixous contends that women's writing "does not speak in linear narrative but in flashes, in disruptions, in a language of the body" (Cixous 881). This very disruptive aspect is what gives mysticism its strength in literature written by women.

In Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, mystical imagery is inextricably linked to the body and trauma. Roy adds, "It is curious how sometimes the memory of death lives on for so much longer than the memory of the life that it purloined" (Roy 6). The past takes on a ghostly form, haunting the living with heavenly but excruciating clarity. The mystical is not simply a way to get away from things; it's also a way for women to see injustice, pain, and strength. Judith Butler says, "Narrative is the means by which the unspeakable becomes speakable" (Butler 93). For Roy's ladies, mystical perception is just this: saying what can't be spoken.

The Hour of the Star by Clarice Lispector considers mysticism as molecular, a calm, intimate awareness that resides in the tiniest parts of reality. Lispector's style breaks with conventional narrative, which is in line with Trinh T. Minh-ha's claim that "to write is to return to the body" (Minh-ha 22). Lispector uses mysticism to say that feminine creativity is a cosmic power.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie combines mysticism with strong emotions and cultural subtleties. She uses quiet not as a way to give in, but as a powerful way to fight and wake up. Kambili writes of her aunt's house in *Purple Hibiscus* with quiet respect: 'Laughter always rang out in Auntie Ifeoma's apartment, from the kitchen, from the living room, from the tiny bathroom' (Adichie 142). This happy mood, which is quite different from the strict religiousness of her father's home, shows a spiritual change that is based on the feminine domesticity. In this context, mysticism is not associated with visions or heavenly encounters, but rather with the restoration of pleasure, community, and physical autonomy, a holy experience integrated into quotidian actions. Gloria Anzaldúa writes in *Borderlands/La Frontera* that "Spirituality is tangible in the actions we choose, in our words, in the breath of our bodies" (88). Adichie posits that female characters fight the hierarchies of both religion and patriarchy via their nuanced, lived

spiritualities. When women laugh and take charge, the divine takes on a new meaning. It becomes a powerful force that questions old ways of doing things and calls out a deeper, liberating truth.

In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison's mysticism connects the living and the dead, the earthly and the divine. In Morrison's tales, mysticism is a way to get back forgotten history and silent anguish. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar characterise these works as "counter-narratives reclaiming women's hidden knowledge" (Gilbert and Gubar 27). Morrison's spiritual insights, therefore, transform into acts of historical reclamation and prophecy. In Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*, mysticism has a darkly prophetic side. Aunt Lydia's private writings show the facts that are concealed under Gilead's religious facade: "The trouble with a woman standing up for herself is that she's labelled a bitch" (Atwood 208). Her secret story takes on the character of a prophet, a lady who shares forbidden information. This prophetic role exemplifies Gayatri Spivak's assertion that the subaltern must sometimes "speak in codes to be heard at all" (Spivak 280).

Conclusion: From Inspiration to Sovereignty

Modern women's literature asserts that women are no longer only muses, peripheral moms, or mystics enveloped in quiet. Instead, they become makers, builders, artists, artisans, teachers, and seers who live in and change narratives. Morrison states in *Sula*, "The future was hers as much as it was his" (Morrison 91). The triadic framework of Muse, Mentor, and Mystic illustrates how literature has evolved into a potent domain whereby women inscribe themselves into history, so reconstituting both myth and significance. In the end, the female voice is not only heard; it is listened to. Women's tales are becoming essential scripts for rethinking civilisation and reimagining culture where there is no single story.

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EATING MUCH? RESISTANT GENDERED BODIES IN NECROPOLITICS**Dr. C. Seema**

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Abstract

In postmodern societies across the world, traditional modes of sovereign power have long been replaced by what Foucault calls, biopower. Biopower, with its benign emphasis on the protection of life (as against the threat of death), regulates various aspects of human existence, including body, health and sexuality, in the garb of promoting the well-being and productivity of society as a whole. Ironically, it also creates self-destructive beings that in gendered bodies pre-empt biopower from debilitating to necropower. This paper examines the resistant power in such devalued bodies, the victims of societal necropolitics. It also explores the representational politics and power relations at play in the novels, Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* (2007) and Chelsea G Summers' *A Certain Hunger* (2020), which deal with starvation and cannibalism respectively and their approaches to the body.

Keywords: Biopolitics, Necropolitics, Carnophallogocentrism, Starvation, Cannibalism.

A poststructuralist interrogation of binaries through a reading of Foucault's concept of biopolitics examines the operation of power in modern societies through the regulation and control of entire populations, with a focus on their biological and social lives. Although biopolitics and biopower have been the basis of several works, such as providing a model for world politics (Roberts 1938), an examination of scientific racism (Kuttner 1967) and a study of anti-capitalist insurrection (Hardt and Negri 2000), Mbembe's critique of the theory is particularly fascinating. Mbembe's necropolitics questions the concept of biopolitics by highlighting the ways in which power is exercised through the control of death rather than the management of life. Though Foucault acknowledges how biopower might result in the subjugation of the non-normative population, Mbembe's necropolitics examines how some populations are treated as expendable and disposable, thereby creating a new form of sovereignty based on the power to kill a reading that posits a dire threat to the non-normative gender. This paper examines the woman's body as a site of resistance and what happens to those bodies who have 'offended' the collective cultural consciousness of the society. It comments on these victims of societal necropolitics, these aporias, whose devalued bodies (as

against Mbembe's valuation of life in terms of utility or Puar's reading of queer people of colour as non-valuable populations) have ironically become sites of subjective identity. The paper examines two diametrically opposite novels, Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* (2007) and Chelsea G Summers' *A Certain Hunger* (2020), one that explores vegetarianism and starvation and the other, gourmandism and cannibalism and how both posit woman's body as a site of resistance and contention. In doing so, the female protagonists in the novels refuse to play into the biopolitics of the age. It comments on the body as a space that reflects consumerism, globalization and political incursion of postmodern times. The paper charts the movement from biopower to necropower in these novels through the Derridean idea of carnophallogocentrism that establishes the meat-eating man at the dominant centre.

According to Foucault, biopower emerged in the 18th century as a new form of power that was based on the idea of "life itself" as a political and social concern and sought to —normalize‖ —healthy‖ behaviour through medical treatments and interventions to advancing social policies and programs designed to promote certain kinds of behaviour or lifestyles. Though Foucault acknowledges how biopower might result in the subjugation of the non-normative population, his view of the biopolitics is largely a positive political rationality which takes the administration of life and populations as its subject. Biopolitics views the population as a biological and social entity that can be managed and regulated through various forms of intervention and control. Mbembe's notion of necropolitics questions the concept of biopolitics by highlighting the ways in which power is exercised through the control of death, rather than the management of life. Mbembe's necropolitics examines how some populations are treated as expendable and disposable, thereby creating a new form of sovereignty based on the power to kill a reading that posits a dire threat to the non-normative gender.

Food is a major biopower. The act of eating for women is both biological and symbolic. They cook, eat, feed, starve and serve. This connections among food, body and power is central to the works of many women writers. Woman's body becomes a site that reflect consumerism, globalization and political incursion of postmodern times. The disciplining of bodies through physical exercises is a powerful biopolitical trope as unfit bodies are less useful than the fit ones. Even non-institutionalized forms of exercise and diets have become trends that lead the digital nomads. The contemporary world is driven by a desire of oneness, a subterranean longing coded in love, physical desire, religious fervour, fad diets and consumerist trends (Dalgona coffee, coffee mug cakes, banana bread etc.) but silhouetted within these exhortations to have a healthy lifestyle is the image of the self-

destructive or the subjective body that defies attempts at universalizing. While the dominant image in our society may be that of a healthy, good-looking youngster or people hitting the gym, reports on rising obesity, self-harm, and drug abuse. The self-destructive body is a body that self-destroys rather than becoming a healthy temple and is open to criticism, condescension and condemnation, a necropolitical dispensation of an undesirable, uncaring and hence, dispensable body. Such a subjective woman whose yearnings and desires do not coincide with the normative yearnings of the society becomes a Foucauldian anomaly-fracturing and rupturing the fabric of society and culture. A woman must be then isolated to ensure the non-corruption/contamination of the world at large. The subjective, isolated woman's body is then assigned, in Mbembe's term a —differential value^{ll} and she becomes —disposable^{ll}. In the postmodern world, women writers explore these 'subjective' choices of food that women make and the turbulent relation between these choices and the subject's body- a body over which she often lacks power or control. The need for autonomy over one's body and choices is emphasized in the writings of women writers who deal with such topics. Though Kang's *The Vegetarian* and Summers' *A Certain Hunger* are set in very different social milieu and on either extreme of the food spectrum, the concerns of both Kang and Summers seem to concur on food, body and autonomy.

Derrida's notion of carnophallogocentrism places the carnivorous male in a position of centrality within Western culture. Meat eating is often seen as a marker of status and power and is often associated with traditional masculinity. At the same time, the act of killing and consuming animal flesh involves a literal embodiment of carnophallogocentric values. The process of animal slaughter and meat consumption reinforces the divide between human and non-human, masculine and feminine and can reinforce notions of dominance and superiority of one over the other. Derridean carnophallogocentrism, aside from reading the dominance of the masculine discourse, underpins a sacrificial structure that turns Foucault's biopolitics to Mbembe's necropolitics. The devouring patriarch in Kang's *The Vegetarian* is one such metaphor for necropolitics and is represented in almost all men that Yeong-hye associates within the novel. The theme of starvation is central to Kang's novel. The protagonist, Yeong-hye, decides to become a vegetarian after having a disturbing dream. However, her decision is not just about abstaining from meat; she begins to reject all forms of food, even to the point of starving herself. The decision to become a vegetarian by a seemingly ordinary housewife in a primarily meat-eating society shocks and offends her husband, who is embarrassed by her behaviour in front of his colleagues. Yeong-hye's family and society in general view her as strange and abnormal. If Yeong-he's vegetarianism and

subsequent starvation can be read as a gendered resistance to a deeply patriarchal Korean society, Dorothy's gourmandism and subsequent cannibalism in Summer's *A Certain Hunger* can be seen as gendered resistance to a fetishized capitalistic economy. Ironically, Dorothy's first victim is a vegan.

Summers' *A Certain Hunger* represents the fetishization of biopolitical attempts to stay fit and clean in the contemporary American society. Dorothy, the protagonist in the novel, is a food critic whose palate is jaded with a range of food, from truffles to *Lingua con le Olive*. She must look for something else, something *more*, to tempt her jaded palate and so she cannibalizes her lovers. Cannibalism is the central theme in the novel and is used as a metaphor for various forms of consumption and power dynamics in a capitalistic, competitive society. Dorothy's relationships with the people she eats are often exploitative and transactional, echoing the power dynamics that exist in many other kinds of relationships. Furthermore, the novel critiques the traditional gender roles and expectations that often limit women's power and agency. By making the protagonist a cannibal, the author subverts traditional ideas about what is and is not acceptable for women to do and consume.

If we are what we eat, Dorothy's choices seem quite deliberate and in an ironic counterpoint to *The Vegetarian*, her first victim is a vegan. The gourmand in Dorothy is unable to distinguish between Giovanni's capricious tempers and sexual desires and imputes it to his denial of meat, calling him a —poor vegan fool (Summers 84). Wilful vegetarianism and stubborn starvation in the gendered bodies of the patriarchal Korean society becomes a counterpoint to the bingeing gourmand and cannibalistic woman in the plentiful foodgasmic American society. Dorothy's cannibalism can be seen as a way of rejecting capitalistic values of the food industry and asserting her own agency and desires. She asserts her defiance by consuming human flesh instead of animals bringing her own way of 'ethical eating' to the table. So, while cannibalism is the primary focus of the novel, the portrayal of the food industry and the critique of capitalism serve to contextualize the protagonist's actions and offer a broader commentary on the values and power structures of our society. If *A Certain Hunger* highlights fetishization of American hedonistic capitalism, Kang's *The Vegetarian* hints at the incongruity between South Korea's economic progress and its relative cultural backwardness. The novel presents a critique of the persistent patriarchy in the East.

The contemporary consumerist culture offers a plethora of choices yet social status is determined through one's ability in controlling appetites rather than fulfilling them. In a capitalistic era where power must be rationally explained and culturally fuelled, the woman's body becomes a powerful source of Foucauldian biopower in the play of biopolitics which

debilitates to necropolitics when the patriarchal society decides who gets to live and who must starve. The woman's body, while —acted upon by the external patriarchal agency, also becomes a site of internal personal resistance. Food, and the act of eating and drinking may have a lot of subtle connotations associated with them and the self-destructive body, in the form of starving woman or the cannibalistic woman, maybe an easily ignored figure of necropolitics. However, such bodies demonstrate that feeding and eating are not simply basic necessities of life but are indissolubly linked with questions of gender, power, politics and control. *The Vegetarian* depicts a woman who by refusing food rejects an all-pervasive and perilous violence even at a cost of herself. *A Certain Hunger* depicts a woman who through the act of ingestion defies introjection and chooses her own path at the cost of human lives. In summary, it is not starvation or cannibalism per se that is important but their function as signifiers for female appetite and resistance. Female appetite, whether excessive or dysfunctional, is met with disapproval if it is not aimed towards serving male needs. The woman's body in such instances becomes a subjective agency of resistance within the collective power dynamics. The starving body and the cannibalistic body ironically becomes weapons in the calculus of biopower.

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**K-DRAMA AS VISUAL COMMENTARY: ANALYZING SELF-HARM IN K-
DRAMA AS A MIRROR OF THE AGGRESSIVE SOUTH-KOREAN SOCIETY
LEADING TO THE COMPLEXITIES OF MENTAL WELLNESS**

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—Death is merely a means of ending the pain I'm in. I refuse to struggle to survive anymore.‖

– Choi Yee Jae-*Death's Game*

Abstract

K-drama is gaining popularity worldwide for its beautiful depiction of stories. It is always known for its popular romantic tropes with a tinge of second-lead characters to make the viewers more engaged. It also gives importance to the topic of suicide with sensitivity and some K-dramas have addressed the idea of mental well-being as a storyline to create a sense of awareness among the viewers, which is positive in the portrayal of real-life challenges of the Koreans. Now the question arises: why is it becoming a significant issue in the country, and how does it impact society and people? What factors lead a person to make such a drastic decision? Are K-dramas doing justice to these characters in their storyline? This paper discusses how K-dramas are showing the reason behind this issue concerning a few popular K-dramas: “*Save Me (2017)*” “*Death's Game (2023-24)*”, “*True Beauty (2020)*” and “*Tomorrow (2022)*”.

Keywords: Self-harm, K-drama, Mental Well-being, Death, Awareness, Korean Society.

The popularity of K-dramas has grown significantly over the years, both in South Korea and internationally. They are known for high production values, which include excellent cinematography, beautiful locations and attention to detail in costumes. Not only that, they often feature compelling and well-written story lines that captivate viewers. Its popularity is due to its portrayal of relatable characters, where viewers can connect with their struggles, dreams and relationships which add depth to the storytelling.

Apart from these, the makers believed that it is now time to delve into the social issue surrounding suicide and mental health. These K-dramas raise people's awareness of the challenges, promote empathy and encourage discussion about mental health. Suicide or self-harm as a theme in Korean dramas (K-drama) can serve a variety of narratives and thematic purposes. It is important to note that not all K-dramas use suicide as a theme and when they do, the reasons can vary. Suicide is a complex and deeply emotional subject and its inclusion

in a K-drama allows for the exploration of a wide range of human emotions. It can be a catalyst for exploring the impact of grief, guilt, redemption and loss on individuals and communities.

K-dramas often incorporate social issues into their story. By dealing with suicide, dramas can provide social commentary on the pressures and challenges that individuals face in Korean society, such as academic stress, social expectations and economic hardships. Now the question is why it is an issue in South Korea. The reason is that South Korea has faced significant challenges related to mental health, suicide and culture which have greatly affected Korean society. It is important to approach this issue with sensitivity and understand its complexity. South Korea had a high suicide rate which received attention both domestically and internationally. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon, including social pressures, academic stress, financial insecurity and the stigma associated with mental illness. Efforts have been made to address this issue, including government initiatives and mental health awareness campaigns. According to the survey by World Population Review:

Yet in 2019, according to World Population Review, South Korea had the fourth-highest suicide rate in the world. There are multiple explanations, related to both mental health and the external environment, for the high suicide rate. South Korea followed Lithuania, Russia and Guyana to record the fourth-highest rate of suicides – 26.9 suicides per 100,000 people. (Salmon and Shin, 2020).

The pressure to succeed in education and get a prestigious job can lead to stress and mental health problems, especially among young people. That pressure is often called "exam hell" or "exercise fever." Yoon Min-sik in his article, —School grades a matter of life and death ... literally for some states: —Education Ministry data from 2022 shows that a total of 630 elementary, middle and high school students died by suicide between 2018 and 2021. In 116 of the deaths, academic pressure was cited as the main reason. Grades caused more deaths by suicide than sexual violence, personal relationship troubles, financial issues and other reasons (Yoon, 2022).

Body shaming is a serious problem in South Korea and its consequences can be harmful to an individual's mental and physical well-being. The cultural emphasis on beauty standards, especially thinness, has led to widespread body shaming that affects people of all ages and genders. Media often lacks representation of different body types which reinforces narrow ideals of beauty and marginalizes those who don't fit the mould. Body shaming in South Korea is associated with serious consequences, including an increased risk of mental

health problems and tragically suicide. The pressure to conform to narrow beauty standards combined with societal expectations and the stigma surrounding mental health has created a challenging environment for people struggling with body image issues.

In some cases, the perception is that the physical appearance is directly related to success and social acceptance. This belief can increase the impact of body shame on individual and mental well-being. Some people may use unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as extreme diets, self-harm or substance abuse, to cope with the emotional stress of body shaming. In an interview with Claire Lee, a girl named Alina Shamsutdinova who faced a lot of criticism and hate from people regarding her appearance said in one of her interviews with *The Korean Herald*, —Another was _You're really lucky that you have a pretty face. Otherwise, you would never be able to have a boyfriend. While she has always considered herself a confident person, Shamsutdinova said a part of her, struggled with her self-image, during her stay in Korea. She was often told by Koreans, —she should lose weight (Lee,16). This leads to social isolation, self-harm, low self-esteem and feelings of failure for those who feel they can't do it.

Cyberbullying is a major problem worldwide, and South Korea is no exception. Unfortunately, cases of cyberbullying, especially targeting K-pop idols and Korean individuals have been associated with serious consequences, including suicide. Celebs like Goo Hara and Sulli became victims of negativity and hateful criticisms by the Korean people. It is very common in Korea to hate any celebrity based on their appearance or hate the idols for breaking any sort of stereotypes. The success and popularity of certain idols can trigger jealousy or resentment in some people, leading to negative comments that bring them down. The emphasis on physical appearance in the entertainment industry combined with societal beauty standards can lead to body shaming and harshness. Criticism of idols may target perceived flaws or deviations from ideal beauty standards. South Korean society may stigmatize the unemployed by linking their identity and worth to their employment status.

In South Korea, personal identity and social status are often closely intertwined. Unemployment can cause a loss of identity, purpose and sense of belonging. The unemployed may experience social isolation because they may withdraw from social activities due to shame or inadequacy. Limited social support can reinforce the negative effects of unemployment. Young people entering the labour market may have difficulty finding stable work, which increases uncertainty about their future. In some cases, unemployed people may not have access to adequate mental health support either due to financial constraints or lack of available resources.

K-dramas or Korean dramas often explore different aspects of people's emotions, relationships and personal struggles, making them a unique and powerful visual commentary on mental health. Although K-dramas are primarily forms of entertainment, many of them contain themes and stories that resonate with mental health experiences because K-dramas feature characters who deal with mental health issues and help demystify these issues. This can encourage open discussions and promote a more understanding and supportive society.

The South Korean TV series, *Save Me* (also known as *Rescue Me*) explores various dark themes such as cults, manipulation and despair. Although suicide is not the central subject of the series, it shows the emotional and psychological struggles of the characters. Im Sang-mi, played by Seo Ye-ji, is the central character of the story. She falls into a religious cult and her experiences include severe emotional and psychological distress. The series examines the effects of manipulation and exploitation on the mental well-being of individuals concerning —Sang-mi's mother who suffered from depression and lost her sanity after her son Sang-jin's suicide leading her to consume drugs (Kim, 2020). The show deals with the theme of despair and the struggles that people face in difficult situations. Mental health and the consequences of manipulation are explored, contributing to the overall dark and intense atmosphere of the drama. A review by *Tea Girl Reviews* states,—This drama is a psychological, thriller mystery that follows a girl, Im Sang Mi (Seo Ye Ji), who is trapped in a religious cult. To free herself, she relies on her old high school classmates to help her and essentially —save her. (teagirlreviews.com, 2018).

Suicide is not the central theme of *True Beauty*. However, the series is about the various challenges and insecurities that the characters face. One of the characters, Lim Jugyeong, played by Moon Ga-young, experiences low self-esteem because she perceives a lack of physical beauty. The show explores her journey as she transforms her look with makeup skills that take her confidence to new levels. On the other hand, the suicide of the character, Seoyeon, a K-pop idol led to a traumatic experience for both Suho and Seojun, feeling a sense of guilt that created a distance between them. This k-drama pointed out the issue of online bullying of a K-pop idol and body shaming, and pointed out the fact that idols are human beings too and they deserve respect for their work. Besides, the character Suho lectured Jugyeong about the hard-hitting facts thinking that she wants to kill herself, —He lectures her, wondering what she could be going through that led her to wanting to die. He barks that her loved ones would be devastated and it seems personal when he claims that they could live in guilt for not being able to save her. Soo-ho gruffly tells her not to die and heads back inside (Selena, 2020).

