

# The Golden Line

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## **Editorial Note**

We are very happy to bring out the second issue of the magazine and see the works of the teachers, budding researchers and students. As we made it clear in the inaugural issue, our attempt would be to promote new voices and include exiting insights in order to inspire and enlighten students of UG and PG levels. I express my sincere thanks to Prof. Somdatta Mondal for giving her expert opinions on various issues relating to diaspora. I also thank other contributors to the magazine. I hope students will find the issue very helpful.

## On Diaspora: Somdatta Mandal in Conversation with Ajay K Chaubey



**Somdatta Mandal (SM)** is Professor of English at the Department of English and Other Modern European Languages, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, India. Her areas of interest are contemporary fiction, film and culture studies, Diaspora studies and translation. A recipient of several prestigious awards and fellowships like the Fulbright-Pre-doctoral Fellowship, Fulbright Visiting Teaching Fellowship, Charles Wallace Trust & British Council Fellowship, Rockefeller Residency Fellowship at Bellagio, Salzburg Seminar Fellowship, Shastri Indo-Canadian Faculty Enrichment Fellowship, she has been published widely both nationally and internationally. She has written two academic books,

edited and co-edited more than twenty books and journals, and published scholarly articles and book reviews both in India and abroad. She has received a Sahitya Academy award for translating short fiction and has also been awarded the Meenakshi Mukherjee Memorial Prize 2014 by Indian Association of Commonwealth Literature & Language Studies (IACLALS) for the best scholarly essay published between 2012-2013. Prof. Mandal spoke to **Ajay K Chaubey (AKC)** through e-mail on multiple contours of theory, texts and contexts related to diaspora.

**AKC: Since Man's arrival on earth is a consequence of his dispersal from heaven, How far do you agree that man bears the seeds of Diaspora since its genesis?**

**SM:** Whether we believe in the idea that man was actually expelled from heaven or not, it is true that since time immemorial, the nomadic nature of man in earlier times carried with it the urge to migrate. This was because of survival, search for food, and suitable habitation. In the case of the origin of the concept and the etymological meaning of the word 'diaspora' of course, we have the mythological story from the *Old Testament* when the Jews were forcibly thrown out of their homeland and like seeds, they were scattered in different places of Egypt. In their minds, they always nourished the desire to return to their homeland. It was only during the last two decades of the twentieth century that postcolonial scholars and critics started using the term 'diaspora' without any religious connotation and use it in a broader sense for people who have undergone transnational migration.

**AKC: Is migration of people within their own country regarded as a category of Diaspora? If "yes". How far? And if "No". Why not?**

**SM:** Migration is always undertaken for two purposes, either voluntarily for financial reasons or involuntarily due to forced political conditions. In both cases the situation is similar as within the country as well as outside the country. For a large multilingual country like India movement from one state to another and settling down in another part of the country by a particular socio-linguistic group bears with it all the essential tropes that define diasporic existence, namely nostalgia for homeland, bonding within their own community and living in ghetto-like state, trying to maintain

contact with root culture through food, clothing, language etc. The refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan who settled in West Bengal after the partition of India still prefer to maintain their own enclaves, language and customs. In recent times novels like Anjum Hasan's *Lunatic in My Head* which speaks about the Khasi versus non-Khasi life in Shillong is a good example of an author settling in a different part of the country. Having grown up and lived most of her life there, Anjum Hasan does a brilliant job in grasping the laid-back nerve of the city, something that people over the years have associated Shillong with.

**AKC: The pre-colonial diaspora was labour diaspora what Robin Cohen classifies in his *magnum opus, Global Diasporas* (1997). The ancestors of Naipaul were also sent across black sea in the same pursuit. In what context do you see the migrants and their *modus operandi* in post-colonial Diaspora? How far postcolonial diaspora differs from the pre-colonial Diaspora?**

**SM:** We all know that after the abolition of slavery in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the plantations around the world were in dire need of manual labour and that was when the 'girmits' or indentured labour from India (the ancestors of Naipaul for instance) were sent to places like Guyana, West Indies, Fiji, Mauritius and other places. Though not by force, most of these illiterate workforce did not have any idea where they were being taken and they all nurtured the desire to come back after five years when the contract period would be over and after they would be able to amass sufficient amount of money by then. In reality, of course, it never happened and very few of them ever came back. Therefore, the people belonging to this class of labour diaspora along with their descendants suffered from nostalgia for their homeland much more than those who voluntarily went to lead better lives. Many of these girmits considered themselves suffering a period of banishment like Lord Rama in exile and they neither acculturated well in the new environment in which they lived but clung on to their old traditions as much as they could. *A House for Mr. Biswas* serves as a good example of this.

As for the voluntary diasporics, though they suffer from occasional pangs of nostalgia for their homeland too, they are much keener to acculturate in the hostland as 'model minorities'. Financial stability and better living conditions deter them from ever returning to their original homeland. For the people belonging to the petro-dollar diaspora, earning money to remit home becomes the main objective of their living in the diaspora and as a result, the demographics of their hometowns have changed significantly. But unable to enjoy the benefits of the new diasporic space, they go on slogging in inhuman conditions and so everything is not always rosy for them.

**AKC: What are the factors behind dynamics of Diaspora that has resulted in a progressive journey from labour and victim Diaspora to academic, economic, or technocratic Diaspora?**

**SM:** At the beginning of the twentieth century, Indians wanting to immigrate to the west had to face plenty of problems, as the policies of the governments were not conducive for such migrations. For example, let me mention the tragic *Komagata Maru* incident when Indians who were British nationals were denied to land in Vancouver in Canada fearing the browning of the nation and were sent back to India to be tortured there by the British administration once again. Later the scenario changed when in 1965 the US government passed the new immigration act and since then there has been a regular stream of white collared professionals entering and settling down in that country. Though they faced discrimination in certain circumstances, their experience can in no way be compared to the people of labour diaspora.

**AKC: What type of paradigm shift has been caused by political treaties, compromises, multiple socio-economic deals and Military agreements in diasporic writings?**



**SM:** Though many countries have given permission to people seeking political asylum at different periods of time, the same has not been reflected much in literary writings. Probably, like all refugees or victims who suffered from the trauma of partition, these diasporic individuals prefer to remain silent about their past. We find issues of cross-cultural conflicts/dilemmas especially in areas where difference in generations, gender and sexuality intersect. Needless to say the more recent voluntary diasporic subjects are different from those Indians whose lives were mapped by exile, mass migration and economic emigration.

**AKC:** During my short span in the UK, I found that Bangladeshi and Pakistani nationals were residing in disguise of Indians. Even, I found many Indian restaurants owned by them. What is the position of Indian Diaspora as compared to Pakistani and Bangladeshi Diaspora in the West after 9/11 insurgencies?

**SM:** Belonging to the Indian sub-continent, Bangladeshi and Pakistani diasporic nationals are often clubbed together in the UK as belonging to the South Asian group, of which Indians form the largest contingent. One has to remember here that a sort of racism by the ruling Brits pervades multicultural British society even today. Novels by Hanif Kureishi, Monica Ali, Atima Srivastava, Meera Syal and others amply testify this phenomenon. We have to keep in mind the different nature of migration of these various South Asian groups and the reason for their settling down in the UK. For instance, Bangladeshi persons (then from undivided region of East Bengal) have been going and settling in Britain for quite a long time and they went primarily from Sylhet and Noakhali districts of that country to work as lascars in ships and later settled in the East End district of London. Many of them later took on the job of cooks and ayahs and helped in the flourishing of the restaurant business. As for Indian restaurants run by them, the lure and taste of 'curry' and 'chicken tikka masala' that entices the British palate is their USP and the Britishers are either unable or not simply bothered to distinguish between genuine and fake identities of the South Asians who run the businesses. Another fact has to be kept in mind. Unlike in the United States, the number of Indians and Pakistani migrants in the UK are much more in number, because these countries were part of the Commonwealth and under the British imperial rule. As far as we can make out, the division of South Asian Indians and Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in Britain is operational more on religious lines, than on nationality. Also a lot of South Asians settled in the UK has undergone multiple migrations after being evicted from some country in Eastern Africa.

**AKC:** Younger authors are also writing a lot about India like Rushdie and Naipaul but unlike them, they are slightly positive about India. How are they different from the other younger diasporic writers in the perspectives of India?

**SM:** Examining the themes of exile, identity, longing, displacement, race relations, rootlessness, and ultimately acceptance is the staple stuff of most novels on the diasporic experience. In order to make sense of his present state, the writer revisits the past by taking recourse to memory and imagination. Most diasporic writers feel nostalgic about their homeland. I feel Rushdie and Naipaul are exceptions. In the gifted writers, the cross-cultural conflicts/dilemmas are generally disrupted and complicated in productive ways, especially in areas where differences in generations, gender and sexuality intersect – as in Meera Syal in Britain, Jhumpa Lahiri in the USA. This points to a trend or a pattern in the future of Indian diaspora also. Both Syal and Lahiri write from their own experiences of living abroad as a second-generation immigrant in multicultural society. An Indian by descent, the Kenyan-born, Tanzania-raised, US educated, and a Canadian by citizenship since 1978, M.G. Vassanji is a writer who falls somewhere in between the two categories. Like Neil Bissoondath and Michael Ondaatje, he is an Indian expatriate separated from the subcontinent by generations. Most diasporic writers try to juxtapose their homeland and the hostland in their works. In their fiction the plots and

characters usually in some way or the other link India as well as UK or the US. The novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, or Sunetra Gupta are good examples of such transcultural interface.

**AKC: The prevalent conditions of “New Diaspora” are much more different from that of “Old Diaspora”. What difference do you find in both the Diasporas?**

**SM:** The formation of the Indian diaspora according to Amitav Ghosh “is not merely one of the most important demographic dislocations of modern times: it now represents an important force in world culture” and can be classified, according to the critic Sudesh Mishra, as the ‘sugar’ and the ‘masala’ diaspora. There is also a distinction to be made between the old and the new diasporas. “This distinction,” according to Mishra, “is between, on the one hand, the semi-voluntary flight of indentured peasants to the non-metropolitan plantation colonies such as Fiji, Trinidad, Mauritius, South Africa, Malaysia, Surinam, and Guyana, roughly between the years 1830 and 1917; and on the other the late capital or postmodern dispersal of new migrants of all classes to thriving metropolitan centres, such as Australia, the United States, Canada and Britain.” This same classification is termed by other critics as ‘forced diaspora’ and ‘voluntary diaspora’. Another critic and scholar, Vinay Lal, reiterates the same idea by calling it ‘diaspora of labour’ versus ‘diaspora of longing’. For most of the old diasporic writers, there is an unease of the dislocated and the deracinated who either by choice or by compulsion have abandoned home in the country of their birth for a home in their adopted country. For the migrants of choice, on the other hand, the situation is totally different. They prefer to live in a kind of cosmopolitan globalised world where the markers of their borderless state have often to be invented.

**AKC: There are many authors like Arundhati Roy, Aravind Adiga, Jeet Thayil who live in India but they have pen-pictured the “exotic tales” of dark side of India. What is your assessment of this type of writing? (a) Politics for prize-winning (b) desire to seize popularity by being negative about the nation (c) because of being more realists?**

**SM:** First and foremost, none of them are diasporic writers. Instead, they reside in India. But it is true that almost all Indian English writers wherever they are physically located, along with their publishers, have a latent wish to win some sort of a prize from the western world – be it a Booker, or a Commonwealth or a Nobel. The noted Kannada writer U.R. Ananthamurthy had once remarked, “A lot of new writers who get the kind of attention that Rushdie gives them are writers who write for export. It is a shame that in the whole world only Indian writers in English write for export.” It is true that exoticism sells. Though India is no longer perceived in the west to be a land of princes and snake charmers and naked fakirs, nevertheless the reality of India at present times is what probably motivates these writers. When Arundhati Roy wrote *The God of Small Things* in 1997, the theme of the novel highlighted in the dust jacket cover of the New York Random House edition was the caste system in India where the love between a person of a higher caste and an untouchable was the main focus. After all, like any other multinational consumer product book production is also dependent upon marketing hype. Balaram Halwai becoming rich through improper means in *The White Tiger* is part of the present reality in India. I do not understand why some critics lay blame on Aravind Adiga for being negative about the nation. When a novel like *An Obedient Father* was published by the diasporic Indian American novelist Akhil Sharma in the United States several years ago and even won a prize, the judges thought that the novelist had given a true picture of India with its dubious politicians and bureaucrats in Delhi. We feel ashamed to admit that the Indian protagonist of the novel was a man who raped his own daughter, kept on living with her, and even attempted to sexually abuse his granddaughter. Even Bharati Mukherjee, who claims to be recognized as a mainstream American novelist, wrote about the reality of a resurgent India of contemporary times

with its call-centers and urban problems and sexual abuse of young women in her latest novel *Miss New India*. She depicted a true picture of the nation as of now and I don't feel she was aiming at popularity by being negative about India. In fact she sees the book as a stand-alone novel and last part of her trilogy comprising of *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*.

**AKC: There are many South Asian authors who prefer to settle down in the “other” world rather than in the First world viz. Uma Parameswaran, Vassanji, Mistry, Ondaatje and Shyam Selvadurai in Canada; Suneeta Peres da Costa, Yasmine Gooneratne and Chandani Lokugé, Samantha Sirimanne Hydein Australia; AmulyaMalladi and Tabish Khair in Denmark; Sujata Bhat in Germany; Manjushree Thapa and TaslimaNasrin in India and ShehanKarunatilaka in Singapore. Do you think that that the First Worlds-the UK, the US and France and etc. are not safer in the backdrop of 9/11 attacks in the US, 7/7 in the UK and, of late, Charlie Hebdo attacks in France? Please comment.**

**SM:**I find this question of yours problematic because as far as my knowledge goes writers who have settled down and live in Canada are considered part of the First World. You cannot call it ‘other.’ It is true migrants have been more suspect to state vigilance after the terrorist attacks in events like 9/11in the US and 7/7 in UK, but we should be very careful about not falling into the trap of essentialism. Each individual South Asian writer has a different reason and trajectory for settling in an alien country and so we cannot generalize. For example, many of them went along with their family for better economic prospects, like Yasmine Gooneratne from Sri Lanka who went to Australia or Romesh Gunesequera who went and settled in Britain after the Civil War in his native country. Some went for academic reasons (Tabish Khairfor example, who went from his native Bihar to Denmark, Amitava Kumar from Bihar to the United States), whereas Taslima Nasrin had to flee her homeland Bangladesh (and now even India) because of religious fundamentalism, and so on.

**AKC: What role does Bollywood construct in gaining prevalenceabroad and re-uniting the Indian diaspora at the global forum? Do you think that Indian Cinema is more accepted in the West than any other film industry of neighbouring countries of India?**

**SM:**By its sheer number of films produced per year,Bollywood happens to be the largest film industry in this subcontinent and thus overshadows films produced by neighbouring countries of India. Bollywood films are watched by an overwhelming number of South Asians both at home and abroad. Of course the diaspora watches these products differently than the home audience. I feel this difference is marked in two particular areas. First is the spirit of nationalism that is inculcated in many films where dying for the nation becomes a heroic act. This even cuts across religious lines. The second and more significant issue is the interest showed in the west for queerness in Bollywood films where narratives about queerness in the Indian diaspora are almost upbeat and use the acceptance of queerness as a token for entry. For example, Karan Johar's films *Dostana* and *Kal Ho Na Ho*, set among the diaspora community in America, present the possibility of joy, hope, and acceptance for an Indian gay man. In contrast, *Bombay Talkies*, Johar's only film addressing queerness within India, deals with the same issues while at home, shows only the possibility of a violent confrontation with society, represented by parents, followed by a life of loneliness, pain and lies while the spirit of India looks on and sings songs of mourning for them. All of the recent films set within India with a prominent gay story line have had similar bleak endings. With the advancement of technology and simultaneous release of a Bollywood film in any part of the world on the same day, the people of the Indian diaspora feel more connected with the homeland now. Unlike earlier times they do not have to wait for pirated copies of Bollywood blockbusters to reach them much later.

**AKC: When you are on tour to abroad or settled there for a long time, what do you think of your homeland? Do you realize the contours of Rushdie proliferated by him in his *tour de force*, *Imaginary Homelands* (1991)?**

**SM:** The critic Avtar Brah in *Cartographies of Diaspora* emphasises on the homing desire and the desire for the homeland as recurrent themes in diasporic writing. Accordingly, she identifies four stages in the process of assimilation in the hostland. These are the tourist phase, the culture shock phase, the conformist phase and the assimilation phase. For Rushdie, the role of memory, what he terms as ‘Indias of the mind’ remains the most significant criteria. The other metaphor that he uses is that of the pieces of a broken mirror, parts of which are lost. So, in spite of having a desire for the homeland, when one is settled abroad for a long time, the memory keeps on fading. As Rushdie has put it in *Imaginary Homelands*, the position of ‘the exile or immigrant’ is one of ‘profound uncertainties’ The diasporic person is at home neither in the west nor in India and is thus ‘unhomed’ (Homi Bhabha) in the most essential sense of the term. Thus the concept and interpretation of ‘home’ becomes vital in all kinds of diasporic writing.

**AKC: To what extent do you agree that present economic and political fluidity has converted the “nowhere presence” of Diaspora into “omnipresence”?**

**SM:** The way our Indian government woos her diaspora population by observing the *Pravasi Bharatiya Diwase* every year and by offering sops like PIO and OCI cards and by asking them to invest in the country speaks a lot about their financial stability in general. On the other hand, the overt presence of politicians of Indian origin in both the UK and the US also speak a lot about their ‘omnipresence’. They are now a serious power to reckon with.

**AKC: What role has South Asian Diaspora played in deconstructing the Orientalist view of the Occident?**

**SM:** I believe that South Asian diasporic writers see a new phase of neo-orientalism in recent fiction. For example, Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Lowland* or Neel Mukherjee’s *The Lives of Others* where large sections of the novels are based on Kolkata fits in this sort of agenda.

**AKC:** Thank you, Prof. Mandal! Its enlightening talk not only for me but also for the pan-Indian scholars and academicians.

**SM:** Welcome Ajay. It’s worthwhile for me too.

*[This Interview was originally published in the Reviews (ISSN: 2347198-0)]*

**Ajay K Chaubey** is Assistant Professor of English in the Department of Sciences & Humanities at the National Institute of Technology, Uttarakhand, India. His has recently published his maiden academic work, *V S Naipaul: An Anthology of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Criticism* (Atlantic, 2015). His another volume on Salman Rushdie is under publication from the Atlantic itself. He has co-edited two volumes on the Literature of the Indian Diaspora—*Transnational Passages: An Anthology of Diaspora Criticism* (Vol. I) and *Discursive Passages: An Anthology of Diaspora Criticism* (Vol. II)—under publication from the Yking Books, Jaipur. He has attended, participated and presented research papers in the conferences and symposia held in India and overseas including York St. John University, York; Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham and University of Leicester, Leicester (UK) during June 2014. He is also associated with the preparation of syllabi and academic policymaking as he is also the *Officiating Dean* (Student Welfare) in his institute. He is a Life Member of the research organizations viz. IACLALS, AESI and Sahitya Academy, New Delhi.

# Nature Adorns Her Chosen Dwelling Places: An Ecofeminist Approach to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

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## Abstract

'Ecofeminist theories reflect differently on the relationships between women and the natural world and between misogyny and ecological crisis', Shepard Krech opines and ecofeminism is a widely researched theory today. Under the camouflage of horrors of science and the consequent danger of thwarting the female body in the process of procreation, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* upholds lengthy narratives describing the majestic nature—in her gentility, tranquility, and magnificence as well as in a mad anger. One can trace an image of a woman in the plethora of the vivid descriptions of Nature. She has been exploited and ravaged in the cruel hands of science implemented by the protagonist, and this phenomenon bears a close parallel to the oppression of women in the hands of patriarchy, and this shared distress of Nature and Woman is the tenet of Ecofeminism. This paper is an attempt to reread *Frankenstein* through the lens of Ecofeminism and discover the close affinity between Nature and Femaleness and Femininity and ecological stances and feminist postulates that underscore the novel.

“But Frankenstein's attempt in Mary's view, violates the laws of nature, of natural modes of procreation and reproduction; he is therefore pursued and punished in the novel by Mother Nature, who curses him with physical and mental disease, denies him a maternal instinct and the opportunities for natural procreation. She pursues him with the very thunder and lightning he has stolen from her and finally brings about his death from natural causes at the age of twenty six.”

Mary Mellor

Mary Shelley's celebrated dystopian science fiction *Frankenstein* manifests the creation of a gigantic creature by an erudite scientist beyond the natural process of procreation and the immediate abandonment by the creator out of horror and repulsion. Utilizing the intricacies of science and natural philosophy and deploying the ingredients scraped out of the entrails of Mother Earth, Victor Frankenstein completely dismisses the role of female body and womb in the creation of his enormous superhuman. As the novel traces the revenge carried out by the 'Monster' in the pangs of being left out by his creator, it also charts the colossal presence of Nature in her variant moods. Like Percy Shelley's *West Wind*, Nature in the novel is preserver and destroyer—sometimes she is soothing, caring and doubles the onlookers' delight when acknowledged and appreciated, sometimes she is majestic, awe-inspiring, typical of the Nature depicted in Romantic poetry with the harmonious combination of 'strangeness and beauty' while at other times the author projects Nature in her fearsome and violent mood, implicitly protesting the injustice imposed against her. Mary Shelley has associated Nature with the image of a woman in the narratives of *Walter, Frankenstein* and *Monster*. There are lengthy passages where a reader won't fail to delineate the constant unification and oneness between the femaleness/femininity and Nature. It is this alliance between Nature and Woman that makes possible to reread *Frankenstein* in the light of Ecofeminism.

Ecofeminism is significantly a new theory that attempts to combine the tenets of socio-cultural theory of feminism with those of environmental studies. With the recent awareness of the massive devastation on the environmental resources and the exploitation of ecology to galvanize the growth and enrichment of economy, environmentalists have given voice to their collective protests against the ecological destruction. Conceived by Francoise d'Eaubonne in *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974), ecofeminism is the close affinity between ecology and women due to the shared oppression they undergo in a strictly gendered society wherein both are identified in terms of productivity. Mary Mellor opines:

Ecofeminism is a movement that sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women. It emerged in the mid-1970s alongside second-wave feminism and the green movement. Ecofeminism brings together the elements of feminist and green movements, while at the same time offering a challenge to both. It takes from the green movement about the impact of human activities on the non-human world and from feminism the view of humanity as gendered in ways that subordinate, exploit and oppress women (Mellor 01).