With the theme of fantasy, K-dramas like *Tomorrow* (2022) and *Death's Game* (2023-24) explore the idea of how death can be painful and show the consequences that humans face after death. Both the dramas showcase the importance of human existence and, —metaphorically looks at many of the negative emotions that humans face: suicide, greed, betrayal, overly desperate for companionship, and the unpredictable nature of humanity (outlookindia.com,2023). Both the characters-Death(played by Park So-dam) and Koo Ryeon (Kim Hee-seon) make the victims realize that even God will not be happy with the choices people make because death is not the solution for problems. They say, —Suicide is a form of murder. It's a brutal murder of themselves. (Korb,2023). These two shows create a sense of awareness and an eye-opening experience leading the viewers to experience the harsh realities of a person's inner struggle. Now the question arises, are K-dramas doing justice to these characters in their storyline? The answer is yes, K-dramas are known for their emotional depth and engaging storytelling. Experiencing a range of emotions from joy to sadness can be a cathartic and therapeutic experience. Crying or laughing while watching helps to release pent-up emotions and makes the viewers feel liberated. K-dramas often have compelling stories, well-developed characters and beautiful cinematography. It can provide a healthy escape from everyday stress, allowing viewers to immerse themselves in a different world and temporarily forget about their challenges. Jennie. Y.Chang, a Korean-American therapist stated that K-drama characters are good examples of showcasing strong identity which is connected with an individual's mental health. She says: —I soon became enthralled by the effect K-dramas had on my mental health. In many Asian communities, there are a lot of stigmas surrounding therapy, family conflict, and chronic diseases like cancer. K-dramas tackle those topics in a way that I'm actually floored by (Matthews,2022). This indicates that the plot and characters are doing justifying job in portraying the real-life struggles to their viewers.

Although positive steps have been taken to address mental health issues in South Korea, the challenges are complex and require continued efforts from multiple stakeholders, including government, educational institutions, communities and media. Raising awareness, reducing stigma and fostering a supportive environment are essential parts of building a healthier and more sustainable society. With any form of entertainment, individual preferences vary, so it is important to choose an activity that truly brings joy and relaxation.

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TRAVELLING AS REVELATION IN ELIZABETH GILBERT'S *EAT PRAY LOVE***Dr. Jasleen Kaur Nanda**Assistant Professor, Department of English,
GSSDGS Khalsa College, Patiala, Punjab.**Abstract**

Travelling can not only provide a life enriching experience but it can also be a source of intercultural transactions and spiritual revelations. Elizabeth Gilbert explores the dynamics of travelling experience in her memoir *Eat Pray Love* (2006). During her journey through Italy, India, and Bali, she comes across different cultures, and in the process she gains a new insight towards life. She makes new friends and attempts to find new meanings of life through those relationships. She tries to understand the connections between history and culture of the places that she visits. While assimilating the fun loving culture of Italy, spirituality seeking experience in India and life balancing truths in Bali, Elizabeth emerges as a changed woman who appreciates the deep rooted peculiarities of different cultures that are reflections of their wisdom and understanding. The memoir is a representation of dissolving fixed identity and affiliation, and the creation of renewed identity. The research paper attempts to highlight travelling as a learning experience through intercultural dialogues.

Keywords: Ideology, Cultural Identity, Assimilation, Globalisation, Hybridity.

Elizabeth Gilbert (b. 1969) is an American writer and journalist. Her first book *Pilgrims* (1997) is a collection of short stories which received the Pushcart Prize. Her novel *Stern Men* was published in 2000 and non-fiction work *The Last American Man* was published in 2002. Her memoir *Eat, Pray, Love* (2006) became very famous and has been translated into many languages. The memoir was also adapted into a film with the same name. In this memoir, Gilbert writes about her divorce and her journey to three different countries Italy, India, and Bali in search of happiness and peace of mind. Her actual spiritual journey begins in India in an *Ashram* that changes her life completely. Gilbert's fifth book *Committed: A Skeptic Makes Peace with Marriage* published in 2010 examines the whole concept of marriage from different perspectives. Gilbert published her second novel *The Signature of All Things* in 2013 and *Big Magic: Creative Living beyond Fear* in 2015 which is an insight into living life creatively.

The memoir *Eat Pray Love* is a complete journey from Gilbert's sad life to a happy spiritually satisfying life. It is also a journey from ignorance to maturity and from darkness towards light. Called by the nick name Liz, Elizabeth begins her memoir when eight years

have passed after her marriage and she realizes that she and her husband lack compatibility. She no longer wants to stay in that relationship. Although she has seen so many dreams about their successful married life they are all crumbling. She can feel herself imprisoned in that relationship.

Elizabeth knew that separation from her husband would involve sadness, chaos and depression. One night when she was feeling utterly confused, she started praying. The voice that came from her heart seemed to be God's voice that sounded like a kind of reassurance for her future. That was her first connection with God during that time of utter despair. After seven months of that prayer, Elizabeth left her husband. She wanted a divorce but did not want to involve herself in any legal battle. She wanted to settle everything calmly but the divorce settlement years turned out to be very traumatic for her.

As soon as Elizabeth's husband signed divorce papers, she decided to travel and explore Italy, India, and Indonesia. Travelling was a passion that defined her identity as a woman and as a writer. —I have quit my job, paid off my divorce settlement and legal bills, given up my house, given up my apartment, put what belongings I had left into storage in my sister's place and packed up two suitcases^{ll} (ch.10). Elizabeth was willing to enjoy the beauty of Italy and most importantly make new friends during her new journey. She also had the desire to attain spiritual fulfillment.

Daniel Silliman writes in his lectures on —Spiritual Seeking: What Modern People Need^{ll} that human beings seek to find fulfillment in their lives and yearn for peace of soul. A new spiritual journey begins with new experiences that connect a human being to one's soul. Elizabeth Gilbert writes in her memoir about her experiences while travelling and about various people whom she met while pursuing her search for spiritual contentment and happiness. Gilbert spends four months each in Italy, India and Indonesia. —The three countries she travelled each represent a specific pursuit: the pursuit of pleasure in Italy, the pursuit of devotion in India, and the pursuit of balance in Indonesia^{ll} (Silliman 5). Elizabeth found Italy a dream place and the Italian language her dream language. Her heart was healing with the magic of beauty of that place and also the new friends she had made. Still there were some depressing moments due to her past broken relationships. During those moments when feeling of loneliness overpowered her, she started believing in an inner voice that seemed to have a deep connection with her and gave her support. As the name of the memoir suggests, she relished the variety of food in Italy which she found as a part of exuberant culture of Italy. In this new culture, she could experience heart fulfilling relationships and appreciate the beauty of family life. There was no hustle bustle of American life and Italian people gave

equal preference to work and leisure. Gilbert's journey had started bearing fruit by the intercultural exchange of thoughts.

The subject of intercultural amalgam has been popular among many travel writers. In an essay on —Dimensions of the Intercultural within Travel Literature: British Images of Spain, González-Cruz and Isabel write —Capacity for understanding and appreciation of the other when comparing cultures is, though, a vital attribute in travel writers (46). Setiawan writes in his paper on —Tourism and Intercultural Communication: A Theoretical Study that —Having an understanding of other people's culture is essential to recognise the nature of these differences and to relate to others through an attitude of understanding and tolerance, which is the basis of actual intercultural discussions, especially in the field of tourism (186).

Although Elizabeth was feeling happy during this phase of assimilating another culture, she was somewhere unhappy about her loneliness. There was much more to explore and understand regarding life's complications. She wanted to make the best out of the journey she had started. Her first destination had filled her heart with gratitude towards other people who were playing their role in making her happy and now it was time to move to the next level of her journey.

Elizabeth's next destination after Italy was India. She headed off to her Guru's Ashram in a village. She reached the Ashram at 3.30 a.m. and the beautiful sound of *aarti* could be heard. *Aarti* was being sung by the disciples in Sanskrit language. Elizabeth called it —The Amazing Grace of Sanskrit (ch. 37). She was present at the heart of spirituality to pursue her spiritual quest. She believed in the *Yogis* who had said that human beings suffer when they become too worldly and materialistic, and forget about the divine element present inside them.

Elizabeth writes in her memoir about the importance of silence and peace. She writes about an incident in New York when a monk came on to the stage and transferred his tranquility to the audience. Within ten minutes, the audience was under the spell of the monk and people were calm in mind and body. This was his —divine power (ch. 38). Elizabeth writes about the importance of a Guru in reaching the divine state. She also writes about ancient Indian sages who believed that a soul is fortunate if born with a spiritual quest in heart.

In the Ashram, the work assigned to Elizabeth was to scrub the temple floor. It was believed that the beginning of spiritual journey should be with selfless and sincere work. It was also believed that scrubbing the floor makes a person humble and the soul cleaning process also begins with floor cleaning. Meditation was also a part of the routine of disciples.

They were supposed to do meditation with a calm and quiet mind. Elizabeth wished to have a calm and quiet mind during meditation but it seemed impossible as her mind was always restless. —Instead of being amused, though, I'm only anxious. Instead of watching, I'm always probing and interfering (ch. 49).

After a few days, the calm environment of the Ashram began to have positive influence on Elizabeth's mind. The people who visited the Ashram or lived there intertwined with the serenity of its environment. They were all united with the flame of spirituality in their hearts. Elizabeth found it a different world altogether. The simplicity and goodness of people made her introspect her own life. She tells in her memoir about a Buddhist story in which Buddha meditated for thirty nine days and when his soul found enlightenment, he wanted to share the ways of spiritual path with other people. He found that the secret of enlightenment could be perceived by very few people as most of the people are not interested in the deeper truths of life. Elizabeth felt that she wanted to gain knowledge regarding the deeper secrets of life. Her goal was to bring peace to her heart with the help of meditation. The restlessness in her mind due to her past life was not allowing her to be at peace. She wanted to stay in the Ashram and know more about the spiritual life as she was interested in it.

Elizabeth met a seventeen-year old girl Tulsi at the Ashram who was always more interested in meditating and cleaning the Ashram than going to weddings or dancing and gossiping. Her family could not understand her interest in spirituality at that age. Elizabeth found happiness in developing a bond with Tulsi which gave a positive meaning to her life. Soon Elizabeth realized that a deep bond with another soul could transform the heart completely and could give new direction to life. It was like dedicating one's love and care to that soul.

During her stay at the Ashram, Elizabeth realized the importance of silence and solitude in a spiritual journey. —Learning how to discipline your speech is a way of preventing your energies from spilling out of you through the rupture of your mouth, exhausting you and filling the world with words, words, words instead of serenity, peace and bliss (ch.62). Elizabeth decided to go into a silent phase for two months but soon after her decision, she was called to perform the duty of 'Key Hostess' as hundreds of devotees were going to arrive at the Ashram. They were coming from all over the world and their purpose was to practice meditation. They were supposed to remain in a silent phase to achieve that blissful spiritual contentment. —According to the mystics, this search for divine bliss is the entire purpose of a human life (ch. 66). Elizabeth's stay at the Ashram during the next few weeks made her

experience the bliss a person feels when he/she becomes ‘One’ with God, with nature, with moon and night, and with trees. She realized that her heart’s desire to feel the divine love led her to achieve that blissful state. Through her new companions, she was able to gain wisdom from their experiences. Her life took a completely new turn when she found innermost peace in meditation. —I am not actively praying. I have become a prayer! (ch.71). All her doubts had found answers. She came to the conclusion that God lives in the heart ‘As You’. —To know God, you need only to renounce one thing – your sense of division from God! (ch. 64). It is also important to accept yourself as you are rather than adopting a fake personality and trying to become someone else. Elizabeth remembered Sextus, a Pythagorean philosopher, who said that a wise man is always similar to himself. Hollinshead (1998) writes about Homi Bhabha’s views on culture: Bhabha’s writing on the post-colonial mood is ‘postmodern’ in the way it tends to view culture as an amalgam of seriously contestable codes and representations, in the fashion that it draws attention to the constructed and artificial nature of received cultural accounts, and in the manner in which it sees studies of culture as intrinsically ‘inventive’ rather than being ‘representative’ acts of interpretation (122-23).

Elizabeth’s next destination after India was Bali in Indonesia. While assimilating the culture of Bali, she found a complete balance of her physical, mental and spiritual states. She learned about the importance of meditation from Ketut, the medicine man. Ketut said that body, mind and soul could be kept in a strong condition with the help of meditation. Elizabeth gained the realization that life needs to be discovered and its essence needs to be explored, —When all this was finished, I was empty. Nothing was fighting in my mind anymore. I looked into my heart, at my own goodness, and I saw its capacity! (ch.107).

Alfi Nikmatin, in her thesis on —Elizabeth’s Journey to Search for her Identity in *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert! used existentialism theory by Soren Kierkegaard to explore existential aspects in the memoir. The three stages of Elizabeth’s life are highlighted; the aesthetic stage, the ethical stage and the religious stage. During the aesthetic stage, Elizabeth enjoys the beauty of Rome and the special food of that place. The ethical stage began in India when Elizabeth learns the ethics of leading a spiritual life. During the religious stage in Bali, she learnt the religion of mankind as a balance between love and spirituality. At the end, she was able to enhance the beauty of her personality and thoughts. Travelling to other countries and making it a learning experience plays a great role in Elizabeth’s metamorphosis. All the persons she met on her journey became her teachers.

William Zinsser wrote in his book *Going on Faith: Writing as a Spiritual Quest* (1999) that he explored the interests of those writers who wrote on the theme of spiritual quest or similar themes. The works of such writers mostly deal with pilgrimages and the presence of a divine element makes them unique. Zinsser included nine such writers in that book whose works were reflections of their spiritual quest. He emphasized that writers who write about spiritual quest also write about the importance of love. Love is that feeling which can drive a person towards spirituality and bring wholeness in life.

In the selected work *Eat Pray Love*, the sadness and utter despair in Elizabeth's life leads her on a spiritual quest and spiritual journey. Instead of merely accepting the sadness, she changes the course of her life for having spiritual fulfillment and loving relationship. She becomes successful in creating a balance between love and spirituality, the two most important things for her happiness. Her courage and confidence play a great role in building her new life in which she structure her identity as an independent woman.

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MATERIALITY OF THE MULTIPLE NARRATIVES: A POST-TRUTH ANALYSIS OF SHEHAN KARUNATILAKA'S *THE SEVEN MOONS OF MAALI ALMEDIA*

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Abstract

History is a form of narrative which is unreliable, not objective as it is written or documented by an individual or a group of individuals who form subjectivity. Like history, creative writing is also subjective and it is hard to separate a narration from the subjectivity of the author. This paper analyses the multiple narratives of Shehan Karunatilaka's 2022 Booker Prize winning novel *The Seven Moons of Maali Almedia* which talks about the Srilankan civil war. The narrative of the chosen novel unfolds through Maali Almedia who is dead at the beginning of the novel itself. The ghost narrator attempts to identify his murderers. As an omnipresent narrator, he gets into the minds of other characters and discloses their perspectives also. While the ghost narrator makes the narration unreliable, the blend of history and myth makes the narration more complicated. This paper traces the intricacies of the multiple narratives, their reliability and how the multiple narratives are utilized to portray the harsh realities of the hostile political environment during the Srilankan civil war.

Key words: Materiality, Post-truth, History, Narratives, Subjectivity.

Materiality of literature and materiality in literature are two important ideas in the modern literature. Materiality of literature refers to the material or tangible aspects of literature like printing, paper quality, cover design, font size, paragraph arrangement and all related things and objects. It is true that the material form of the text influences the readers. On the other hand, according to Thomas Bermer, materiality in literature is —about the function of representing things within a text. Here things characterize a person, a situation, a social environment (349). This paper explores how materiality in literature has been effectively utilized as a tool to unfold the plot and document various social and political milieu of Sri Lanka.

As far as the narrative technique of the chosen work is concerned, the very title *The Seven Moons of Maali Almedia* itself is so symbolic. The author himself explains, in the novel, —Seven moons is seven nights. Seven sunsets. A week (5). The entire narration is done by Maali Almedia who is killed by the government's death squad. The narrative opens in a hospital in which the ghost of Almedia is confused whether it is alive or dead. It thinks,

—This is hallucination. There is no damn life after death....The odds of the soul surviving the body's death are one in nothing... (8). Later, the ghost affirms that —... all ghosts wear clothing from previous lives and that it is better than being naked...you wear sins or your traumas or your guilt (13). The author capitalizes on this unreliable context to explore the complex socio-political situation existed in the history of Sri Lanka. Here, the author warns the readers, at the beginning itself, that the narration may not be conducive to read.

The novelist has utilized the ghost narrator to explain the theme of war and its harsh realities. The author contextualizes the narration in the 1980s in which the civil war of Sri Lanka was at its zenith. The narrator Maali is a professional photographer who works as an undercover photographer for different foreign agencies that have invisible hands in making or ending a war across the globe. The Sri Lankan government is after the photographs taken by the narrator in the war zones that have the power to topple the governments. The ghost narrator travels back to the past exploring the cause of his death. By making the narrator revisiting the past and war zones, the novelist exposes the ugly face of the war. This narrative materiality is utilized to speak against the atrocities of war.

The author, in the course of narration, criticizes all who have a hand in the war. He records, —Tigers and Army killing civilians. Indian peacekeepers starting wars (6). The narrator despises Sri Lanka's 1987 Peace Accord with India and comments on the then leaders as —garbage men. He affirms, —The government forces, the eastern separatists, the southern anarchists and the northern peacekeepers are all prolific producers of corpses (18). The authorial voice comments upon the very civil war itself. —1983 was an atrocity. Eight thousand homes, five thousand shops, a hundred and fifty thousand homeless, no official body count. The Sri Lankan government has neither acknowledged nor apologized for it (107). The involvement of the government machinery in the atrocities is well documented by the author in this novel. The photo of —the government Minister who looked on while the savages of '83 torched Tamil Homes and slaughtered the occupants (12). —The mother and daughter buried under bricks in Kilinochi, the ten students burned on tyres in Malebe, the planter tried to a tree with his entrails (12). While criticizing the government, through these passages, the author presents the alternative views of the war also. He claims, —LTTE had become a fascism, stifling other Tamil voices (111). Thus the narrator juxtaposes the different power centres involved in the war. At one point, the narrator becomes more philosophic about war and says, —Evil is not what we should fear. Creatures with power acting in their own interest: that is what make us shudder (19).

The interference of a foreign country will not solve the existing problem. The author comments on the role of America in intervening into the affairs of other countries. —...evil doesn't know it is evil, like the mad don't know they're insane. That America doesn't think it has invaded too many democracies and killed too many innocents. That we shouldn't let them slaughter like the worst tyrants and drop bombs on children. That there's nothing exceptional about a country built on genocide and the back of slaves (122). At the same time, the author criticizes Indian Peacekeeping forces for attacking a hospital that treated wounded LTTE soldiers. The author says, —These are foreign devils...Invited by our own devils (126). Here the novelist points out the strategic flaw of the Sri Lankan government in their attempt to solve an internal issue by seeking an external agency.

The internal divide of the country is painfully recorded by the novelist in the following passage: —The nation divides into races, the races divide into factions and the factions turn on each other. Whoever is in the opposition will preach multiculturalism... (23). He raises the inevitable question, —Hard to imagine a bright future when over four thousand are raped in this country every year. Many by their own family (122). Through a character named Jake, the author blasts the existing scenario in the island country as —It's all tribal bullshit...Race before country...Sinhalese outnumber Tamils. But Tamils are cleverer than Sinhalese. We work harder. And we have to be better. And we have to conceal it as well. Or the Sinhalese gets jealous (232). Moreover, the author reasons out the cause for the existing internal civil war. He says, —All our heads are colonized by Hollywood. We are brainwashed by rock and roll. The people dying up there aren't really our people, are they? (122). This passage comments on the insensitive nature of the people who ignore the existing war crisis as they are not directly affected. Besides, the bourgeois mentality of the people is vehemently attacked by the author through his multiple narratives.

While presenting the consequences of war, the author exploits the context of unreliable narration to explore the possible bleak future in the given war context. During the post-life of the narrator, he says, —Even afterlife is designed to keep the masses stupid... They make you forget your life and push you towards some light. All bourgeois tools of the oppressor. They tell you that injustice is part of some grand plan. And that's what keeps you from rising against it (11). Hence, the ghost of Almedia says, —I don't want to go back. Don't want to be reborn. Don't want to be anything. Can't I just be nothing? (90). This narration juxtaposes the life before and after death and they do not have much difference. The narrator claims, —Down there, I was told that my poverty was my my karma, my cross, my affliction, My fault (92). The narrator discloses the minds of the affected people who need

justice. —The world will not correct itself. Revenge is your right... Demand your justice. The system failed you. Karma failed you. God failed you (93). Finally, the author seems to give solutions to the existing issues. —Revenge is no justice. Revenge lessens you. Only karma grants what is yours. But you must be patient. It is the only thing you need to be (93).

A religion is expected to be a panacea to all the existing problems of the people. Many seek religious places and worship Gods to find out a remedy to all the difficulties that they face in their lives. There is a gulf between the faith of the people on religion and Gods and the desirable return that they get. In this novel, the author points out the limitations of the religious faith through the unreliable narration. Once the ghost narrator goes to every holy place because it —...enjoy(s) how stupid they look (15). He points out that the holy places are the silent spectators of the atrocities carried out by the authorities in the name of politics, religion and race. —Columns of stone Buddhas from the floating temple stare at the buoyant dead with neither interest nor alarm (16). The question raised regarding the inaction of the supposed God is unanswerable. Once he asks, —If there's a heavenly father, he must be like your father: absent, lazy and possibly evil. For atheists there are only moral choices...we are alone and strive to create heaven on earth (19). On another occasion, the narrator questions the very power of God. —Is God unable to stop evil? Or unwilling? (89). Even he condemns God at regular intervals. —The Mahakali feeds on lost souls. Lately, it has grown fat (89). Later, he questions the ideology of Buddhism too. —Buddhism forces the poor to believe they belong where they are. The order is made to appear natural. It is self-serving bullshit that keeps the poor sick (241). The author conveys that the religion plays the role of a neutralizer in society. It entertains no war or protest and brainwashes people to accept their existing position in spite of all the difficulties. Besides, the author gives a new perspective about the very functioning of this world. —There is no force that governs butterflies or Buddhas or what is fair. The universe is anarchy. It is trillions of atoms pushing at each other, trying to clear space (243).

The author points out the need for looking at the potential danger of the prevailing evils in the society and fighting them. He states, —...the battle of good vs evil so one-sided...Because evil is better organized, better equipped and better paid. It is not monsters or yakas or demons we should fear. Organized collectives of evil doers who think they are performing the work of the righteous. That is what should make us shudder (343). He also highlights that —The powerful get away with murder. And all the gods in the sky look away (94). Towards the end the narrator becomes more philosophical about the different happenings of this world. He seems to give a possible solution to the existing adversities in

the society. —The universe does have a self-correcting mechanism. But it's no God or Shiva or karmall (242). —All the most powerful forces are invisible. Love. Electricity, windll (352). Though the author juxtaposes various aspects of the socio-political, racial and religious turmoil of the island country, he seems to believe the role of an invisible force that guides the universe. For some people, it is science, for some it is karma and for some others it is God. However, these social apparatuses should not be used for oppressing each other.

Hence, the author utilizes novel as an effective tool to present the social-political environment of Sri Lanka and he analyses the various factors involved in the country's civil war. The strategy of multiple and unreliable narration empowers the author to expose the minds of different characters and disclose the plurality of the society. Thus, the materiality of the multiple narratives present in the chosen novel serves as a medium of recording multiple social facts and narratives and it speaks against the war caused and sustained by the political and religious power centres.

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CIRCUMVENTING CROSS-CULTURAL CHALLENGES IN HOME SPACE – A STUDY OF AZAR NAFISI'S *READING LOLITA IN TEHRAN*

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Abstract

The paper explores the challenges encountered by Azar Nafisi while living in the Western world and returning to her homeland, Iran. Her memoir, *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, takes up the turmoil which affects the author as she returns to her much-cherished home. The shock treatment she receives at the airport and her workplace opens a gamut of cross-cultural challenges accosted by the Iranians. As the human spirit can rarely be subdued by challenges, the author's efforts to circumvent the restrictions by escaping to the Third Space form the crux of the study.

Keywords: Cross-culture, Exile, Home Space, Turmoil, Third Space

The paper explores the challenges encountered by Azar Nafisi on returning to her home land Iran, after years of living in the West. Her memoir *Reading Lolita in Tehran* tackles the turmoil which affects the author in her much cherished home. Nafisi left Tehran, at the age of thirteen, for England and the US and came back after seventeen years at the age of thirty. The ingenious ways in which the author tries to circumvent the restrictions are dealt with in the study.

Salman Rushdie in his essay —Imaginary Homelands remarks about the imaginary homelands created by the Indian migrants. The diaspora, —... create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands... (10). Nafisi creates her own imaginary homeland, her idea about Iran while she is in the western world. These images break as soon as she reaches Tehran airport, on her return. Her bags are searched for any objectionable items though her books are not confiscated at this stage. The closing down of universities and the wearing of the veil are distant possibilities at this point of time. The harsh realization dawns on her about how life for her in Iran would change forever. The gap between the imagined homeland and the real one becomes too wide to fathom. Nafisi takes refuge in literature. While in the US, she claims she did not feel far away from Iran as she had Rumi, Hafez and Ferdosi. The reverse is also true. On her return to Iran, when she finds about the oppressive air prevalent, she takes refuge in the books of Nabokov, Jane Austen and

Henry James. She creates for her students a Third Space in which they experience a life of liberty and remain level headed in a fundamentalist regime.

While in the US, she did not miss her homeland as she thought she could go home any time she wanted. She did not realize then that the homeland of her dreams had changed drastically since she had left it. On her return, she feels that an alien culture has engulfed her country. An identity crisis evolves. Assimilation into her own culture has become very difficult for her. This happens with the displaced people often. If they ever return physically to their mother countries, they will find that reintegration is very difficult even for the first generation emigrants.

Nafisi takes up teaching in Iran and she is thrown out of the University for wearing the veil. She feels that her faith, her traditions and the religion that she believed in, have now been confiscated and redefined. Probably this is similar to the culture shock the diaspora feels in the first few years of their lives in their displaced lands. Unfortunately, Nafisi feels this in her own homeland but she reacts strongly and refuses to go in with the flow. As a result she has to think of an alternate strategy to continue with her chosen life. The idea of parallel classes comes to her. This is how she tries to ward off the feeling of alienation in her home country. She chooses seven of her brilliant students to come home and discuss various classics. Through this, there opens a world of imagination and the world of an alternate reality where characters in famous novels are scrutinized. Art and literature become so essential for their lives so as to survive in an ‘alien’ culture which has engulfed them. The regime cannot subdue the mind of the youth, instead they become open to ideas so that they can survive the difficult times in their own country. The idea of a Third Space which Nafisi chooses to engage students is new. The perseverance of the students in the wake of adversity is worth mentioning. They are quite passionate about their classes. As reading a novel is a journey through another land, Nafisi and her students embark on their journey through the world of literature to explore new homelands where they can be comfortable. Within Nafisi’s homeland, she creates an in-between land — a hybrid place where her progressive ideas can exist even in the midst of the fundamentalist views of the authorities. Nafisi realizes, —The more we withdrew into our sanctuary, the more we become alienated from our day-to-day life (74). Nevertheless, it is to be noted that this escape into the Third Space is only for a short while when they are discussing Western classics. Once the class gets over, the students disperse and go back to the reality of being deprived women under an oppressive regime.

As Homi K. Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture* points out that it is —...the inbetween space — that carries the burden of the meaning of culture (56), in Nafisi, this

transition happens in her own home in Iran before she and many of her students physically get out of their homeland. This Third Space helps them come in terms with the conflicting claims of religion which they experience in Iran. For Bhabha, the border is the place where conventional patterns of thought are disturbed. He says, —And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves (56). In Nafisi's choice of books for discussion the very same conventional thought patterns are distributed. Nabokov's *Lolita*, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Henry James' *Daisy Miller* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* are some of the books chosen for discussion. There is polyphony of voices in these novels and that is the reason why books in general have become dangerous to the autocratic mindset in Iran. These books offer the students a broad platform to discuss life of a woman in Iranian society. The authorities shut book shops to prevent youngsters from getting revolutionary ideas which are deemed dangerous to the regime. Nafisi buys many books to keep in her collection before the bookshops are closed. Her Third Space has to make use of photocopied materials for discussion later, as the original works become impossible to procure in Iran.

In *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, some of Nafisi's women students oppose authority. They participate in protests against the regime and express their strong views on matters concerning them and their country. Nassrin, an ex-student of Nafisi, ends up in jail for her radical views. Another student, Sanaz, when she is about to be engaged comes up with a revelation regarding her aunt. Her aunt has advised her to spend time with the boy without the interference of the relatives before coming up with the decision of marriage. Such voices, which dare to think differently, can be seen in Iran.

Nafisi does not condemn her ancestral culture. She finds the extremists' views intolerable. She has great respect for their tradition, during the times of her grandmother and her mother. She has great admiration for their literary men like Rumi, Hafez and others. In fact, it is the writings of these great men that sustain her while she was away in the US but it cannot be denied that Nafisi would have been influenced by the Western way of thinking as she had her education in various Western universities. This could be the reason why she opposes the strict implementation of wearing veil vehemently, upon her return to Iran. There are fellow professors who wear the veil and advise her to do so stating that it is not worth losing their heads on such an issue. They still have the freedom to teach the courses which they deem right. They are more practical in their approach than Nafisi. Her revolutionary zeal and Western education would certainly have influenced her in the portrayal of Iranian

women. It is ironic that the orthodox students defend her at the university before she is expelled from there.

The one criticism against Nafisi is her choice of books for discussion in her private classes. She chooses all western classics to explore the condition of women in Iran. She could very well have chosen works closer to her culture and thereby helped the brilliant young women, who had come to her to understand their mother culture in a better way. Though the books chosen by Nafisi have a very western background, the Iranian students discuss it very passionately. Even while Nafisi is teaching at the university, many puritan students find it difficult to come to terms with the morality depicted in *The Great Gatsby*. There is mention of the book being put to trial. Students speak for and against the book. It is worth pondering whether such a trial would take place in a class in the West. Nafisi comes up with an innovative way of teaching a novel. Probably the enthusiasm shown by the Iranian students may be missing in the West. This could be because of the limited freedom that Iranian students enjoy. Most often, when something is denied, it is better appreciated. The same thirst for knowledge can be seen in the students of Nafisi's reading group. Some of her students like Nassrin, Mitra and Sanaz migrate to the West later on but they keep their fires burning inside them by pursuing higher studies there. The inspired lessons given by Nafisi are still with them even in their displaced lands.

At the same time, there are many women who stayed back in Iran and are fighting the authorities in their own small ways. Nafisi's former student, Azin teaches at Allameh University the same courses and books that Nafisi had earlier taught her. Another student of hers, Manna and some others tempt the authorities with their defiant gait, colourful scarves and short robes. They wear makeup and walk freely with men which are considered taboos in Iran. The raids and the arrests continue on one side but the students are as rebellious as ever. Many have taken up teaching to keep the torch lighted by Nafisi going.

Reading Lolita in Tehran is not the kind of book which is allowed in Iran but it is interesting to discuss the implication of such a book there. Iranian women may disagree with the passivity surrounding their usual portrayal in literary works but in her memoir, Nafisi draws subtle word pictures of some of her bold women students. They try to recreate a third space for themselves even in the midst of the daily turmoil they face. So it does not become a one-sided affair with the brutal Eastern men always overpowering their powerless female counterparts.

Nafisi can boast of coming from a learned family. She says that they are known for their contributions to literature and science, —...the Nafisi women had gone to universities

and taught at a time when few women dares leave home (84). The fact that she comes from such a family may have aggravated her aloofness in a society where women are given scant respect. Someone coming from a more ordinary background could have adapted a better way to the change than Nafisi in Iran but this does not prevent her from inspiring the less fortunate women students from fulfilling their dreams through her private lessons. Her home has been redefined into a space, where a cross-cultural journey with far reaching implications is being initiated.

—The real home we have transcends ethnicity and nationality, gender, sex, and religion. It is a universal space where we can all live in. (Nafisi, P.S. 5)

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ELUCIDATING THE NATIVE HISTORICAL REALITY IN THOMAS KING'S *INCONVENIENT INDIAN*

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Abstract

In the words of Herodotus, history exists in order to tell man what man is telling him what man has done. New Historicism, as a theory of literary criticism, pays much attention to the historical and cultural context of the literary text by focusing on the marginal events in the history that affected the lives of the people living in the period. Thomas King, a Native American, is one such writer whose literary works combines with various historical aspects. In this context, this paper examines certain elements of his popular work *The Inconvenient Indian* in the light of New Historicism.

Keywords: History, New Historicism, Literary Criticism, Marginalism, Native American.

As an approach to literary theory and literary criticism, New Historicism is based on the premise that a literary text should be considered a product of time, place and historical circumstances of its composition rather than as an isolated work of art or text. It facilitates to deal equally with both the literary and non-literary texts by deconstructing the elements of the text within the historical context of the given period. In contrast to Formalism, this New Historicism aids in understanding the history and its implications which is associated with the political events of the era within the said literary text. *The Inconvenient Indian: A curious Account of Native People in North America*, written by Thomas King, is a history of Indian people in North America written in the narrative perceptive. Through this work, the writer unveils the actualities of the Native histories in the New World and offers an outright description of the unconventional account of Indian-White relations since the contact. In this paper, certain elements of the text are explored to understand the native historical reality and its devastating subversion as depicted by the writer.

Native American writing emerges from the background of historical misrepresentation of native people from Eurocentric perspectives, which continued for centuries. This unsophisticated misrepresentation became the subtext of many Native Indian stories which deal with their cultural conflicts, land issues, policy making, status definitions of Indians, their elimination and extermination from the continent exclusively from the perception of natives, thereby subverting

the dominant white perception. Generally, Euro- Canadians based on their white attributes, act as the historians to present the native history in the mainstream American culture, which is actually a misrepresentation. Hence, the image ‘Indian’ is always a conception of white culture and the native culture is termed as alien to the supremacy but the known fact is that the native Americans are real and still they exist in the New World. As these native people are considered innocent, uncivilized and are not capable enough to produce their own history, they were considered vulnerable and this led to their misrepresentation by the despotic white governments. The other reason for undermining the natives is the tendency of Europeans to represent their European continent in terms of cultural, intellectual, political and military superiority, and even they pictured themselves as wearing a crown, armed with guns, holding orbs, spectre or surrounded by scientific instruments, pallets books etc., which they consider as symbols of civilization. In contrast to this civilized appearance, New World appeared to them as naked, usually wearing a feathered head dress, carrying bow and arrow that are believed to be the symbols of being heathen, pagan, barbaric and savage. Ronald Wright, a Canadian author aptly remarks about this one-sided depiction of history in his famous work, *Stolen Continents: The New World Through Indian Eyes*, by referring to the words of Yellow Wolf: —The Whites told only one side. Told it to please themselves. Told much that is not true. Only his own best deeds, only the worst deeds of the Indians has the White man told. (Wright 4). Hence, the tribal Americans were usually described as illiterate, innocent, possessing wild nature and often portrayed from the view point of outsiders, who fail to understand their ideas or customs. In spite of centuries of contact and the changed conditions of native American lives, white men still consider the real Indian as the one before contact or during the early period of that contact, conceiving him as the aborigine he once was, rather than he is now. Under these constructed conceptions, civilization was destined to triumph over savagery and so the Indian has to disappear through assimilation into the said larger, progressive white society. Behind this assimilation and the suppression, there lies imperialist ways of thinking that treat Indian as ‘Other’. By effective use of the term ‘Aboriginalism’, White governments tried to erase colonial histories, nation to nation agreements and also the diversity that exists among native cultures. In this nexus of misrepresentation, Thomas King and other native writers gave a call for accurate presentation of native concerns, so as to give exposure to the minority voices. Kateri Akiweni Damm, an Anishanbi writer in her work, *Says Who: Colonialism, Identity and Defining Indigenous Literature*, observes, —who we are has been constructed and defined by others to the extent that at times we too no longer know who we are. The resulting confusion, uncertainty, low self-esteem, and need to assert control over identity are just some of the damaging effects of colonisation. (Akiwenzi 11).

King also being a native rights activist, tries to examine such elements of native history and native American resistance in his work *The Inconvenient Indian* by debunking the fabricated stories of savage Indian and white heroism. In this text, he uncovers many false interpretations of Native people made by the White writers in their works, in their movies and also the deceptions done by the settler governments in the form of treaties, removals, relocations, residential schools etc. King's main concern is to eliminate the stereotypical image of 'Indian' by subverting the native history from all the disciplines that has been constructed by the Europeans since ages. Even many native scholars believe that the word, 'Indian', embodies the very first act of colonial injustice and neither decolonisation nor self-determination can be realised unless they challenge this history that institutionalised Indianness. Hence King gave subtitle to the text, 'A Curious Account of Native People' but not the history of natives. In his view, mere repetition of history may not result in justice but presenting the history with oral tradition of storytelling from native perspective can yield the facts about native people. The fact cannot be denied that the presumed native history is actually imperial history made by white men, which actually consists of the constructed images of anthropology, ethno history etc., that stemmed out of the White superiority. King unravels the fallacious historical representations of native images and makes the reader understand what it is to be a native, not from the perspective of White superiority but from the discernment of an Indian. With his techniques of storytelling and alluding humour, though King presents and reinterprets history in the work, underneath the narration lies serious element of rage and agony which helps to understand King's attempt in challenging the centuries of injustice perpetuated among the people of Indigenous cultures. He refashions the existing old stories of historical events and figures by employing the techniques of wit and humour. The subtitle of the text itself reveals that the comprised essays of the book collectively cover an ample amount of historical and contemporary situations, together combining different issues of Canada and America with reference to the stolen land relocations, cultural denial, residential schools, broken treaty promises and more, that became a hindrance for the First Nations people in their struggle for achieving self-determination and sovereignty. According to King, history is not just the recount of the incidents of past, but instead it deals about the stories which tell about the past. In this regard, few aspects of native history are focused here to discern the dynamics of European misconceptions and how the author explicitly challenges all the fallacies of Aboriginal people.

At the outset, King introduces the subversive elements of native history by giving a starting glimpse to some of the massacres and battles which should be considered as Indian massacres in actual. Popular of them are the Almo massacre, Wounded Knee, Sand creek

massacre and Battle of Little Bighorn in which many Indian tribes were killed but all these incidents were depicted only in favour of whites. Especially Canadian historians depicted these battles in favour of whites as when Indians attacked a white village or fort and won the result was called a massacre and if Whites attacked an Indian village and won it was described as a victory. Also, Indian warriors who fought against white men have no place in the historical records and in contrast, white army officers and commanders who were known for the brutal killing of the Indians were popularized as heroes in the mainstream society. As opposed to these forsaken native warriors, the image of 'Indian' created curiosity and interest in the Hollywood films as being dramatic, exotic and romantic with violent confrontation. These images gained much significance rather than the real warrior images of Louie Reil, Gabriel Dumont, Sitting Bull etc. The literary stereotypes of native Indians were transformed into powerful images of Hollywood Western films, thus portraying two types of Indians as 'blood thirsty', and 'noble savage'. These images are the result of the contradictory myths about Indians created by Americans. One is derived from the Puritan fear of the uncontrolled wilderness and its inhabitants which depicted native American as blood thirsty savages. The other image flourished in the writings of the eighteenth-century European Romantics who presented Indians as noble savages living in an unspoiled wilderness with nature. Eventually, being caught within these constructed images, native tribes of America became the elements of fantasy stories for both films and media. Ironically, native people roles were played by non- natives thus romanticizing aboriginal history on the screen. Hence, the history of Indians in Hollywood is considered as more a comedy than a tragedy. Now, in the contemporary scenario native film makers are trying to change the scenario by using their powerful tool of storytelling techniques and producing the best documentaries.

Subsequently, King in an in-depth investigation of the role of Indian in Native American culture depicts how the settler governments contemplated and defined native people as Dead Indians, Live Indians and Legal Indians through different acts and policies that were made in order to usurp the land from them and also to have an absolute control on the continent. Dead Indians signify the fabricated images of real Indians from the past and whose description is based on the imagination of the non-whites. They were reduced to the symbols of lost native culture, being portrayed as Hollywood savages in wild west shows, rodeos, theme parks etc. Live Indians are described as the present-day Indians in the mainstream society but are not considered Indians, as they were not defined culturally by the governments. Quite opposite to these two types of Indians are Legal or Status Indians in whom the governments of the United States and Canada are very much interested as these Indians are purely the construction of colonizers. King

further describes how land became the base for the division of native people into different categories by framing them in the legal definitions. Native Americans perceived the land as part of their culture and family but not in terms of property or ownership. In contrast, Euro-Americans discerned the land as empty without any cities or borders which are quite common in European continent. Hence, this free land made them look at Indians as an obstacle in the process of acquiring the land in the vast continent. This cultural separation between the settlers and the Indians, affected their relations since their arrival on the continent. Various agreements and treaties that were made in this regard were believed to be about sharing an open landscape by the natives but Euro-Americans thought of them as owning the land continually and fixing the boundaries. ‘The Indian Act’ that was created in the name of protection of the Indians was turned out to be a violation as it resulted in the poverty, inequality, thus making these people as mere ‘furniture’ in the words of King. Not only this ‘Indian Act’ but many other treaties never represented the original verbal promises made by settlers during the negotiations. It became quite common to witness the suffering by the natives as and whenever the new land was needed, treaties were arbitrarily broken by the makers. The theory of ‘Manifest Destiny’ was successfully employed by the Europeans to remove the tribes from their native lands in the process of usurpation. This led to the beginning of the historical tragic incident ‘Trail of Tears’ during which thousands of natives lost their lives as they were forced to forbid their land and walk thousands of miles to reach the said ‘Indian Territory’ which was designed by the colonizers. King addresses this brutal incident as the largest massacre of the native Indians in the history of North America.

This physical genocide later transformed into cultural genocide which aimed at the total destruction of Indian culture aiming at civilian control. As a part of this, Indian Residential School System was created in which schools were designed as part of the colonizer's imperial object. The idea was to remove Indian male from his language and culture so as to re-socialize him and also it is an attempt for the deliberate condemnation of the traditional ways of American Indians but in real, most of the children in these schools were abused physically and sexually, malnourished, overworked and subjected to the harsh form of corporal punishment. The education system in Native America is one of the most striking examples of the process of assimilation and disintegration of Indians from their native culture. Apart from this education system, forced removal, allotment, reorganization, termination or relocation and self-determination are the federal policies which can be considered as being less than subtle attempts at cultural genocide. Despite the exploitation of native people which continued for centuries and the usurpation of the major portion of land from the Indians, they face distress and anger of the

settlers as they continued to be a never-ending problem for White North America. King is successful in delineating the fact that Whites were always in want of land from Indians since the early periods of contact and hence many policies and programmes were framed only for the destruction of the native languages and cultures with their native identities subject to the fact that they can have complete authorization over the indigenous land. He satirizes how the total Indian problem would disappear in the course of time, as all the natives would become private land owners instead of having a native community, thus making fruitful, the efforts of the Westerns to civilize the savage. Hence, the history in the text *Inconvenient Indian* serves as a wisdom into the wide differences of the mainstream Americans and Canadians' view of the Native people in their midst. In the whole, 'What do Indians Want?' is the question and this book of King gives a very frank answer by giving a clear depiction of history from both the perspectives in the form of stories and conversations to clear the dichotomies of native life and culture in the modern American society. Though the text deals with the hard realities of native sufferings and humiliations, the narration sometimes takes the form of humour in order to present the irony that lies behind the so-called developmental policies that were being framed by the White governments. The employed humour in the narration is not by the manner of cheap laughs at the White man but rather it can be considered a tool by which King manages to cut into the absurdities of the Anglo invasion of the continent. He aims at the core beliefs and practices of the 500-year long assault on native people and their lands, not as just retelling but narrating the history in the form of stories. Finally, King reinstates that the image of 'Native Indian' can no longer be a historical image or a museum of curiosity, as the native people are completely civilized people, striving to have their own sovereignty on their own lands.