The feminists have looked at the exploitation of nature as a close affinity with the oppression of women under patriarchy. Mythologically and culturally, Nature has always been considered Mother Nature, thereby thrusting her maternal instinct of protectiveness and nourishment as well as fertility and productivity. Patriarchy asserts that masculine power has complete and unquestionable control over female body, woman's sexuality and her womb and that her femaleness is determined by the fertility of her womb; similarly Earth is only identified by her potentiality of production. Catherine Roach draws a close proximity between Mother, Earth and Nature affirming that this connection unifies the trio against a threatening patriarchy:

We speak of "Mother Nature" and "Mother Earth". How does the image of Earth as mother function in our patriarchal world, and how is the environment affected by this association with the female and the maternal? I argue that engendering the Earth as female mother, given the meaning and function traditionally associated with "mother" and "motherhood" in patriarchal culture, will not achieve the desired aim of making our behavior more environmentally sound, but will instead help to maintain the mutually supportive, exploitative stances we take toward our mothers and toward environment. This analysis brings out one of the fundamental points of ecofeminism: the way we think about and treat the environment is related to the way we think about and treat women (Roach, 46-47).

The children, being nourished by the placenta of the mother, after delivery gets torn off from the connecting umbilical cord and get the identities of the father, like the plants getting nourishment from the Mother Earth, are however in the possession in male-run market economy. Thus Nature, like women, nurtures with her eternal femininity, but becomes an erasure due to her femaleness.

*Frankenstein* traces the chronicle of a scholar, who, out of his hubris, decides to create a 'new species' that has never been created and that would transcend mortality. In his attempt of creation with muscles, fibres and other organs and infusing 'life spark' into it, the creature he creates turns his plans into topsy-turvy, as it ends up in being an unspeakably 'horrible' 'Monster'. The creator Victor Frankenstein absconds, and the tale charts the punishments inflicted by the Monster to Victor, who in the verge of death meets the narrator, Walton. In *Frankenstein*, we can observe the gradual extinction of the female characters, through natural or unnatural death. What strikes us is that, the mothers die quite an early death, leaving the children in the custody of the fathers. The lack of the protective care from a mother-figure is hence conspicuously absent in the text. The only woman whose loving presence pervades throughout is Elizabeth Lavenza, Victor's cousin and fiancée. In

spite of not being a biological mother, maternal instincts are dominant in her nature and she is almost a mother-surrogate for the male members of the family in Geneva. Ironically, she never becomes a mother in the sense of procreating, because she dies on her wedding night, brutally murdered by Frankenstein's monstrous 'child'. The motherly instinct of an all-pervasive and all-forgiving love is however traced in the Mother Nature, and incessantly bestowed on Victor. Chased by the Monster who has killed Victor's brother William and indirectly Justine who was falsely accused for it in the act of avenging Frankenstein's desertion of him, the exhausted Creator, on the verge of breakdown seeks for solace in the lap of Nature:

Even I, depressed in mind, and my spirits continually agitated by gloomy feelings, even I was pleased. I lay at the bottom of the boat, and as I gazed at the cloudless blue sky, I seemed to drink in a tranquility to which I had long been a stranger... (Shelley 107).

The Monster, as he narrates his pitiful tale to Victor, trying to move the latter's irresponsible, callous heart and knock him to the sense of realization of the custody of his 'child', gives us glimpses of his anchorage in Nature. In times of relentless hunger, the Mother Nature provided him with berries. Being severely beaten by the cottagers, and later his appetite for love being crushed by the de Lacey family, the poor Monster, without a biological or a nurturing mother, is soothed by Nature. Not being born inside a woman's womb, the creature had no mother to comfort him, and here the need for a human mother is satisfied by Mother Nature:

[M]y spirits were elevated by the enchanting appearance of nature; the past was blotted from my memory, the present was tranquil, and the future guided by bright rays of hope, and anticipations of joy (Shelley 77).

The physical and mental agony of the creature, after being maltreated by Felix de Lacey, is minimized by Nature: "The pleasant sunshine, and the pure air of day, restored me to some tranquility..." (Shelley 92). The calm comfort provided by Nature to the turmoil of the hearts of both Victor as well as the Monster has a close relation to the unsaid love of a mother.

As the feminists believe that the only reward for femininity—the way of appreciating the feminine virtues of care-giving and love—is loving the female and not exploiting or violating her; the environmentalists' postulate is 'Love Mother Nature'. Mellor observes in *Feminism and Ecology* that 'love' for Nature is 'exhortation to care for and maintain the health of the Earth (47). In the novel under consideration, the love for the Mother Nature is rather deconstructed into the deliberate obliteration of her entity and replacing her with science. Victor thereby becomes a modern man, and the power of Nature is described in science, the domain of masculine elitism. The language has a major role to play in the exercise of patriarchy, and language is basically phallogocentric. Victor's description of the destruction of the oak tree by lightning and his emphasis on 'electricity' as the destroyer, drives home the ecological destruction under the hands of insensitive science. If tree as a natural element is equated with woman and science with male, this graphic description implicitly underlines the oppression of woman in the hands of patriarchy:

[I] beheld a stream of fire issue from an old and beautiful oak, which stood about twenty yards from our house; and as soon as the dazzling light vanished, the oak had disappeared and nothing remained but a blasting stump. When we visited it the next morning, we found the tree shattered in a singular manner. It was not splintered by the shock, but entirely reduced to thin ribbands of wood (Shelley 23).

Instead of being sensitive to the oak's destruction, Victor contemplates on utilizing the intricacies of electricity in the creation of a human being and inventing an electrical machine that would suck the

fluid from the clouds: science/culture thus asserts the ecological oppression and annihilation of the feminine entity.

The sexual entity of Nature is also traced from the narratives of Walton and Frankenstein. Walton expresses a pleasure as he travels through Petersburg: 'I feel a cold northern breeze play upon my cheeks which plays upon my nerves, and fills me with delight (Shelley 07)'. Read in terms of ecofeminism, the Nature is here described as seductive, caressing the shipman. Walton's further proposal of satiating his 'ardent curiosity' by treading on a land never before visited, through an ecofeminist's lens may be interpreted as a man penetrating through a woman's virginity. Even Frankenstein's act of digging deep into Nature, ravishing her entrails to dig out corpses from her belly to use them in his scientific enterprise can be read as a rape. Mother Nature is thus raped, and that underscores an incestuous relationship. Strangely, Victor's fiancée was his cousin Elizabeth Lavenza, and Elizabeth loved the motherless Victor with her maternal instincts: the marriage between the two sardonically also signifies incest. Another level of interpretation can also suggest that the Monster was begotten out of a union between Victor Frankenstein and Mother Earth, the receptacle of the Earth was thus the woman's womb that provided the raw materials (ovum) which germinated into a human with the life spark (Frankenstein's sperm). The 'life spark' and its indispensable role thus propound patriarchy and the erasure of woman. Collard's opinion confirms the continuous oppression of ecological resources:

In patriarchy, nature, animals and woman are objectified, hunted, invaded and colonized, owned, consumed and forced to yield and produce (or not). This violation of the integrity of the wild, spontaneous Being is rape. It is motivated by a fear and rejection of life and it allows the oppressor the illusion of control, of power, of being alive (Collard 01).

Mother Earth's reproductive organs were thus scraped off and impregnated outside her body, thus also depriving her from her rightful motherhood and possession over the child.

If the ecology is allied with women for procreative, fertile femaleness and malleable femininity of both, they are also aligned with the issues of feminism. The oppressions of the women gave way to uproar and protest of the feminists, and that can be equated with the anger of Nature when she is active in destroying. Nature punishes the patriarch Victor with the other side of her being—violent, harsh and furious. The complete denial of the role of female body in reproduction incites the Nature with fury, and hence at the last moment of creation, 'the rain pattered dismally against the panes (34)', the Nature violently declaring her presence that was so callously denied. She avenges her erasure with coldness, pulling Victor finally into glaciers till he dies. If the Monster's revenges through the murders of Victor's family members including that of newly wedded Elizabeth be the chief reason, Nature's implicit conspiracy with the Monster too has a considerable role.

The ecofeminists interpret that spiritual and social ecofeminism can be perceptible. In the novel, social ecofeminism is the repeated oppression and devastation of nature to promote scientific ventures by men. On the other hand, Elizabeth Lavenza's emphasis on Ernest to be a farmer 'with a healthy, happy and [...] least hurtful life' depicts her rootedness with Earth. She is spiritually connected to Nature and is pitted against Victor who violates nature to establish a different culture. This affirms Gould Davis' point:

Man is the enemy of Nature: to kill, to root up, to level off, to pollute, to destroy are his instinctive reactions. Woman is the ally of Nature, and her instinct is to tend, to nurture, to encourage healthy growth, and to preserve the ecological balance (Davis 335-6).



The depiction of Nature—in her variegated roles, where she is acknowledged or denied, appreciated or exploited, have close connection with the theories of feminism and environmentalism and thus *Frankenstein* has possibilities to be read from Ecofeminist approach.

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# Darwin, Evolution and Unity of Life: *Far From the Madding Crowd* and Hardy's Ambivalent Vision of Nature

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## Abstract

Thomas Hardy's concerns as man and as artist highlight his immense love and sympathy for the flora and fauna of the natural world as also his keen eye for detail. Hardy's deep communion with Nature and the animal world is evident everywhere in his literary creations. Hardy's vision of Nature was both multifarious and inclusive and his minute observation of those signs which Nature produces silently, and which mankind often ignores, makes him a writer of regional and yet universal sensibilities. It would be difficult to understand Hardy's vision of Nature independent of his reading of Darwin and the Evolutionary debates of the early Victorian period. Darwin's vision of Man and Nature was based on his theory of evolution through 'natural selection'. Darwin's theory shifts the focus from man and rather emphasizes upon the natural unity which binds all species in the natural world. Darwin's theory also envisions a possibility of eventual ennoblement in the unity of life. This essay attempts to explore this ambivalent attitude to Nature marked by a transition from Romanticism to Darwinism in Hardy's novels with special emphasis on *Far From the Madding Crowd*, which completed one hundred and forty years of its publication last year.

**Key Words:** Hardy, Darwinism, Nature, detail, ambivalence

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at the door,  
Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees  
Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,  
"He was one who had an eye for such mysteries"?

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom  
And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,  
Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,  
"He hears it not now, but used to notice such things"? (*Collected Poems*)

The lines from the poem 'Afterwards' where Hardy describes himself thus, sums up his concerns as a man and as an artist -- one which highlights his immense love and sympathy for the flora and fauna of the natural world, as also his keen eye for detail. The trapped swallow in the furnity tent, trying to escape, in the memorable wife-selling scene in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the earthworms which the sensitive young Jude tries to avoid stepping on, the dog which lovingly supports the heavily pregnant Fanny to the workhouse and is later spurned away, the injured pheasants whom Tess kills to put them out of pain are all suggestive of Hardy's deep communion with Nature and the animal world. Growing up and living all his life in the beautiful county of Dorset, among the heaths, slopes, trees and agricultural surroundings, Hardy's vision of Nature was both multifarious and inclusive. His minute observation of those signs which Nature produces silently, and which mankind often ignores, makes him a writer of regional and yet universal sensibilities. This essay attempts to explore this

ambivalent attitude to Nature in Hardy's novels with special emphasis on *Far From the Madding Crowd*, which completed one hundred and forty years of its publication last year.

It would be difficult to understand Hardy's vision of Nature independent of his reading of Darwin and the Evolutionary debates of the early Victorian period. Darwin's vision of Man and Nature was based on his theory of evolution through 'natural selection'. Darwin's theory shifts the focus from man and rather emphasizes upon the natural unity which binds all species in the natural world. Darwin's theory also envisions a possibility of eventual ennoblement in the unity of life. It is this optimistic vision which shapes Hardy's unique vision of Man and Nature and makes him a 'meliorist' (Hardy's own words) even while it breeds pessimism, as Man no longer is in control of anything but is merely floundering in a Natural world that seems to act against, or is indifferent to, his grandest efforts. Nature in Hardy is, thus, an ambivalent force, one which exists not in conjunction with but independent of human existence and one to which human beings can at best adapt but never successfully control. Thus, from very early years his fiction came to reveal man's constant struggle to fit himself in the uncontrollable scheme of the Universe and this made the tone of his works sombre to the point of being recognized as pessimistic. That there is a disjunction between the laws of nature and of the human world, causing the ironies of fate and tragic mischance which punctuate the novels and short stories, is reiterated again and again in the Hardy universe. The famous evening walk scene when a pregnant Tess returns to her village and mostly stays indoors to avoid the disdainful looks of society, she can only take walks at the fall of dusk, and a beautiful passage sums up this anomaly between the world of nature and that of the human world with its 'unnatural' moral codes:

The only exercise that Tess took at this time was after dark; and it was then, when out in the woods, that she seemed least solitary...But this encompassment of her own characterization, based on shreds of convention, peopled by phantoms and voices antipathetic to her, was a sorry and mistaken creation of Tess's fancy—a cloud of moral hobgoblins by which she was terrified without reason. It was they that were out of harmony with the actual world, not she. Walking among the sleeping birds in the hedges, watching the skipping rabbits on a moonlit warren, or standing under a pheasant-laden bough, she looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence. But all the while she was making a distinction where there was no difference. Feeling herself in antagonism, she was quite in accord. She had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly (*Tess* 107-108).

It is not nature which here is the cause of pain and misery to Tess but society whose laws are not in tandem with those of nature. Nature here emerges as a non-judgmental and amoral force which soothes Tess in her misery and different from the Nature which had watched without protest Tess's seduction/rape in *The Chase*. Although Hardy often wrote of the beauties of Nature, especially in his earlier novels, where the pastoral element is present, he could also see its cruelty or rather, its indifference to human fates. There is constant reminder in the Hardy Universe that though man may live in conjunction with nature, he can never control or change it at his own will. In the novel, *The Return of the Native*, for instance, the narrator describes the inability of civilization to tame or encroach upon Egdon Heath, the chthonic and primal force that it is:

. . .Wildev's patch, as it was called, a plot of land redeemed from the heath, and after long and laborious years brought into civilization. The man who had discovered that it could be broken up died of the labour: the man who succeeded him in possession ruined himself in fertilizing it (35)

And Clym later feels 'barbarous satisfaction':

at observing that in some of the attempts at reclamation from the waste, tillage, after holding on for a year or two, had receded again in despair, the ferns and furze-tufts stubbornly reasserting themselves (176).

We wonder if this 'satisfaction' is merely one felt by Clym and not the author himself? In this ambivalent natural world it is no wonder then that Mrs. Yeobright is killed by an adder's bite amid the sunshine of a bright summer's day. Similarly, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* Henchard's crops are destroyed by the whimsical and unpredictable forces of Nature:

All these transformations, lovely to the outsider, to the wrong-headed corn-dealer were terrible. He was reminded of what he had well known before, that a man might gamble upon the square green areas of fields as readily as upon those of a card room.

Henchard had backed bad weather and apparently lost (213).

In a later novel like *The Woodlanders*, which shows the strong influence of Darwinism, the opening description of the Woodlands shows how far English Fiction has come from the Romantic view of Nature as peaceful, serene and one of peaceful coexistence:

Here as everywhere, the Unfulfilled Intention, which makes life what it is, was as obvious as it could be among the depraved crowds of a city slum. The leaf was deformed, the curve was crippled, the taper was interrupted; the lichen ate the vigour of the stalk, the ivy slowly strangled to death the promising sapling (41).

Thus, the lasting impression one takes away from *The Woodlanders* is of the gloom and decay which exist in the natural world, and which is mirrored in the lives of the woodland characters. This overwhelming feeling of pain and decay results from Hardy's insistence on the Darwinian struggle for survival within the woods, built through numerous references throughout the novel. Hardy's vision of nature combines a Romantic with a Darwinian view. In this novel Hardy searches primarily for the *intention* behind nature, whether this intention is beautiful or grotesque, Romantic or Darwinian. If nothing else the very description of the trees trying to compete with each other for the basic life-sustaining resources is reminiscent of the evolutionary debates going about in Britain since the 1930s. It is thus evident that all of Hardy's fiction is replete with his vision of nature that is fraught with ambivalence.

The earliest novel which reveals Hardy's close communion with Nature and the animal world and also the emerging ambivalence in the way which he envisioned Nature is *Far From the Madding Crowd*. While most readers and critics discover pastoral elements in the novel, and where tragedy is supposedly averted in the end with Bathsheba Everdene getting remarried to the Pastoral hero Gabriel Oak, a closer look only reveals how the sombre ingredients of tragedy are already present in the offing. In fact Michael Squires correctly comments:

In *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874) there is no perpetual summer, no frolicking sheep, no piping shepherds who live without care. Instead, there are many realistic details of actual rural life: sheep die, storms threaten, shepherds have misfortunes both "amorous and pastoral," peasants work, and unhappiness and despair are spattered over the second half of the story. Before the novel's essential realism, prettiness disappears (299).

The earliest description in the novel of Norcombe Hill refutes any assumption that this is going to be an idyllic pastoral romance. It is not a place of serene beauty, but a place of desolateness, loneliness, and sadness. It is with the description of Norcombe Hill that the reader becomes well-aware of the pessimistic note that Hardy's writing now begins to incorporate into his ideas concerning the Nature he has known and has loved as a child:

The hill was covered on its northern side by an ancient and decaying plantation of beeches, whose upper verge formed a line over the crest, fringing its arched curve against the sky, like a mane. Tonight these trees sheltered the southern slope from the keenest blasts, which smote the wood and floundered through it with a sound of a grumbling,, or gushed over its crowning boughs in a weakened moan. The dry leaves in the ditch simmered and boiled in the same breezes....A group or two of the latest in date amongst the dead multitude had remained till this very mid-winter time on the twigs which bore them, and in falling rattled against the trunks with smart taps (46).

One looks for the light, tripping note present in some sections of Hardy's earlier novels, but it cannot be found in the passage just cited. Gabriel Oak, the pastoral hero, who is attuned to reading the signs and signals of nature in the novel, becomes one of its chief victims too. He loses his sheep and the dream of being an independent farmer to his dog. This dog tries with tragic eagerness to carry out the tasks assigned to him, but the results are disastrous. Nature becomes the impenetrable, inexorable force, ordering man's life, pinning man to the wheel of fate. Gabriel Oak, in his most tragic moments, becomes a victim of Nature's unerring course. And Hardy ends the chapter on the dog with the following exquisite comment:

George's son had done his work so thoroughly that he was considered too good a workman to live, and was, in fact, taken and tragically shot at twelve o'clock that same day – another instance of the untoward fate which so often attends dogs and other philosophers who follow out a train of reasoning to its logical conclusion, and attempt perfectly consistent conduct in a world made up so largely of compromise (74).

There is a kind of wistful understanding on Hardy's part of the dog being a mere cog in the scheme of Nature, where he is as much victim as Gabriel. This same love of the animal world can be seen in many of Hardy's novels always mixed with the consciousness of the inexorable force of Nature. This episode sets about a chain reaction whereby Oak is forced to encounter Bathsheba again. Later with Bathsheba's sheep poisoned with ivy and almost dying, Nature plays a dual role of destroyer as well as a bridge which brings the pair together again, as Oak has the know-how to treat the sheep. Oak's tragedy is the tragedy shared by most of Hardy's characters — a tragedy in which man is acted upon by the forces of Nature and becomes and is tossed about in whimsical fashion by a Fate over which he has no control.

Hardy's close relations to the natural world had deeply attuned him to the sounds of a even a thrush singing a mournful song in the night, "singing each note twice over," and he had almost come to understand the language of animals, birds, and even insects which play such major roles in his fiction – such as the moth-signal in *The Return of the Native*, or the gambling in the light of glow worms, or the spiders which forebode rain in *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Therefore, in each of his novels he displayed a parental wistfulness in regard to the tiniest creatures. There seems to be division of Hardy's moods concerning Nature, where initially there is mostly pastoral loveliness, with only a small hint of the sinister tone Nature would take in his later novels. But no matter where the eyes light Nature is always the immutable controller of man's actions, whether it is helping or hindering him.

In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Nature acts both as the 'great mother' who provides clear signs for those who will read to warn them of natural calamity, as well as the nonchalant avenger who destroys blindly. Thus it is Gabriel Oak who reads into the signs of the approaching storm and the details devoted by Hardy to the reading of the signs offers fascinating insight into a man "who noticed such things":

Gabriel proceeds towards his home. In approaching the door, his toe kicked something which felt and sounded soft, leathery, and distended, like a boxing glove. It was a large toad humbly travelling across the path. Oak took it up, thinking it might be better to kill the creature to save it from pain; but finding it uninjured, he placed it again among the grass. He knew what this direct message from the Great Mother meant. And soon came another (272).

This sign is followed by the brown garden-slug which seeks a safe haven indoors to find protection from the approaching storm, the dropping of black spiders from the ceiling to the floor and finally Oak's reading of the reaction of the huddling sheep which confirms his fear of the approaching natural calamity:

Every voice in nature was unanimous in bespeaking change. Apparently there was to be a thunder-storm, and afterwards a cold continuous rain. The creeping things seemed to know all about the later rain, but little of the interpolated thunder-storm; whilst the sheep knew all about the thunder-storm and nothing of the later rain' (272-73).

Nature, ready with her warning signs, is yet destructive in its fury and the storm is literally a 'dance of death' from which Gabriel and Bathsheba narrowly escape and save her grains. Nature is almost always in the Hardy universe an ambivalent force; as an entity with a mind of its own which often makes the best human plans go awry. The violent face of nature, one which shows that atonement is impossible for past actions in her scheme of things, is symbolically shown in the episode of the repentant Sergeant Troy placing flowers at Fanny's grave and those being washed away by the gushing Gargoyles:

The persistent torrent from the Gurgoyles' jaws directed all its vengeance into the grave the rich tawny mound was stirred into motion, and boiled like chocolate. The water accumulated and washed deeper down, and the roar of the pool thus formed spread into the night . . . The flowers so carefully planted by Fanny's repentant lover began to move and writhe in their bed (341).

The influence of Darwin and of *The Origin of Species* is present everywhere in Hardy's work. There are thus, constant juxtapositions of the comforting and menacing aspects of Nature in Hardy. The much-quoted passage from *the Origin of Species*, of the 'tangled bank', points out the codependency of species and life. Darwin presents a Nature full of energies and teeming with life forms:

It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us (459).

Gillian Beer makes an apt comment comparing the styles of Darwin and Hardy when she says: "Hardy like Darwin places himself in his texts as observer, traveler, a conditional presence capable of seeing things from multiple distances and diverse perspectives almost in the same moment" (230). Hardy too pays a lot of importance to detail and intricacies. Especially in the episode in the novel when Nature acts as a retreat and a place for comfort where, spurned by a conscience-stricken Troy, Bathsheba leaves her home and finds shelter in the darkness of night among a 'brake of ferns'. The place which gave comfort to her full and palpitating heart on an emotionally turbulent night, on waking up in daylight evokes a different reaction in Bathsheba. It is only the narrator or Hardy who can see the beauty latent within the apparently dangerous swamp:

She looked further around. Day was just dawning, and beside its cool air and colours her heated actions and resolves of the night stood out in lurid contrast. She perceived that in her lap, and clinging to her hair, were red and yellow leaves which had come down from the tree and settled silently upon her during her partial sleep. Bathsheba shook her dress to get rid of them, when multitudes of the same family lying round about her rose and fluttered away in the breeze thus created, 'like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing.'