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A STUDY OF THE COLONIAL DETERMINANTS PORTRAYED IN *THE NUTMEG'S CURSE: PARABLES FOR A PLANET IN CRISIS*

BY AMITAV GHOSH

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Abstract

Diversification of culture and races had run its course since the outset and relocation of human settlements. Every culture and population has its own uniqueness and identity and it was during the colonial era a worldwide awakening on the struggle for identities to survive became apparent. Even as post colonialism transacts with the west dominating the others to conquer spaces, Amitav Ghosh's *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* published in 2021 narrates how colonization went hand in hand with environmental degradation during the Dutch invasion of the Banda islands in the seventeenth century. Through this work, Ghosh reconstructs history to set a look back into the unnoticed settler scenarios. This research paper aims at analyzing the colonial practices and determinants portrayed by Amitav Ghosh, which threaten the sustainable cultural space and the ecological equilibrium of the native population.

Keywords: Sustainability, Colonial Practices, Cultural Spaces, Ecological Equilibrium, Colonial Determinants.

The study on colonial determinants tries to show the underlying extremism of colonial portrayals and their narrative potential in social space. Furthermore, examining the inversions of identical structures among the orient and the occident would suggest to strike a fine balance of objectivity and factual trustworthiness along with the narrative portrayals.

Epistemic influence has been the root of colonial invasion. Though colonizing the geographical sectors comes later, due colonialism starts by influencing the thinking of the victims. The British established superiority in the epistemic grounds before they proceed to conquer the physical territories. The same trait gets a revisit with minor modifications in the postcolonial era.

Both in academics and politics, subjugation by promoting ideologies contain a similar quality of epistemic control. Unchecked knowledge production and propulsion among masses form a rehash of an epistemic colonization. This suggests a pattern of colonial rehash stressed

by the native dominant over the native recipient thus leading to the other extreme of the judgemental spectrum.

A disclaimer should be realized before reading through postcolonial literature that factual trustworthiness and reliability should be scrutinized and followed by the information intake. Any presentation of an author tinted with a prejudicial vision or a motivated recital would pull the reader as a victim of colonial rehash.

The prime ideology of post-colonial, cultural or any other humanitarian studies is to treat individuals and cultures in an equilibrium but a counter academia attacks the core of such motive. As an example, where feminism at some degree deviated into male hatred and political motif, postcolonial academics could also be seen being under a threat of overlook.

—Othering‖ has been much discussed in post-colonial syllabus with the view of the West treating the Orient as an exotic species, thus considering them as the —Other‖ being at divergent existence. On the contrary, the unforeseen end of the postcolonial negotiation spectrum i.e., hatred towards the Occident or prejudice over the occidental existence and culture flips the role. Here the Occident becomes the —Other‖ under the scope of the Orient thus making the very base of stereotypical postcolonial —Othering‖ questionable. A sense of minority over the self arises under the situation where othering gets transposed. Whenever an awareness of the self arises and slowly begins to move towards shredding of the imposed behaviour or identity, there is a great chance of exceeding over a threshold where the once looked upon —Other‖ starts to view the barring candidates as the new —Other‖.

—Decolonization‖ is also a major aspect that has got a contemporary swift in regard with postcolonial practices. Blindness towards the modern forms of colonization can push the victim to reach a delusion of decolonial progress. The postcolonial capital as suggested by cultural scholars such as Raymond Williams has placed a shift from Britain to non-indigenous standards. This means that the topic of discussion on identity crisis has also shifted from the place where it has been looked upon so far.

Sticking on to the archaic dogma and a view being promoted to be decolonized from the historic exercises of the British, but desiring the outcomes of modern power structure is hypocrisy as well as a self-blinding practice. Neocolonial depreciation should also be the charge as it would be in effect of opposing an active colonial power than looping the self in charging against a passive colonial power.

Character is always imposed and superimposed constantly. A try to return to the native culture and practices has often resulted only in a hybridized identity rather than returning to the undiluted primitive root. Most of such hybridized identities that exist today take the

advantageable characteristics from non- native identities and mingle them with some of the native dogma. Every culture is evolving and shredding and this would lead mostly to a hybridized identity which might soon be taken as a subject for shredding, thus resulting in an endless cycle of decolonial oblivion.

Certain traits irrespective of the Orient and the Occident establish a similarity in thought and action. One or the other can either be appreciated or accused based on certain traits. These traits are subject to change and evolution over the course of time as they are the patterns of human behavioural structure. Hybridity is a state of overlapping premises of more than one trait. The thought of dispositional hybridity becomes the quarter where traits of the native population and the colonizers start to overlap. The overlap of cultural spaces of the West and the Orient coming together in a native land at present is an example of dispositional hybridity. This might not be evident as observed near the colonial timeline but reaching far away from the era such of a hybridized character could be observed very well.

Amitav Ghosh in his work *The Nutmeg's Curse* states that the colonial powers deprives the resources of nature and exploits the native inhabitants of the land by activities such as deforestation. This is claimed to be profited from trading natural resources like spices.

Such reports can be found even among indigenous populations under requisites such as shelter and natural resources. Ranking second on a global scale in the deforestation chart, India has shown a significant increase in deforestation between 1990 and 2020, with a difference of 284,400 hectares. Thus, there also exists a dispositional hybridity of patterns in action in consideration of the Orient and the Occident in affecting the ecological equilibrium.

A sense of exploiting one for the profit of other is set as the object of discussion by the author. A high chance is evident in almost every population, where a group of natives might exploit their own people for a self-prioritization. Such characteristics of the colonizer and the colonized could be considered as a distinct feature of dispositional hybridity.

Key characteristic of the colonizer is to establish power over the colonized in any aspect that could be attended to. This has been an inherent trait in governance motif of world order. Though spotlighting the British on annexing countries might lay an overemphasis on their character being one that exploits the other, this is an innate characteristic of any global dominance brag that has been in World history. This could be traced way back to the Grecian conquests ranging up to Islamic conquests.

This is another case where the hybridity between the records of British and other colonial ventures could lap upon each other. The establishment of colonial power by the

British over other countries could be considered as a topic of academic disposition. At the same time, considering other colonial histories and examining the inherent commonalities among these conquests could check on not singulating the British under a specific domain thus subconsciously drawing the scholarly towards the intensified end of the spectrum and also drawing an overall pattern over such annexial inherence.

Amitav Ghosh talks about the colonization of Banda islands in this non-fiction narrative. Also, a common understanding of post colonial theories is that often they are correlated only with the west. Nevertheless, an analogous tethering could be traced under various other invasions. Considering these, the tension laid on just over the British colonization could be eased in order to prevent a prejudicial frequency and also open up a wide array of academic scholarship in the field of postcolonialism.

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RESISTING CULTURAL AND SOCIAL OPPRESSION: DISCUSSING WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION THROUGH RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S 'SHASTI', 'GIRIBALA' AND 'STREER PATRA'

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Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore was a master of painting women's experiences, their psyche, the obstacles they face in order to thrive both at 'home' and 'world'. The short stories by Tagore have a myriad of representations of women who either succumb or resist the claustrophobic oppression of society and the limitations set by culture. This paper deals with short stories like 'Shasti' (The Punishment), 'Giribala' (Giribala) and 'Streer Patra' (The Wife's Letter) where the women protagonists resist the age-old patriarchy prevalent in society. Chandra from Shasti, a woman coming from the economically deprived group of society silently punishes Chidam, her husband and liberates herself from the bondage of hostile and toxic marital relationship which is otherwise not common as per the prevalent Bengali culture. Mrinal from 'Streer Patra' writes a letter to her in-laws stating that she has embarked on a spiritual journey and she will not come back. Her rejection of the marital bond as a mode of resistance was rare during the 19th century Bengal. Giribala on the other hand is a woman of beauty and charm who longs for her husband's lost love. She steps into the world of theatre which was forbidden for women. She grabs the limelight and asserts her own identity by performing on the stage which was her way of rebelling against her husband's misconduct. Through the three selected stories, the lives of three women coming from different socio-economic backgrounds finding out their own ways of resisting societal oppression and marginalisation can be analyzed.

Keywords: Emancipation, Feminism, Patriarchy, Resistance, Marginalisation.

Rabindranath Tagore, one of the finest writers of the 20th century, portrayed women with an intense level of empathy and a keen awareness of their challenges and goals. He emphasized the limitations and difficulties faced by women while also manifesting their innate power and resilience. From the independent and contemplative Charulata in *Nastanirh* to the rebellious and passionate Binodini in *Chokher Bali*, Tagore offers a wide range of female characters who question conventional gender roles and defy societal norms. Furthermore, Tagore depicts women in a way that transcends domesticity.

In his celebrated novel *Chokher Bali*, one of Tagore's most nuanced and contentious female characters, Binodini, discovers herself enmeshed in a web of feelings and desires inside a traditional society. After becoming a widow at a young age, Binodini defies social conventions that prescribe a woman's limited place in society through her unapologetic quest for love, passion and suppressed sexual desires. Conversely, Bimala, the protagonist of *Ghare Baire*, experiences a metamorphosis, evolving from a secluded housewife to a woman who challenges conventional norms and transcends the boundaries of the 'home' and liberates herself by entering the 'world' outside.

While discussing the myriad liberated women characters and their personal journeys, this research aims at exploring three women characters of Tagore who represent three different socio-cultural and economic background but experience the same level of marginalisation and how they navigate through the layered levels of marginalisation in order to resist the social oppression and attain spiritual emancipation.

The way women are portrayed in Tagore's short stories is complex and multi-layered. In 'Kabuliwala,' he explores the emotional ties between a young child named Mini and her capacity to empathise and connect with Rahamat, the Kabuliwala despite social obstacles and cross-cultural boundaries. In 'The Postmaster,' Tagore portrays a teenage female character Ratan who belongs to a very poor family. She helps the postmaster in his household chores and gradually develops an affectionate bond with him through conversations.

Tagore also highlights the power dynamics within relationships, shedding light on the complex interplay between men and women. In stories such as 'Punishment' and 'The Wife's Letter,' he delves into the emotional struggles faced by women in their marital lives. Tagore's female characters navigate the delicate balance between their own desires and the expectations imposed upon them by their husbands and families. He portrays their resilience as well as their ability to challenge oppressive norms. In the above-mentioned stories, Tagore addresses social issues and advocates women's rights and also exposes the injustices faced by women, such as domestic abuse and societal discrimination. In 'Shasti,' Tagore explores the inner courage of a lady who defies her husband's disregard and injustice in his narrative. As Shawkat Hussain writes in his translation —Tagore offers us a strikingly brave heroine who recognizes the invisible threads of power that limit her choices.“

Mrinal, the protagonist of 'Streer Patra' (The Wife's Letter), in the world of hierarchy, is subjected to a system called 'marriage' where a wife is always instructed to be pious and thrive silently under masculine dominance but Mrinal rejects this conventional mode of silent existence and rebels against it. In this tale, Tagore depicts the anguish and

sorrow of a woman living in a man's world, sometimes candidly and other times with humour and circumlocution that draws attention to the absurdity and unfairness even more.

Giribala, on the other hand, is quite different from Chandra and Mrinal. She belongs to the upper strata of society and unlike the other two she is conscious of her beauty and sexuality. She is enamoured by the glamour of theatre and stage and she also longs for the love of her husband. By performing on stage, Giribala asserts her agency and avenges the humiliation afflicted by her husband.

Thus, Tagore's short stories provide a rich tapestry of women's experiences that captures the complexity of these lives in a society that is constantly evolving. His stories still strike a chord with readers, igniting conversations about gender, society and the quest for personal autonomy. Tagore left a legacy of supporting women's rights and highlighting their significance in creating a more just and equal world through his writing.

In the chosen stories, it can be seen that the modes of asserting agency and self-adequacy are immensely varied and shaped by the socio-economic and cultural background of the three characters: Chandra, Mrinal and Giribala. *‘Shasti’* (1893), one of his powerful short stories, explores themes of casteism, the multi-layered marginalisation of women in lower caste families and their assertion of agency and self-respect. Set in rural Bengal, *‘Shasti’* mainly focuses on the misery of Chandara, a defenseless country girl unfairly entangled in the social and familial hierarchy of power systems to further the goals of feudalism and patriarchy.

‘Shasti,’ or *‘Punishment’* is a product of Tagore's observations of rural Bengal as he stayed there for ten years as the estate manager. It had an impact on Tagore's nuanced portrayal of the complex dynamics among the members of the upper-class rural society who mistreat the lower-caste Rui family. It suggests a sense of melancholy as well as stark realism.

Chandara, the protagonist of the story, is a powerful woman who is inflicted by abuse and rift with her sister-in-law. In a fit of wrath, her brother-in-law murders his wife. Chandara's husband puts the entire guilt on Chandra in order to spare his brother from the gallows. This act of extreme victimisation somehow silences Chandra.

Chandara stared at him in dumbfounded shock; her two black eyes burned through her husband like black fire. Her entire body and soul began to shrink as she sought to escape from the clutches of her monster-husband. Every fiber of her being rose in rebellion against him. (Hohenleitner 3)

She stops refuting anyone, rather silently accepts the injustice she has been subjected to just because she is a powerless woman. In the court itself she denies that her sister-in-law did not attack her first. She gave the same reply repeatedly which actually made her husband Chidam shout at her but this act was the ultimate act of defiance on Chandra's part. She could not fight the injustice inflicted by her husband and her family but she accepts her death as she wanted to convey to her husband,

I am leaving you and embracing the scaffold with all my youthful ardor. My final bond in this world is with the gallows. (Hohenleitner 5)

While Chandra resists the overpowering impact of patriarchy through her silence, Mrinal in *'Streer Patra'* shows the growth of a girl who gradually becomes Tagore's New Woman. As Dr. Shekhar Chakraborty narrates in his paper —Rabindranath Tagore's The Wife's Letter: A Story reveals Patriarchal Domination that,

Tagore's short story, *Streer Patra* (The Wife's Letter) begins quite simply but gradually weaves a tale where the woman protagonist comes to represent a world, which is not so simple, where she is subject to a system of *'pious house wife existence'* under masculine domination and how she rises up and breaks away from the same. (Chakraborty, 234)

The protagonist of Tagore's short story, *'Streer Patra'* (The Wife's Letter) (1913), starts out when Mrinal was a kid but gradually the story develops into a tale of a complex world in which she is subjected to a system of performing the role of a beautiful and perfect *'mejobou'* of the family. She is expected to remain silent but she navigates it throughout and resists this domination. Mrinal was chosen by her mother-in-law to satiate the thirst of having a good-looking daughter-in-law but everyone including Mrinal's husband overlooked the overwhelming intelligence Mrinal is endowed with. As Mrinal writes in her letter to her husband, —This intelligence must have lain deep within me, for it lingered in spite of the many years I spent merely keeping house for you (Gupta 2).

Her own mother also despised her intelligence, because, woman was supposed to submit and bow down while facing numerous constraints. If she attempted to apply logic and challenge the legitimacy and propriety of these laws and structures, she would undoubtedly encounter resistance and difficulties. However, Mrinal kept the fire of knowledge and intelligence alive in her by writing poems secretly which itself is an act of rebellion against patriarchy. Shyamali Dasgupta puts this thought in words in —On Reading *'Streer Patra'*, Mrinal's Letter to Her husband, —Since a woman was declared unfit for independence, the question of her being equipped in the way men were with intellectual training did not arise.

Amidst all these strictures and restrictions, there was one thing that set Mrinal free. She used to write poetry^{||} (Dasgupta 4).

Mrinal's rebellion takes up a new height when Bindu, the destitute and tortured cousin of Mrinal's sister-in-law comes into her life. Mrinal builds an empathetic relationship with Bindu and grows protective about her. She tries her best to rescue Bindu from the clutches of forceful marriage but Bindu was soon married off to a mentally unstable groom. Traumatized Bindu flees from her in-laws' house and comes back to Mrinal. Bindu was provided with a life of a maid in Mrinal's in-laws' house. Bindu's own sister did not even take a stand for her as she was performing the socially prescribed role of a perfect bride. Mrinal narrated in her letter how she refused to succumb to this inhuman treatment of Bindu and resisted the unfair oppression but the claustrophobic, male-centered family members found no fault in the groom and sent Bindu back to her husband. The feudal and patriarchal society firmly believed that a woman has to live with her husband accepting all his flaws. A few days later, the news of Bindu's suicide triggered Mrinal to the core. Mrinal's husband and his family blamed deceased Bindu for her shameful act of committing suicide. Thus one understands that women do not get emancipation even after their death. Mrinal, who was planning to go on a pilgrimage to Puri and was keen on rescuing Bindu through her brother, finally writes the letter to her husband that she will never come back to the family which considers women as mere subjects and leaves the *'Doll's House'* for asserting her choice and agency.

Quite contrary to Chandra and Mrinal, the third character Giribala takes a new turn for resisting the patriarchal set up of the monied upper class family. Giribala, the wife of Gopinath is an embodiment of conventional feminine beauty but she is not frail. She secretly nurtures her passion for theatre and performing arts as —the theatre seemed to her like a world where society was suddenly freed from its law of gravitation.^{||} She is oppressed and mal-handled by her husband Gopinath. She longs for his love but Gopinath has surrendered himself to a stage artist named Lavanga. Giribala expressed her desire to witness the stage performance of Lavanga but she was not permitted by Gopinath as theatre was considered to be a forbidden land for women from decent background. Sudha, her maid bears a great taste of art and theatre ignites Giribala's suppressed desire to witness the theatre on her own. She decides to transgress the set boundaries of the society. Enamoured by the glittery and free world of theatre, Giribala starts visiting the plays desperately and it becomes a route of escape for her,

Every time the curtain rose the window of her life's prison-house seemed to open before her and the stage, bordered off from the world of reality by its gilded frame and

scenic display, by its array of lights and even its flimsiness of conventionalism, appeared to her like a fairyland where it was not impossible for herself to occupy the throne of the fairy queen. (*Giribala* 4)

When Giribala saw her husband cheering for other actresses, her contempt and hatred for Gopinath grew stronger. One night, Gopinath comes to Giribala's room, ransacks it and physically abuses her. He flees with Lavanga in the middle of the play *Moanorama* but the director finds a new heroine to play the role of 'Manorama' and the play becomes an instant hit. Gopinath visits the theatre and finds out that it is Giribala who is playing the role of Manorama, the heroine. Thus, Giribala comes out to be the New Woman of Tagore possessing the qualities of Eve, she avenges her husband by shattering her male ego and snatching away what she truly deserves.

Through the reading of the three heroines of Tagore, one can analyze that Tagore did not deliberately take any overtly feminist stance to prove his point; rather he concentrated on the individual journey of his heroines for coming out of the shackles of bondage. As Bharati Roy writes in her article titled —New Woman in Rabindranath Tagore's Short Stories: An Interrogation of —Laboratory

While Rabindranath was never comfortable with strident assertions of women's rights, and was not kind to those who were known as feminists (Tagore, *Chithipatra*), he showed a remarkable understanding of woman's psyche, perceived the injustice of an unequal social structure, and advocated for greater freedom and decision-making power for women in the family and the larger society. (Roy, 69)

Chandra asserts her agency and finds her emancipation through embracing death and thus punishing her husband for eternity for the injustice he inflicted on Chandra. Mrinal embarks on a spiritual journey to attain her spiritual emancipation after the death of Bindu and her inability to save this hapless girl enables her to free herself from the oppressive household permanently. Giribala, on the other hand asserts her choices to avenge the wrongdoings of her husband Gopinath. Three of them rebel and resist patriarchy in their own ways but the motive of Rabindranath Tagore behind creating a number of strong female characters was to make room for the social upliftment of women in the 20th century. Sarika Gupta has rightly pointed out in —A Feminist Reading of Tagore's Selected Stories that —These examples of cultured Bengali women bring into notice that the social and cultural atmosphere of urban Bengal was changing. With that, he subtly challenged the status quo and ideas that hindered women's growth in society in his own unique way.

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WOMAN AND TRAUMA IN MAYA ANGELOU'S

I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS

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Maya Angelou is one of the most prolific writers. As a writer, she deals with the aspects of woman and womanhood, individual and society, self and identity and domination and realization. Her autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* draws a variety of approaches to her traumatic experiences as a child that affected her throughout her life. She specifically emphasizes the issues of cultural trauma experienced by her as an African-American woman. The main objective of this paper is to delineate how Angelou attempts to explore female recognition despite social obligations and marginalization. The paper intends to execute the coordination between her childhood experiences and their enduring imprint on her and her cultural identity.

Keywords: Woman, Society, Trauma, Culture, Recognition.

Maya Angelou is an African-American poet of the 20th century who is best known for her autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. She deals with race, gender, patriarchy, oppression and discrimination. In this autobiography, she depicts her childhood experiences as a girl and a black woman. This book throws light on the historical depiction of sexual and racial discrimination of a black woman in America. Her mood of recollection aims at deciphering the dichotomy between personal experiences and mental anguish, sexual identity and racial commitment, oppression and empowerment, life and reality and self-expression and individual development.

The book chronicles the history of America during the early 20th century. —I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings represents Angelou herself who seems to be in chains. The word —sings in the title symbolizes her voice that is somehow heard and —why finally uncovers her psychological approach to life and reality. The autobiography deals with the poet herself as Marguerite Johnson and her brother Bailey. It insinuates the life of an eight-year-old girl who lives with her brother Bailey, mother, Vivian and her boyfriend, Mr. Freeman. It also casts her grandmother, Mommy who enjoys life.

The structural narrative refers to Maya's physical assault, mental anguish and individual alienation. Maya here projects Freeman's harsh behavior towards her that made her

traumatized both physically and mentally. She at the outset intends to tell what he did with her but finally, she is unable to speak her mind. She thinks that people like her grandmother and her uncles would throw stones at her. She withdraws herself with the apprehension of being discovered. Such fear within her appears as a decisive factor in her life. In the beginning, she seems to be an innocent and simple-minded girl but after the catastrophic event, she becomes conscious about self-revelation and saturation. This change within her acts as a psychological phenomenon that again leads to horrific and terrific childhood traumatic exigencies.