There was an opening towards the east, and the glow from the as yet unrisen sun attracted her eyes thither. From her feet, and between the beautiful yellowing ferns with their feathery arms, the ground sloped downwards to a hollow, in which was a species of swamp, dotted with fungi. A morning mist hung over it now — a fulsome yet magnificent silvery veil, full of light from the sun, yet semi-opaque — the hedge behind it being in some measure hidden by its hazy luminousness. Up the sides of this depression grew sheaves of the common rush, and here and there a peculiar species of flag, the blades of which glistened in the emerging sun, like scythes. But the general aspect of the swamp was malignant. From its moist and poisonous coat seemed to be exhaled the essences of evil things in the earth, and in the waters under the earth. The fungi grew in all manner of positions from rotting leaves and tree stumps, some exhibiting to her listless gaze their clammy tops, others their oozing gills. Some were marked with great splotches, red as arterial blood, others were saffron yellow, and others tall and attenuated, with stems like macaroni. Some were leathery and of richest browns. The hollow seemed a nursery of pestilences small and great, in the immediate neighbourhood of comfort and health, and Bathsheba arose with a tremor at the thought of having passed the night on the brink of so dismal a place (329).

*Far From the Madding Crowd* thus presents a picture of Man and Nature related to each other in a precarious balance. Despite the beauty of nature captured in *Far From the Madding Crowd* the pastoral elements are often eclipsed even here by the painful episodes of real tragedies for an agricultural community – related to storm and rain, harvest, farmers losing sheep and of unwed mothers and their dead newborns. Hardy's vision of Nature remains too elusive and impossible to be pinned to a single ideology and reflects the transition or evolution from the Romantic view of Nature to the Darwinian. Hardy's vision, which was to become much more well-defined and gradually darker, finds its initial shades in *Far From the Madding Crowd*.

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# Is Sherlock Holmes a Children's Hero?

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## Summary

Sherlock Holmes is idolized by children. But is he a proper role model? Considering the problems with lionizing Holmes, the paper looks at issues and challenges with regarding detective fiction as children's literature. Further, alternate detective heroes for children are posited – such as Agatha Christie's Miss Jane Marple and Ross Macdonald's Lew Archer, who are probably better role models.

Children's literature is “the body of written works and accompanying illustrations produced in order to entertain or instruct young people” (Fadiman). As this literature gives equal importance to education and entertainment, the texts belonging to this category can be seen as not just utilitarian but also as having social responsibility. Depending on the milieu, children's literature varied in the importance it gave to these characteristics.

In early civilizations, literature itself was in its infancy, and the oral literature that was produced to be told generally by the fireside included tales that interested and educated children and adults alike. These were usually tales of gods or heroes or beasts, propagating virtues such as humility, ambition, courage, love, and harmony.

When literature moved from the oral to the written form, the moral aspect of these tales led to their finding a place in the texts that children were meant to study and emulate. Aesop's fables, *Kathasaritsagara*, *Panchatantra*, the *Jataka* tales, etc., are examples of this. They provided instruction in the form of entertainment.

The importance of passing instruction through simple tales that children could enjoy was well recognized by early 18<sup>th</sup> century British writers. Jonathan Swift's (1667-1745) *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) exemplifies this. Swift's work depicts an English doctor's misadventures in various fantastical lands, while satirizing the British preoccupation with war and empire building. However, children enjoyed and still enjoy this tale as it comprises elements of magic and adventure that appeal to their young minds. This led other authors to try their hand at adventure and attract young readers. Initially, this was frowned upon by parents and teachers, as they felt that such stories corrupted the young. However, by mid nineteenth century these tales were accepted, albeit as a necessary evil. As Dennis Butts points out:

The emerging children's literature, with its growing tolerance of children's playful behaviour,

its recognition of the importance of feelings as opposed to reliance upon reason and repression, and its relaxation of didacticism because it was less certain of dogmas, all reflect what was happening in the world beyond children's books. It is surely remarkable that, whereas fairy tales had to fight for recognition in the 1820s, no fewer than four different translations of Hans Andersen's stories for children [...] have been published in England in the year of 1846 alone. (159-160).

Thus, late 19<sup>th</sup> century children's literature included not just moral stories but also tales of adventure. Works such as R M Ballantyne's (1825-1894) *The Coral Island* (1858), Lewis Carroll's (1832-1898) *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), R L Stevenson's (1850-1894) *Treasure Island* (1883), Rider Haggard's (1856-1925) *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), Anthony Hope's (1863-1933) *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894) became popular with children. All these works, while they celebrate honesty, courage, and hard work, have ample amount of the magic ingredient: adventure.

The nineteenth century was also a period when science and reason were celebrated, and detective fiction with its emphasis on logic and deduction naturally became popular. Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin stories, Wilkie Collins's (1824-1889) *The Moonstone* (1868), and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's (1835-1915) *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) owe their success to public's interest in science -- although it must be admitted that the morbid fascination of the Victorian public with sensationalism was no less important.

The upshot of this success of crime fiction with public resulted in the recognition that these were also tales of adventure. Hence, detective fiction also became a part of children's literature. By the time, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) wrote his Sherlock Holmes stories, detective fiction became grist for the voracious child's mill.

However, they still were not considered respectable or desirable for children till mid-twentieth century. This is best exemplified by the manner in which detective fiction or crime literature is treated by noted children's authors of this period such as Frank Richards (1876-1961), Enid Blyton (1897-1968), and Richmal Crompton (1890-1969). Richards in his Billy Bunter stories shows how the "Fat Owl of the Remove" as Bunter is called by his playmates, is regularly punished by his form teacher Mr Quelch for indulging in sensational literature. Crompton and Blyton too display a similar attitude. Crompton's William is punished by his elder sister and parents who consider his reading detective novels as a fascination with the gory and grotesque, and Snubby in Blyton's *Mystery* series is depicted as smuggling such literature as he is not allowed to read them.

However, this is in essence hypocritical on the part of Richards, Blyton, and Crompton -- as they include elements of crime and detection in their stories. Richards shows how the adventurous boys of Greyfriar's School manage to outwit criminals as varied as jobless gypsies out to burgle or kidnap, to crooks of international repute attempting to steal jewels that have supernatural abilities. Crompton too shows how William is impressed by detectives, and tries his hand at outsmarting robbers. It might be argued that both Crompton and Richards do not make crime or detection as a quintessential part of their writing, but only include it as adventure. Blyton, on the other hand, gives detection a major role in her stories. Her various children's series such as the *Secret Seven*, the

Famous Five, the Five Find-Outers, the Adventure series, the Secret series, and the hitherto mentioned Mystery series, have at their heart a crime and these books show how the children, who are the protagonists, detect these criminals while displaying admirable courage and industry.

The success of these authors resulted in the mushrooming of similar works. Hence, by mid twentieth century, children's literature included works such as the Hardy Boys series by Franklin W Dixon, Nancy Drew stories by Carolyn Keene, and the Three Investigators series by Robert Arthur (1909-1969) and W C Carey. The last mentioned were published with ostensibly the recommendation of Alfred Hitchcock, and immediately found favour not only with children, but adults.

As these stories apparently included moral education they gradually were accepted by parents as well, and in the second half of the twentieth century were unquestionably accepted as part of children's literature by critics such as Sally Sugarman, Jonathan Shipley, Juan Arteaga, John Champion and Tanya Bryne. This acceptance also led to a reappraisal of earlier detective fiction writers such as Doyle and Collins, and such writers were deemed to have virtues hitherto unperceived.

The rediscovery of Collins towards the fag end of the twentieth century led to the reissue of his major works, not just in their unabridged form but also as abridged texts for the consumption of children and adolescents. His *The Moonstone*, albeit in abridged form, is, in fact, prescribed as a supplementary reader for intermediate students by the Board of State Education in Andhra Pradesh.

Similar is Doyle's case; although it must be admitted that it was not so much a discovery as it is of acceptance. Doyle's stories featuring Sherlock Holmes hardly ever lost popularity since their initial publication. But even Doyle would have been surprised that these tales are included as part of the curriculum by various education boards in India. This is because by prescribing it as compulsory reading the education boards are sending out a message that Holmes can be used as role model for children.

But role models play an important role in the development of children, as Manjari Singh and Mei Yu Lu point out:

Heroes and heroines in good literature are portrayed as complex individuals, so it is necessary to analyze them in a holistic manner by paying special attention to the interplay of both positive and negative traits. Many main characters are strong role models because they rise above their own negative traits or weaknesses and overcome personal challenges. We often find protagonists inspiring because they demonstrate the need for individuals to be resilient and to respond proactively to challenging circumstances. Discussing heroes and heroines with children presents countless opportunities for considering how character traits are expressed in others, and how children can develop positive character traits in themselves. (Singh and Lu.)

While it is true that the Holmes stories may be used to teach children "to respond proactively to challenging circumstances", the protagonist is a character with a dark side. Doyle depicts him as a chain smoker, a sociopath, a cocaine addict, and a misogynist. Moreover, there are various factoids

that are included in the canon such as ‘the mind is an attic and the space in it is limited where the acquisition of new knowledge would lead to the erasure of other information’, and that ‘starving the body helps in the thinking process as the blood supply that would have gone to the stomach to help digestion would go to the brain’. Such factoids are ridiculous, and it may be argued that even if children do believe these, they are not positively dangerous.

However, Holmes also propagates the virtue of smoking. In “The Man with the Twisted Lip”, Doyle depicts Holmes as considering the mystery as a three pipe problem, and smoking through the night to solve it. Such romanticizing of smoking is not only undesirable but dangerous as children have impressionable minds.

Hence, a child who idolises Holmes and hopes to become a scientific intellectual might take to smoking in a vain attempt to become like him. Such a fear is not far-fetched. In fact, even Doyle speaks about what we become depends on the kind of knowledge we acquire. Ironically, he does this in his first story of Holmes, where he portrays the various skills of his hero, and how such learning helped him to become the world’s first private consulting detective. This is done in the form of a list that Dr J Watson, the narrator of these stories, prepares, as he attempts to understand what Holmes’s profession is:

1. Knowledge of Literature.—Nil.
2. Philosophy.—Nil.
3. Astronomy.—Nil.
4. Politics.—Feeble.
5. Botany.—Variable. Well up in belladonna, opium, and poisons generally. Knows nothing of practical gardening.
6. Geology.—Practical, but limited. Tells at a glance different soils from each other. After walks has shown me splashes upon his trousers, and told me by their colour and consistence in what part of London he had received them.
7. Chemistry.—Profound.
8. Anatomy.—Accurate, but unsystematic.
9. Sensational Literature. —Immense. He appears to know every detail of every horror perpetrated in the century.
10. Plays the violin well.
11. Is an expert singlestick player, boxer, and swordsman.
12. Has a good practical knowledge of British Law. (Doyle 9)

Thus, children might prepare a list of things that are necessary to become like Holmes, and this might include not just the pursuance of the above-mentioned skills, but also his vices such as smoking, drinking, and doping.

While it is undeniable that the Holmes stories propagate various virtues such as honesty, integrity, courage, and patriotism, the presence of such vices in a character who is idolized by children makes this text undesirable. Hence, it becomes necessary to posit alternatives to this, which are free from such unwanted elements.

A perusal of detective fiction shows that such an endeavour is not impossible. Edgar Allan Poe's (1809-1849) Dupin stories, Agatha Christie's (1890-1976) tales featuring Miss Marple, and Ross Macdonald's novels are prime examples. Poe's Dupin is the original ratiocinator, who inspired Doyle amongst others to attempt detective fiction. Moreover, his stories do not include valorisation of vices. However, the problem with these stories is that they are very few in number as Poe had written only three Dupin stories.

This is not a problem in Christie and Macdonald's case, and could thus be posited as serious alternatives to Holmes stories as children's literature. The Miss Marple stories with their focus not just on scientific deduction but also on creating a harmonious world through its depiction are ideal for children. The protagonist in these novels is an elderly spinster, who is free of vice, and understands human nature. Her love and concern for humanity is a virtue that can and ought to be propagated.

If Marple due to her old age does not immediately find favour with the young and the restless, Macdonald's Lew Archer is a veritable alternative. Archer is depicted by Macdonald as not just as a logical thinker, a hard working patriot, and a brave crime fighter, but also as an energetic person who attempts to not just help the victims but also the criminals. For Macdonald, a criminal is a society construct, and he believes that sympathy and empathy could lead to a world which is free of evil. An idealist at heart, his *Find a Victim* (1954), depicts his detective ruminating on how severe punishment might lead to a juvenile delinquent turning into a hardened criminal. In the novel, Macdonald describes how Lew Archer, too, escapes such a fate, and became a detective. By this, the author propounds the importance of kindness and empathy in a world that is rife with strife and corruption.

These are virtues that children would do well to emulate, and thus, it is high time that School Boards and Publishing Houses take note of it. These works by Dupin, Christie, and Macdonald can be prescribed in the curriculum, as they would not only whet the appetite of the child for detective fiction, but also teach them morals and values without valorising vices. Similarly, publishing houses too can make these texts available in abridged forms or package them as children's literature.

As adults it is our responsibility to pay attention to this fact as we live in a world where news is sensationalised and children are exposed to corruption and vices from a very young age, it is necessary that the heroes they idolise are ideal.

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# The Superego, or why Yes means No

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The superego is the imperative of *jouissance*—Enjoy!

--Jacques Lacan, *Seminar XX*<sup>i</sup>

If the primary function of the Superego is to impose limits and restrictions, why does Jacques Lacan, the controversial French analyst who proclaimed himself true heir to Freud's legacy, posit that its injunction is "Enjoy"? Shouldn't it rather be "No" or "Stop" or "Yield"?<sup>ii</sup>

Although Lacan has been accused of reworking Freud beyond recognition, I claim that when it comes to the Superego he remains thoroughly Freudian. Lacan lays bare the insidious strategy of the Superego: enjoyment loses its pleasurable dimension once it becomes an injunction. The subject is kept from "wrong" action not through demands for abstinence, but through forced enjoyment. This can be debilitating not only for the subject, but for its relation to the Other: enjoyment becomes a burden that has to be displaced to an Other who can accomplish the duty of *jouissance* for us.

We know that the Superego, following the conventional Freudian definition, is an internalized authority that bombards us with unreasonable ethical demands. It is the enemy of enjoyment; it is that which drains the pleasure out of indulgence. It is a cruel inner voice that reminds us that we are too fat, too wasteful, too lazy, too perverse.<sup>iii</sup>

Consistent with the metaphors used in psychoanalysis, the Superego is represented in popular accounts as a whisper in our heads that brings to our attention moments of excess and failure. Despite its unimposing form, it can be psychologically crippling. Freud thought of the Superego as a sadistic judge with a single virtue, that of consistency: it never fails to issue a guilty verdict.

Part of the Superego's function is to berate us for a failure that is "inbuilt": it points to the gap that separates our pathetic reality from our perfect image of the self, the *Ego-Ideal*. Formed by early narcissistic love and untainted by flaws, the Ego-Ideal can only be perceived once the subject is made aware of its "lack", which in turn can only be perceived once the subject recognizes the existence of an Other and the dependence on that Other. The Superego constantly ensures we are aware of the distance between what we are and what we would like to be, and scolds us whenever we deviate from our Ideal in the pursuit of pleasure.

Freud's characterization of the Superego as a paternal figure, ubiquitous throughout our culture, seems to be at odds with Lacan's concept of *jouissance*. Why does Lacan claim that the Superego demands that we pursue enjoyment, if it runs contrary to its primary function of prohibiting pleasure? It might appear that Lacan is suggesting that the Superego's mechanism has evolved historically, that the psychic economy of the human subject has been recalibrated to suit the

postmodern condition. But rather than a faithful “return to Freud,” this would be a revision of Freud’s vision of an ahistorical psyche.

Philosopher Slavoj Žižek, the (in)famous “Elvis of cultural theory” and self-professed dogmatic Lacanian, provides an apropos example that reconciles the two thinkers. Žižek contrasts the “classic” totalitarian father with the tolerant and permissive “postmodern” father. The totalitarian father says, “You will have to visit your grandmother whether you like or not. It’s an order!” while the postmodern father says, “You don’t have to visit your grandmother if you don’t like to, because you should only go if you really want to.”<sup>v</sup>

What’s the difference? It’s certainly not a matter of “good” and “bad” parenting. Far from it! The classic and postmodern fathers differ merely in method; their objectives (and often the results) are the same. Whereas the former issues a direct, openly threatening mandate, the latter achieves the same effect through subtlety. “Not only do you have to visit your grandmother,” the postmodern father intimates, “but you have to *like* it!”

The postmodern father is *not* the antithesis of the totalitarian father, but rather his reincarnation. Far from being an agent of pleasure, the paternal Superego and its Lacanian injunction to “Enjoy!” drains the pleasurable content from enjoyment.

What is the effect of the Superego’s project to render enjoyment *unenjoyable*? Think about a time when you were forced to go on a vacation with your family. As you frantically try to keep up with the itinerary in the hope of maximizing the pleasure of the experience, you secretly long for the quiet and uneventful passivity of home. You can’t help but fantasize about lounging on the couch with a good book. Perhaps you become jealous of another vacationer or local, who appears to have achieved the state of relaxation you so desire.

When enjoyment becomes a duty it becomes a burden. To achieve stasis and relief, the subject must share the burden of forced enjoyment; that excess *jouissance* is displaced to an Other who can enjoy it for us. However, once it has been displaced, it no longer appears as a burden. The fickle subject, seeing an Other who can enjoy what it could not, is caught between the oppression of *jouissance* and desire for it.

Needless to say, this facilitates and sustains a strange relation with the Other, known in psychoanalysis as *ambivalence*. On the one hand, the Other is the repository of excess pleasure of which we want to rid ourselves, but on the other hand, we see the Other as usurping pleasure that is rightfully ours. Ambivalence is rendered clear in the “logic of racism,” for the idea of the *theft of enjoyment* animates much of its discourse: “They are lazy, but they have more fun than we do because they live off our hard work!” Thus, to a subject under the auspices of Superego, the Other is seen as both a necessary and unwanted presence.

Lacan has not revised or embellished the Freudian Superego, he has explained its primary mechanism. The Superego is a force for unreasonable ethical demands, which acts through enjoyment rather than prohibition; we must displace this pleasure or face psychic imbalance, but we become jealous of the Other on whom we displace it. What do we do then? How are we to think about ethical relations if the displacement of excess pleasure to the Other fuels our mutual antagonism?

I suggest that rather than seeing the Other as a reservoir for enjoyment which we cannot enjoy, what we should displace upon the Other is our constitutive lack – the fundamental incompleteness of our being – as a means to coming to terms with our insatiable desire for the Ego-Ideal. This gesture has a precise, technical term in psychoanalysis: it is called love.



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**Notes**

<sup>i</sup>Lacan, Jacques. *On Feminine Sexuality: The Seminar, Book XX*, New York: Norton 1998, p. 3.

<sup>ii</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup>See Freud, Sigmund. "The Ego and the Id". The Hogarth Press: London, 1949.

<sup>iv</sup>*Zizek!*. Dir. Astra Taylor. Zeitgeist Films. 2006. DVD.

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# Handling of Male Characters in Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session*

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## Abstract

Tendulkar's stance on his characters has been a subject of continual discussion among the critics. Though the dramatist seems to have a fascination for women characters in most of his plays and it is undeniable that his female characters capture the imagination of the reader at first, some of his male characters are equally important and captivating. Through the treatment of his male figures in *Silence! The Court is in Session*, Tendulkar projects a vision of the world as an essentially hostile place populated, for the most part, by hypocrites, egoists, absolutists and hard-hearted realists. There is many a point of tastes, manners and attitudes which most of Tendulkar's men share with each other. The critique of the males in the play spotlights that these characters arouse a unique and rewarding interest in his drama, and serve to provide a better understanding of various aspects of his works.

Vijay Tendulkar (1928-2008) had been one of the most influential dramatists and theatre personalities in Marathi for the past six decades. Nobel Laureate V.S. Naipaul had once called him "India's best playwright" (Singh). Tendulkar's plays along with those of playwrights like Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar and Mohan Rakesh have changed the face of Indian theatre. Many of them have been translated into major Indian languages and English as well. Introduced in 1967, *Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe* is a well-known Marathi play by Tendulkar. Priya Adarkar translated it as *Silence! The Court is in Session* in 1978.

In most of Tendulkar's plays, "generally, women are at the centre...around women that most of the action revolves. The roles that Tendulkar's female protagonists play eclipse those played by the men figuring in them" (Dharan 28). Dealing with the pitiable conditions in which women are put in male-dominated society, *Silence! The Court is in Session* is not an exception. The play is "about a woman targeted by men, placed in a situation where she can neither get sympathy nor legitimacy for her child," says Vinod Bala Sharma (14). However, the issue that the critics of Vijay Tendulkar tend to ignore, sometimes completely and sometimes partially, is his handling of male characters in the play. "The theatre group in *Silence!* . . . which comes to perform at a village is a miniscule cross-section of middle-class society" (Banerjee viii), consisting of five male players, viz. Mr. Kashikar, Sukhatme, Ponshe, Balu Rokde, and Karnik along with the village hand Samant. Other male characters, though portrayed as off-stage players, are Professor Damle, Nanasahab Shinde and Rawte. With *Silence! The Court is in Session*, "for the first time in his dramatic career, Tendulkar began to look into the psyche of his subject" (Dharan 95); and he has not confined himself to the psychological analysis of his female characters only, but has explored the mind of the male characters also.

Almost all of the male actors of *The Sonar Moti Tenement* (Bombay) Progressive Association have been presented as male-chauvinists who give no respect or importance to woman. When one comes to learn about persons like Mr. Damle, it seems that woman is nothing more than an object of sex for them. Mr. Damle, who is a professor at a university, acknowledges Benare, the heroine of the

play, only for her sexual attraction and not for her character or intelligence. As she articulates in her soliloquy: “He didn’t want my mind, or my devotion—he didn’t care about them!” (Tendulkar 118). “Despite being an eminent intellectual, he demeans himself and his profession by having an extramarital relationship with Benare which, eventually, results in her pregnancy” (Dharan 51). Benare admires him for his scholarly attainments, but he understands only her body and exploits her closeness with him, as she bumbles: “He wasn’t a god. He was a man. For whom everything was of the body, for the body! That’s all!” (Tendulkar 118). Further, for Ponshe, “on the whole, girls are silly and frivolous” (107). He cannot dare accept an unmarried mother like Benare as his wife. To quote from the play:

SUKHATME. What was your answer, Mr. Ponshe? Were you prepared to take a broad view of things for the sake of humanity, and accept the child along with the mother?

PONKSHE. The answer is quite clear.

SUKHATME. You weren’t prepared, of course.