Angelou marks the early stages of her life where she had to undertake a lot of travels from one place to the other. The book shows her movement from California to Stamps in Arkansas, to St. Louis and then back to Stamps. This was mainly because of her parent's separation. Thus, she and her brother grow with the lack of parental care and guidance. She considers them as —poor little motherless darlings‖ (Angelou). The line reads: —... we were unwanted children‖ (Angelou 59). Marguerite wishes to behave and look like a white girl. The book portrays the pain of being a Southern black girl. When referring to her grandfather Willie and his crippled nature, Angelou tries to represent him as a fatherly figure. The book highlights Willie's sufferings not because he was crippled but because he was a black man. Marguerite sees herself as an ugly black girl. Angelou describes Marguerite's skin colour as 'shit colour' (Angelou 22). She is criticized not only for being a black woman but also for having black steel wool on her head. Her skin tone becomes a matter of ridicule for her. For her skin colour, she feels obligated and humiliated. She also talks about certain social norms that the African- American black women are expected to abide by in society. She writes: "Thou shall not be dirty" and "Thou shall not be impudent" (Angelou 27). Morris in *The Culture of Pain* rightly writes that pain —... always requires a personal and cultural encounter with meaning‖ (Morris 267). The personal and cultural setback of any person performs as an appropriation for a traumatic ordeal.

Trauma as a concept subscribes to the affinity towards physical ailment and mental imbalance. It is a theory evolving in the present world. It intends to locate the conscious and subconscious unit of one's self. It helps to reshape the individual acclamation and self-endurance. It redefines how a person suffers and struggles to survive in the cosmos. Trauma studies first appeared in the late 19th century and exemplifies issues like mental suffering, physical ailment, psychological variations, gradual transgression and social commentary. The domain of trauma studies is well-groomed by authors namely Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and many others

In *Unclaimed Experience*, Cathy Caruth talks about the catastrophic impact of trauma that engages a specific way to respond to a particular situation (Caruth 5). She categorizes trauma into an event and its possible outcomes. In the introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, she says: —The phenomenon of trauma has seemed to become all-inclusive, ... (Caruth 4). In this respect, Michael Alpert quotes Caruth in —Cathy Caruth Injects Trauma into Comparative Literature, —Traumatic memories are never fully known but nonetheless insist on being told (Alpert, 2001). The disabled character, Bhagirathi amplifies an integrated alliance between capitulation and elimination. Further, it situates events and incidents that foster the making of a fragmented self. Theorists like Craps and Buelens in the introduction to *Post-colonial Trauma Novels* insist on the understanding of —colonial traumas such as dispossession, forced migration, diaspora, slavery, segregation, racism, political violence, and genocide (Craps and Buelens 3). The story unravels the expanse of gendered assault and distorted social prejudice. In this book, Angelou talks about her incoherence which is caused due to male dominance, racial monopoly and political consortium.

According to Caruth, trauma is likely to be a mode of ‘return’ (Caruth 17) and for Rothberg, it is a manner of ‘representation’ (Rothberg 27). Marguerite always seems to represent her identity as a spokesperson for equality and fraternity. In every aspect, she struggles and persists in the phase of hardship and arrogance. She even encourages everyone to inquire about the unyielding social standards and make a review of cultural imbalance. Every sequence teaches her to prefer kindness and humbleness instead of hankering after power and wealth. Moreover, Awatef in his research article —Sexual and Racial Trauma in Maya Angelou’s ‘I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings’ writes: —Her brother... always stands by her and consoles her while she is crying and humiliated, he always attempts to encourage her to have self-confidence, he strongly supports her (Awatef 30). He also portrays a clear disparity and distinction that lies between —the whites and the coloured race, this was a sour and painful experience not only for Maya as an individual Black girl but for the whole African-American people. It was a collective trauma (Awatef).

Marguerite says, —Let the white folks have their money and power and segregation and sarcasm and big houses and schools and lawns like carpets, and books, and mostly... let them have their whiteness. It was better to be meek and lowly, spat upon and abused for this little time than to spend eternity frying in the fires of hell (Angelou 131). She believes that the black folk would receive solace after death. In another instance, it is found that during a boxing match, Maya visualizes how Joe Louis, a black boxer was not allowed to celebrate his victory as it arose jealousy and detestation of the white people. She says, —My race groaned.

It was our people falling. It was another lynching, yet another black man hanging on a tree. One more woman ambushed and raped. A black boy whipped and maimed. It was hounds on the trail of a man running through slimmy swamps. (Angelou 135).

Shoshana Felman talks about how trauma provides the powerful truth of one's life and helps one to adapt to the newly formed environment. (Felman 8). Further, Erikson defines trauma as —an assault from outside that breaks into the space one occupies as a person and damages the interior (Erikson 455). Here, Marguerite's traumatized mind seems to be the outcome of societal pressure and fear to dominate over the black Southerners. She prefers to live a life of equity and integrity. Her character symbolizes the quest for meaning in life, adjustment, a conglomeration of time, place and action, alienation and awareness.

Ellisa Marder in *Trauma and Literary Studies: Some —Enabling Questions* writes, —There is no specific set of physical manifestation identifying trauma, and it almost invariably produces repeated, uncontrollable, incalculable effects that endure long after its ostensible —precipitating cause (Marder). —*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* talks about suppression, displacement, rape and oppression of a black girl, Marguerite in particular and black woman in general.

Negin Heidarizadeh believes that trauma is a state of mind that —results from an injury (Heidarizadeh 789). The elements of assault and emigration raise the cathartic tone of the story. The book reads, —He held me so softly that I wished he wouldn't ever let me go. I felt at home. From the way he was holding me I knew he would never let me go or let anything bad ever happen to me this was probably my real father and we had found each other at last (Angelou 73). For her, sharing the bed with Mr. Freeman is a very natural thing. She says: —After the third time in my mother's bed, I thought there was nothing strange about sleeping there (Angelou 72).

Zoe Norridge writes, —... pain is often either a result or a cause of the denial of another person's voice (Norridge 209). Here, Maya's state of mind appears to grow more intense with the repeated exasperation of episodes that she encounters. The intensity of her pain is revealed when she writes, —I couldn't say yes and tell them how he had loved me once for few minutes and how he had held me close before he thought I had peed in my bed. My uncles would kill me and Grandmother Baxter would stop speaking, as she often did when she was angry (Angelou 85). In another instance, the aspect of rape contributes a great deal to her alienation and discomfort in life. She was threatened by the rapist to not disclose the fact to anybody otherwise he would kill Bailey, her brother. Thus, she was obligated to maintain it as a secret. The fact was ultimately discovered by her mother and brother much

later. In an article Suzette A. Henke writes, —The benevolent father figure turns out to be demonic predator enacting a torturous nightmare (Henke).

Bessel van der Kolk's *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on the Mind, Body, and Society* considers trauma as an affective phenomenon. It affects human behaviour, psychology and perception. Angelou in her autobiography aims to deal with involvement and exposure of the human psyche. Marguerite suffers due to her displaced origin and regulated inner psyche. Her conscious being seems to be engrossed with attaining self-recognition and social transformation. Michelle Balaev in *Trauma Studies* writes that trauma —... impacts the self's emotional organization and perception of the external world" (Balaev 360). Angelou deciphers the aspect of incomprehensiveness and nescience. Her characters prefer to move by time and set of actions. The past events of her life always resonate. As Morris in *The Culture of Pain* rightly says, —pain is always personal and always cultural (6,25). The personal and individual pain of the character act as a subsidy for the cumulative ordeal. The plot revolves around time past and present helping the characters to regain their present status and identity.

Kali Tal in *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* writes about how —trauma is reflected and revised in the larger, collective political and cultural world (Tal 5). The story contributes to the displacement of thoughts, personal grief about the loss of feminine space and social arrogance, dignity and subordination, inclusion and exception. The characters mostly undergo inner suffering. The conscious self, the psychological self and the categorized self abound them with different predicaments, specific confusions and diverse interventions. The paper ascribes to the uprightness of a black woman in the south rural landscape of America. Rothberg in an interview with Philippe Mesnard says that trauma is always linked with the history of a particular period. Further, he is of the view that there is always a correlation between the historical perspective and the different models of memory.

Amid social and familial binding, she inculcates the potential of pedagogy to prosper in life. She in the beginning seems to be engrossed with several episodes that arouse pain in her. Moreover, in the later part, she appears as a personification of positivity, endurance, knowledge and grandeur. After being raped, she muted herself. However, with the help of her mentor, Mrs. Bartha Flowers, she got back her courage to speak her mind and thoughts. She begins her new phase by reading a poem. Thus, she again apprehends herself to the outside world as a charming and cultured African-American woman. Mrs. Flowers' encouragement and support enlighten her self-awareness and instinct. The book reads, —It would be safe to say that she made me proud to be Nigro, just by being herself (Angelou 95).

In another instance, it is found that Mrs. Cullinan hurts her dignity by mispronouncing her name as Mary. Maya never insinuates such disgrace to her identity even from her master. All these instances reinforce her awareness and upgrade her to become the protector of her race and herself. This paper intends to explore Maya as the personification of self-acknowledgment, introspection, self-fulfillment and conscious upbringing.

Finally, her traumatic past provides her the antecedent of strength, wisdom and upheaval. Thus, the traumatic events procure her the agenda for perceptive recognition. Her cathartic past manifests her present actions and future representation. This memoir serves as a premise that initiates one's urge to know and understand oneself with the sustenance of dark skin colour, clumsy black hair, original name and the identified woman's voice. This paper subscribes to the dynamics of childhood trauma, sexual abuse, exploitation and many such socio-cultural paradigms. On top of everything, it manifests the illumination of Maya, the protagonist's overwhelming response to all sorts of repercussions of being an African-American woman.

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EARLY-MEDIEVAL ENGLISH LITERARY SPACE AS A 'NON-BECOMING'**Sreeja Chowdhury**

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Abstract

Early-Medieval Britain's Roman colonization, frequent Viking raids, and a flourishing Eastern trade, its culture and literature can easily be read as Homi Bhabha's 'third space'. This article argues that the limitation of space to a mere process of becoming (as in the third space) is inadequate; it is simultaneously being and becoming, a culture that engages not merely in contemporary transcultural diaspora but with both the remote past and the distant future. This 'non-articulate' can be considered a 'split', a term borrowed from Lacan but not limited to his sense of 'lack', it captures 'lack', 'excess' and 'différance'.

Keywords: Celticism, Non-becoming, Anglo-Saxon, Lack.

The way to power for the Anglo-Saxons was paved in Celtic blood. However, they could not altogether do away with the vestiges of Celticism and this article explores how such cultural confluence is not a space of becoming, as Homi Bhabha argues, but a non-becoming, an excess that cannot be reconciled with.

For Freud, excess is simultaneously both liberated pleasure beyond bounds and an abominable transgression and destructiveness. Therefore, Anglo Saxon culture can be read as a palimpsest that had politically transgressed the constraints of the Celtic culture by colonizing, destroying and erasing it; culturally, it had liberated itself from the narrow bounds of the cultures of Celtic paganism at a time when paganism was vanishing away from Europe and later freed from that of the Irish monasteries but it was somehow in the debt of Celtic and Ionian culture and was perpetually in the process of erasing. It was then an excess that effaced the political and geographical boundaries of the Celts in battles fought and it was indebted to it in several cultural ways, such as the ornamental art form of the Anglo Saxon era had vestigial remnants of the Celtic knotwork and ornamentation such as the spirals, imposed on Anglo Saxon art forms such as its red, blue and gold garnet patterns of jewellery. A veritable instance could be the page from the Gospel according to Saint Mark. Carpet pattern from the Lindisfarne Gospel in —Evangiles of Lindisfarne, by bishops Eadfrith and Aldred, between 710-721.

However, in the process of erasing that culture, it was attempting to reshape and re-appropriate the cultural principles in its own ways. However, Homi Bhabha's notion of becoming is narrower for him. The word 'becoming' only encapsulates a notion of perpetual formation, a confluence where tributaries of varied cultures intersect but what it fails to capture is the 'non-becoming', a reverse process that is perpetually in the process of erasing yet it is never able to completely eradicate the roots of its predecessors. It is capable of only remoulding and re-appropriation, though this re-appropriation often leads to a misappropriation of cultures. What a particular symbol in one culture would have denoted might have been completely misrepresented in another culture. This leads to the question as to what constitutes originality, to which no definite answer can be delivered. This is because every culture is an amalgamation of several cultures and the transmission and retransmission of symbols and emblems across generations variously alters its meanings and therefore any reading of a cultural object is bound to be a misreading.

A veritable instance can be in the —Dream of the Rood where the rood endures not God-sent tribulations but 'wyrda' on the hill, which in turn reflects upon the Old Saxon epic *Heliand* where the life of Herod is not exacted by God but 'wurd'. The interpretation of the symbol of dreams as omens is from times immemorial but its structural and formative principles have been borrowed from Celtic legends with attempted Christianisation. The initial lines of —Dream of the Rood, —Hwæt, ic swefna cyst secgan wylle, /hwæt mē gēmætte tō midre nihte/ syðþan reordberend reste wunedon. are reminiscent of the lines from an old Celtic poem 'My eyes slumbered in sleep, /... A strange dream happened to me, The motif of silence evident in —reorberende reste wundeon heralds two types of new beginnings: one, a silence inessential for the poet to begin the narration of his dream and the other, the beginning of the new realm of Christ following his crucifixion and resurrection. The absolute indispensability of silence to the new beginning, primarily that of the year of the Lord, was in effect an attempted re-appropriation of the Celtic ritual Samhain, the Celtic new year, where absolute darkness and silence were observed on 1st November which they believed would gradually disperse into the light whisperings at Beltane on 1st May. However, this appropriation was a misappropriation insofar as Samhain was also a ritual honouring the dead when the boundaries between the Earth and the otherworld were loosened. In the case of —Dream of the Rood, it imagines the ultimate death and the return of the dead through the Supreme Saviour figure of Christ and through the virtues of humiliation but it disrespects the virtues of holy joy, camaraderie and feasting that followed the Celtic rituals. The beginning of a new year which for the Celts had been established through a festival of joy, the end of

harvest season (as Samhain literally translates to —summer’s end) metamorphosed into a season of sorrow and suffering through the excruciating act of crucifixion of Christ. However, the traces of joy and the numerous references to gold and jewels are again a distinctly Celtic ritual. Numerous references to gold in the Gaelic poems not only bring out its overwhelming significance in the Celtic life but also when associated with the Cauldron of Dagda, it symbolises rebirth and abundance. Thus, what had been originally a fertility cult was transposed to the Christian God representing spiritual and bodily resurrection but such association denigrates Christ’s spirituality into grotesque sexuality, a carnal misappropriation from which Christians dissociated themselves. Furthermore, the line, —bewrigene weorðlice || —covered with gold|| might recall the intertwined Celtic chains that covered several of its ornaments and metalwork, a symbol of the power of the object chained. Thus, the power of the rood is ironically appropriated through the chain imagery of the Celts. Similar references are also found in Beowulf. For instance, the gilded helmet which Beowulf wears to fight Grendel’s mother, —twas wound with chains,|| and the — chain-hilt|| that Beowulf seized during the battle with Grendel’s mother, both testify to the bearer’s prestige and position in society. Beowulf is replete with Old Norse elements that hint towards a possible future that might have been, the colonization of the Anglo-Saxons by the Danes but these demonstrate a dynamism with the past, present, and the future, the past insofar as its fond memory is concerned, the future in a possible colonial rule and the present in constant apprehension of the raids mixed with awe and wonder for the skill of the raiders. Tracing the origin of Beowulf to Danish myths, regarding the treasure in the poem has been cursed by the ancients who laid it in the ground. Richard North argues that indeed he presents Beowulf’s act as a moral choice. With hindsight, one can see that ‘heathen gold’ was an early theme, for it implied that Hama chooses eternal reward by giving up the Gothic Broosinga mene (Beo 1199–201), just before one sees Wealhtheow presenting another great necklace to Beowulf. Later, not long before Beowulf attacks the dragon, he tells a story of Hrethel’s grief for Herebeald in which the poet seems to highlight Hrethel’s restrained acceptance of his son’s death as a heathen’s best hope (lines 2469). Finally, with Beowulf’s death in the dragon fight, the poet suggests that the treasures he sought amount to poison, the possibility of spiritual death (lines 3066–7). For each of these morally defining moments, the poet appears to draw on the unquantifiable sources of living Danish mythology. Respectively he plays on Freyja’s Bri’singa men, O’ ðinn’s vengeance for Baldr, and Po’rr’s death by the World Serpent.

However, these instances of cultural mimicry, as Bhabha argues, do not constitute a mockery of the colonized subjects or the Celts. These do not create —partial representation|| or stem from paradoxical mockeries existing within the colonial system but simultaneously stem from and create a —lack||, a lack of being in the process of erasure complementing the non-becoming. The Anglo-Saxon culture, in the course of the cultural erasure of the Celts, is always engaged in the discourse of displacement and such displacement is perpetuated by its engagement in the process of erasure because displacement constitutes the lack and this erasure is the desire to fulfil the lack, which by definition, is fated to remain unfulfilled for the lack encompasses an endless continuation of desire rather than attaining fulfillment itself. Therefore, the identity of the literary texts and by extrapolation Anglo-Saxon culture itself is this lack or displacement or this —not||. This is substantiated by the fact that —Wanderer|| and —Seafarer|| can be read as reinforcements of the views of Celtic Christianity. Both the poems so vehemently renounce in favour of the ‘mead-halls’, which in a Christian context could be interpreted as community halls of the Roman Catholic monasteries. The body politic of the poems can be interpreted as inherently resistant for the very act of the poems are not writings but soliloquies and ironically, talking was an act very much limited even within the halls of the Catholic monastic brotherhood. The most crystal clear evidence of Wanderer’s renunciation of the Roman halls is this stanza where friends and riches are said to be —læne|| - —transitory||, and the —earth’s foundations||, an allusion to the stone buildings of the monasteries are —vain||.

—Hēr bið feoh læne, hēr bið frēond læne,
hēr bið mon læne, hēr bið mæg læne,
eal þis eorþan gesteal īdel weorþeð.||

Similarly, in the —Seafarer||, in the end, there is almost a desperate wish that there will be no more lords or givers of gold. Gold is metaphorically representing communion with God.

—Dagas sind gewiten
Ealle onmedlan eorþan rices;
nearon nu cyningas
ne caseras
ne goldgiefan||

It can be read as a frustrated response to extreme stringentness and discipline, as absolute obedience was necessary for the monks in Roman Catholic monasteries according to

the Rule of St. Benedictine. However, this is against the zeitgeist of the rest of the poem which mutely takes obedience to a lord as the supreme virtue.

Forþon nis þæs modwlonc
 mon ofer eorþan,
 ne him his dryhten to þæs hold,
 þæt he a his sæfore
 sorge næbbe,
 to hwon hine Dryhten
 gedon wille.℥

—Forþon me hatran sind
 Dryhtnes dreamas
 þonne þis deade lif
 læne on londe.℥

In a similar fashion, the protagonist of the poem —Judith℥ can also be metaphorically read as representative of the Celtic Church as it often assigned significant roles for the women to play at the forefront. This had a historical significance that the abbess in the monasteries was no woman from a humble background but often a female of a royal descent who grew up close to the royal castle and therefore, she had to be assigned a position accordingly. Therefore, Judith can be read as a holy leader of God's people on earth leading them to God. However, this problematizes the hermetic ideal of the Celtic Church as the bonds between the aristocracy and the Church became stronger and it was no longer possible for the monks to pray for their individual salvation alone but for their patrons' as well. This leads to the question of the originary narrative of the Anglo-Saxon culture, the culture professedly converted to Roman Catholicism. This is because if the subject of colonization is at least partially resembling the master will, it problematizes the power hierarchy and in turn, questions the mimicry narrative of Homi Bhabha. Therefore, the culture functions not in the third space but in the void of —not℥, the non-becoming is playing upon, as it is discovered now, a non-becoming that is itself in the stages of erasure, that is, attempting to erase any trace of Roman Catholicism and preserve the 'originality'. This notion of self-segregated pristine 'originality', as Bhabha argues, is evidently flawed. The notion of mockery of Bhabha can be proved wrong because mimicry need not always constitute a self-mockery. If Anglo-Saxon culture is read as a text inscribed in the body of its literature, it can be read as a multiplicity, where there is no static particularized identity of the colonial Self to relegate the

foreign as the Other. It is where the meaning of the Self is itself in difference with the highly civilized ideal of Bhabha being a transcendental signified.

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BIG BROTHER VS POETIC JUSTICE: A SAGA OF BATTLE NEGOTIATING THE CENSOR OF HUMOR

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Abstract

Amidst the recent controversy with the 75th movie of Nayanthara's *Annapoorani: The Goddess of Food* directed by Nilesh Kirshnaa, social media is under fire. It was removed from OTT platform at the request of the licensor of the movie. While some people argue on one side that this kind of censorship is not healthy for the film industry, others argue that the movie promoted enmity among different groups. Responding to the controversy, one of the co-producers of *Annapoorani* issued a letter to the right-wing organisation on January 9th that they will collaborate with OTT platform and the production company to remove the film from the commercial medium after editing (TET). One must understand the reason and need for censorship in today's tech-savvy society. It is necessary to evaluate how far is everything censored and how far the freedom of expression can be used. Censorship was predominant even from the British colonization historically. This paper aims to prove that Tamil cinema has faced the boons and bans of extra-constitutional censorship and is no stranger to censorship of progressive films.

Keywords: Censorship, CBFC, Freedom of Speech and Expression, Tamil Cinemas.

With the advent of technology, the expansion of media and the age of communication, restrictions, responsibilities and directives must be there in place in order to not deviate from the government's social stands or the opinion of people. The media is not of an individual even though it uses the right of an individual to express itself. India has been restricted by the British Government historically from time to time. One such example is the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 where each content for newspapers had to be scrutinized by government officials before they were printed.

In the early days, television and radio were under the complete control of the government. There were no private TV channels but there were many newspapers and magazines across the country, both regional and national. They needed the support of the government as their profits and survival depended on the advertisements from the government. When the Emergency was declared, some agreed and some were against it. The founder of *Indian Express*, Ramnath Goenka stood his ground along with other newspapers like *The*

Statesman and Patriot. Newspapers that opposed suffered huge losses because Indira Gandhi introduced the Monopoly and Restrictive Trade Practices Act. Under this act, the government reduced the supply of newsprint to media houses. Some printed the newspapers blank as a mark of protest and others changed their format by writing non-news and trivia as a form of protest

India had its battles against the oppressive colonial forces who restricted its expressive voice. Now, the degree of freedom the social media enjoys lies under Article 19 (1A) of the Indian Constitution that came into place on 26th January, 1950, on Republic Day where every citizen has the right to freedom of speech and expression. This right also includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, regardless of frontiers.

In India, there was a censorship code in 1928 in cinema. While India was under British Colony, the censorship code was designed in such a way that anybody who was involved in mass media was considered powerful and dangerous. The British considered anything against them suspicious. Any kind of political statement was strictly prohibited from making. This was the reason why censorship came to India in the first place. Later it took on other aspects of the social norms. The movies began to embrace a lot of violence and carnal actions in it. There were a lot of social groups which protested that these movies are not under the Indian ethos. Thus, there was a whole process that developed historically to form the basis of recent norms for censorship. The fact that there is censorship for cinematography itself is redundant considering the right to freedom of speech and expression. What is even more problematic is that this censorship is only for cinemas and not for television programs.

The regulatory body that is in place to monitor the positive development and the positive outcome of the advent of the technology is CBFC- Censor Board of Film Certification, also known as Censor Board. The content of the film is evaluated and certified under four categories U for Universal, UA for children under twelve along with parental guidance, A for everyone above the age of 12 and S for the view of scientists. CBFC is a statutory body under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of the Government of India. It goes through any content that is built for public viewing. It works under the Cinematograph Act of 1952. Foreign films also should go through the Indian CBSE board before being exhibited. *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984) is Stevens Spielberg's action adventure and it was banned in India for its negative portrayal of Indian culture and tradition. The *Da Vinci Code* was banned in several states of India, particularly for its portrayal of Jesus Christ. The government at times may use the regulatory bodies to stiffen a

person's opinion. Kamla Swaroop's documentary film *Dance of Democracy: Battle of Banaras* faced the ire of the censor because of its political views.

The following are the few Indian movies that were under controversies for their content. *Fire* is a movie directed by Deepa Mehta. Though the movie was recognized globally, in India it became a topic of discussion. It is about the lesbian relationship between two sisters-in-law from a Hindu family. The film was screened in theatres but it was withdrawn after protest. *Black Friday* (2004) was banned and was directed by Anurag Kashyap. It was based on a true story of the Bombay blast by Hussain Zaidi. The CBFC considered it too dark and the movie received a stay order from the Bombay High Court as it mentions the 1993 Bombay blast and its conspiracy. *Darzania* (2005) directed by Rahul Dholakia talks about the Gujarat riot. The film won a National Award but faced a ban in India. It revolves around a boy called Azhar who goes missing during the 2002 riot. *India's Daughter* (2015) was directed by Leslie Udwin and it revolves around the 2012 Delhi gang rape and murder of 23-year-old Nirbhaya. The court thought the documentary projected unhealthy public sentiments.

The movie *Annapoorani* is the centre of controversy. It is about a girl of one of the orthodox communities who dreams of being the best Indian chef. She does not eat meat and to improve her culinary skills she is expected to taste and cut meat which her family is against. She still embarks on the journey hiding it from her parents. In the climax, Annapoorani follows a friend's mother's beliefs and offers Namaz before cooking Biryani whom she learns it from. The movie was undercurrent for hurting Hindu sentiments, people also filed complaints for its promotion of Love Jihad.

Raja Gambeeram, a documentary filmmaker finds this reaction extreme. He says that Tamilnadu is no stranger to progressive films. The film *Vedham Puthitha* (1987), written and directed by Bharathiraja became controversial for being critical of a dominant community. In *Alaigal Oivathillai* (1981) which was also directed by Bharathiraja, the protagonists choose love over religion. In 1973, *Arangetram* released by K Balachander resulted in protests for portraying the heroine from the dominant community doing odd jobs inorder to save her family. She was finally disowned by her family when they got to know the nature of the job. *Agragarathil Kaluthai* (1977) is a cult classic by director John Abraham. The film was about a dominant community man bringing a donkey into the house. The movie was stopped from telecasting due to high opposition(TF).

Raja Gambeeram further asks —Even if a scene is removed from the film, it will be edited and made viral on social media. So what do these organisations seek to achieve?!

Kavita Muralidharan in her article quotes Bhaskaran, —If there is such extra-constitutional censorship filmmakers will begin what is known as anticipatory censorship. They will try to avoid controversial issues, anything that will give them trouble and will end up with mindless entertainment‖(TF).

India is a more diverse society than any country in the world. Shashi Tharoor says,

There is a certain amount of liberal fundamentalism on the Internet space where highly educated and sophisticated people do not want anybody, least of all the government telling them what they cannot read write see and think. But from the point of view of the government, there is a certain responsibility to the society of the state. In India, sadly there are different kinds of reality like the political, cultural and linguistic sense that are different from those ways of the developed Western world. This does not mean that India is less developed we are just different‖. (NDTV, 0.45 - 1.38)

Filmmakers or artists do not think in normative terms. Their thinking is in binary terms like positive and negative. Therefore, it is necessary to be conscious that at the base of all, it is one's sense of right and wrong, moral and immoral.

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VOICES INTERWOVEN: NAVIGATING INTERSECTIONALITY AND SUBVERSION IN INDIAN SLAM POETRY

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Abstract

Indian spoken word poetry or slam poetry has gained prominence with artists often exploring the intersection of gender, class, religion, and ethnicity that shape individual experiences. Through a comprehensive analysis of selected slam performances, this paper aims to explore the intersectionality in the Indian context, shedding light on how spoken words engage with multiple social categories providing a space for diverse voices and experiences. By examining the socio-cultural landscape reflected in these poems, insights into the transformative power of spoken word poetry as a medium for subverting societal norms can be derived.

Keywords: Performance Poetry, Poetry Slam, Subversion, Intersectionality, Resistance.

Slam poetry or spoken word poetry has captured the nuances of collective national consciousness since its inception in the 2000s. Indian slam poetry has a long history of being a powerful venue where poets address and subvert societal conventions. Poetry slams enable the creation and representation of diverse and marginalized identities through stories of resistance, contemplation and community. They serve as a platform for cultural exchange by depicting the overlapping nature of cultural markers like gender, ethnicity, class, caste and religion. Slam poetry has dynamically altered the relationship between the Indian audience and poetry. Indian poets portray the intricacies of individual identities and experiences using their voices to subvert traditional norms and challenge stereotypes.

Poetry, as an oral form of expression, has been a persistent and continuous presence throughout human history. Spoken word poetry is an umbrella term for poetry intended to be spoken aloud to audience and slam poetry is a subgenre of spoken word poetry that combines performance, competition, and audience engagement. The beginnings of poetry slams may be traced back to the 1980s, when Marc Kelly Smith, a former Chicago construction worker turned poet organized the first poetry slam, in an attempt to bring down poetry to the general public by moving it away from the sacred groves of academia.

Marc Kelly Smith and Joe Kraynak define slam poetry as —a blend of original poetry, performance, and competition that spawns a captivating event in which poets compete in

front of an animated, electrified audience (Smith and Kraynak 12). Slam poetry is characterized by the emphasis on vocal delivery, gestures and body language but the defining feature is the pivotal role that the audience plays in the process of constructing meaning. Emerging poets perform their original poetry in a competitive setting, where they are judged by their peers and live audience, thus signifying the exchange of evaluative authority from academicians to the general public. Slams foster a countercultural atmosphere by establishing specific democratic principles that diverge from sanctified academic conventions.

Indian slam poetry embraces intersectionality which points to the interconnectedness of social identities such as gender, caste, class, and religion. Intersectionality as a method for literary study, provides an analytical framework with which one can understand how several identities intersect and contribute to the formation of an individual character and the systems of oppression they face. Intersectionality originates from critical race theory and specifically examines the convergence of gender and racial identity. The term —intersectionality‖ was theorized by the black feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in her 1989 essay titled —Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.‖

Postmodern theory advances the concept of identity as being fractured, multiple and in a constant state of reconstruction. Intersectionality posits that traditional manifestations of oppression in a culture, such as racism, classism, sexism, homophobia and religious extremism converge to create intersecting and compounded forms of oppression. Crenshaw in her essay, —Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Colour‖ offers a threefold definition of intersectionality. The first aspect is —Structural Intersectionality‖ which refers to how race and gender determine the fundamental difference between the real experiences of white women and women of colour. The notion of structural intersectionality stands true for Indian women as well. The second aspect is the —Political Intersectionality‖ which highlights the importance of incorporating and addressing the voice of individuals from every community in the political solution of a social issue. The third dimension of Intersectionality is the —Representational Intersectionality‖ which calls for the need to represent all social classes in positions of power.

The analysis of Indian slam poems under intersectionality would provide a more holistic picture of how slam poetry actively addresses the identity politics of diversity in India. Indian poets employ performance to claim, represent and occasionally reconstruct marginalized identities. Slammers celebrate the interconnectedness of various identities such as race, class, caste, gender, and religion by prioritizing diversity and democracy. Slam poets

often challenge the social and political forces that oppress people with a prevalent focus on the vernacular, cultural codes and expressions of marginalized identities. Indian slam poetry represents the double marginalization of women on the grounds of their multiple intersecting identities like race, gender, religion, caste, sexuality, class, and so on. An overwhelming number of works are recited in poetry slams in India all year round and these are demonstrations of multiple identities.

Aranya Johar's "A Brown Girl's Guide to Gender" is a compelling critique of patriarchy and sexual abuse. The poem delves into the intersecting nature of different aspects of one's identity and highlights the importance of subverting societal expectations and standards placed upon young girls. Johar narrates personal experiences and highlights the sexualization faced by girls from a very young age and the continuing existence of acid attacks and rapes in India. The lines —My mom telling me to wear shirts out less often, Nirbhaya and more left forgotten. We don't want to be another of India's daughters, do we? (A Brown Girl's Guide to Gender) emphasize the intricate nature of the poet's experiences concerning her identity as a brown girl growing up in an Indian household. The poem concludes with a powerful affirmation challenging the patriarchal contention of the female experience —We're girls, women, human, not a burden.

Zainab Rashid's poem, "The Truth about Burqa" explores the intersecting nature of religion and gender by examining the experiences of a woman who wears a burqa. The speaker contests societal prejudices by addressing her identity as a woman and a devout follower of the Islamic faith. The line, —I am a woman, I drape around my body a piece of prejudiced cloth implies the intricate relationship she has with the burqa and foregrounds the societal biases associated with this religious garment. The poem explores the nuanced experiences of women for whom the burqa is a choice and elaborates on both the external challenges they encounter and the internal conflicts they suffer regarding their identity. Zainab Rashid uses the structure of slam poetry to explore the concepts of personal choice and religious expression concerning her amalgamated identity as a Muslim woman. The poem challenges and subverts preconceived conceptions about women who choose to wear a burqa and provides deep insights into the complex and mysterious nature of identity.

The slam poem "Hindustani Musalman" by Hussain Haidry brings into focus the complex interplay of identities that arise from being both an Indian and a Muslim. The poem narrates the conflicts and encounters of those who live through several overlapping identities, such as being both an Indian and a Muslim. The poem portrays the social prejudices and

collective cultural biases that influence an individual's sense of self. Haidry vehemently disputes the Islamophobia that he encountered as an individual.

"Witch Hunt" is a slam poem composed by Arati Warriar in which she explores her personal experience of being a homosexual in India. The poem challenges the traditional gender stereotypes and offers a thorough examination of societal expectations. Warriar explores the necessary resilience required to embrace one's true identity, which may be an amalgamation of different identity markers. She offers a heartbreaking portrayal of the lesbian experience at her home and in society and closes her poetry with the following words, —I know how to pick my battles and accept the body. My people, we accept these bodies and celebrate them in all their wounded stories|| (Witch Hunt).

The poem, —Five Rules for Whomever It May Concern|| by Vinatoli depicts the grim reality of misogyny and the sexual objectification faced by women from Northeast India. The poem exposes the disgraceful reality of a nation where the intersecting identities of ethnicity and gender frequently serve as instruments of oppression. The poem questions racism and sexism and concludes with a harmonious yet solid stance against these forms of discrimination. In the poem, Vinatoli expresses her resilience in the lines, —And if you still do not obey these rules, remember, my forefathers were headhunters. I was born out of a clan of warriors. Remember the world's hottest chilli is growing in my grandmother's garden. Remember the battle of Kohima, perhaps one of the cruelest battles in the history of World War II. Yes, it was fought in my backyard|| (Five Rules). The poem examines how gender and ethnicity intersect in the life of Northeast women and how they find themselves trapped in overlapping oppressive identity markers like gender and ethnicity.

Slam poetry has revolutionized how the feminine experience is depicted in the world of art. This form of speech not only provided a platform for women to give voice to their thoughts and opinions but also allowed them to give an artistic expression to their sense of self. It provides women with an arena to assert, own and represent their body types, sexual orientation, gender identity and political affiliations. Slam poetry has emerged as a powerful weapon for young individuals from different socio-political backgrounds to express their lived experiences.

Slam poetry as a movement of performance poetry is also a significant social movement. In addition to gender and race, intersectional analysis of Indian slam poetry puts a large focus on how societal norms and conventions feed into the violence against individuals, especially women. Slams are venues where individuals from various marginalized communities are glorified and showcased. Poetry slams function as forums for the expression

and representation of one's identity. Slam poetry as a literary genre also offers a unique opportunity to observe the politics of interaction between the poet and the live audience. Indian slam poems demonstrate the simultaneous presence of intersecting systems of oppression and prejudice in an individual's life.

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REDRESSING TRAUMATIC MEMORY WITH RESILIENCE: A STUDY OF ROSHI FERNANDO'S SELECT SHORT STORIES

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Abstract

A deep scrutiny into the contribution of Sri Lankan writers directly takes the readers through a span of diasporic consciousness burdened with trauma and the crisis of possessing an identity. It always evokes an unexplainable terror and an excruciating process of coming to terms with the lives of victims who yearn for a new beginning of their old fashioned typical lifestyle. This research article aims to dig in through the consciousness so as to evince the fact that the trauma underwent strives to create forms of resistance and resilience to the painful memory thereby being diverted to live a life with newer connections to their old self with nostalgic memories exhibiting recuperation. In the process of walking through the consciousness, the paper entrusts its support from Freud's principle of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and Jan Assmann's conceptualization of the cultural memory present in all the victims. As a result, this article strives to argue for the resilience that the characters display despite the traumatic memory that hold them back. The findings of the paper accounts to the cultural relativism exhibited by the victims who try forgoing the sense of being an absent-referent with the help of nostalgic memories simultaneously creating newer ones.

Keywords: Trauma, Cultural relativism, hybridity, cultural memory, identity, resilience.

Running around a span of twenty five years, the civil war in Sri Lanka has turned out to be quite heinous bringing about a new and unsettling history in Indian and Sri Lankan narratives. The civil war amidst the government and the Tamil Eelam has amounted to a number of deaths, not to mention a high rise in infringement of human rights and the excruciating refugee population. Ironical, as the situation sounds, death seemed to take a friendly and optimistic characteristic, when compared with the living who suffered great pangs of pain bereft of their home, identity and their loved ones. It is right and fitting to say that the survivors were totally racked with living the life which at any situation seemed so grueling and burdensome, considering the guilt they carry for not being able to save their loved ones and for not being able to live the second chance granted upon them. Betwixt that shattered livelihood, the survivors who were labeled refugees continued to carry their crosses of pain thereby paying tribute to the lives lost at the cost of their survival. Labeled and lashed

out, they sought refuge in different cities to live the rest of their lives with hopes of building a home which was more of a mirage. The feeling of belonging nowhere and being unwelcomed thrived within them making them victims of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder. Yet, some of them carried their crosses all along building a new place to inhabit with hopes of being relieved from the trauma that lurked behind.

This study highlights such a multitude as portrayed by Roshi Fernando in her short story collection, *Homesick*. The book is a collection of interlinked short stories giving a complete overview of a family and its close neighbourhood who have settled in London partly accepting the loss of their selves and partly creating new selves in a new place of inhabitation. A well-bred scrutiny over this population has taken researches on various levels of understanding, particularly on the hold of the post-traumatic stress disorder in dismantling lives, adding up identity crisis and feeling of the lost home and belongingness. The depth of research on this area has added more to the voice of the refugee population and their underpinnings except for the process of creating the new selves, its constructiveness on their lives and how they have been resilient to all the packed up guilt and suffering. Taking this as the motive, this paper strives to look out for the maturation and growth of resilience in their lives with all the memories that they have had in their motherland. In aiding the research, postulates of Freud on reality principle and Cultural memory as drawn by Jan Assmann are put forth. This research article strives to challenge this notion of trauma being disruptive to an individual's life against the redressing of the trauma into resilience to live reality. The stories taken for study are, —Homesick, —The Fluorescent Jacket and —Sophocles Chorus. The paper divides itself into two parts giving witnesses against the characters becoming the conscious other and the redressal of the trauma with their cultural memory also exhibiting cultural relativism.

The Becoming of the Conscious Other

Reading through Roshi's stories and the psyche that she has bestowed upon her characters help the readers find a conscious and voluntary move towards being the other. The main protagonists of the story seem to have become well accustomed to the new environment they have suited themselves to, whilst holding onto the yearning for home. Scrutinization of those short stories and the characters wakes the reader to various customs that were adapted by the migrants without regret and at the same time, their hold to their traditional customs and rituals at heart exhibiting guilt and nostalgia. In elucidating this conscious other, the researcher would like to draw from Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in which he delineates the pleasure and reality principle. Reality principle as stated by Freud

stands contrastive to the pleasure principle or the id that works on every individual. It solely works on the domination of the superego that controls impulses and protects the safety of an individual towards attaining instant gratification or timed pleasure.

Grappling onto the reality principle that protects and controls, the characters in the short story also struggle towards releasing their trauma through creating a life that best suits the setting thereby becoming the conscious other, rather than loathing on the life lost. Producing instances from the short story, —Homesickll, the main protagonists, Victor and Nandhini who host a party for the migrant neighbourhood create a space that is culturally hybrid. The music, food and the attires symbolize their old selves meanwhile the drinking of wine, the stereotype about remarriage, inter-racial relationships, adolescent life of the children symbolize their newer adapted selves. As the story moves on, one finds the conscious clinging towards the newer setting when Victor exclaims, —We speak in the language we live in. It is not important... _We belong nowhere,‘ he says. _But if we belong anywhere, it is here. I have chosen here.‘ He stands. _We have chosen herell(Fernando 18). The line stated above gives the reader the understanding that the characters, by all means have chosen to live and belong there. Belongingness is always one crucial motif that is studied with post-colonial and refugee studies which brings upon a debate upon the question of where they belong and where their home is. It is very surprising to note that Roshi’s characters take a different stand in this. As Freud explains on the reality principle, it —does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but nevertheless demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasurell(Freud 4), their psyche’s work on diminishing the possibility of going back home so as to create a new life in the new place.

Further, the lifestyle change is explicitly found when Rohan, son of Victor builds up a gay relationship with a miner who has run away from Colombo and it makes the reader understand that creating the conscious other was also done for beneficial reasons of ultimately stepping up towards a new life diminishing the traumatic hold on them. Gay relationships at Colombo could have been considered grey contrary to the benevolence that Britain gives back. Probing through Preethi, an adolescent character in the short story, one could find the adolescent assimilation to the culture of UK. The phase of her growth and psyche is sure to draw her into living the typical carefree life of an UK kid. Yet, Preethi exhibits signs of guilt when she smokes, drinks and gets her to lose her virginity to a guy at a

party. Her psyche before attempting to do any of the above activities seems normal yet once the act was done, she broods on unwinding the mistakes that she has ever done.

Redressing Trauma with Resilience

Trauma, the unexplainable terror that each individual undergoes at any point of time stands heftily strong with its repercussions through hallucinations and nightmares. Freud, extending his domain under id, ego and superego and the post-traumatic stress disorder fails his attempts to talk more on how post-traumatic stress disorder could ignite itself to resilience. Studies and claims by theorists of trauma have explicated that once traumatic, it stands perennial and could never set right but theorists of resilience claim different by stating that there are certain factors that could help for resilience. Shean quotes Werner's definition of resilience as follows, —The capacity [of individuals] to cope effectively with the internal stresses of their vulnerabilities (labile patterns of autonomic reactivity, developmental imbalances, unusual sensitivities) and external stresses (illness, major losses, and dissolution of the family) (Shean 11). Werner and Garmezy, the leading theorists of resilience believe in three factors that could help in boosting resilience namely the individual factor, the familial factor and support factor each of them corresponding to the temperament of an individual, presence of a family and presence of external support respectively (Shean 10).