PONKSHE. No, I wasn’t. (106)

Sukhatme also proves himself to be a sexist when, in his last speech as the lawyer for the prosecution, he states:

“ ‘Woman is not fit for independence. . . .’ That is the rule laid down for us by tradition. Abiding by this rule, I make a powerful plea. ‘Na Miss Benare swatantryamarhati.’ ‘Miss Benare is not fit for independence’ ” (115).

Even Kashikar, who projects himself as a great social worker, continues to insult his wife throughout the play and pays no regard to her. Whenever she tries to speak or give any opinion, he gives a severe reprimand to her. For instance, when Mrs. Kashikar is trying to make Samant understand how to avoid mistakes at night, he presumptuously silences his wife: “Silence must be observed while the court is in session. Can’t shut up at home, can’t shut up here!” (77).

The male figures in *Silence! The Court is in Session*, who do “performances of the Living Lawcourt” (83), are sadists too. Through the treatment of these ‘so-called’ artists, Tendulkar lays bare the dormant sadism in human mind that peeps into the privacy of others and derives a devilish pleasure in exposing it to the public. In the name of a light-hearted pastime, Miss Benare’s colleagues exceed their limits and descend to metaphorical cannibalism. Their failures and disappointments in life make them derive a wicked pleasure in the discomfiture of their own co-artist. The malicious glee of Kashikar and his team looks like the dance of the devils. One cannot afford to forget the counsel for the prosecution, Sukhatme, who reveals the private life of his female colleague in public and derives a sadistic pleasure in the name of “just a game” (120). The dramatist has made every effort to unmask this latent sadism in him and his other male associates. To cite from the play:

ROKDE [looking at Benare]. Now laugh! make fun of me! this lady was there. Damle and this—Miss Benare! [Benare has stiffened. Karnik signals to Ponshe]

.....

SUKHATME [with peculiar care]. Mr. Rokde, you went to Professor Damle’s house, as night was falling. What did you see there? [in a deep, cruel voice] What did you see?

KASHIKAR [alongwith he is enjoying it all greatly]. Sukhatme, I feel this is getting onto too personal a level—

SUKHATME. No, no, no, not at all, milord. It’s just for the trial; so, Mr. Rokde . . . don’t be

shy—tell everything you saw. (86-87)

The sadistic motive of Ponkshe can be observed when he asks Benare in a sarcastic tone:

“What happened afterwards to that friend of yours, Miss Benare? That girl—the one in trouble—whom you found for me to marry . . .” (68).

It becomes quite evident when, in the last act of the play, the audience comes to know that he, in the name of ‘that girl,’ was talking about nobody else but Benare only.

Another dominant feature of the personality of the male characters (except that of Samant) in the play is their hypocrisy. All of them are hypocrites having a farcical moral code and sham social values. There seems to be no connection between what they say, what they do and what they are. Kashikar, the judge of the mock-law court, projects himself as a conscience keeper of the society who “can’t take a step without a Prime Objective” (59). He boasts of having been “studying society for the last forty years” (113), but the hollowness of his ideology is obvious when he comments: “[O]ur society should revive the old custom of child marriage. Marry off the girls before puberty. All this promiscuity will come to a full stop. If anyone has ruined our society it’s Agarkar and Dhondo Keshav Karve. That’s my frank opinion, Sukhatme, my frank opinion” (98). The hypocrisy of Dr. Damle is evident from Benare’s statement when she tells Samant:

“. . . we have an intellectual too. That means someone who prides himself on his booklearning. But when there’s a real life problem, away he runs! Hides his head. He’s not here today. Won’t be coming. He wouldn’t dare” (60).

Here, the cowardice of the learned Professor who is significantly absent from the trial denoting his total withdrawal from responsibility, either social or moral, for the whole situation into which he has landed Miss Benare is brought out in a biting satire. Mr. Sukhatme, who calls himself “a lawyer to the marrow” (68), does not have any practice in his real life. He is found giving himself “meaningless legal airs” (64) throughout the mock-trial. His hypocrisy is at its best when in the beginning of the third act “he puts on his gown ceremoniously” (96) and also asks the judge to wear it. He “straightens up, closes his eyes, and meditates for a while. Then slapping himself piously on the face, he raises his hands to his forehead in prayer twice or thrice” (96). More, Ponkshe, despite being an ‘inter- failed,’ pretends to have a great knowledge of science: “In this scientific age, it’s fun to get everything at the last minute, without effort. [snaps his fingers.] Like that!” (65). Even Karnik and Rokde are not less pretentious. Despite the fact that he is a ‘rotten actor’ in his real life, Karnik is proud of his stagecraft. Rokde, whom Kashikar calls “a buffoon . . . from the start” (86), shows keen interest in the lofty statements made by his co-artists, but he himself is unable to speak even a single line without hesitancy in his voice. Though he boasts of having slapped Benare, he does not dare even to enter the witness box until he is forced.

Besides being sadists, hypocrites and chauvinists, the male members of the amateur theatre group are arrogant, selfish, spiteful, morally corrupt and emotionally sterile also. Among off-stage players, Nanasaheb Shinde is not an upright one and his attitude towards women is exposed when he talks to Mr. Kashikar about Benare: “ [S]he is a young woman. So I couldn’t say no straightaway. I have called her again, for a quiet talk’ ” (112). Moreover, he shows no sympathy towards this ideal teacher and robs her of her ‘only comfort,’ i.e. her job, as his obvious from his emotionless statement: “ ‘It would be still more immoral to let such a woman teach, in such a condition! There’s no alternative—this woman must be dismissed’ ” (113). The selfishness and cold-heartedness of Professor Damle is discovered in his conversation with Benare. When Benare asks him where she will go if he abandons her in such a critical condition, he replies arrogantly exposing his emotional sterility: “ ‘Where you should go is entirely your problem. I feel great sympathy for you. But I can do

nothing. I must protect my reputation' ” (92). Other males in the drama company, also, possess spiteful and vengeful attitude towards each other. Throughout the play, they continue to pass their malicious comments on their own workmates. Here is an example:

SUKHATME. . . . Our Punkshe looks most impressive during the trial. The scientist in the witness-box! A pipe and all that! No one would believe he has just taken his Inter-Science for the *second* time. Or works as a clerk in the Central Telegraph Office!

[Here Rokde, unable to control himself, laughs a little.]

PONKSHE [irritated]. Don't you laugh, Rokde! I didn't get my education on Mrs. Kashikar's charity! I may have failed my Inter-Science. But at least I did it on my own father's money. Nonsense! (61)

At another juncture, when the trial is going on, Sukhatme calls Punkshe as his first witness in a tone soaked in sarcasm: “My first witness is the world-famous scientist, Mr. Gopal Punkshe. Well, Punkshe? Are you happy? I've suddenly promoted you to world fame, eh?” (80). In the course of such dialogues, Tendulkar reveals the prevalent human tendency to mock at others' defects and derive a malevolent joy out of it.

“Patriarchy plays an inevitable role in shaping the psyche of a person...[It] influences, directly or indirectly, the working of the conscious mind. Some may remain untouched by patriarchy for a while, but it is impossible for all to avoid it perpetually,” says Budhwar (44). The ideals celebrated in a patriarchal society find expression in the character of almost all of the male players in the drama. Benare comes in contact with a host of males, and through her experiences one gets glimpses of a typical male-dominated society. Via Benare-Damle episode, Tendulkar presents a veracious picture of the contemporary Indian middle-class society that has different yardsticks to measure man and woman. No one, including Samant, raises his voice of protest against Damle who is responsible for the catastrophe of Benare. He is not even summoned as a co-accused in the court, while Benare remains the “prime accused as the unwed mother of his illegitimate child” (Banerjee viii). She is facing the trial while he is attending an academic seminar. While the court pins down the victim of love, it lets the victimiser go scot-free. Owing to his belonging to a patriarchal society, it seems to be impossible for Mr. Kashikar to evade the influence of the traditional milieu he lives in. He passes the judgement that is highly partial and partisan, and that smacks of the justice of jungle rather than that of a judge of a civilized court: “It is the firm opinion of the court that your behaviour puts you beyond mercy. . . . No memento of your sin should remain for future generations. Therefore this court hereby sentences that you shall live. But the child in your womb shall be destroyed” (Tendulkar 118-19). Interestingly, “the accusation brought against Benare at the beginning of the trial—that of infanticide—turns into the verdict at the conclusion, principally because contemporary Indian society, with its roots grounded firmly in reactionary ideas, cannot allow the birth of a child out of wedlock” (Banerjee viii-ix). This reversal of the position of the ‘authorities,’ which consist only of males, conveys the double standards on which our society is founded.

The male characters of *Silence! The Court is in Session* are seen not in relation to patriarchy alone. For instance, through Rokde, Tendulkar has been successful in putting forward the problem of the Indian adults who still feel stifled under the pressure of their parents and cannot take their own decisions, even about their own marriage. Rokde himself tells Benare: “ ‘I can't do anything without Mrs. Kashikar's permission. . . . I can't help it. That's one's luck. I can't think of marriage' ” (Tendulkar 109). In addition to that, the playwright introduces Samant, who is an outsider to the rest of the group, not only to play a key-role in the ‘mock-trial,’ but also to highlight the gaping holes in the moral pretensions of his urban counterparts. Through his utterances and actions, this innocent rustic

becomes “a powerful vehicle of satire against these hypocritical city-wallahs” (Dharan 55).

In spite of the fact that the play is gynocentric, the penetrative study of it gives the impression of playwright's deep insight into male psyche. In delineating his male characters, Tendulkar has explored their psyches to the extent of revealing the hidden sense of failure pervading their lives—the inefficiency of Sukhatme as a lawyer, the childlessness of Mr. Kashikar, the vain attempts of Karnik to be a successful actor, the non-fulfilment of Ponkshe's dream to become a scientist and the inability of Rokde to attain an independent adult existence. The figure of the simple-hearted villager, Samant, is adeptly handled by the dramatist to offset the complexities of these *soi-disant* urbane characters. It is not out of genuine love for drama but out of a sheer sense of their personal failures in life that they have turned to theatre activity. Therefore, to expect them to be refined, truthful, and generous is perhaps crying for the moon. “Their characters, dialogues, gestures and even mannerisms reflect their petty, circumscribed existences fraught with frustrations and repressed desires that find expression in their malicious and spiteful attitudes towards their fellow beings” (Banerjee viii). Tendulkar is highly satirical of these so-called champions of culture and social welfare who trample on the individual's right to freedom. Though the dramatist tries to strike a balance between individual freedom, social values and moral standards, he also wants us not to miss the lop-sided justice—one for man and another for woman. By pitting Benare against her male co-artists, he “questions the stock notions of morality and attacks the hypocrisy of basically weak but arrogantly cruel yet apparently friendly people so eager to lynch a woman who happens to violate their moral code” (Raykar 46).

To conclude, it can well be said that Tendulkar has displayed a remarkable skill in achieving certain purposes through the presentation of his male characters. Nevertheless, the fact that he has his own constraints while dealing with these male figures cannot be denied. Human nature is a mixture of an angel and a devil. At times, the angel takes a holiday and lets the devil have a field day. Conversely, the male members of the dramatic troupe give a long holiday to the angel and allow the devil rule the roost letting themselves have a fiendish pleasure at the suffering of one of their own associates. On the other hand, in case of Samant who is a pure hearted, simple and ignorant countryman, the devil remains off the field all through the play. On the whole, Tendulkar has been unable to present his male characters as complex and dynamic ones. At the same time, considering his special interest in the female characters of his plays and his purpose of zeroing in on the ‘ugliness’ in their male counterparts, such kinds of limitations are understandable.

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# Beyond The Reach of Her Imagination: A Feminist Reading of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

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## Abstract

This article explores the ambivalent position of female characters in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. In relation to the male protagonist, the female characters are depicted as 'other's, tools to centralize the male protagonist. Female characters are trapped in a binary dualism of good-bad, angel-demon.

“Women have always been the ones to change my life: Mary Pereira, Evie Burns, Jamila Singer, Parvati the witch must answer for who I am, and the widow, who I'm keeping for the end: and after the end, Padma my Goddess of dung. Women have fixed me alright, but perhaps they were never central- perhaps the place should have filled, the hole in the centre of me which was my inheritance from my grandfather Adam Aziz, was occupied by for too long by my voices”

These words of the narrator Saleem in the chapter 'Love in Bombay' of *Midnight's Children* sets the tone of the novel to its female characters. *Midnight's Children* contains many characters who are taken from the various pockets of Indian life. The male characters like the female characters share a big space in the novel, yet the female characters are specially mentioned by the narrator at the narratorial level. And the reason for special mentioning is that they are assigned with a chief function of framing protagonist's destiny. Therefore, the male characters in the novel enjoy more literary autonomy than their female counterparts. The women in the novel woe their existence to the hero. Their position is equivocal – apparently they are makers of the hero, they themselves are made by the hero.

Let us notice the ambivalent picture –Dr.Jekyll-Mr.Hyde image of female folk in Salman's fiction. In *Midnight's Children* a woman character carries her feminine duty; moreover she does what a man should do.. When Ahmed Sinai crushed by ill luck and financial disaster takes a shelter in the bottle of jinns and other drinks, it again a woman who leads the family to financial stability. She uses her money in race course and earns a lot in returns, fights legal battle for her drunkard loosing husband and wins it for him. Parvati manages to save Saleem from the clutches of enemy and gets herself a son by another man because her man is impotent. Revenge is taken by the Brass Monkey on Evelin for the wrong done to her brother. In the real world of day to day activities female characters outpace their male counterparts in success, managing power, homemaking. In the stories of the novel, female figures Amina, Pia Aunty, Mary, Parvati, Padma are upheld as mothers and dynamic aspects of Maya; they are also caught in bad light of morally low beings and a power that muffles one's consciousness. Amina is an unfaithful wife like Lila Sabarmati; Mary Pereira commits a serious sin of baby exchanging; Parvati the witch traps and compels Saleems to marry her; she is also an infidel who gets her son from Saleem's arch-rival Shiva. Vanita and Parvati give birth to bastard children respectively. Most of the female characters of the novel are given schoolboys like nicknames – Reverend Mother, Parvati the witch, Nussie the-duck, the Brass Monkey. The business



of giving nicknames denies the character from their real character and own feelings to be revealed in their own way. The narrator is busy in establishing his own version of story and history. He is the centre. Therefore, naturally his objects are denied self consciousness. Female characters in the novel are designed as shaping tools to ease the author's task of structuring the development of the protagonist's character. Their characters are prepared to suit two completely opposite purposes. The female characters are painted in black and white colour- the black part to hurt Saleem enough so that he can gather energy to fight against odds of life and the white part to help him survive in life.

Amina	assidious mother	unfaithful wife
Mary	loving ayah	sinner
Grandmother	caring homemaker	authoritative mother
Parvati	loving, caring friend	too calculative witch
the Brass Monkey	spirited singer	hater to love-feelings

Josephine Donovan in the essay 'Beyond the Net: Feminist Criticism as a Moral Criticism' admits "much of our literature in fact depends upon a series of fixed images of women, stereotypes... In the Western tradition these stereotypes tend to fall into two categories reflecting endemic Manicheistic dualism in the Western worldview... The following diagram shows how this dualism is conceived:

spiritual	material
spirit/soul	body
virginal ideal	sex object
Mary	Eve
inspiration	seductress
good	evil

( Newton p. 213)

But *Midnight's Children* being written in postcolonial Indian background by a person whose mindset is shaped by Eastern as well as Western world-view, Euro-American feminism can't be its yardstick. In the Indian culture the woman who, in the Hindu pantheon, is worshipped as a symbol of Shakti, is often ill-treated at home and outside of it. Therefore, unlike Western literary texts in which a female character is either an angel or a devil Rushdie's this magnum opus depicts that both a devil and an angel are lurking in a female character. Yet, behind this apparently balancing picture of women what is lost is the authenticity of female experience.

The women are not so much eulogized for their merits as much they are punished for their demerits. Lila Sabarmati is killed by her husband, and that is viewed as a heroic-act across the nation. Amina is made to be frightened by her baby in belly. Parvati has to be perished. Mary Pereira is haunted by a male phantom. When Amina goes secretly to meet her ex-husband she is labelled as an unfaithful wife. Even her little baby Saleem plans to teach his mother a lesson for her infidelity but he has no plan to teach his drunkard father who goes on flirting with his Anglo secretaries, even though he secretly dreams of undressing them. Shiva is not punished by his victims, he chooses his own punishment. In the paternal society male is given the opportunity to choose punishment, while women are crushed by the male hand.

Women are makers at the same time unmakers of Saleem Sinai. The narrator says, "women have made me, and also unmade. From Reverend Mother to the Widow, and even beyond I have been at the mercy of the so-called (erroneously in my opinion!) gentler sex." The novel projects a pitiable picture of the narrator like a puppet and the women are his tormentors, unmakers, controllers. A sort of sexual role change is a new tactics to project women in men's torturer- image.

When Padma proposes to marry Saleem, he protests 'like a blushing virgin'. Here a woman advances and male coils. But woman is determined and man flees "in the burning heat of Padma's determination, I am assailed by the demented notion it might be possible, after all she may be capable of altering the end of my story by phenomenal force of her will." When Padma leaves Saleem for two days he not only feels saddened to be alone, also was moved to anger. He grudges "why should I be so unreasonably treated by my one disciple? Other men have recited stories before me, other men were not so impetuously abandoned." Padma's sudden departure is appeared to be a torture to him. The influence of the female character on the narrator is appeared to be painful. The Widow is a devouring lady who takes away Saleem's manliness. Again it is a lady who takes away a man's sexuality, because she can't enjoy it?

The pompous story that admires as well as belittles the female folk is told, as the author shows, to a female listener. The relationship between the author and his listener is quite interestingly complex. Their relation is a multi-faceted- one of love relation, hunter-hunted, author-reader. It's quite prominent that Padma is in love with the narrator. Saleem wants to enchant his listener with his story telling, but he ends up catching her in love-net. "I have become its masters – and Padma is the one who is now under its spell. Sitting in my enchanted shadows... while she my squatting glimprer, is, captivated as a helpless mongoose frozen onto immobility by the swaying". Padma is impressed not by the story, but by the personality of the narrator. In the chapter 'Accident in a washing chest' the narrator says that Padma leaves him for two days. The cause of leaving is hinted in two chapters before 'The fisherman's Pointing Finger' in which narrator hints that Padma is interested more in 'other pencil' than in his creative pencil. Writing and biological reproduction are projected as rivals in the novel. The narrator questions "To resent nocturnal scribbling as though they were the very flesh and blood of sexual rival? I think of no other reason for Padma's bizarre behaviour; and this explanation at least has the merit of being as outlandish as the rage into which she fell, when tonight I made the error of writing". After two days when Padma returns on her own giving up her wounded vanity to save his love Mr. Saleem she brings with her a herb with which she prepares a love potion to revive Saleem's vitality and manliness. Padma is depicted in the same light like Parvati the Witch. She is caring and at the same time driven by voluptuous sexual love like Parvati. Woman who changes her religion, takes up a new name to marry a man with a dumb baby, is running after a man mainly for sex! To an author, a reader is an urgent need like sex, but to a reader an author is a mental food. Saleem projects his urgent need of a necessary ear upon Padma in package of sex.

Saleem holds Padma spell-bound with the magic of his foreign accent, personality, stories, but his story telling fails to create her belief in his bizarre story of midnight's children's activities. She cannot make head and tail of Saleem's language. She can understand Saleem the man not Saleem the narrator. She is seen to underestimate Saleem's writing, though she is interested in his life history. Padma says, 'so I thought how to back to this man who will not love me and only does some foolish writery?' in 'My tenth birthday'. And that's why Saleem helplessly cries a woman who loves him cannot understand him. In Rushdie's world Padma is one of the fiction-sisterhood who fails to understand the spirit of art and story. Its other member is Soraya in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Saleem's biography is a postmodern metafictional autobiography in which upper-lower, dream-real, fact-fiction, english-hinglish are chutnified. Saleem has multiple fathers, mothers, sisters, multiple families like multiple realities of India. In an essay 'The Riddle of midnight: India August 1987' in *Imaginary Homelands* Rushdie describes that he met two persons one a 1947 born Hindu tailor Harbans Lal and other a 1947 born muslim Abdul Ghani, a worker in a shari shop. "They were both slightly built, mild mannered men with low courteous voices and attractive smiles"(p30) . Both of them were communalist in brain and heart. In that particular essay later he says, "I came from

Bombay , and from a Muslim family too. ‘My’ India has always been based on ideas of multiplicity, pluralism, hybridity: ideas to which the ideologies of the communalists are diametrically opposed.” (p32) The India that Saleem, who was educated upto secondary level, narrates comfortably matches with highly educated author’s view of India. Rushdie’s own spirit enters into Saleem while he was penning the novel. Saleem’s view is Rushdie’s view. Chutnification to produce a postmodern novel is not conscious a work of secondary school passed man, is the Author’s brain work. Padma is also Rushdie’s creation. Padma’s inability to grasp his story displays author’s prejudice to her. The narrator may not have the intellectualism of an Oxford educated author, yet he has the force of fierce force of imagination with which he has created an unprecedented story which Padma cannot understand because she lacks the imagination as well as intellect. Padma is interested in story only, only in those events that our eyes and reason support, not in plot, way of telling and the stories of midnight’s charismatic children. She demands “Arre baap just tell what happened mister!”(p594) Her brain is full of straight forward clear-sighted realistic traditional stories. Not only Padma, even Soraya can’t understand unrealistic stories of her noted story-telling husband Rashid Khalifa. Soraya fails to understand the value of her husband’s fanciful stories. She also fine-tunes herself to Mr. Sengupta’s materialistic worldview of realistic story: ‘what is the use of stories that even are not true’-a view that feminist critics attaches to paternal society’s oppressive literary device. French feminist Luce Irigaray posits in *The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine*(1977)

“ This ‘style’ or ‘writing’ of women tends to put to the fetish words, proper terms, well-constructed forms ... Simultaneity is its ‘proper’- a proper(ty) that is never fixed in the possible identity-to- self of some form or other. It is always fluid without neglecting the characteristics of fluids that are difficult to idealize... Its ‘style’ resists and explodes every firmly established form, figure, idea or concept.” ( Rivkin & Ryan p572)

The narrative of *Midnight’s Children* hammers the notion of realistic novel, single mode of reality, linear form, single identity of the protagonist. Apparently the narrative smells feminine experience of fluidity and multiplicity, which the female listener of the narrative is seen as incapable to apprehend. Women as receivers of stories are absorbed so much in traditional realistic narrative that, feminists claim, is devised to subjugate women, that they hardly recognize a novel narrative that reflects their own temperament. Here emancipating narrative that can free literature from male hegemony is seen to be pioneered none by a male author himself. And that narrative is beyond the imagination of a female reader. Soraya, Padma who left their men are forced to return. Their men do not go in search for them, the ladies surrender and return with the realization of their mistake and guilt-feelings. Yet these ladies’ estimation of their men’s art is never seen to be improved, because they are incapable of doing so.

The narrative of *Midnight’s Children* places itself in popular masculine literary hegemony by drawing the female reader in the negative image of a listener and privileging the male sight and worldview. In the novel female characters are Janus-faced figures either makers and unmakers of Saleem. They don’t have their own selves, whereas Saleem is a kaleidoscopic figure-Snotnose, Stainface, Baldy, Sniffer, Buddha, Piece of the Moon. In the postmodern world a reader can also have a share in creation because his/her taste and demands help in shaping productive activity. Padma as a listener-cum- creator is given little credit in the creation of Saleem. When Padma, Saleem’s ‘necessary ear’ leaves him, he thinks of giving up her ignorance and superstition which, he feels ‘necessary counterweights to my miracle laden omniscience’. Saleem thinks that Padma with her realistic outlook and earthiness keeps the narrator’s feet on earth, prevents him from soaring up. All these are merely verbose like his melodramatic narrative. When Soraya leaves Rashid Khalifa, his son his greatest fan questions the validity of his story nothing comes out of the legendary storyteller’s

voice except 'ark'. Here Saleem goes on scribing his book's three important chapters for two days without his necessary ear. Realizing that people around him cannot understand him and his story, Saleem begins to put his faith in his son who is not even his own son: "I said: 'My son will understand. As much for any living being, I'm telling my story for him, so afterwards, when I've lost my struggle against cracks, he will know'." In *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* a mother leaves her husband for absurd fanciful stories which her little son struggles to revive. Here the narrator hopes that his bastard son will appreciate his story rather than his ladylove. The female readers are given a disappointing image. Padma, Parvati, Amina bibi are seen to be biologically generative, but they lack literary and aesthetic sense. On the other hands Nadir Khan and the narrators are sexually meek, but they are intellectually and artistically generative. Mary, the old ayah prepares superb chutneys delicious for tongue only, the narrator prepares chutneys for both tongue as well as brain. Rushdie's narration falls into structural binaries into which male is given a tacit hierarchy-

male	female
author	reader
intellectual	sexual
innovative	traditional
imaginative	materialistic

Rushdie's characters are to describe in Judith Fetterly's words from her "On the Politics of Literature"(1978) 'intellectually male, sexually female'(Rivkin & Ryan p568). In 'Towards A Feminist Poetics' Elaine Showalter criticizes the 'two-tiered system of 'higher' and 'lower' criticism'-hismeneutics and hermeneutics(Newton.p218). Hismeneutics is a manly aggressive elite literary theories based on linguistics, deconstruction, stylistics, computer. Hermeneutics is intuitive, feminine traditional literary criticism. Rushdie's fiction creates that division of higher himmeneutic reading and lower hermeneutic reading.

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# Reading Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* through the History and Legacy of Morichjhapi

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## Abstract:

The conflict between human rights and animal conservation is a perpetual concern in state politics. My paper on Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* explores how the Morichjhapi massacre –a result of the Foucauldian governmentality of contemporary Left government in West Bengal –was justified on the basis of ecological concerns and systematically paved the way for further marginalisation of East Bengali refugees in other parts of India. Thus while the Partition of India as an event might have been consummated in 1947, its after-effects continue to shape the politics of South Asia, reducing both citizens and refugees to diasporas and even stateless objects.

**Keywords:** Morichjhapi, Diaspora, Refugee, Partition, Ecology, Project Tiger, East Bengal, Stateless, Sunderbans, Home, *Namasudras*

The plight of the displaced is a recurrent theme in Amitav Ghosh's novels. *The Hungry Tide* (2004) is marked by the author's ecological consciousness as he merges history, myth and fiction to delve into the liminal space of the Sundarbans where human destinies are shaped and structured by the ebb and flow of water. The novel juxtaposes two temporal narratives –that of the Morichjhapi massacre (through Nirmal's diary) and Piya's research on the elusive Irrawaddy dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*) to highlight the central conflict between animal conservation and human rights. The story begins with the arrival of two 'outsiders' –Kanai, a Bengali translator, now based in New Delhi and Piya, an Indo-American cetologist who despite her Bengali roots, is alienated from the language. As Kanai is coerced by his aunt Nilima to come and explore his late uncle's diary, Ghosh takes us back and forth in time and space to recreate the horror of Morichjhapi –a tragedy conveniently marginalised in Indian historiography.

Following Partition, many Hindu East Bengalis started migrating to India and especially to West Bengal to escape persecution in their homeland. Joya Chatterji mentions how this took place in waves with the initial migrants mainly representing well connected upper classes (106). Those who arrived later were from the lower strata of society –the *namasudras* –with little or no resources of their own. Consequently these people were seen as economic liabilities and forced to settle in hastily made rehabilitation zones like those of Dandakaranya, their "dumping site" (Bauman 77). However tutored in the ways of paddy cultivation, fishing and carpentry, these migrants were unable to adapt to the arid infertile soil of central India. In 1978, a group of refugees originally from the Khulna district of East Bengal, started marching to Morichjhapi, an uninhabited island in Sundarbans with the hope that the new Communist government would fulfil its promise, having supported their cause earlier. Kudaisya points out how the "political ascendancy of the Left owed a great deal to the refugees" who were encouraged to seek shelter within Bengal (32). However in a dramatic reversal of policy, the Jyoti Basu government now refused to entertain their demands. The state imposed an economic blockade and sunk the boats of the islanders thereby reducing Morichjhapi to a panopticon-like structure. While most people died of starvation and cholera, others were killed in police firing and arson attacks. Ross Mallick writes how Muslim thugs were also hired from Bangladesh to execute the mass killings (110).

In Ghosh's novel, the brutal clampdown is witnessed by Nirmal, a retired teacher whose Marxist ideology is shaken by the ruthless state power. Nirmal is mystified to see the precision of the refugee settlers in constructing a new village within a matter of days—"Such industry! Such diligence!"(181). Thus these so-called illegal migrants were neither "human waste" in need of recycling (Bauman 77) nor were they a "bundle of apathy" as claimed in the official discourse on Bengali refugees (Kudaisya 37). Rather they were seeking a new Dalit nation (Ghosh 205), the seeds of which were sown by Sir Daniel Hamilton, a visionary who had started a cooperative society in early twentieth century Gosaba. Incidentally not all Morichjhapi settlers came from the refugee camp. Many like Kusum were looking for an opportunity to reclaim their lost Home. Hailing from the lowest strata of society, the *namasudras* felt it to be their legitimate right to seek a Place within West Bengal, oblivious of the fact that their 'homing desire' threatened the social hierarchies represented by the main Bengal landmass.

Unlike the educated Hindu Sylhetis in Siddhartha Deb's *The Point of Return* or the economically deprived refugees in Sunil Gangopadhyay's *Arjun*, the Morichjhapi settlers were not encroaching upon the resources of the human natives but those of the non-human ones. Though according to Jyoti Basu, the immigrants had violated the Forest Acts by their unauthorised occupation of a part of Sunderbans Reserve Forest, Morichjhapi was not part of the core tiger reserve area and the forest was earlier cleared by the state government to make room for coconut plantations in 1975. Annu Jalais remarks—"the anthropomorphism of tigers in relation to the villagers' history intrigued me" (1758). The tigers came to be more privileged than the refugees—the "nimnborner lok" (1758), marking a significant rupture in the history of man-tiger conflict in Sunderbans. In a vehement critique of Project Tiger and first wave of ecocriticism, Ghosh's Kusum questions the humanity of the elites: "the worst part was not the hunger or the thirst. It is to sit here, helpless and listen... that our lives, our existence was worth less than dirt... this whole world has become a place of animals, and our fault, our crime was that we were just human beings, trying to live as human beings always have, from the water and the land" (Ghosh 284). Thus in a double act of betrayal, the settlers were not only made "ecological refugees" (Buell, "The Ethics and Politics" 121) but also reduced to "tiger food" by the Bengali *bhadralok* (Jalais 1758). Lawrence Buell cites how to bridge this gap between ecological and human concerns, ecofeminists in the "past decade" have pushed the "ethics and politics of environment criticism" in a more "sociocentric direction" focusing on "voices of witnesses and victims of environmental injustice" (112).

In *The Hungry Tide*, the academician becomes the stranger and by extension the outsider, aloof from ground reality. Amitav Ghosh is extremely critical of the Bengali *bhadralok* whose knowledge of Sunderbans is restricted to "tigers and crocodiles" (12). Therefore Kanai who is proud of his linguistic abilities, initially looks down upon Fokir's rustic ways. His aunt Nilima has no sympathies for the refugees as being the founder of the Babadon Trust, she cannot afford to alienate the government even at the cost of alienating her own husband. Despite staying in Lusibari for fifteen years, Nirmal too is unaware of the intricacies of the place and relies on Bernie's *Travels* for snippets that are part of Horen's daily experience. The poet, Khokon one of the Calcutta guests invited by the islanders to mobilise public opinion, is most cynical: "You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs" (Ghosh 206). Thus despite not being trespassers as argued by Shakkho Sen in Tushar Bhattacharya's 2009 documentary on the massacre, these people had to be dispersed as far as possible to give the Calcutta *bhadralok* a false sense of security and as a lesson to all future East Bengali refugees. The legacy of the state sponsored violence culminates in the 2007 atrocities in Nandigram that became one of the primary reasons for the downfall of Left government.

Though Piya voices many ecological concerns in the novel, it is the villagers who through their mythic-ethical space of Bon Bibi<sup>i</sup> embody the "environment unconscious" (Ghosh, "Wild Fictions"). Their self-imposed borders segregating human and wildlife territories are more real

and potent than a “barbed-wire fence” (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* 241). The respect for the space of non-human Other is so acute that Horen warns Nirmal: “The rule, Saar, is that when we go ashore, you can leave nothing of yourself behind...if you do, then harm will come to all of us” (264). While the Irrawaddy dolphins are “Bon Bibi’s messengers” (235) engaged in a symbiotic relationship with the fishermen, the tiger which is not to be named is a prototype of the devil, Dokkhin Rai, the antagonist. Thus if the trapped tiger is burned by frenzied villagers, the dolphin calf is killed by the coast guard’s boat, a symbol of the repressive state apparatus. From the villagers’ perspective the tiger has to be punished for violating the invisible territorial boundary (as also exemplified by the death of Kusum’s father in the island of Garjontola). Unlike the carnivore which is hailed for its aesthetic appeal, there are no steps taken to protect the endangered species of dolphins. However Piya does not distinguish between the two in terms of conservation. In the chapter, ‘Interrogation’ she points out to Kanai: “Once you decide we can kill off other species, it’ll be people next—exactly the kind of people you’re thinking of, people who are poor and unnoticed” (326). Here she alludes to the ecological belief that “Environment is not an ‘other’ to us but part of our being” (Buell, “The Place of Place” 55).

Like the sea in *Riders to the Sea* or Egdon Heath in *The Return of the Native*, Sundarbans is not a mere setting in the novel. Here water is an agent of change that shapes the geology and history of the island, dissolving and recreating man-made boundaries (Anand 36). Though Fokir, a remnant of the Morichjhapi massacre is victimised by the forest guards, he is empowered by the legacy of oral traditions and knowledge about the tide country. Piya and Kanai have to depend on him despite being equipped with GPS technology and monetary resources. Kanai’s limitation as a translator is also enunciated when he is initially unable to translate Fokir’s song. Water acts as a great leveller as neither Nirmal nor Kanai manages to lure the women of their dreams who prefer their rustic counterparts. While Nirmal is destroyed by Partition induced violence<sup>ii</sup>, Kanai’s upper class cocoon is shattered as he showers expletives at Fokir in Garjontola. By addressing Kanai as *tui* instead of *apni*, Fokir marks a significant rupture in the power equation between the rural and urban, privileged and underprivileged, induced by the hostile terrain of Sundarbans. Kanai’s momentary loss of sanity while hallucinating a tiger suggests the breakdown of all societal rules and class distinctions that the island of Garjontola refuses to abide by. It completes his transformation that was initiated by Nirmal’s diary. Madness, a popular trope in Partition Literature here becomes a product of fear and threat of violence that traps the *bhadrolok* instead of the *udhbastu* (refugee) or *bastuhara* (dispossessed).

The novel turns into a quest for self not only for Kanai but also for Piya. Despite her linguistic and cultural limitations, Piya is completely at ease with Fokir whose childhood memory too is centred on his mother. Like the animals, they are not imprisoned within linguistic totalities and hence can look beyond human existence (Huttenen 91). However Home has different connotations for each of them, embodying different aspects of their selves. Fokir who resembles a caged bird in the presence of an ambitious wife Moyna and is almost denied speech by the novelist, is an emancipated man in his boat. While Sundarbans remains the site of his cultural and ethnic roots, Piya’s notion of Home is more fluid like the migratory nature of the dolphins.

If state action obliterates Kusum, Fokir the other subaltern, is silenced by nature herself. The cyclone that reduces the tiger, the bird and the humans to the same level; also kills Fokir, the Local who sacrifices himself for Piya, the Global. The evanescent nature of the island is reiterated as Piya loses most of her research data and Nirmal’s diary is reclaimed by the river. However the latter’s impact as mediated through Kanai is obvious when Piya refuses to place the “burden of conservation on those who can least afford it” (424) and decides to engage with the fisherman for her idealistic project in the tide country—her new “home” (427). Kanai, on his part must rely on his memory as a secondary witness to write the testimony of the subalterns. The novel therefore places (rather problematically) the onus on the privileged to speak up for the marginalised.

*The Hungry Tide* serves as Ghosh's political mouthpiece, being published in the very year when the Bengal government evicted fishermen from the island of Jambudwip to start a tourism project. Recalling the Morichjhapi massacre, he writes: "It is scarcely conceivable that a government run by the same Left Front is now thinking of handing over a substantial part of the Sunderbans to an industrial house like the Sahara Parivar" ("A Crocodile"). The tragedy of Morichjhapi serves as a significant rupture in Indian immigration history, foregrounding the "narrative of infiltration" (Schendel 195) that was soon to be followed by the Assam movement in 1979. It anticipates the phase of denial when East Bengal refugees, particularly Muslims became "transnational migrants" being rejected by both India and Bangladesh as economic liabilities (Ramachandran 14). Thus be it the 1983 Nellie massacre or the Hindutva narrative of BJP, East Bengalis continue to be constructed as strangers<sup>iii</sup> as a result of the host nation's reduced sense of hospitality verging on hostility.

### Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup>The narrative of Bon Bibi serves as a counter to caste-based religious instructions and political hegemony that govern the main Indian land mass. Ghosh seems to question the very logic of Partition by showcasing the unique fusion of Hindu and Islamic traditions in the tidal country somewhat reminiscent of pre-Partition Sindh.

<sup>ii</sup>like Tridib in *The Shadow Lines*

<sup>iii</sup> See Priya Kumar's essay illustrating the differences between a stranger and an outsider.

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# Original Sin of *The God of Small Things*

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## Summary

In that enchanted jungle, a divorced, upper-class mother of two children made love with an untouchable *Paravan* transgressing the boundaries of morality and breaking the 'law' as to who should be loved, how and how much. This paper seeks to study Roy's *The God of Small Things* as a parable of the original sin depicted in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

*The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy brought India the first Booker Prize for any non-expatriate writer. It is endeared both by critics and lay readers positioning Roy as a literary genius, after which she sauntered into political activism. The novel has been analyzed from multiple dimensions highlighting feminism, Dalit aesthetics, non-sequential narratology, stylistics, neologism, postcolonialism, postmodernism, eco-criticism and so on. The novel also bears an imprint of the Original Sin which will be my contention here.

Tempted by the Devil, Eve tasted the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. Adam could not imagine a fate without his consort and partook of the fruit. Having acquired knowledge, they looked at themselves lustfully and became aware of their nakedness. Innocence deserted them. They committed the Original Sin and broke the commandment of God. They were banished from the heavenly abode and their progeny had to toil in the mortal world. Thus began death and suffering for humans. Milton's *Paradise Lost* deals primarily with this fable. This Judeo-Christian tale impacted immensely the western understanding of human life.

Even though the tale of sin and banishment appears as a tragic event, Milton's *magnum opus* withholds a simplistic reading. Milton's Satan is not only characterized with guile and viciousness but also with righteous rhetoric, leadership and an indefatigable zeal against God's monarchy. One echoes Satan's words when one says, "it's better to reign in hell than serve in heaven" (Milton 7) or "what if the field be lost, all is not lost" (Ibid 3). Isn't Satan the perennial Samson Agonistes, who risks his life to fight tyranny; the ambitious Icarus who ventured to fly to the sun; Dr. Faustus who trades his soul in exchange for power? Isn't Satan the alter ego of Milton himself who defended regicide and was instrumental, along with Cromwell, in the establishment of the only Republic of Britain? In his voluminous epic, God is an ambivalent character. According to Danielson, Milton's attempt to "justify the ways of God to men" (Milton 2) was characterized by both *chutzpah* and humility. The attempt thus presupposes our "ability to arrive at judgment concerning God's nature and character" with the awareness that God was "himself the Author and Judge of all things" (Danielson 115). Milton intended to balance the three fundamental propositions of Christianity:

1. God is all powerful (omnipotent).

2. God is wholly good.
3. There is evil in the world. (Ibid 113-115)

If two of the above three propositions are asserted, the third one is invalidated. For example, If God is omnipotent and wholly good, how could evil exist? In the context of *Paradise Lost*, one is haunted by similar questions. If God is omniscient, why didn't He prevent Satan's infiltration in his Garden? Why would God dislike Adam's partaking of the fruit of knowledge? Satan asks not an unreasonable question:

Knowledge forbidd'n?  
 Suspicious, reasonless. Why should thir Lord  
 Envy them that? Can it be sin to know,  
 Can it be death? And do they only stand  
 By Ignorance, is that thir happy state,  
 The proof of thir obedience and thir faith? (Milton 70)

According to John Carey, Milton hasn't projected Satan as pure evil or *infimum malum*. Therefore, Satan has been valorized as the true hero in *Paradise Lost* in eighteenth century France and England. Romantics like Coleridge, Blake, Byron and Shelly glorified Satan. Carey cogently attributes the reason of the controversy of between pro- and anti- Satanists to the text's ambivalence.

Milton's God falls short of being all merciful. Blake was credible in stating that Milton is "of the Devil's party without knowing it". The fall has been lauded as fortunate by many. Lovejoy explores the paradox of *the fortunate fall* and argues that God's grace could be invoked only by primal sin of Adam. The *Exultet* read on the Eve of Easter exclaims "O sin of Adam, truly necessary" and "We should be lost (*perdus*) if we had not been lost" (qtd. in Lovejoy 178). Empson believes that "Milton regularly presents a fall as due to an intellectually interesting temptation, such that a cool judge may feel actual doubt whether the fall was not the best thing to do in the circumstances" (36). Others, however, see a better future in Eden for human progeny. Lewalski argues that Adam and Eve gathered experience in Eden itself by their dialogues with angels. They also achieved prelapsarian physical union.

In the light of the above discussion, a reading of Roy's fiction will reveal a hitherto untrodden path. Velutha and Ammu appear like Adam and Eve who transgressed the 'love laws' equivalent to the commandment of God. Ramanathan sees Velutha as a Christ figure. Her thesis takes into account Velutha's profession as a carpenter and the heart-rending suffering he undergoes. The nascent child Estha has been compared to Judas for unknowingly nodding to accusations against Velutha. However, unlike Christ, Velutha is not a savior of the downtrodden. His death follows no resurrection. He is more like an Adam, innocent, susceptible to temptation and persecution at the hands of the Big Gods.

Like Milton's invocation, Roy's first chapter titled "Paradise Pickles and Preserves" summarizes the tale which began thousands of years ago.

They all broke the rules... They all tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much. The laws that make grandmothers grandmothers, uncles uncles, mothers mothers, cousins cousins, jam jam, and jelly jelly... it could be argued that it actually began thousands of years ago... it really began in the days when the Love Laws were made. (Roy 31-33)

The novel depicts a binary of godhead; the Big God and the Small God. The Big God “howled like a hot wind, and demanded obeisance. Then Small God (cozy and contained, private and limited) came away cauterized, laughing numbly at his own temerity” (Roy 10). Velutha has been termed as the God of loss, the god of small things, equivalent to Adam, the earthly image of God.

The love between Ammu, a divorced mother and Velutha, a *Paravan* Christian broke the ‘love laws’ that were created ‘thousands of years ago’. One might find the reference to the genesis because these laws made grandmothers grandmothers, uncles uncles and jelly jelly. The laws not only regulate the world but have also created it. Laws are therefore the pseudonym of God.

In *Paradise Lost*, Satan tempts Eve in a dream. Perturbed by the dream, Eve relates the obscure details to Adam. In the titular chapter titled “The God of Small Things”, Ammu too dreams of making love with a one-armed man. She wakes up and realizes that the one-armed man was none other than Velutha. As a parallel to Eve’s narcissism beholding her own image in the water, Ammu too looks at her naked self in the bathroom mirror. “Hooded in her own hair, Ammu leaned against herself in the bathroom mirror and tried to weep” (Roy 224).

Both Eve and Ammu were frightened and bewitched by their dreams. After waking up, Ammu shrugs off her twins and reclaimed her body. “It was hers”, the narrator exclaims (Roy, 222). Harish finds it to be an obvious “feminist proclamation the narrator” (49). While Ammu is undoubtedly a victim of patriarchy, this scene is far from these concerns. Why would a mother of two children assert her feminism by disengaging herself from the filial affection of her seven year olds? The reclamation of her body can be a symbol of her arousal of sexual desires after the erotic dream she had. It was her movement from innocence to experience.

The final chapter is the re-creation of original sin committed in the Paradise. Like Eve, Ammu is alone and vulnerable to the guiles of Satan. She listens to her transistor.

A lonely, lambent woman looking out at her embittered aunt’s ornamental garden, listening to a tangerine. To a voice from far away. Wafting through the night. Sailing over lakes and rivers. Over dense heads of trees. Past the yellow church. Past the school. Bumping up the dirt road. Up the steps of the verandah. To her. (Roy 331)

Ammu, is approached by a voice from far away. The movement of the voice resembles the serpentine trail. The voice sang as if borrowing Satan’s rhetoric.

There’s no time to lose I heard her say  
 Cash your dreams before they slip away  
 Dying all the time  
 Lose your dreams and you  
 Will lose your mind. (Ibid 331-332)

These lines cast a spell on Ammu who rushes to the river bank. “She moved quickly through the darkness, like an insect following a chemical trail” (Ibid 332) as if following the infernal serpent.

When Ammu reached the river bank, Velutha was in his elements, swimming in the river. He was wearing only a loin cloth from which water dripped. He came ashore almost naked like Adam. While Ammu had already made up her mind and therefore tasted the fruit, Velutha had still time. He saw Ammu. “Despite his fear his body was prepared to take the bait” (Ibid 334). He was aware that he could lose everything, yet was defiant and ventured like Adam did: “if Death Consort with thee, Death is to mee as Life” (Milton 175). The narrator says, “Had he known that he was about to enter a

tunnel whose only egress was his own annihilation, would he have turned away? Perhaps. Perhaps not Who can tell? (Roy 333)”

Ammu felt only those parts of her body where he touched her. The rest was smoke. It strikes a parallel with the description of angelic love by Raphael in *Paradise Lost*. But unlike Adam and Eve, Ammu and Velutha are not repentant. They knew it was the only thing they could ask of each other. The parting word of Ammu is *Naale* (tomorrow). But soon the message went to the Big Gods.