Reading the story, one finds all the three factors help redressing trauma to resilience. Victor, the protagonist of the story —Homesick is portrayed as a dynamic character who undergoes a swing of emotions. The narration of the story taken up by him explicates a strong sense of nostalgia for Sri Lanka. He recalls and brings to mind the celebration at his house and the familial traditions that they would follow up back home. The arrangements that he makes for the party makes him fall back into the good old days he had and heightens his wish to replicate it here in London. On the contrary, Roshni projects another side to Victor, who stands as an epitome of maturity through his acts of acceptance, forgiveness and love. Producing an instance from the story, the guests begin to bicker and gossip about one of their relatives getting married to a white man resulting in an argument. They find ways to say that marrying white man would destroy their culture and would nowhere evoke a feeling as their family pointing to the first difference of the mother tongue. Listening to those ethnocentric ideals, Victor brings sense to their minds by uttering, —It is the same as theirs. We speak in the language we live in. It is not important (Fernando 18), stating that we speak with respect to the surrounding we live in highlighting the use of English amongst themselves. The story holds another instance where Victor willingly and whole-heartedly forgives the people who were behind their labeling as refugees. The above two instances could be seen as an example

of individual factor that helps in moving towards resilience. One more instance that clearly explicates the resilient self of Victor is revealed towards the end of the story when the night comes to an end and he is in bed with his wife, Nandhini. He utters, “I was homesick for you,” (Fernando 18). In the middle of the party, the nostalgic sense of his home makes him want to look at Nandhini, ultimately quenching his feeling of home. Though yearning about his home back in Sri Lanka, he tries to feel at home in London by directing the warmth of home towards his loved ones highlighting Garamezy’s familial factor of resilience. He is one character to understand that home is where the heart is. Such is the act of resilience, of making tougher situations seem crossable. Turning towards Nandhini, another main character, the story leads us to another instance where the party turns into mere rambles of how Sri Lankans were not accepted in London, also allowing for a mockery of the other ethnic groups in London. In addition to stopping the conversation, Nandhini directs their minds into thinking that all of them are the same here. She says, —We are all the same, in this house. Who are you to say you are better? All are welcome. Sinhala, Tamil, Burger, Black.” (Fernando 13). Taking into account the above instances one could directly comment on the state of maturity and resilience that the characters possess amidst the chaos in their lives.

Resilience via Cultural memory and Cultural Relativity

Theorists argue that memory moves beyond suffering and violence to create hope and optimism thereby focusing on an ideal utopia. The concept of cultural memory emerged in the 1990’s with the conception of idea given by Jan Assmann. Quoting Jan from his interview with Meckien, he says, —Cultural memory is formed by symbolic heritage embodied in texts, rites, monuments, celebrations, objects, sacred scriptures and other media that serve as mnemonic triggers to initiate meanings associated with what has happened. Also, it brings back the time of the mythical origins, crystallizes collective experiences of the past and can last for millennia. Therefore it presupposes a knowledge restricted to initiates” (Meckien). The characters hold onto their sense of nostalgia and memories despite the conscious other that they had to become. Viktor’s nostalgic memories of celebrations, the guest’s reaction towards the Sri Lankan *baila* music and food, the love for nature in the —The Fluorescent Jacket” clearly evince the cultural memory they have held onto thereby creating an identity for themselves rather than being pushed to people with identity crisis, Bhabha’s hybrid self via the cultural relativity they exhibit. Cultural Relativity addresses the ideology of accepting another culture as dignified and respectful, intentionally avoiding ethnocentric notions. The stories and the characters can seem to be well identified under the exhibition of cultural relativity rather than Bhabha’s hybridity. The sense of respect that they possess on the new cultural

practices enables them to take it over without regret and guilt considering there is no measure in cultures. The acceptance of gay relationships, teenagers to throw parties, alcohol consumption, second marriages, inter-racial marriages and adoption clearly shows the acceptance of a varied culture apart from their own. Living into another culture does not scare them of losing their own cultural identity when they have their cultural memory to hold onto. As Jan puts it, —cultural memory is the faculty that allows us to build a narrative picture of the past and through this process develop an image and an identity for ourselves (Meckien), memory outlives itself and is a best way of wading away identity crisis when one is already created whilst living the life. The cultural and collective memory that one has about his or her life is what defines himself or herself amidst all the factors that could hybridize him or her.

Stating so, the trauma would be an unexplainable terror or a repetitive nightmare that would reign on an individual eternally but with the right aid of cultural memory, one could ignite it into resilience thereby recreating the past into one's own future.

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DECONSTRUCTING FEMINISM IN *FLEABAG*

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Abstract

The television series, *Fleabag*, breaks away from the norms and conventional trends upon which feminism is built and elucidates the absurdity and weirdness with which a woman experiences things from a post-feminist viewpoint, thus 'breaking the fourth wall'. The connection between real and imaginative has been blurred and constructed in a vivid manner, which can be considered as the primary trait of the show. The series is viewed through the lens of John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* and how far the 'gender' representation has been improved overtime is been analyzed in this paper through a qualitative analysis of particular scenes from the series by incorporating the theory of Judith Butler's —Gender Performativity.

Keywords: Gender, Feminism, Representation, Performativity, Fourth Wall.

Fleabag has a unique narrative. *Fleabag* can be used as a device to evaluate the shift in the representations, especially concerned with gender. This particular show written by Phoebe Waller-Bridge who is both the creator and lead role in the show is known for the distancing effect. The very act of breaking the fourth wall is used in the narration of this series and is told from a feminist perspective with utmost brilliance. Waller-Bridge presents a Londoner in her early thirties who struggles to create meaningful connections. The narrative refers to this woman as 'Fleabag,' even though she has no name in the series. Her sole friend died under unfortunate and (at least for the first season) unknown circumstances. She manages a coffeehouse by herself. Her sister is a thorn in her side and she ended abruptly her relationship with her boyfriend. Her mother has passed away and her emotionally inadequate father is remarrying 'the godmother,' a vengeful, self-obsessed artist.

By tracing the history of the representation and performance along with an analysis of the show by including many other major theories like Judith Butler's *Gender Performativity*, Goffman's analysis, and John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, a feminist reading of the show can be done. This research is carried out by a qualitative analysis of a few episodes from the series. Particular scenes and screenshots from the show will be analyzed to explain the validity and relevance of the statement that is to be established in the paper. The series *Fleabag* breaks down the sociocultural taboos and norms that exist in the media

industry in representing female characters in the show, to a certain extent. John Berger in the second episode of *Ways of Seeing* talks not about the celebration of humanist virtue but it deals with the notion of the 'male gaze' which Laura Mulvey put forward a year later. Certain constructs of meanings related to urban experiences and digital platforms have not been explicitly put forward by Berger but one can find out the connections that he is trying to make about the world by what he meant by paintings (meant all the mediums) in general. *Fleabag*'s narrative structure is unique from others and it does break the fourth wall to a certain extent. This particular narrative reiterates what John Berger has elucidated in *Ways of Seeing*, Judith Butler put forward in 'Gender performativity', and few more other concepts.

Fleabag, just like any other show plays a major role in shaping the minds and equipping the audience with certain concepts of gender, class, and race. The show has progressed over time and a comparison is done with the feminist theories put forward by the thinkers in the field. In *Ways of Seeing* by John Berger, he says, —To be born a woman has to be born, within an allotted time and space into the keeping of men. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her image of herself. From earliest childhood, she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually (Berger,46). In his second episode of the television series, John Berger elucidates the notion of how women are conditioned in a particular manner to always watch her, whenever they sit, talk, eat, and so on. Accompanied by her image, she is been influenced to a great extent to survey herself, where there already exists a preconceived notion of 'surveyed' and 'surveyor' as separate elements that make up one's identity.

The view that gender is performative explains how gender identity is formed through a set of acts. What does it mean for gender to be performative? According to Butler, —nobody is a gender before doing gendered acts (Ton, 9). Judith Butler's concept of what makes 'gender' performative and the whole notion surrounding it can be associated with *Fleabag*, since the whole appearance of the protagonist is in itself a contradiction to the existing normal trends about gender as such, and women, instead of dressing up and being attractive, choose to be messy which turns out to be attractive. This particular narrative emphasizes the importance of how 'gender' as an identity is not stable across the narratives, but rather it is evolving, day by day, by the repetition of certain acts as such.

At 1.47, there is a particular dialogue in the series, where she looks at the screen and makes a statement, 'Next morning, you will find him, fully dressed, sat on the side of you, gazing at you. And then he leaves. Here, in episode 1 of season 1, she even makes a

statement, that she is drunk and tired. Since he is interested in her, she consents to have intercourse with him. Now the primary scene portrays female objectification in one way or another, where the woman is submissive to the man and there is a dominant recessive rapport between the two characters in the series. John Berger, in *Ways of Seeing*, has remarked that men's emphasis is on 'action' whereas women's emphasis is on 'appearance', where women usually observe how they are being looked at, instead of not watching themselves. Also, the fact is that the surveyor is considered male and the surveyed is been considered female! *Fleabag* is concerned about how she is being looked at by the other person. This portrays that he is only with her because she lets him be in whatever manner he likes her to be.

In episode 1, *Fleabag* is making the statement to her sister that they both are bad feminists, which questions the whole concept of 'feminism' as such. This is in association with what 'Goffman' was trying to convey through his theory of *Body Image*, where it creates dissatisfaction in women about their bodies and images, that overlaps with what Berger tried to explain in *Ways of Seeing*, where the whole notion of beauty is competitive and the rapport between *Beauty* and being *Available* to men is also explained in detail. Anti-aging creams, ointments to reduce weight, and Lattise ads are all major implications of how 'women' are taught to be, see, eat, walk, and talk. In the second season, there is a particular scene, where *Fleabag* comments on the church "I would not be a feminist if I have bigger tits." This is associated with body images as such.

In the particular scene portrayed above, *Fleabag*'s sister tries to hug *Fleabag* but she refuses. Here, a trend that is different from other conventional patterns of narrative is followed because usually 'women hugging each other' is normalized and *men hugging each other* is considered *inappropriate*. Through this particular scene, one questions intentionally or not intentionally, *women hugging each other*. Though these are minute details of the narrative, they contribute to the uniqueness of the narrative.

When looking at other parts of the narrative, it is crucial to analyze the scenes, where *Fleabag* elucidates the death of her mother, the relationship that she has with her stepmother, the characteristics of the stepmother which portrays 'male objectification' or 'female objectification' to a certain extent. "Mum died three years ago. She had a double mastectomy but never recovered. It was particularly hard because she had amazing boobs. She used to tell me I was lucky cos mine would never get in the way." ("Episode 3", 22.47) The death of her mother has affected her which can also be the reason why *Fleabag* is not

like other women. It has its pros and cons at the same time. She is not the so-called 'feminine' and does not follow all the norms and socio-cultural taboos to attain the 'Madonna' like figure. One can find a messy, rather a confused woman, who at the same time, has a vulnerable side to it. One can find the contrast in the character of 'Stepmother'. Her words are sarcastic and hurtful, she looks down upon Fleabag but her 'appearance' is soft, gentle, and subtle, thus fitting to the conventional form of 'feminine touch', 'body' and 'expression'. Through this particular scene, Waller-Bridge is questioning the concept of 'motherhood' and bridging the gap between 'appearance' and 'reality'.

Kathryn Hughes, in an interview titled 'Gender in 19th Century' mentions that women during that era were only trained to behave, manage their physical presence, how to stand up, and how close should one stand, "Also, the concept of 'Hysteria', where most of the women, were diagnosed with anxiety, depression, and sexual frustration, and they lacked freedom which can be due to the patriarchal norms of the society, who were always depended upon their males in the family" (The British Library). When a comparative analysis of both the eras is taken into consideration, it becomes vivid that 'women' are subjected to oppression psychologically which is so normalized that one tends to not even recognize it and moves forward with it. "I don't believe people always think about sex when they see a naked body. I believe they think of their minds, their bodies, and their power. And that's what this show is really about. It's about power." (—Episode 6, 10.40). *Fleabag*, in the context of other feminist works grabbed the attention of the audience's eyes for the very reason that the narrative structure is different and how certain feminist elements have been incorporated into the series.

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**POSTCOLONIAL SUBALTERNIZATION OF KASHMIRIS IN
MADHURI VIJAY'S *THE FAR FIELD***

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Abstract

Postcolonial literature is produced by the people who were formerly colonized and subjugated. The writers of the postcolonial period in India concentrate not only on the past subjugation of the people but also on the present process of subalternization by powerful people towards their fellow beings. In India, minor sections of the population are ostracized and treated brutally by the majority of the population. Postcolonial subalternization is a process whereby certain categories are rendered destitute, disenfranchised and economically powerless by the socio-political structures of the decolonized nations. This paper aims to examine India's colonial occupation of Kashmir and the suppressed voices of the subalterns. Madhuri Vijay in *The Far Field* depicts the lives of people in Kashmir under the rule of the Indian government. The concept of 'Postcolonial Subalternization' is used as a framework to study the problems under the notion of nation, nationalism and unity in diversity myth and how these problems led to the marginalization and the mass hiding of minorities in India.

Keywords: Kashmiris, Postcolonial, Marginalization, Cultural identity, Nation.

The writers of the postcolonial period in India concentrate on the role of nation-building which is a primary tool for understanding the lives of postcolonial people in their native land. The destiny of postcolonial writers has often been tempered with an awareness that things are not exactly wonderful in the postcolony (Nayar, 69). Even from the first phase of independence people started to move from colonial manipulation to postcolonial decline. This decline also includes the marginalization of particular sections of Indian society. In India, minor sections of the population are ostracized and are treated brutally by the majority of the population. One of the major conflicts in India is between Hindus and Muslims. The colonial project of 'divide and rule' marks a division among people under the discourse of 'religion'. This conflict lead to horrible conditions like riots, ethnic cleansing, and cross-border migrations.

Madhuri Vijay's *The Far Field* depicts the lives of people in Kashmir under the rule of the Indian government. Ironically, the majority and southern parts of India called 'Kashmir'

the land of paradise. Shalini, a 30-year-old woman from a well-to-do family in Bangalore lost her mother and felt a distant relationship with her father. This made her move towards Kashmir. She believes that Bashir Ahmed, a man in a village on the mountain, holds the keys to her mother's life and death. The terrain as well as the lives of people are shrunk under the hands of powerful elites. Gyanendra Pandey argued that 'minorities are constituted along with the nation' (Pandey 1999). He says that in the post-colonial period, India colonized specific communities that claimed their independence. Nayar calls this process 'Postcolonial Subalternization' which is captured by many writers from Africa to Asia. Madhuri Vijay represents this process through the lives of people in Kashmir. The representation of subaltern serves as a critique of postcolonial enormity. The horrors of postcoloniality are visible under the concepts of 'Constructing the Nation' and 'Postcolonial Subalternization'. The postcolonial construction of a nation also includes the use of myth, collective memory, and the appeal to a common history of the people. Vijay uses her protagonist Shalini to speak for the subalterns but she agonizingly expresses 'it will make no difference in the end' (3). Shalini's attempt to formulate an identity through a sense of belonging pertains to a failure. Her voice becomes useless and fails to reach justice because of her identity as an outsider.

After independence, there is a rise in oppression towards their nation-states. It becomes the main theme in postcolonial writing. Colonial concepts like urbanization and globalization pave the way for a major political project. Kashmir and the remaining parts of India do not consider themselves a part of a single nation. They divide themselves as a Nation of Hindus and a Nation of Muslims. The Indian government pays very little attention to this partition and rules its land with enormous bloodshed and suffering. It builds the idea that Hindus and Muslims are different in all forms. This idea passes through the entire population of India and creates hatred toward their nation-states. In this novel, Shalini meets a soldier named P. L. Stalin who guards the mountains in Kishtwar. He shares his ideas on this particular land, "This place itself is not so bad, but the people... they are not friendly, any of them. Actually, the Hindus are okay. It's mostly the Muslims... they supported the militants, you know... These people they are not like us" (81).

These words of Stalin shows the constructed identity of Kashmiris towards the remaining Indian society. The government registers a wrong ideology about their people. This led to the unnecessary chaos and religious conflict within the nation. They are neither in the process of constructing unity nor in the process of accepting nativism. —The activities of the privileged elites failed to acknowledge the truth that nation is liable to dissolve any moment —(Nayar 81). The lack of acceptance of cultural identity leads to the problem of 'Postcolonial

Subalternization'. The nonrecognition of the other parts of India towards Kashmir is the main cause of the conflict.

In the novel *The Far Field*, people who are away from Kashmir identify Kashmiris as terrorists. The projection of media makes humans believe the illustrated false truths. The false ideas create nonrecognition of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. This novel projects the lack of understanding of cultural identity through two characters, Shalini's father and Bashir Ahmed. Shalini's father belongs to the elite class and he pollutes himself through media under the name of intelligence but Ahmed belongs to the lower class and works in Bangalore to feed his family in Kashmir. The father questions Ahmed about his native land and the killings of Hindus by Muslims but Ahmed rejects vehemently that none of those killings happens in his place. The father wants to know the character of Ahmed as he is a Kashmiri in Bangalore. He exclaims —he doesn't seem like the rest of them, the Kashmiris you read about in the newspaper these days anyway (133).

The native identity of Kashmiris is replaced by the postcolonial identity. India projects itself as the savior of Kashmir but it puts its powerful hand on Kashmir and makes Kashmiris suffer under the postcolonial rule. They give deep thoughts on the communal tensions of contemporary India with the revival of Islamic and Hindu fundamentalism (Nayar, 97). Nayar says that the communities of different religions are forced to become marginalized. In this novel, Vijay portrays the life of Kashmiris as a marginalized society. They are abandoned by the government and struggle with the lack of development in their lands. The dialogue between Mohammed Din and Shalini becomes evidence that they lack everything as they are marginalized. Din is surprised at Shalini's arrival from Bangalore and expresses his dissatisfaction that Kashmir is not as developed as Bangalore. —We are trying to become developed... All the money that Jammu and Kashmir gets, half goes to Srinagar, Gulmarg, places like that, and the other half goes to the yatras. So, tell me, what is left for us? (183). The government projects the fights, gunshots, and bloodshed as the activities of Muslims to destroy Hindus and other parts of India but the truth behind the projection is that people of both religions are suffering at the hands of foreign militants and Indian army. The government hides its flaws by blaming its people and disastrously projects them. This novel is a vivid presentation of the brutalities of Indian soldiers and militants towards Kishtwar people under the name of nationalism. Kashmiris who led their life in poverty and unemployment helped the militants as they threatened them. For their livelihood, they sell their lives in the hands of militants and army. Nayar says —unity in diversity myth or the illusion of the world's greatest democracy often conceals sharp inequities, oppressions, and

injusticell (102). He adds that basic needs and democratic rights are attainable for the people of a particular class and caste. Many people are marginalized and globalisation also turns the situation worse. Postcoloniality, unfortunately, is a continuous process of subalternization for many (Nayar, 102). In *The Far Field*, Bashir Ahmed's stay in Bangalore is a great example of being marginalized in a metropolitan society. After his temporary dislocation from his native land, he comes to Bangalore and sells Kashmiri shawls and clothes. He stays in an ugly building which is located in a corner. It is not a place filled up with houses but with a butcher's shop, leaking pipes, and dusty houses. The place where he stays is very small and dim. It smells of an unidentifiable, unpleasant scent. He lives in a dungeon like room where there is no space to walk freely and the barred windows leave no place for the sun to show its mercy on his room. There are eight Kashmiris who share the same tiny room and their presumed kitchen has few steel vessels. The life of Bashir Ahmed in Bangalore shows the continuing effects of colonialism which is the major component of 'Postcolonial Subalternization'.

—Nationalism which had helped the anti-colonial struggle, now becomes something entirely different in the postcolony" (Nayar, 106). The difference of opinions is suppressed and the privileged elite groups take up the charge and become the colonial masters themselves in postcolonial India. Frantz Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth* states a warning against the rise of elites as a ruling class in the newly independent societies. Postcolonial India covers the differences in an attempt to project the country as a unified nation. Under the name of national development, the government gets paid by the Euro-Americans and helps the bourgeois by destroying the lives of tribals and the local population. Nayar calls this kind of nationalism 'Postcolonial Subalternization'. This process helps the nation homogenize everyone by excluding the people who do not fit in. Indian government uses the expression 'Unity in Diversity' to describe India but it makes a desperate attempt to make the nation a monolithic mass. The government uses its power to control the people of Kashmir and hides its atrocities from the rest of the country. It projects the part of Kashmir as a whole. The life in Kashmir is not as easy as people think. The novel *The Far Field* presents the hardships of people as religious minorities, especially Muslims in India. When Shalini's mother asks about Bashir Ahmed's native place, he replies wickedly that no one can recognize his small place in Kashmir because of the Governmental setup. He says, "You wouldn't have heard of it. You people in India, you think, Kashmir begins and ends with Kashmir" (36). This novel is a protest against the false homogenization of the nation.

The people made protests against ‘postcolonial subalternization’ but their voices are unheard. In the novel, a character named Riyaz stands against hegemony, homogenization, and injustice. He faces seclusion from his people but he stands stubborn against the government. Through Riyaz the image of India as a nation is questioned and he presents the nation-state's uneven relationship with its people and regions. He decides to move to Bangalore but he is heavily beaten by the Indian army. Finally, his identity is erased from his family and Kashmir. Vijay's portrayal of Riyaz shows that he is not an exception and that the indulgence of non-kashmiris in the issues of Kashmir will only create problems but no solutions will be found.

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GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF OTHERNESS, SUBVERSION AND THE SUBALTERN IN *PERSEPOLIS*

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Abstract

Marjane Satrapi has used *Persepolis* to focus on issues of otherness, subversion and the subaltern. A complex, multi-layered, first person narrative. *Persepolis* is an honest and uninhibited account of the politics of Iran, the cultural transformation, the gender narrative and the social conditions but the trajectory of the novel also leads the reader to look into the issue of Otherness- cultural, racial, and gender based. The sense of not belonging and being an outsider is a psychological inhibitor, that becomes the cause of alienation and rootlessness. This Otherness translates into a racial discourse that breeds intolerance and xenophobia, not to side-track the projection of gender as the subaltern. There is thus a subversion of identity, both cultural and gender. Outside the country, there is the otherness that emanates from race and ethnicity, language and conditioning as an Iranian woman in Austria, struggling with what could be a self-imposed exile to escape the traumatic events in Iran. The book is significant in that the translation of words into graphic illustration is not lost as Satrapi is both the novelist and the illustrator, which renders the narration authentically powerful. More so, with the recent similar turmoil in Iran, this books adds to the symbolic importance of voicing the unheard. This paper intends to look into these facets and understand how graphical representation has been put to use to deal with these complex issues in a manner that lightens them up without undermining them.

Keywords: Otherness, Racist and Imperial Hegemony, Graphical Representation, Culture, Social Norms.