Velutha was caught by the Police and charged falsely with abduction of the children. He succumbed to the torture perpetrated by the Big Gods. Ammu was ostracized. She committed suicide in a hotel room. As the biblical couple became mortal by their sin, Ammu and Velutha succumbed to mortality.

Ammu’s love for Velutha flouts the ‘love laws’ in a variety of ways. Being a woman, even though divorced, she is not allowed coitus. The narrator contrasts her libido with that of Chacko who could get a tacit assent from his mother for satisfying his “man’s needs”. Secondly, she is a mother. But most importantly, she chose a *Paravan* to make love to. Even though “on paper”, Velutha is casteless for being Christian, in practice caste regulates the converted Christian community in Kerela, God’s own country. The Ipes take pride in their genealogy from Brahmin ancestors. Untouchable Christians like Velutha are assigned a Pariah Church and a Pariah Father. Satan tempts Eve by stating that eating the apple will make her equal to gods. The Ipes could never condone Ammu’s choice of a *Paraiyah* as her paramour. It could equate an untouchable Christian with the touchables. It was unthinkable. The matter was suppressed and the transgressors punished.

The sin committed by Adam and Eve had its repercussion on their progeny. The sin by Ammu made her children suffer. Estha did not join college and started doing menial jobs at his biological father’s house. He thus earned his living by the sweat of his brows as Adam’s progeny were compelled to. Rahel’s life was in shambles. As a punishment in her school, She was made to look up the word depravity in Oxford Dictionary which read the “innate corruption of human nature due to ‘original sin; both the elect and the non-elect come into the world in a state of total d. and alienation from God, and can of themselves do nothing but sin” (Roy 16). When the twins meet, they realize that their happiness lies only in themselves. Before leaving the twins, Ammu had extracted a promise from them that they would always love each other. The Siamese twins nodded without knowing the difference between each and other. When Estha eventually puts his arms around Rahel, the insinuation of a biological relationship ensues. Is it incest? Is it a union they fell into owing to their failures in separated lives? Or did they too violate the ‘love laws’ and thus committed another original sin?

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# Understanding Dalit Politics and Aesthetics Through a non-Dalit Paradigm: A Reading of Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things* and Ulhannan Thoppil's *God's Own Unotouchables*

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## Abstract

Underpinning the aesthetics and politics of Dalit literature the essay offers a critical analyses of two novels namely, *God of Small Things* and *God's Own Untouchable's* by non-Dalit writers. The intention is to see how these texts have come a long way in the history of representation of Dalits by non-Dalits from objects of pity and sympathy to politically conscious subjects. Unlike their predecessors such as Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand, Bonomli Goswami, S K Pillai, and others, both Arundhati Roy and Ulhannan Thoppil have represented the Dalit subject as dynamic personality fighting the system of caste not through a narrative of pain but through a narrative of rebellion.

Speaking on the aesthetics of Dalit literature Sharan Kumar Limbale in *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature* (2010) points out three major features of Dalit literature, “first, the artist’s social commitment; second the life-affirming values present in the artistic creation; and third, the ability to raise the reader’s consciousness of fundamental values like equality, freedom, justice and fraternity.” (Limbale 2010: 120). Limbale’s theoretical and literary underpinnings for Dalit literature are incumbent upon social and political paradigms. He powerfully theorizes principles that should govern Dalit literature evoking revolutionary principles in order to blatantly fight the structures of caste and fashioning an empowered Dalit subject-hood thereby interlinking literature with politics. D R Nagaraj<sup>1</sup> has offered another perspective per to this politics of rage by speaking of aesthetic autonomy which is essentially absent in Limbale’s framework. The detached authorial position seeped into the narratives of cultural myths, history, and folklore attains a revitalizing force for Dalit consciousness which Nagaraj opines opposing the narrative of apparent political and social revolt..

Another feature that concerns the contours of Dalit literature is the ethics of representation, in other words, who can represent the life of a Dalit, the atrocities of caste system upholding its’ recurrent political streak. This is where the realms of theory and lived experience coincide. Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai’s responses in *The Cracked Mirror* (2012) generate a series of ideas, which reflects upon the ethicality of the representation of Dalits. For Guru a “lived experience” of being a Dalit is a prerequisite condition to express a life lived in oppression and constant challenge. But Sarukkai’s departure from Guru’s point is to be understood in terms of ownership/authorship divide. He puts light on the fact that in terms of experience “there are many elements of that experience that the owner is not really an owner of. We own our experience only in a particular meaning of that

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<sup>1</sup> On Nagaraj’s idea of Dalit politics and Aesthetics see *Flaming Feet and Other Essays*.

term and we may have control over only some elements of that experience.”<sup>2</sup> (Sarukkai 2012: 39). The oppressor-oppressed linkage involves an oppressor and he/she being instrumental in creating an oppressing life, for the oppressed partakes of the ownership in this grid as the one who is being oppressed has no control over the conditions that are being generated to oppress him. In Dalit literature when we look at the works of non-Dalit writers and their representation of Dalits, an ethical balance needs to be assumed in order to partake of an authorial domain where lived experience has a major stake.

In the following section a study of two novels by non-Dalit writers has been undertaken. Both these novels sharply critique the caste system. It is my contention to assess at the same time the radical potentiality as well as limitation of the discourse that these two texts generate. Both Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) and Ulahannan Thoppil's *God's Own Untouchables* (2012) have central to them the theme of caste and its manifestation in the Indian society. This essay intends to see how these novels are involved in a historical revisionism where narratives of the subaltern voices are mediated and the entrenched caste system is critiqued.

Roy's deep and rich narrative has central to its focus the untouchable protagonist Velutha whose “scandalous” affair with the upper caste Ammu clearly subverts the social construct of caste based laws. To offer a revisionist view of history, the narrative through the focal view point of Estha and Rahel, Ammu's monozygotic twins, runs back and forth in time when the two of them after returning to Ayemenem after 20 years attempt to recapitulate and put in place the misplaced pieces of the historical puzzle of their life, of Ammu's, and of Velutha's. The epigraph to the novel, “Never again will a single story be told as though it's the only one”, implies a diversity of many narratives that history has produced. Roy's narrative incessantly breaks the historical appropriation of the low caste by the high caste.

Velutha's grandfather, Kelan, was among a number of Parvanas, Pelayas, and Pulaya who converted to Christianity to escape the oppressed life of an untouchable which “... didn't take them long to realize that they had jumped from the frying pan into the fire.” (Roy 2002: 74). Being a Pulaya before converting to Christianity actually made them Christians Pulayas after the conversion which did not make them touchable rather made their life more miserable by depriving them of Government benefits because Christianity apparently made them casteless and thus entitled to no caste benefits. If Vellya Paapen, Velutha's father, represents an “Old World Paravan” (Roy 2002: 76) whose gratitude towards the upper caste almost verges on being subservient to them then Velutha clearly debunks such a role playing which is reflective in his inadvertent demeanor and is as much a concern for his father because, “It was not *what* he said, but the *way* he said it. Not *what* he did, but the *way* he did it.” (Roy 2002: 76). His phenomenal chemistry with Ammu, Rahel and, Estha brings vibrancy to his character as not just someone who is assertive and imbues a sense dignified presence but at the same time is capable of reciprocating emotions of love. He exhibits the small tales of history against the big ones. Velutha as an alternative world order and story teller to Ammu, Estha, and Rahel provides them with care as Rahel remarks that his taking care was not to decimate it with adult carelessness but like a dream to let life be and travel with it.

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<sup>2</sup> This shall be understood in conjunction with the concept of humiliation. In Dalit Literature the experience of humiliation by a Dalit subject is crucial as such an experience transforms the oppressed agent into a rebel fighting the tyrannical forces. It therefore becomes vital that the representation of Dalits by non-Dalit writers demonstrate the conceptual understanding of certain kinds of experience to pose threat against an oppressive system or ideology.



Roy's representation of the untouchable Velutha is not just limited with his effervescent presence but his association with the Naxalite movement seems to be making a case of political radicalism as well. But this political radicalism which stops short of making him an active member does not possess the agency to match his uninhibited personality. Roy's novel adopting an anti-communist stance seems to be clear enough which caricatures its leaders while exposing the core of communism which is not insular to casteist ideology because "... communism crept into Kerala insidiously. As a reformist movement that never questioned the traditional values of a caste-ridden, extremely traditional community" (Roy 2002: 66). K.N.M Nair and Namboodripad's are criticized for their patriarchal and feudalistic ideologies even after being key leaders of the party.

Roy also exposes the pollution/purity dichotomy malevolently endorsed by the high caste as evident in Baby Kochamma's reaction to Vellya Pappen's revelation of the "illicit" relationship that has happened between Ammu and Velutha. She contemptuously remarks for Ammu, "*How could she stand the smell? Haven't you noticed? They have a particular smell, these Paravans.*" (Roy 2002: 257). She epitomizes the cruel deep-seated aversion towards the low caste characters. Her misrepresentation of facts regarding Ammu and Velutha's relationship leads to brutal assassination of Velutha. As opposed to this Ammu is enamored of how Velutha had changed so much whose body has become contoured and hard. Brinda Bose in her essay, "In Death and in Desire", remarks that Ammu not just sees the potential of Velutha's red politics through his body but also through his mind as well. Approving of his Left leanings Ammu hoped that "it had been him that had raised his flag and knotted arm in anger. She had hoped that under his careful cloak of cheerfulness, he housed a living, breathing anger against the smug, ordered world that she so raged against." (Roy 2002: 175-6). According to Bose then it is not just bodily gratification that Ammu seeks of Velutha "but she seeks also to touch the Untouchable." (Bose 2007: 125). Bose sees the play of erotic desire between them as a moment of no momentary aberration in History rather they become "the sources of alternative revolutions." (Bose 2007: 126).

Although the same erotically and politically defiant body of Velutha's faces the mutilation at the hands of upper caste, Roy towards the end of the novel seems to be diverting to the utmost broken taboo of touch and un-touch with all its radical potentialities as, "Then carpenter's hands lifted her hips and an untouchable tongue touched the innermost part of her." (Roy 2002: 337). What least they could do was to stick to small things; for their love held no future. The promise to meet tomorrow may or may not be fulfilled but we already know Velutha would never have "fathered future generations" or "died of natural causes" (Roy 2002: 339) as his individual fate seem to have already been sealed before he could outlive others.

The second novel that this essay intends to discuss is Ullahann Thoppil's *God's Own Untouchables*. The crux of Thoppil's narrative is a re-visioning into the nature of history which becomes a central theme in his politics of caste. The novel also criticizes the institute of religion, the so called markers of caste identity such as color of the skin, the Christian missionary movement, and the issue of reservation. Thoppil also bring out the idea of humiliation which according to him is necessary to define a Dalit consciousness not in terms of underestimating one's potential but using the shame as a catalyst to sustain the anger and rebel against the caste system. At the same time he also shows the internal dissent among the low caste as well which clearly hinders with their solidarity and also exposes the fragmentariness of a modern Dalit identity that looks for benefits through reservation even if that means turning a back to your own roots and values.

As the novel opens we are told of Priest Reverend Aaron Pathrose Micha's appointment as the Archdiocese of God's Own Country. As he confronts the journalist who are eager to interview, the author clearly condemns the way society sees the progress of a Dalit in terms of an extraordinary

event while disregarding the fact of the struggles been undertaken to achieve it. One of the interviewers wants, “to cook up an exotic story that Pulaya Priest was appointed the Archbishop of God’s Own Country” (Thoppil 2012: 3). The phrase “Pulaya Priest” is in itself an anomaly which shows how the caste-less religious institutions such as Christianity have been inverted in the Indian society which has created caste hierarchies there as well. But Aaron Micah who is “Never ashamed of his past...admitted his parents lived untouchables, converted neo Christians but he was born a Christian.” (Thoppil 2012: 3).

Further highlighting the genealogy of the missionary movement in India Aaron Micah states how it never pricked the Christian conscious the visual of heartless atrocities being done towards the untouchables until the missionary movement started. It did not affect the high caste whose material interests remain unaffected which meant full exploitation of the untouchables, extracting every labor from their body and depriving them of even the basic human needs. The exposure of such hypocrisy becomes a stark reality where a change of religion does not guarantee a life which is not exploited through all pervading caste structures where one’s caste follows him/her wherever he/she goes.

To strengthen the theme of Dalit consciousness Thoppil’s narrative seeks to delve deeper into the pages of history to understand the variegated nature of the experience of an untouchable which is not just mired into the brutal structures of caste oppression but also seeks to try, apprehend, acknowledge, and inspire from the seeds of rebel that are as relevant to dig as other forms of experiences. For Aaron Micah it is his encounter with Sister Thomasina after which events take an interesting turn and he is shown a part of his historical lineage in a new light. Her confession to him a few days before her death sheds light on the life of Aaron Micha’s father, Pathrose Micah. She confesses to him about her unrequited love for a man about whom she still thinks and wishes to meet and who turns out to be no one else but Aaron Micah’s father, Pathrose Micah himself. The next chapter details the fortunes of Pathrose Micah who was an army man and served in the World War two. The constant reference to his dark skin is an ironic underpinning of the ludicrous notion of relating the color of a person which signifies his/her low caste origins. For Pathrose Micah whose life in the army has taught him “great lessons of human dignity” and that “the army is a powerful social leveler.” (Thoppil 2012: 23), is a man of assertive nature. He understands the reality of his existence as belonging to the low caste but does not seem to accept its logic. After spending a night at Thomakutty’s place, Thomakutty’s father, Thomman Master, finds in Pathrose Micah a suitable match for his grand-daughter Mariaachi (who later becomes sister Thomasina). However Thomakutty’s disinclination for this match is because of his reservation against Pathrose Micah’s roots who he suspects to be of an untouchable caste. Pathrose Micah’s rationale behind not believing in the caste system as because he is a Christian like Thomakutty is discredited by the latter who says, “You may believe anything you like but the truth is that in this country everyone has a caste, whether one likes it or not...” (Thoppil 2012: 32). Eventually not just Thomakutty but other members of the Christian community after knowing the fact that Pathrose indeed belongs to an untouchable caste opposes Mariaachi’s betrothal to him. Pathrose leaves the place after arranging his marriage with a shopkeeper’s daughter Kaali who also belongs to an untouchable caste. This whole episode serves to augment the critique of how caste has seeped itself into other religions as well which disregards a person’s merit or worth.

The narrative goes back to Aaron Micha who is visiting his hometown, Kerala, after seven years to meet his father Pathrose Micah but gets perplexed after not finding his father at his home. The hypocrisy of the Church is also evident in the behavior of the Vicar who is also not insular to caste based discrimination and snubs Aaron Micah by not even offering him a stay at his home.

Aaron Micha, after spending the night on the pavement outside his father's house, next morning when he wakes up, everyone from the colony seems to be surprised after seeing a Bishop amidst them.

After Pathrose Micah's return, he and his son along with other members of the neighborhood sit together and endeavor to dig into the history of their ancestors. This act of consciously invoking one's past especially by the Dalits is an important imperative in defining a Dalit sensibility, consciousness, subjectivity, and belongingness which is also a basis for the paradigm of their radical progressivism. We saw in Roy's novel how the heterogeneity of alternative history shapes the narrative which seeks to present those unsung events, disparaged by the casteist framework of history, exuberantly disrupting the flow of Big things by Velutha, the God of Small things. Thoppil also seems to be undertaking the same task of historical revisionism while adopting a different narrative structure altogether.

Aaron Micah's encounter with the history takes him to the times of his great-grand mother, Poomachee, and grandfather, Meenan. Thoppil vividly describes the minimal existence of the untouchables in those times when the rules of caste were stringently followed. Facing deprivation from all sides the untouchables were not even let to have proper funeral ceremonies. Poomachee's death gives no other option to Meenan but to dump her carcass into the river which resulted in a traumatizing experience for him and his community.

Apart from the many atrocities that the untouchables had to bear during those times I want to specifically point out a revealing fact which comes out of this process of historical revisionism and affects the consciousness of Aaron Micah. It is the story of his grandfather Meena's biological mother Neeli Manka. She represents the spirit of rebelliousness which is indicative of the fact that a historical revisionism not only exposes the cruelty of the caste hierarchy but also how in every narrative there is a story of rebel, of courage, and of making an attempt to tear down the structures of caste that sustain it. Neeli Manka's story of courage is not without her share of oppression as a little girl. Her attempt to overcome grief and hunger and to be concerned about her mother's dying condition makes her bear the wrath of an upper caste Hindu. After suffering from hunger she decides to steal away the rice balls being kept in a temple's courtyard by the priest for the crow's to peck upon it in order to assuage the spirit of dead ancestors. For Neeli who considers herself as black as crow thinks that she could partake of the crow's share for herself and for her mother. But being caught by the priest she gets thrashed badly. Her failure to gather any food results in her mother's death and this impacts her psyche severely. Later on her simmering anger and humiliation takes on a radical bent as she gets associated with a group of radical rebels called Pulapedies "to avenge the atrocities committed by the powerful against the oppressed castes." (Thoppil 2012: 127). She becomes a rage in her community and looked up as a powerful symbol of freedom from the oppressions of the upper caste. Even after knowing this fact that Meenan was Neeli's son whose father's identity was not known "Msgr. Aaron Micah never felt ashamed when he discovered his grandfather was a bastard or his great grandmother was a woman with an uncomplimentary past." (Thoppil 2012: 125).

## **Conclusion**

This is how Thoppil's attempt in developing a revisionary historical meta-narrative is important for the project of conscious raising that fruitfully connects one with his/her past. Both Roy and Thoppil as non-Dalit writers seek to invest historically, psychologically, and radically with the lived experience of a Dalit existence. Being ethically minded they have brought out in their own ways about the nature of radical individualism, dealing upfront with the issue of caste and critiquing religious and

political realm which in the modern times have also perpetuated the subtle workings of it. The representation of the Dalits in these novels is clearly not overpowered by the emotions of pity and sympathy but it also stands true that as texts of social critique of caste they at one level fail to provide viable revolutionary or radical intermediations that could structurally annihilate the caste. But this failure should not dispense with the fact that they bring new insight in to the nature of Dalit aesthetics and politics and work towards sensitizing the readership towards the atrocities that this system has generated and therefore must be shunned vehemently.

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# Lucid Life, Slippery Truths: Theme of Otherness in its Different Facets in Australian Author David Malouf's Novel, *The Great World*

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## Abstract

The present paper deals with the anxiety within is reflected in the out-world otherness of the two main characters in David Malouf's *The Great World*: the paper shows how, apart from mere 'class-difference', the two contrasting individuals constitute a type which in his later novels can be seen as a trope to explore a plural existence, a different Australia that does not simply and exclusively belong to either the white or the black.

But only in blown music from the town's  
Quaint horologe could time intrude... you'd say  
Clocks had been bolted out, the flux of years  
Defied...

("Nuremburg", Kenneth Slessor)

The land of Australia is full of unexplored and as a result wrongly speculated places and spaces creating a room for newer elucidations. Australia is rich with its several myths and stories of antiquity that reappears in Malouf's fiction in several guises making the narrative open for further interpretations. From the backyard Mediterranean garden as mentioned in his 12, *Edmondstone Street* to the self of the individual meeting macrocosm, David Malouf's fictions give a picture of a spatial travel twisting the straight and by extension, dominant chronological specificity. Through the use of myth, mythical allusions, anecdotes, names of classical antiquity, his long fictions progress creating a balanced dance of the logical and the so called irrational forces often represented by the two contrasting individuals as in Dante and Johnno, in the novel named after the latter, or Vic and Digger in *The Great World* or Jim and Ashley in *Fly Away Peter*. A self-destabilizing anxiety within is reflected in the out-world otherness of the two main characters: apart from mere 'class-difference', the two contrasting individuals constitute a type which in his later novels can be seen as a trope to explore a plural existence, a different Australia that does not simply and exclusively belong to either the white or the black: it is not only a 'reverse assimilationism' but furthers with greater reality that transubstantiate a newer continuation. The two individuals apparently in binary oppositions, in actuality come into view through an interchange of persona, with a confusing liminality of the Apollonian and the Dionysian<sup>1</sup>, therefore problematizing the process of compartmentalizing. This paper would focus on the strange trajectory of the human experience in Malouf's novel, examining, if

all these could create an alter-narrative or discourse concerning anti-colonial aspects along with the subjective view of the author both in the personal and exposed paraphernalia of the Australian existence that wades through a turbulent external world.

In the *Book of Lies*, Aleister Crowley talks of the condition or the state of being in doubt. The discussion centers on doubt expressing that it should be applied to everywhere, in a more paradoxical manner even to itself: to question. The ontological questions remained in Malouf's novels. His novel, *The Great World* explores an Australia that is beyond the reach of the regulatory forces of the colonizers. Furthermore, these novels put up an image of the country that emerges with all individuality against the macro affairs of the without.

*The Great World*, as a war-epic, spans over the lion's share of a century, from WWI to the stock market crash of 1988. Like its precursor, *Harland's Half Acre*, this novel also involves the degradation and dehumanization endured by prisoners in the Southeast Asia during WWII. The two characters, namely, Vic and Digger, despite being poles apart, share an undeniable intimacy by virtue of their fact of incarceration. Beneath larger perspective of the Great Depression and the Holocaust, the post-war mining and property boom, these two micro-lives portray more entropic dimensions of human existence. Two contrasting individuals, the unambitious loaner, Digger and the boastful entrepreneur Vic come into contact in course of the narrative. The initial juxtaposition was forming a gradual spectrum establishing a subtle psychological relationship with the Australian land that was becoming broader, reshaping their lives.

The sign of questioning with its curb leaves a surreptitious movement under the surface of the con successful Vic with his son Greg being busy with liberal sloganeering. The clandestine connection between the micro and macro reveals itself in several meticulously worked out details leaving a space, latent, almost invisible for the unheard, but alive. The superficial clichés of national character involves the myth of "digger", as Australian soldiers were commonly nicknamed during WWI. The encyclopedic memory of Digger is redressed, imbued and pitted against the reality in the trenches, suffering the 'visibility', lying bare, gang chained. His stoic silence armed with a conspicuous, seemingly self-annihilating indifference is contrasted with the very much "living" Vic. A curious archetype of the Australian male, the nomenclature goes beyond its conventional existence of "a bushman" or the "the gold-digging" associated with Eureka Stockade. The legendary quasi-physical qualities of a 'digger' are reinforced making the account different as, to quote Serle, "it remains for the historian to explain, reinterpret and popularize the crucial role of the digger...place it in truer perspective for the next generation" (Serle 158). The remarkable accounts by Malouf towards the end of 12, *Edmondstone Street* leave a clue to this evolving Self, living beyond the topographical identity down the years. Malouf, in this book describes the metamorphosis of a child from the world of imaginary to the realm of the symbolic involving the socio-cultural scenario. This includes several myths of the land that ascertain a close relationship with the indigenous culture. In all the three novels this idea is incorporated in different ways.