This paper is an attempt to establish the relevance and universality of the graphic novel *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi, the Iranian-French artist, whose personal journey of expression and self -preservation during the Cultural Revolution in the 1980's is a representation of otherness, subversion and the subaltern in an otherwise largely homogenous Shia Muslim country. With the death of sixteen year old Armita Geravand, as recent as 28th October 2023, the teenager who was dragged out of the train by the police for not wearing hijab, the graphic representation takes whole another meaning.

Persepolis's meteoric rise to fame could be partly attributed to the widely used book in the prestigious *International Baccalaureate English Programme* (IBDP) where teenagers around the world study the graphic memoir as part of their course. Additionally, the book is a universal representation of political, cultural and social hegemony. What makes it compelling is the first hand verbal, emotional, and mental commentary of the situation through Marji, as Satrapi calls herself in the memoir from a layman's perspective. This Iranian-centric version of events is a more authentic, demystifying graphic representation of the people involved. As a decolonisation narrative, it shows the impact of the western capitalist power struggles and contestation for political and economic hegemony.

Otherness in Persepolis

A 10-year-old Marji as a narrator creates reliability and sympathy through the innocence attributed to that age. The choice of narrative voice, of that of a child, makes the recount seem honest and objective. The compelling graphic representation of a distraught Marji in the Chapter 1, 'The Veil', already creates strong readership allies of Marji. The image of confused Marji wearing a hijab, in the very first panel, in a medium close up shot with her upturned mouth and submissively crossed arms sets the tone for the reader. The caption in the first person narrative is cleverly used to break the fourth wall, in addition to Marji looking straight at the reader with the vulnerability of a child.



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In the same chapter, the image of an imposing government official, again in a medium shot, in the centre and the ambiguous three panel division, powerfully portrays the power struggle between the youth and the government. It also describes the impactful segregation of society. The caption of 'We found ourselves veiled and separated from our friends' (Satrapi, 8) is powerful at many levels. The sense of agency of the people in the panel is stripped through the passive voice and with the diction choice of 'veiled' and 'separated' in one sentence, pitches one against the other, creating a sense of 'us' and 'them', foreshadowing impending conflicts.



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This segregation highlights a crucial distinction between descriptive norms and injunctive norms within the Iranian society. Injunctive norms motivate by the promise of social sanctions; descriptive norms have been taken to motivate by inference from what is typical to what is a sensible thing to do. However, clearly in the case of the then social developments, injunctive norms were being driven by the authorities, leading to the defiance of some, and accession of most. Satrapi's clever visual representation of descriptive vs injunctive norm outcome can be seen in this panel.



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While the group of women in black are proponents of the descriptive norm, representing what they thought wearing a veil was the sensible thing to do, the group in white were against the injunctive norm, creating otherness and subversion within the society. The use of exclamatory chanting of both groups, along with the illustration of eyes open and closed symbolism, Satrapi compellingly underscores the otherness of each group, labelling the other as subversive.

This divide also leads to an important discourse of impact of the injunctive norms on different socio-economic group and their depiction within the text. In the chapter titled 'The Letter', Satrapi introduces a servant girl of the family, Mehri,



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Mehri's backstory introduced through the above panel represents the externalities of the two classes. With a major part of the panel is in black, the conversation seems to be taking place behind a veil of black, giving it a secretive feel, thus giving a negative connotation to the veil. Mehri's parents are traditionally dressed, with both Mehri and her mother's head covered by hijab. Alternatively, Marji's parents are dressed in modern attire. Interestingly, each is representative of the subaltern in its own way, thus highlighting the otherness within the community.

The third section is the "fish out of water" narrative device that refers to a storytelling technique where a character is placed in an unfamiliar or foreign environment, emphasizing their feelings of being an outsider. Marji's experiences in *Persepolis* as a young girl growing up during the Iranian Revolution and the subsequent Islamic regime reflect this narrative device. She comes from a progressive and educated family, and her upbringing contrasts sharply with the strict religious and political atmosphere of her society.

The purpose of utilizing the "fish out of water" device in Marji's characterization is to underscore her challenges and conflicts as she tries to find her place in a society that often rejects her nonconformity. As an outspoken and rebellious individual, she constantly clashes with the oppressive regime and struggles to conform to the imposed rules and expectations.

This device is significant because it allows readers to empathize with Marji's experiences as an outsider and understand the profound impact the societal divide has on her identity formation. It also sheds light on the broader theme of cultural alienation, illuminating the difficulties faced by individuals who do not conform to societal norms.

Marji's perspective as an outsider becomes crucial in challenging the assumptions and prejudices of her society. Her unique viewpoint allows her to question the oppressive regime, challenge gender roles, and critique the limited freedoms within Iranian society. Through the "fish out of water" device, Marji's outsider status becomes a catalyst for her growth, resilience, and eventual quest for individuality and self-expression.

With these perspectives in mind, we take a look at the graphical representations unfold the subtexts in the novel.

1. **Otherness through Objects:** The veil becomes the symbol of gender otherness which already exists in the minds of the men as can be seen in image 3. Satrapi as Marji in the novel presents herself as the outsider in the group of girls wearing hijab through the splash panel.



P. 7 & 10

2. **Cultural Symbols:** How Marji loses her virginity once in Europe, stepping out of the cultural shadow of her society and religion, trying to blend and not feel like the other, as also reflected by her assertiveness of marrying a European-the three panels make a movement in this direction. Enrique's revelation of being gay is a cultural shock for Marji, especially when she is looking at a committed relationship.



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3. **Political and Social Embeddedness:** Though Marji belongs to a liberal family, the societal norms are dictated by the political will which is driven by religion. The panel is divided into three parts with the official in the centre being larger signifying otherness. It creates a sense of not belonging, as being a member of the other gender, as seen by the use of words like separated and veiled, while Marji's parents demonstrate on the streets to show their defiance of the oppressive regime.



P. 8



P. 22

4. **Racist Discourse:** The White man's political and imperialistic racism changes the course of a nation's politics and history. The white (us) views the Asian country (you) as the other, as a source of wealth which can be exploited. In the third panel the white man is looking down in a position of authority upon the Iranian counterpart. In Europe, Marji's Iranian identity is seen as a threat. She finds herself rejected and humiliated on several occasions, even being called a witch who is hooking on to white guys for a passport, despite all her attempts to fit in.



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5. **Antagonistic Space:** The Islamic Revolution in Iran chartered a new destiny for the nation and it was accepted by a large number of people, as was the ouster of the Shah,

which again had many supporters. The raised arms and hostile expressions of the people show power, while in the second panel there are three divisions. On one side is the authoritative assertion of the people, in the centre the helplessness of the loyal soldiers is visible, while the exit of the Shah is seen on the right.



P. 7

P. 45

6. **Interface of Socio-cultural Factors:** Mehri's affair with the neighbour's son makes rounds in the entire neighbourhood and is put to an end. The shaming of the woman on the periphery represented by Mehri is shown by the four people in a rectangular panel with their hands on their mouths, while Marji's father does not conform to this idea of social and cultural suppression of the poor class as being the other. It also reflects a deep divide within the society.



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7. **Collective Acceptance:** The idea of being a martyr if gets an acceptance of the mob or masses who define themselves as we can create a hilarious situation. The widow's son has died of cancer, but he is accepted as a hero by the mob, making the widow demonstrate with them. The line of demarcation between real and unreal is lost in the face of collective acceptance.



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- 8. Media, Reality, and Audiences:** The interception of satellite television created a world of its own for the audiences who had long witnessed totalitarianism and aggressive violence. The media images gave a breather, fresh perspectives and also an escape from the grim realities of the country's present scenario. Living in this euphoric bubble was a psychological therapy.



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- 9. How Narratives Live on and Are Kept Alive Through Literature:** The first image from the Iranian politics is a narrative of the violence against people by a regime. It is powerful narrative for the history of a nation and literature keeps the narrative alive with a number of people massacred are shown. The second image shows Marji's involvement in the political scenario in Europe which makes her feel a part of the group. This is an identity marker for her.



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- 10. How Images Haunt:** Images of one's cultural, historical and religious embeddedness are part of one's mental make-up. The fact that Marji has seen violence in her own country and even within her family, that she feels lonely in an alien country reflect in her demeanour (in image 2) though the listener does not seem to believe her. The efficacy of

prayer is strongly built into Marji and he she reaches out to her mother whose prayers she believes are answered.



p.32



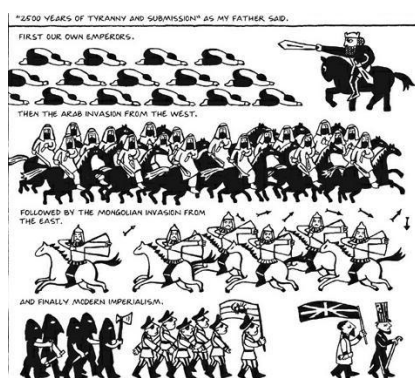
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11. How People Prefer to Express History and Engage Meaningfully with the Past:

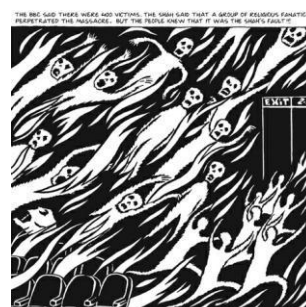
Satrape has captured the historical backdrop of her nation very interestingly by dividing a panel into sections. The violence Iran has witnessed at the hands of its emperors and invaders followed by the western imperialism give a compact overview of the history that has shaped the political legacy of the country. The constant revolutions in Iran, the power shifts have shaped its destiny and Marji's family seems to have accepted the new freedom, though the image of the serpent lurking in the background casts shadows on the future. The educated class feels the otherness within the nation for they understand the repercussions of the Islamic revolution, and they can discriminate between the Leftist revolution and one that is Islamic.



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Linguistic Pragmatic Markers:

Satrape in her graphical representation has used linguistic pragmatic markers. The choice is these markers adds to the graphics because the choice of words enables us to establish the hegemonic power spaces, the otherness and the gender discourse.

Name	Definition	Examples
discourse markers	indicate the speaker's intentions with regard to organizing, structuring, and monitoring the discourse	you know so well I mean
stance markers	indicate the speaker's stance vis-à-vis the message	actually of course hopefully
hedges	enable speakers to be less assertive in formulating their message	I think just kind of
interjections	indicate affective responses and reactions to the discourse	gosh wow ouch

Types of Pragmatic Markers

- A. Stance Marker: —Yes, but... (Persepolis, 336)- Marji is not able to make up her mind regarding her divorce despite the advice of her grandmother.



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- B. Interjection: Marji's father tells Hossein the truth about Mehri being their maid on hearing which the latter's response —ehh (Persepolis, 40) as also seen on his face is a clear statement of his stance. Wow is Marji's response to her mother's warning.



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- C. Hedges: Marji's father wants the news of Anoosh's arrest not to come as a blow. The use of —I think (Persepolis, 72) to initiate the conversation is his way of being less assertive.



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- D. Discourse Markers: —Sol (Persepolis, 76) indicates Marji's intention of going to the US coming to an end with the closure of the US embassy. The political turmoil of Iran and its impact on lives is indicated in many ways in the novel.



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Persepolis is an engrossing graphical representation of many layers and subtexts. The narrative unfolds multifariously through the panels, all of which use black and white colours. Language is used as a powerful tool in the graphics. Satrape has raised many questions for the reader, not just from the point of view of Iran, but for all to discern politics, power, history and religion as powerful tools that shape identities, and make the reader discern the otherness, the subversion and those on the periphery.

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BEYOND INSTITUTIONALIZED INVISIBILITY: LITERARY APPROACHES TO MEN AND MASCULINITIES IN THE HUMANITIES

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Introduction: Need for greater visibility of Studies in Men and Masculinities

Gender Studies has emerged over the last few decades as a counter-disciplinary approach to mainstream discourses of gender in academia, especially those of Humanities and Social Sciences. It has made path-breaking incursions into the classical understanding of gender, integrating feminist approaches to Biology which counter the biological essentialism inherent in the construction of sex as a category, queer theory which radicalizes the constitution of both gender and its performance, and wide-ranging concerns from Health and Digital Humanities to Trauma Studies, postcolonial feminist historiography and Phenomenology of Gender. Discussions on gender have moved increasingly towards the polyvalence of queer identities while at the same time broadening the spectrum of women's studies beyond empirical questions of equality and equity. However, the study of men and masculinities remains considerably invisible in curricula, pedagogy, research, and knowledge production. Except through gay literature, movements and activism, academics have shied away from addressing the constitution of masculinity and the power dynamics inherent in the constitution of what is universally considered as the villain of gender politics – patriarchy.

Academic studies in masculinity date back to the second wave of feminism in the West, concretized by R.W. Connell who laid the foundations for studies in the Sociology of Men. Literature being the most inter-disciplinary of approaches to the ontology of human experience, it contains a plethora of writers who have laid bare the crisis of masculinity either through moral dilemmas, ethical conflicts or the inability to act out traditional roles as men under the family, nation, religion or law. Given the universal practice of considering the term 'man' as representative of humanity itself, it is indeed ironical that men as individual beings within the larger social order are not part of major questions of studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Veritably, the need to look at men in the social order as much as women has surprisingly not arisen in the ubiquitous approach to understand women's struggles against patriarchy. In essence, we have a long tradition of addressing gender equality largely through feminism without exploring the role of men who are part of the matrix of gender relations

across societies, discourses and cultures. There is an increasing and concerting need to expand the ambit of Gender Studies beyond the heavily polarized approaches to feminism on the one hand and queer studies on the other. The inclusion of questions, experiences and challenges of masculinity will indeed help us pay closer attention to patriarchy, sexism, hetero-sexism, transphobia and issues of caste, class, race, ability and global transnationalism which intersect with gender.

Roots and Shoots: From Universal to Visceral ‘Man’

The denotative and connotative shifts of the term *man* make for very interesting research and capture how the universal man got submerged under the currents of the gender binary as much as women seem to have ideologically emerged from it. The Century Dictionary defines man as "a featherless plantigrade biped mammal of the genus Homo" (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/man>). Interestingly, the etymology of the term goes back to the Germanic branch of languages and appears in Old English as *man*, *mannian* or *mann*, referring to human being or person (male or female). Somewhere along history, *man* began to exclusively denote a male being while also paradoxically signifying humanity (Homo: human being; Sanskrit *manu*, meaning humanity (Roshen Dalal). The term is also used as a verb, meaning to operate (something). The term masculinity appeared only in 1850 and gained currency in the 20th Century.

Coming to the recent ideological understanding of Masculinity, Stephen M. Whitehead, a leading theorist of Men and Masculinities defines it as "those practices and ways that serve to validate the masculine subject's sense of self. Furthermore, studies in masculinity acknowledge plurality as the register for its popular ideological and material constitution and consciously use the terms *men* and *masculinities*'. Stephen M. Whitehead focuses specifically on the material ways in which men become men and sums the process with the term —identity work. Masculinity is thus not an integrated, consolidated identity but a set of actions and ways of being that make males/boys/men feel authentic – something that men exhibit, display and express (4). Men are thus public, social beings, acting in, for and as institutions, and are in turn primarily identified by the institutional roles they play. A father, thus, is not just one of the parents but traditionally *the head of the family* and the female *replacement* of the Chairman of a company or organization is a Chairperson. Founding fathers, priests, fathers of nations and disciplines abound. Politics, Sports, Science & Technology, Philosophy, Religion and the economy teem with men. The very structures and systems in which human activities are programmed are largely constituted, literally by bodies of men. Even as men occupy the public domain, they become mere faces in the crowd or

leaders and heads whose institutional roles far outweigh their personal identities as men. Their ethical dilemmas and moral questions are often questions of humanity at large, their personal stories are often read as reflections of the existential crisis of the community, race, caste, nation or tribe at large. Men are meant to be hard, decisive beings who take responsibility and uphold institutions and their identities, not mutually exclusive from their own identities as men.

From Epistemology to Ontology: Material Approaches to Masculinities

Studies in gender continue to reinforce attempts to bridge the gap between theorization of gender difference and the lived experience of gender. Discourses of gender have moved beyond the binary to accommodate the multiplicity of genders as experiential modes of masculinity and femininity. ‘Men and Masculinities’ is thus, often the operative term for studies concerning the construction, expression and representation of the ‘masculine’. The term stems from a critique of the essentialized assumption of an integrated, consolidated subject, always-already ‘Man’ and underlines the need to destabilize the closed circuit of male-masculine-man. Masculinities, a concept emerging primarily from research in the Sociology of Men has evolved as an academic approach, drawing from second wave feminist and queer movements. Stephen M. Whitehead busts the myth that studies in masculinity are anti-feminist by defining it as a pro-feminist approach which, like feminism, is geared towards the equality of all genders (4).

Men are largely constituted as social and public beings, materially constructed through their bodies as hard, tough, aggressive and highly functional beings. This in turn underlines the invisibility of men as their gender roles are constituted and performed within larger institutionalized contexts. Simone de Beauvoir’s classical critique of ‘woman’ stands in stark contrast to the plurality of men, evident even in the generic classification of the entire human race as ‘man’. What are the practices of being which define men and masculinities? How do masculinities intersect with race, class, caste, ethnicity, ability, age, nationality and global citizenship to constitute the inter-subjective and intersectional performance of identities? This research paper which will draw instances from literature to narrativise the performance of masculinities as dialogic processes emerging from the ‘iterability’ (Glendinning, Simon 68) of gender. It calls for greater visibility and inclusivity for literature based on men and masculinities, not just in courses of Women’s and Gender Studies but across the Humanities to help bridge the gap between feminist and queer theory on the one hand and on the other, the material bases of constitution of gender within the tightly compartmentalized roles of femininity and masculinity.

‘Man’ning the Machine: War and the Real Crisis of Masculinity

They throw in Drummer Hodge, to rest

Uncoffined—just as found:

His landmark is a kopje-crest

That breaks the veldt around;

And foreign constellations west

Each night above his mound.

(—Drummer Hodgell, Thomas Hardy)

War is often a narrative which consolidates citizenship, nationhood and ‘Subjects of the State’ by very clearly demarcating ‘productive’ citizens (able-bodied, young, male) who can enlist for war and war-related activities, from ‘unproductive’, ‘weak’ beings who cannot wield its machinery (often women, children, the aged, disabled and people who do not align with the sex and gender binary). From Wilfred Owen and Ernest Hemingway to Virginia Woolf and Chumamanda Ngozi Adichie, literature on political conflict, including civil wars, has questioned the institutionalized violence of war and the need for men to be inherently aggressive. From Thomas Hardy’s Drummer Hodge to Adichie’s Ugwu in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, young boys are institutionalized to become men in the backdrop of violence. While Drummer Hodge is forgotten without even a grave, Ugwu is challenged to assert his masculinity as a young soldier in the Bi-afra Civil War by initiating a gang rape on a woman at a bar. Ernest Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* underlines the crisis of the Lost Generation in the backdrop of the First World War and the floundering sense of self in men who are no longer confounded by action.

While narratives of war are often read as accounts of History, nationalism and collective trauma of people, we often fail to question the institutionalized aggression which is at the heart of what R.W. Connell terms ‘hegemonic masculinity’.

A Man among Men: Intersectional Masculinities and Epistemic Violence

—Quiet as it’s kept, there were no marigolds in the fall 1941. We thought, at the time, that it was because Pecola was having her father’s baby that the marigolds did not grow. (Toni Morrison, 3)

What are the ideological foundations of Masculinity? If hegemonic masculinity is an ideal reinforced by a given society, its material bases are defined by hegemonies of race, class, caste, age, ability and multiple intersectional practices of inclusion and exclusion. Cholly Breedlove’s heinous act of raping his own daughter, Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* is an act of over-compensation for the inferiority of being an Afro-American male in a hegemonic white

society. An earlier instance of being caught in an intimate position with a woman in a public space and body shamed by a white officer in uniform underlines the marginalised masculinity into which Afro-American men are shackled and the epistemic violence of the narrative of race inscribing their bodies as abject and reprehensible. Sexual violence is often the response to a larger epistemic violence which forces men into toxic masculine behaviours of aggression. Thordis Elva and Tom Stranger's *South of Forgiveness* allows the space for an honest dialogue between the male perpetrator of rape and the woman victimised by it, sensitising readers to the factors driving men to toxic masculinity and sexual violence. Approaches to masculinity can thus enable a better understanding and redressal of social factors of gender inequality, oppression and violence

Qu(e)er(y)ing Masculinity: From the Scepter to the Spectrum

Homophobia is the fear among men of 'being homosexualized' or being socially perceived as gay (Anderson 87). While cultural homophobia is concerned with the public representation of sexuality, homophobia relates to societal levels at which boys and men fear being perceived as gay. Gay and non-binary masculine identities come under R.W. Connell's understanding of subordinate masculinities and signify an overarching ideological stereotyping of such men as effeminate, therefore queer. Masculinities across the gender spectrum question the reproductive and procreative role of sexuality and question institutional demands of heteronormative desire. Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* highlights the coming of age story of Arjie who comes out as gay in a Sri Lanka torn by Civil War. Through parallel narratives of intersecting experiences of homelessness, the novel highlights how queer masculinities cannot be imagined and accepted within heteronormative spaces of home, family, community, religion, and even the nation. Marginalised as queer, they also become diasporic. Queer Diaspora therefore extends the idea of queerness to the liminal performance of masculinities and femininities beyond the binary.

Masculinities and Inclusive Approaches to Gender

R.W. Connell observes —Masculinity is shaped in relation to an overall structure of power (the subordination of women to men), and in relation to a general symbolization of difference (the opposition of femininity to masculinity)‖ (26). Studies in masculinity can help address the gaps in our understanding of the power relations of gender, often ideologically programmed by hegemonic power structures and materially constructed by social institutions. It is important to acknowledge how men are as socially constructed as women and masculinity is as much the performativity of gender as femininity. Men and Masculinities thus need better visibility across disciplines, domains and academic spaces of pedagogy and

research in the Humanities. Literature departments (not just English Studies) can help initiate these dialogues through inter-disciplinary forays into narratives of men and masculinities.

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