David Horton's *Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia* contains an article on Aboriginal mythology according to which the mythic map of Australia would show thousands of characters; they are diverse in their significance but they all in some intriguing way are connected to the land. Some emerged at their specific sites and stayed spiritually in that purlieu. Among these mythical figures many were shape changing, transformed from or into human beings or natural species, or into natural features such as rocks but all left something of their spiritual essence at the places noted in their stories. They have a very subtle metaphysical presence in Malouf's fictions.

In *The Great World*, which also talks of the Great War, an out-of-clutch existence reappears in another dimension. This time, it is the character of "Digger", a man with phenomenal memory, who

confronts with the past in a similarly cryptic way while reading Tolstoy's masterpiece. Asish Nandy, in his *The Intimate Enemy*, talks about the psychological relations as well as reactions to colonialism. Nandy's notion of 'player' is intriguingly curious to note in this context. The player accepts the machinations of an alien colonial power and accommodates the colonial regime's prescriptions for selective memory. The 'counterplayer' denotes rebellion in direct acts, in reality, in a much concretized form.

During the years of transportation from 1790 to 1850 and in the 20th century, a Puritan code of denial grasped the convict heritage in Australia, one-third of which was Irish. Australian historian Robert Hughes termed it as the 'conspiracy of silence'. This conspiracy of silence goes beyond the penal statement or mere collective amnesia regarding a tortured past. The involvement of the Australian transported people in the Great War was immense. The masculine and therefore useful 'Diggers' who have gone to oblivion served the purpose of the most memorable GREAT CAUSE!

Digger's huge memory here plays the role of neither a 'player' nor a 'counterplayer' but the passive 'super player' as one could see Malouf giving the curious picture of Digger reading *War and Peace*. The Aftermath, for Digger was spending nights at Bondi Junction, in the library of Mac, their prisoner-friend, killed by the Japanese. The long list of birds listed by Mac, found inside the pages of the book interrupted *War and Peace*, transporting Digger into a different time; and through this time-travel offering an alternative space. With the turning of the page Digger's reading is interrupted. The long list of the birds- the white-throated honey eater, a flock of fire-tails, a Regent bower bird among others -by Mac intrudes into the scene of 'War' as well as 'Peace'. So for ever after, recalling it, Digger would recall the micro stories of an 'unimportant' individual Mac. The montage of memory is very subtly established through a small, almost negligible incident. The lacuna remains beneath the metanarrative of great protagonists and their greater deeds.

The avian existence passed into obscurity down the years. Digger returned safeguarding the letters of Mac, delivering them to their writer, Iris, Mac's sister-in-law. Here, again the significant presence of a woman is notable, with a subtle nomenclature. In Greek mythology, Iris is the deity who unites gods with humanity: her role is that of the connector. Later they became lovers, and continued their life together. This sudden introspection opened up the door to passing moments very subtly "digging out" that missing-link still existing within Digger.

His inner universe, reshuffled, with a slip of paper written, five, ten, or fifteen years before remains as a ploy. The cumulative gap, the silenced lacuna comes alive with a simple bookmark; thus themes integrate for the cause of 'resistance' involving the emergent New Literatures. According to Nandy the creativity of the indigenous "non-players", who, in Michel Pecheux's terminology 'disidentify' with the colonizer, contributes to cultural responses. Apart from its political significance, a deeper ongoing is visible which overtly levels the two old geezer fishing together in an outer physical space. The closing chapters returning to Vic's childhood place the stupendous memory game floating. The physical territory of the prospective wheeler-dealer in the Sydney money market, the gradual mechanized soulless money-making is subdued in the metaphysical space, living within Digger. The wild and natural Australia, losing its beauty and more precisely strength, with gradual urbanization, is recollected in the tranquil backwater.

From Durer's imagined art world, as presented in Slessor's poem, to the present age, a squared existence has sprung up. In the pluralistic socio-cultural scenario of 21st century, literature in any form comes endowed with a plethora of implications. The concept of 'Dreamtime' which we have mentioned in the beginning of the discussion, provides in this present day with a sense of a lack of closure in the narrative. It is Virgiliawhose name itself gives the sense of mythical imagination,

therefore a left out notion of novel formations, beside the polyphonic space of the two confronting individual juxtaposing in a single and singular plane, namely Australia. It is Virgilia and Iris who remain as a constant connectors. Diggers could slip away, but Virgilians stay carrying the future, and in the very core having a woman who would everlastingly rock back and forth tracing and digging the way to haven and heaven.

The content of the opening pages featuring a broken down country store in *The Great World* with a naïve woman watching two people fishing, re-affirms in the end, goes on completing the circle, telling us of–

all those unique and repeatable events, the little sacraments of daily existence, movement of the heart and intimations of the close but inexpressible grandeur and terror of things, that is other history, the one that goes on, in a quiet way, under the noise and chatter of events and is the major part of what happens each day in the life of the planet. (Malouf283-4)

### Notes

1. Nietzsche, in his famous, *The Birth of Tragedy* refers to the concept of the Apollonian and the Dionysiac. In Greek Mythology, Apollo is the sun-god who denotes reason whereas Dionysus stands for irrationality. In the present paper we are trying to see the concept of the Apollonian as essentially an Eurocentric one while the Dionysiac Represents the indigenous spirit.

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# “They understand ecology and the environment in a way we cannot yet imagine”: A Reading of Mahasweta Devi’s “Madhu: A Fairy Tale”

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## Abstract:

The process and forces of reckless development in recent times have promoted a thoughtless and indiscriminate destruction of the greens resulting in an environmental apocalypse. Although many climatic disasters including the very recent catastrophic earthquake in Nepal and India have threatened human civilization about its survival on earth, the unrestrained capitalist and nationalist forces have been plundering nature exclusively to their personal interest. This paper attempts an ecocritical reading of Mahasweta Devi’s short ecotopian narrative “Madhu: A Fairy Tale” and endeavours to bring to the fore the grim effects of development-sponsored environmental collapse on a forest-based community of people and their silent protestation against such exploitative ‘developmentalism’.

**Keywords:** Ecocriticism, Developmentalism, Anthropocentrism, Deforestation, Tribals, Eco-dystopia, Catastrophe.

“The forests and their self-sustaining economy signify the tribal life and its cultural continuity. The misguided notion of national “development” ravages the pristine land, robs it of all its beauty, thus endangering the ecological balance of the region and depriving the local inhabitants of their means of livelihood.” (Gupta 33)

The cultural history of the ‘dalitized’ tribals in India speaks volume of their holistic perception of life, their veneration for nature and their life-long struggle to protect the virginity of forests from the avarice of the mainstream capitalist and nationalist masters. From time immemorial, the tribal peoples, the indigenous inhabitants of India, have been dwelling in the forestlands in an indissoluble harmony with nature getting their sustenance from forest resources and preserving the immaculacy of the forest. For honest earning of their livelihood, these geo-centric groups of people have traditionally been dependent on forest-produce. The tribal history and cultural texts powerfully promulgate their whole-hearted endeavours to stand against the ominous despoliation of nature by the harbingers of ‘developmentalism’ to safeguard their environment and protect their home-nurturer, the forests. It is really important to note that much before the present climate of environmental crisis and the urgency of environmental preservation they used to carry a unique environmental consciousness, something that the civilized human society lacked.

The process and forces of reckless ‘development’ in recent times have promoted a thoughtless spoliation of natural resources and an indiscriminate destruction of the greens resulting in an environmental apocalypse. Although many climatic disasters in recent years including the very recent catastrophic earthquakes in Nepal and India have threatened human civilization about its survival on earth, humanity is not at all interested in putting an end to their irresponsible treatment

of nature as a commodity. Without the least consideration for the present climate of crisis and nature's inability to endure the relentless technological onslaught the unrestrained capitalist moneymakers have been disrupting the rich bio-diversity resulting in the total annihilation of environmental equipoise. The modern human society's anthropocentric perception of life has transformed our mother earth into so inhospitable and 'alien' a place to life of any kind that the human society is moved to rethink the interrelations of man and nature. And herein lies the reason behind the emergence of the relatively new theoretical concept of ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is a postcolonial postmodern environmental theoretical concept whose prime objective is the conservation of ecosystem with all its diversity. It has evolved out of the urgent and pressing need to heighten man's awareness to stop the continuous despoliation of ecological sanctity and sustainability to keep our planet a livable one. It is the human world's commercialized treatment of nature and its exploitation to the point of global environmental crisis that ecocriticism aims to review through the study of literary and cultural texts. To quote Cheryll Glotfelty:

“Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment... ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies” (Glotfelty xix)

In India the mass felling of trees largely began during the British colonial regime when the British imperial masters annihilated native ecology by their ruthless plundering of natural resources resulting in the disadvantage of the forest-dependent indigenous peoples. The Imperial excursions and colonial exploitation of natural resources damaged the traditionally sacred interrelations of indigenous communities and their physical environs. And this exploitation of Indian environment perhaps reached its climax with the 'awesome' and 'dreadful' entry of railways the rapid expansion of which led to a catastrophic contamination of ecological balance in India. Great chunks of forests were chopped down to meet the demand for timbers to make railway sleepers and to use them as fuel for locomotives. The immediate victims of this miraculous invention were the forest-dwellers whose existence was largely dependent upon the forest resources. The wide-scale deforestation hastened by an unabated expansion of railways endangered the local flora and fauna which ultimately resulted in the dispossession of indigenous peoples.

A social activist-journalist-magazine editor-creative writer Mahasweta Devi has certainly attained the status of a living legend through her seemingly distinct but actually interrelated forms of activities. It is an irrefutable truth that Mahasweta Devi's reality-rooted fictional enterprise is exceptionally designed to bring to the fore the discourses that always victimize the helpless and powerless 'other', the 'dalitized' have-nots belonging to the periphery.

“If one were to sum up in a word the recurring of Mahasweta Devi's works and the motive force of her life, it invariably would be: FIGHT AGAINST EXPLOITATION.” (Arya 80)

In her writings, Devi blatantly expresses her serious anxiety for environmental degradation in adivasi areas thoughtlessly done to promote the 'development' of the 'nation'. With her pen, dipped deep in concern for the ecological collapse, she has powerfully raised her voice against the process of modern technology-oriented 'development' that negatively affects the natural world. The experience of her social activism has made her realize the very fact that although the forest-dwellers have usually been condemned for being indulged in illicit deforestation, in reality they have never been involved in large-scale destruction of the forests. In one conversation Mahasweta Devi had with Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak, she asserted:

“... the hands that fell the tree are not the hands responsible for the deforestation all over India. Big money is involved in the furniture that you see in Delhi, or Hyderabad, or Calcutta.

The local political worthies, local police, and local administration are bribed...All over the world Governments protecting the environment is nonsense.” (Devi xii)

Mahasweta Devi’s short ecotopian narrative “Madhu: A Fairy Tale”, translated by Devi herself, was first published in the book *The Politics of Literary Theory and Representation: Writings on Activism and Aesthetics*, a volume of critical essays and creative writings rudimentarily designed as a tribute to Professor Jaidev. As a narrative of environmental degradation and outright destruction of forest ecosystem, the story predicts an imminent catastrophe leading to the gradual extinction of a community of people. Being severely critical of the modern ways of ‘development’ Devi in this foreshadowing narrative brings to the fore the aftermath of unremitting onslaughts wrought on the environment by thoughtless human activities. The narrative certainly acquires an extra dimension in Devi’s selection of the victims of the ominous environmental collapse. She has presented here the Korjus, one of the disregarded tribal communities in India, as the helpless victims of what Wordsworth calls ‘outrage done to nature’ by the mainstream imperial masters. Devi’s displeasure with the process of ‘development’ gets manifested here because it is this form of development, as presented by Devi, that benefits a certain section of people at the cost of the victimization of the poorer sections of people.

A large number of Mahasweta Devi’s narratives are certainly ecocritical in the sense that in these radical (non)literary texts she has vigorously criticized the politics of development that ravages the pristine nature with the result of the deprivation of the eco-conscious local inhabitants of their basic means of livelihood. “Madhu: A Fairy Tale” is a powerful dystopian narrative that portrays the grim effects of development-sponsored environmental collapse on a forest-based community of peoples and their silent protestation against such exploitative ‘development’. The Korjus, as presented in the story are essentially the forest-dwellers who use to live in happy mutuality with the non-human forms of life. They are basically the hunter-gatherer people whose survival was largely dependent on the forest resources. They carry a deep reverence for all forms of life on earth: “... the Korjus knew that snakes and human beings should coexist in harmony” (97). Their geo-centric perception of life was so genuine and strong “that if you lift the eyelids of a dead Korju you will find the imprint of the old saga forest on his or her eyeballs” (98). Their style of living was so indissolubly interwoven with the local environment that their existence got tremendously threatened by the large-scale deforestation done to promote railway expansion.

“When the Sagwana, or the saga forests, were felled, the Korjus, who were food gatherers, became a condemned people...The Korjus ate reori seeds, tuber, roots, fruits, nuts, deer, birds, hares and monitor lizards. Their brains ceased to function when the forest died” (98)

In the story the Korjus are presented as the helpless victims of the indiscreet mass felling of trees that was done to facilitate the introduction and extension of rail network in India by the British Colonial masters. This large-scale illicit cutting of trees completely devastated the local environment which badly affected the local economy leading to the existential crisis of some eco-centric communities of people like the Korjus.

“Korjus, hitherto sustained by the forests, first became homeless and then their very existence was devastated. Physically alive, they felt they simply did not exist. They were like drifting, lost kites with their strings cut off” (102).

When they saw before their eyes the ill-treatment of saga trees, the ‘Banadevi’ they worshiped, they felt themselves to be so abusively treated by the harbingers of modern developmentalism that they “began to shed their desire to survive”(102). Physically the forests got destroyed but the Korjus’ bond with the forest was so strong that “The non-existent saga forests found shelter in their heart”

(102). It is really interesting that although the whole of the Korju community is on the verge of extinction as a result of their “in-built resistance against progress” (100), yet “The Korjus won’t eat because once a few thousand acres of sagwana/ saga/ teak forests were felled” (101).

The target of Devi’s stringent attacks here is not only the imperial masters, the neo-colonial authorities who have done nothing good for the true progress of the ‘nation’ are also severely critiqued in the story. The story presents the idea of nation as homogenous with empire. Disregarding the beliefs and values, tradition and cultures of the forest-dwellers, men like Joshis employed scientific means to understand “a century-old grievance” (101) of the Korjus. It is again of utter importance that instead of taking necessary steps to prevent the deforestation that has still been continued in the tribal areas compelling more Korjus “to shed their desire to survive” (102), the system was busy in concealing the truth to keep up the image of the ‘nation’. When Dr. Apte tried to make the Korju question an issue

“...the collector asked Apte not to come back ever again.... Scandal-mongering about the GOI in the name of research would no longer be tolerated. Sarkar would take necessary steps” (103). And ultimately “The settlement became a forbidden area, a ‘nishiddha bhumi’ (104).

Devi here in this fairytale is unambiguously critical of the anthropocentric ways of the empire and the ‘nation’ that always victimize the powerless others to facilitate the ‘progress’ of the ‘nation’. She rather has upheld the uncivilized eco-centric ways of living of those ‘illiterate’ tribals whose identity, history, ideology, culture, language and literature are integrally related to their close, symbiotic relationship with nature.

Many of Mahasweta Devi’s narratives are certainly characterized by a mode of resistance on the part of the exploited against the machinations of the exploiters. In these narratives Devi has given a powerful agency to the exploited to voice out their protest against the politics of discrimination in the name gender, class, caste, culture etc. In our present concern “Madhu: A Fairy Tale” we can also visualize resistance but it is a different sort of resistance- “An in-built resistance” (100). It is “a silent satyagraha” (101) against a system that has devastated their habitat-nurturer depriving them of the basic needs of their life.

“The Korjus did not open their mouths...They are supplied with food, but no, they won’t eat...The Korjus won’t eat because once a few thousand acres of sagwana/ saga/ teak forests were felled.” (99-101)

Devi is here outspokenly critical of the imperialism, the establishment, the bureaucrats and the mainstream social activists who instead of understanding the Korjus’ reciprocal relationship with nature and their real problem tried some scientific means to understand their “century-old grievance...” (101). It is quite natural that the heralds of modern developmentalism can never understand the indefinable unique interrelation of the tribal aboriginals and the forests. On the other hand they use Madhu, a Korju, as a specimen to experiment with to conduct “research on nutrition balance in order to unravel the mystery of death due to chronic hunger” (104). Devi is ironically critical of modern technology-oriented ‘progress’ which negated “the Korju myth”(106) by saying that “It was all a fabrication.” (106).

In many of her ‘fairytales’ Mahsweta Devi has reversed the traditional structure of a fairy tale. Going beyond stereotypical patterns of a fairy tale in “The Fairy Tale of Rajabasha” and “The Fairy Tale of Mohanpur”, she has inversed “the structure of a fairy tale...The encatastrophic ending, so essential to the traditional fairy tale is reversed.” (Jain 129). However in “Madhu: A Fairy Tale” Devi has deliberately followed the conventional structure of a fairy tale at least as far as the ending

of the story is concerned. The speculative ending of the story very much in the manner of a modern apocalyptic fiction obliquely refers to the catastrophic disaster that the anthropocentric attitude of human society is to bring forth. The unnatural transformation of Madhu from a man into a superhuman figure swallowing almost the entire city of Mumbai is highly suggestive. The system’s attempt to change the life-style of a forest-based community ultimately results in the existential catastrophe of the entire city. Madhu, a common member of the Korju community, got transformed into a gigantic creature first because of the destruction of forests in Korju area and then because of the system’s scientific experiment with a man of nature. Through the eschatological ending Devi certainly and blatantly attacks the environmental collapse that leads men like Madhu either to die in utter desolation or to become a specimen to experiment with in a scientific laboratory. Devi’s eco-centric attitude to life and her critique of the ‘development’ process leading to catastrophic disaster are substantiated in the concluding lines of the story:

“His eye balls mirrored a tall saga tree resplendent with leafs and blossoms. Madhu laughed like a child. Freed.” (108)

So, the story ends on a powerful note when madhu, a representative of the Korjus, finds freedom from the interplay of exploitative forces only after his transformation into a superhuman creature. His ‘lost’ connection with the forest is reestablished and “His eye balls mirrored a tall saga tree resplendent with leafs and blossoms”. The ‘shrunk’, ‘small’ and ‘desolate’ Madhu “laughed like a child” at the end because getting freed from the exploitation of the anthropocentric human society he can now perceive his integral connection with the greens: “After death, the forest reclaims the Korju” (98)

To conclude, through this proleptic tale of anthropocentric exploitation and a silent resistance against it Mahasweta Devi portrays an eco-dystopia where development-sponsored environmental collapse led a forest-based community of tribal people to die in utter desolation. The possibility of their complete extinction as a result of the relentless deforestation as portrayed in the story conveys a very serious message to the human civilization as a whole. Through the apocalyptic ending of the story Devi seems to warn the entire human society that if we so callously and casually continue the thoughtless plundering of nature there will be so scarcity of the basic sustenance of life on earth that one day we all shall have to make a thunderous roar:

“MALA BHUKU LAGALIYA!...MALA KHAILA DE!...PANI! PANI! (107-8)

#### Notes:

1. The quotation in the title of the essay is taken from “The Author in Conversation” (an interview Mahasweta Devi had with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak). *Mahasweta Devi: Critical Perspectives*. ed. Nandini Sen. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2011. Print.
2. All references to the story “Madhu: A Fairy Tale” are indicated with page numbers in parenthesis.

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# Sufferings and Suppressions: Gender Discrimination in Mahesh Dattani's *Dance like a man*

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## Abstract

It is often assumed that only women are victims of gender discrimination but it is not true. Men also suffer as they are judged on the yardstick of masculinity. This paper explores the notion of gender discrimination faced by both men and women with reference to the play *Dance like a man* by Mahesh Dattani.

**Keywords:** gender discrimination, social construct, sufferings, suppression

## Introduction

Discrimination in a general sense is a practice of treating an individual or a specific group differently on the basis of some social and cultural dimensions. The Oxford Dictionary defines discrimination as “the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex” ([www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/discrimination](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/discrimination)). Gender based discrimination has been the age old practice in India and also across the world. Gender discrimination has been in the roots of our society since the dawn of civilization. It is a practice which shows that in spite of the technological advancement mankind is still in the shackles of discrimination which is ultimately leading to the fragmentation of the society. As the tree of human civilization spawned which was once a delight giving source as it brought order in the life of humankind it unfortunately also bore the evil seeds of discrimination on the basis of caste, colour and sex etc.

This paper explores and analyses the notion of gender discrimination against man as well as woman in Indian society with reference to the play *Dance like a Man* (1989) written by the Indian playwright Mahesh Dattani (1958). Both are destined to face the darkness of discrimination which often results in the suppression of their desires and ultimately the progress in life. Art in true sense delineates the life in varied forms and shades. The artist portrays the dark side of life too so as to make people aware and also to bring transformation in the thoughts of the people.

## Gender Discrimination: a Black Cover over Indian Culture

Gender discrimination is a form of discrimination which is profound in every culture and especially in the Indian culture. Sex is a ‘biological construct’ while gender is a ‘social construct’ which means that the discrimination between man and woman on the basis of gender is the result of the social dogmas set in from the ancient times. The voice of discrimination and protest against the rights of a woman has become strong in the present time but unfortunately the man has been overlooked in this aspect and is always considered as ‘a citizen of a privilege class’. In India, it is assumed that only women have been suppressed of their desires, dominated by the wills of others and are the victims of the gender discrimination but it is not true as men also have to face the discrimination. Men like women

are also the victim of society as he is always judged through the lens of masculinity and chivalric qualities.

Indian man has been judged on the parameters of masculinity down the ages. His desires and wishes are ignored if it 'sounds feminine' or are related to the fields where women have upper hand. The man has to be strong, stout, dominating and hard in nature while the woman has to be docile, obedient, silent and submissive. It is a social framework designed by the very people of the society and it has become the basis of gender discrimination which acts like a black cover on the psyche of Indian people.

### ***Dance like a Man: Unfolding Gender Discrimination***

*Mahesh Dattani* in *Dance like a Man* has ingeniously portrayed Indian culture and social issues of contemporary India. The theme of the play is intertwined with relationship, career, caste and society. The plot revolves around *Jairaj* and *Ratha* and their daughter *Lata* and her fiancé *Viswas*. A parallel thread traces the past of *Jairaj*, *Ratna* and *Amritlal Parekh*, *Jairaj's* father through the technique of flashback. *Jairaj* and *Ratna* are exposed to the ire of *Amritlal Parekh* who fails to understand their devotion towards dance and especially of *Jairaj*. The dramatist has shown the typical Indian views towards dance through *Amritlal Parekh* who considers that dance is made only for females. He epitomizes that a man with self respect will never pursue a dance as a profession, particularly a man. *Dattani* has delineated the discrimination based on gender faced by Indian man and woman and its consequences.

In *Dance like a Man* *Dattani* has highlighted that patriarchy is an inseparable element of Indian society. Males hold primary power and predominate in the domain of the family. They tend to hold the reins of authority over women, children and other members of the family. Gender discrimination has been present in society since the onset of civilization and till today humanity is in its shackles. *Multani* says "gender is constituted by some acts which when repeated come to form and give shape to a "coherent" gender identity." (2009, 36).

*Dattani* has projected an Indian family in which *Amritlal Parekh* possessed unquestionable authority over *Jairaj* and *Ratha*. *Parekh* being the head of the family he "assumed" himself to be responsible for taking important decision of their life. He is a freedom fighter and reformist but "conservative and prudish". He was helping India to get free from the white men; ironically he chained and controlled his own son's wishes. He curtails the freedom of his son who wanted to become a *bharatnatyam* dancer- "Do you know where a man's happiness lies? In being a Man..."(425, Act II). *Amritlal* imposes his wish on *Jairaj* and wants him not to pursue dance as his career because it is not a 'male oriented' profession.

In Indian society, man is supposed to be the bread earner and he is expected to be in such a profession with which "self esteem" is associated. In other words, man did not possess freedom to pursue art form like *Bharatnatyam*. *Jairaj's* father equates the art of dance with prostitution.

"The craft of a prostitution to show off her wares- what business a man have learning such a craft? No use. Similar with dance". (406, Act I)

*Dattani* has portrayed that *Amritlal Parekh* felt ashamed of *Jairaj* because being a 'real man' he was involved in profession of lower stature. He considered *Jairaj* a cause for the shame for the family as he judged *Jairaj* with the lens of masculinity in which he didn't fit. He says

"Well, most boys are interested in cricket, my son is interested in dance, I thought. I didn't realize this interest of yours would turn into an...obsession". (415, Act I)



Dattani introduces comic element but prejudice and biases are always present under the surface. When *Amritlal Parekh* associates dance with effeminacy, it evokes humour yet underlined with satire. He doubts “*guru ji*” who teaches dance to be an effeminate which disgusts *Jairaj* -“I have never seen a normal man with long hair. I have also noticed the way he walks.” (417, Act I).

*Amritlal* represents all those men who believe that a man with long hair is not a man in true sense. He almost lost his temper when *Ratna* told him of *Jairaj*'s desire of growing his hair long to “enhance his *abhinaya*”. He says “Tell him if he grows his hair even an inch longer, I'll shave his head and throw him on the road” (418, Act I).

*Dattani* has delineated the tale of woe of both man and woman as the axe of *Amritlal*'s authority is not only confined till *Jairaj* but falls on *Ratna* too. The poor lady is ‘informed’ and ‘ordered’ by her father in law that she must stop visiting aged “*devdasi*” for learning dance as visiting an ‘old withered’ prostitute would bring ill repute to his family. He sternly orders her saying “You will not. That is all. I need not give you any reason for it.” (421, Act I).

*Dattani* has highlighted the irony that on one hand *Amritlal Parekh* equates dance with prostitution and abstains *Jairaj* from dancing and on the other hand he allows *Ratna* to dance. This alludes that men and women are not given equal status in Indian society. In India, skill of dance is considered as inferior and thus it is believed to be suitable for woman. *Amritlal* very cleverly makes *Ratna* feel that *Jairaj* can never be as good as she at dancing and claims grace and beauty to be womanly trait. He says

“A woman in the man's world may be considered as being progressive. But a man in a woman's world is pathetic, yet being progressive is...sick”. (427, Act II)

The gender conflict has also been highlighted through the budding relationship of *Lata* and *Viswas*. *Lata* had to seek *Viswas*'s permission whether he will allow dance after marriage or not. She says, “*Viswas*, when we are married you will let me come here to practice, won't you”? (389, Act I).

In Indian society woman is expected to be an epitome of household chores. *Multani* says, “Women in Indian homes, working in office is not real woman, but working in kitchen is. For men, vice versa” (2009, 32). *Dattani* has highlighted this in this play as *Viswas* says to *Lata* “Accepting a daughter in law who does not make tea is asking too much of him” (391, Act I).

*Dattani* towards the end projects very aching reality; the consequences and repercussions of futile gender conflict which engulfed *Jairaj*. Poor *Jairaj* has been reduced to hollow, lonely “spineless boy” as his stubborn father society made him realize that he is worthless and good for nothing, not even for dance. He blames *Ratna* for taking away his dignity, self esteem, honour and confidence which once again alludes towards gender discrimination as a husband without a single thought blames his wife for his downfall.

“You took it away bit by bit. You took it away when you made me dance my weakest items. You took it away when you arranged the lightening so that I danced in your shadow”. (443, Act II)

## Conclusion

Thus the play *Dance like a Man* brings to the fore the aching reality that both man and woman are victimized by gender discrimination. The Indian society judges an individual's capability, their desires and success on the yardstick of gender. The man with the desire to dance is considered inferior and woman has no rights and say in the family. *Dattani* has shown that not only woman but man too suffers due to gender discrimination as *Jairaj* was not allowed to pursue the career of his own choice.

Gender discrimination is the social evil which has engulfed the Indian society and it can be eradicated only when the mindset of people will change and understand that gender discrimination is a 'mere social construct'. Instead of judging a person on gender basis one must judge on his/her capability and then the society will advance in true sense. Each individual has been sent on the earth with a purpose and deserves equal respect. To end gender discrimination we need to treat everyone as a human being and celebrate their presence in the world. As in the words of Maya Angelou

“How important it is for us to recognize and celebrate our heroes and she-roes!”

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# ‘Globalisation Then and Now’: A Threat for Nature and Women

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## Abstract

A postcolonial ecofeminist perspective would involve the coming together of postcolonial ecocriticism and ecofeminism into one analytical focus, where it is inevitable to notice that the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women are intimately bound up with notions of neo-colonialism. This paper would focus on globalisation as a product of both colonialism and postcolonialism

Less prominently, the same year of the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in 1978, postcolonial history saw the origin of the term ‘ecocriticism’ in an article by William Rueckert with a concern for postcolonial studies, the redress of the historical legacies of colonialism and the revaluation of over-exploited and politically marginalized ‘natural environments’. In the turn of the twenty first century, the vital intersections between the politics of dispossession and the politics of ecological degradation have fused into postcolonial ecocriticism, a discourse with a dual focus characterized by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin. They said that “no social justice without environmental justice; and without social justice for all ecological beings- no justice at all” (*Green Postcolonialism* p10).

When we start with the movements for environmental justice in national level, the first in preference is the Chipko movement. In the stream of grass root environmentalism in India, Chipko movement has gained iconic status even in the international level. When we consider it for our topic, it has significance as a movement that mobilized women. Having been started with the concept of ‘tree-hugging’ for protecting the nature from deforestation, lumbering and mining, this movement originated in the Garhwal region of Uttaranchal in Uttar Pradesh, India. In a broader sense, ecofeminists note that the Chipko movement also involved a protest against capitalism and colonialism. Protecting the trees meant protecting the ability of women to control the means of production and the resources used in their daily lives. The ecofeminist interpretation of the Chipko movement includes an analysis of the material needs of women as much as it considers the need to protect nature from domination and oppression. Approaching ‘nature’ as both material environment and ideological construct is the premise from which postcolonial ecocriticism interrogates as Ursula Heise puts it in an afterword to Roos and Hunt’s volume, “the intertwining of concerns over social justice and environmental conservations” (*Postcolonial Green* p 252). Thus “what we mean when we use the word ‘nature’ says as much about ourselves as about the things we label with that word”. (William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground* p 25).

When we analyze the origins of Chipko movement, we would see the comparable spirit to accumulate wealth through the establishment of small-scale cottage industries by the exploitation of forests and tribal people’s non violent act to fight for the environmental justice. The postcolonial

ecocriticism positions globalization often in a long history so that it can be accommodated to find out the process of colonialism to postcolonialism and then to globalization. Mike Davis's *Late Victorian Holocausts* which is published in 2001 unpacked the periodization of the process of particularly the three "—ism's" (colonialism, postcolonialism and globalism). The text focuses primarily on the disadvantages of 'third world global capitalism' where the forced treatment of changeover of subsistence agriculture into world markets have taken place for the first time in the period under Victorian rule. In contextualizing India, the advancement in technology and communication never produced fruit under British rule right from the beginning. The claim of Indian nationalists during the nineteenth century was that the British "progress" was Indian ruin. The colonization of an 'imagined land' by the westerners to exploit for market values through imperialism is a matter so strong to argue in a postcolonial debate in terms of "globalization". If colonial rule was a nineteenth century globalization, what is prevailing in the postcolonial world is "neo-globalisation". What I mean by neo-globalisation is a key product of neo-colonialism. Literally 'new colonialism', the term was coined by the first President of independent Ghana, and the leading exponent of Pan- Africanism, Kwame Nkrumah in his *Neocolonialism: The last stage of Imperialism* published in 1965. It explains the 'bondage even in freedom'. Though the country like Ghana has got freedom from their colonizers, they are still in bondage of the aftereffects of colonization and the dominance in economy by country like America in the name of monetary bodies through the fixing prices on world markets. It leads the third worlds into a position where upliftment is unattainable. They remain to be marginalized everywhere.

### **Globalisation and Nature**

The manifestations of globalisation such as expansion and intensification of the air traffic, car, truck and sea transport waste and increased consumption of water and fossil energy adversely affected the rhythm of nature. The range of these kinds of effects upon nature ranges from local to global. In order to meet the needs of raw-materials for timber and wood industry, trees are cut down in a large scale in Brazil and Indonesia. This process of deforestation to tackle the global phenomena may cause series of problems in regional as well as global level. Though the global disasters are yet to be fully realized, the side effects of polluted environment inevitably shows its relation with the global disaster called global warming. At local level, it is apparently evident through soil impoverishment, natural disasters and the shortage of ground water:

“As historical landmarks, the publication of *The Limits to Growth*, the first world climate conference organized by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 symbolize the growing concern about the devastation of the global environment driven by the process of globalisation”( *Measuring Globalisation* p 12).

The main drastic changes associated with the term globalisation are climatic changes, ozone depletion and the loss of biodiversity. The global climatic changes raised due to the green house effect results in the increase in temperature by one or two degree Celsius which is enough and more for the melting of the glaciers and the formation of water which creates the scenario of flood. Ecocriticism points out the need to conserve nature with an aim to safeguard the future. Since it showcases the authority of man over creating a situation like this in the name of development, global warming is a high sounded topic in postcolonialism. I would like to cite the expansion of the threat of global warming over the years. The first report is the article which came in the "Florence Times", an American newspaper on March 2 1975:

“In the last decade, the Arctic ice and snow caps expanded 12 percent, and for the first time in this century, ships making for Iceland ports have been impelled by drifting ice. Many

climatologists see this signs as evidence that a significant shift in climate is taking place—a shift that could be the forerunner of an Ice age like that which gripped much of the Northern Hemisphere before retreating 10,000 years ago” ( Howard Benedict).

From an isolated problem of snow expansion, the problem caused by Global Warming has reached in the extreme of ozone depletion in the year 2014. The following passage is a newspaper report published in 'The Guardian' on March 9<sup>th</sup> 2014 by Damian Carrington.

“Dozens of mysterious ozone-destroying chemicals may be undermining the recovery of the giant ozone hole over Antarctica, researchers have revealed. The chemicals, which are also extremely potent greenhouse gases, may be leaking from industrial plants or being used illegally, contravening the Montreal protocol which began banning the ozone destroyers in 1987. Scientists said the finding of the chemicals circulating in the atmosphere showed "ozone depletion is not yesterday's story."

All these things implicitly or explicitly identify the need for ecological balance that is primarily in the hands of the postcolonial world. In the present scenario, it is not possible to define the development what takes place in the third world countries as 'sustainable development'. Without environmental harmony, no one can make a graph which shows a continuous development; it will only be a stunted growth; the growth that is insignificant in the sustainability of human beings.

### **Globalisation and Women**

Capitalist globalisation today involves an unprecedented rise in the commodification of human beings. Studies show that in the last 30 years sexual trade has become a massively industrialized process. Women and children transformed to sexual commodities and the process is globalized and generates a massive amount which accounts from even millions to billions. Though the sex industry, previously considered marginal has now emerged into a successful trade unit to motivate industrial capitalism. From the localized prostitution to global sale of these 'commodities', people began to “think locally and act globally”. In the present scenario, a girl walking through a street in front of a group of male obviously receives comments using the words which are prevalent in the world of commodification. If they merely call the girl 'a commodity', there is no surprise to hear that because our culture itself has been deteriorated by treating women as the matter of 'exploitation'. This particular aspect of globalization involves an entire range of issues crucial to understanding the world we live in. These include such processes as economic exploitation, sexual oppression, capital accumulation, international migration, and unequal development and such related conditions as racism and poverty.

The industrialization of the sex trade has involved the mass production of sexual goods and services framed around a regional and international group of labour. The 'goods' here indicates the human beings who sell sexual services. I would like to throw light into a newspaper report in India:

“We are women first, and sex workers only after that. We want you to recognize sex work as work. Instead of viewing us through the lens of social morality, we wish you would see us for what we are. Many of us are single women, supporting our children and old parents. We are informal, unprotected workers. Why should you and the police treat us as criminals?” (Harsh Mander *The Hindu* February 8<sup>th</sup> 2014).

Collectives of sex workers, speaking for an estimated three million workforce, are emerging slowly from the shadows across India. Though the globalisation and industrialization of sex trade have made contemporary prostitution to a qualitative position than yesterday, it never attributed the

basic rights to women for not to be tortured. Thus mobilization here only means the mobility of the sex trade from local to global. It never meant the exaltation of the position of women in any manner.

Another shocking factor is that globalisation enabled the development of sex trade for the developmental strategy of different countries. It is mainly achieved through the sector of tourism and entertainment. In countries like Nepal and India, women and children are directly put into the regional and international markets, thereby becoming a forceful process for the female gender. At the same time, in countries like Thailand, local, regional and international markets develop simultaneously. Whatever is the mode of development, the 'goods' are transported transnational for the benefit of regions with weaker capital to the region with stronger capital. The increasing size and centrality of the global sex industry helps explain why so many groups and agencies are adopting normalizing regulatory approaches in their attempts to address its harms.

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# Digital Revolution: Open Sources and its Impact on the English Language

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## Abstract

In this “Post-digital Age”, sweeping changes have been brought about with the adoption and proliferation of digital computers and communication technologies throughout the globe. As a result, the open sharing and access to the large amount of internet data and diverse information is gradually becoming an interesting phenomenon. Various sources of information have been democratized in this post digital world. The invention and massive use of computers and internet, the propagation of communication technology and social media are effectively influencing the masses in every strata of society. Its impact can be seen everywhere whether in the field of teaching, learning, research, banking, marketing or space technology and so on. One aspect of its impact can be seen in the permutation and modification of the ‘global’ language (English, the language of computer, internet, and communication technology). This paper aims to focus on the dual concerns: how the digital storm has created a vast open source for accessing the flood of information; and on the other hand, how these new technologies are playing as a driving force behind the linguistic changes (both semantic and syntactical), specifically, of the English language.

**Keywords:** Post-digital Age, open sources, communication technology, information technology, social media, digitalization.

Akin to every revolution, the digital revolution in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century ushers incredible impact on society. Socio-political and cultural changes have emerged and effected every stratum of the global community. In this “Post-digital Age”, sweeping changes have been brought about with the adoption and proliferation of digital computers and communication technologies throughout the globe. As a result, the open sharing and access to the large amount of internet data and diverse information is gradually becoming an interesting phenomenon. Various sources of information have been democratized in this post digital world. The invention and massive use of computers and internet, the propagation of communication technology and social media are effectively influencing the masses in every strata of society. Its impact can be seen everywhere whether in the field of teaching, learning, research, banking, marketing or space technology and so on.

If we look at the mantra of the contemporary society, we can see that this is an age of information high-technology. But the way of sharing information and knowledge was not the same over the years .It has undergone a tremendous process of evolvment- starting from drawing and scribes to mass broadcasting, to ever-increasing amounts of data and its sharing, and digital communication. Let us have a brief overview of its historical development over the ages.

During 1500 B.C cave paintings were the medium to capture and depict hunting knowledge of human beings. Then Hieroglyphics emerged, especially in the Greek, as a sophisticated way to document and share knowledge during 3400 B.C. Around 300 B.C pamphlets were used to record knowledge. In 77 A.D encyclopedia was first written by Roman author Pliny, setting the model for organizing and archiving knowledge of the world. Later, during the late 12<sup>th</sup> century monks transcribed books which were known as “Scriptorium” to document and share religious ideas among their disciples. But these cryptic ways of documentation through manuscript writing had taken a drastic change in the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century as an offshoot of the Renaissance. The invention of Printing Press by Johannes Gutenberg in the year 1440 A.D made a true and effective revolution in the printing world and in the system of sharing information and knowledge through large amount of printed books. Commenting on such a transformation in the information sharing system, author Phillip B. Meggs also writes in his book *A History of Graphic Design*: "...the fifteenth-century shift from hand lettered manuscript books to Gutenberg's movable type."

In the immediate aftermath of the Renaissance, towards the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the necessity of wide-scale propagation and proliferation of ‘humanistic knowledge’ resulted in the advent of news papers as a popular source for sharing information. In 1600s Newspapers began to inform large group of people of current events and information. Though the printing press was invented and news paper became popular, the lack of sufficient paper for printing proved as a hindrance for mass communication system. This dichotomy gets resolved only after the Industrial Revolution which produces a large amount of paper and facilitates information sharing on wide scale phenomena. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, during the Industrial Revolution, the emergence of Public Libraries enhanced the sharing of knowledge among the general public. Yet the freedom of communication and information, a Human right (Art.19 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights) was not achieved fully till the advent of communication technology and digitalization.

But a monolithic concept of the Industrial Revolution has now become a mythical history as a result of the subsequent emergence of its other two phases- the Second Industrial Revolution and the Third Industrial Revolution. As a result of the shifting dynamics of socio-economic power, when the First Industrial Revolution shifted to the Second one, the flourishing of science and technology culminates in the Jet Age, Atomic Age and Space Age produces a productive soil for sharing information even more. But Third Industrial Revolution, popularly known as Digital revolution, through the invention of streaming audio, streaming video, cell phone, digital cable, computer, e-mail, digital photography, social media, impelled the Democratization of Information. It has permuted the world’s functions and communication dramatically. Talking about the significance and relevance of information sharing system in the contemporary age, Frances Cairn-cross in his book *The Death of Distance: How the Communications Revolution Is Changing Our Lives* divides the historical evolution into three distinct phases:

Think of [the information revolution] as one of the three great revolutions in the cost of transport. The nineteenth century, dominated by the steamship and the railway, saw a transformation in the cost of transporting goods; the twenty- eth century, with first the motor car and then the aeroplane, in the cost of transporting people. The new century will be subjugated by the transformation in the cost of transporting knowledge and ideas. (Torr 14)

In this Information Age, effective digital technologies have permitted massive growth in information sharing system. The use of technologies facilitates human beings to triumph over the barriers and confinements inherent in their capacities to bring in information. The physical space now has been revolutionized to cyberspace. And the advent of Internet is a revolutionary achievement of man to



achieve this kind of massive change. In this regard, Henry Blodget's commentary would substantiate the point further:

We view the growth of the Internet and e-commerce as a global megatrend along the lines of the printing press, the telephone, the computer, and electricity. (PR Newswire)

Thus, the internet has now become world's most influential device for the sharing knowledge. One of its facilities is electronic mail (e-mail), while the remainder consists of scientific documents, data bibliographies, electronics journals and digital archives. Newer addition includes electronic versions of news papers, electronic library, the World Wide Web. In contrast to the relatively slow, bureaucratically monitored systems of documenting and circulating information, this digital technology permit a non-hierarchical flow of information in a very free-flowing way. The World Wide Web is easily the most powerful source of knowledge in the world today with Wikipedia available in hundreds of language including popular Indian languages and other websites aimed at academic readership. Lowering the costs of distribution also allows more readers to reach across existing cultural, geographical, and multi and inter-disciplinary boundaries. It allows information to get passed over previously unreachable communities. It enables new communities to form, based on existing interests, and it helps create new interests around which communities can form itself further.

Over the years written texts were the only popular medium of sharing information, but in the contemporary world, the incorporation of the audio-visual media into information sharing system has seen the use of digital broadcasting. You tube is a popular video site having millions of videos related to teaching learning. Besides You Tube, there are many academic websites providing hundreds of short videos on diverse topics. Apart from World Wide Web, there are special devices like e-readers specialized in providing books and publications to people.

User's access to such 'open sources' has thus left a tremendous impact in the field of teaching-learning process. Exposure to such a wide variety of sources would meet diverse learning needs, curiosity and interest, provoke thinking, and support creativity among the learners. Being essentially a knowledge based process, teaching learning has also been significantly influenced by the digital revolution. From purely oral culture (like our Gurukuls) schools have adapted text very well. The digital revolution has the capacity to allow knowledge construction by adopting the modes of text, audio and video. As mentioned by Sunil Shah in his article "Digital English Language Laboratory Project: A Critical Evaluation", Stephen Krashen's commentary on it would substantiate the point:

According to Krashen (2007), using computers will encourage students to wander through the Internet and read what interests them. Krashen concludes that it will result in higher levels of literacy.

Hence the potentiality of open-sources for revolutionizing teaching learning has been explored by the introduction of ICT (Information Communication Technology). Over the last decade there has been large exploration on the usage of ICT in teaching and also in teacher-training. Educationists acknowledge that it is also the most important element of the education system. Hence the use of ICT in schooling has been an effective medium in producing potential teachers for the country.

These digital sources in the age of computer and Internet have become an influential tool in the language teaching process too. In relation with ICT and language learning, a common term used is CALL (Computer-Aided Language Learning). At the time of its inception in the 1960s, drill exercises were generally practiced but over the years tasks of CALL has been more communicative. CALL exercises mean usually the tasks where the computer is playing the role of tutor to the pupils providing responses either by clicking, filling in a word or saying something into a microphone. Henry

Dudenev in his book *The Internet and the Language Classroom* mentions some of the methods of incorporating ICT in language teaching. These are “blogs, wikis, chats, and pen-pals”. Besides using computers in the classroom, interactive whiteboards, sometimes called smart boards are also utilized. Use of online dictionaries and glossaries is also very helpful.

One aspect of the impact of “Digital Revolution” can be seen in the permutation and modification of the ‘global’ language, more specifically of the English language which is a popular medium of computer, internet, and communication technology. Like the democratization of information and knowledge, globalization of English language is also an important aspect of this present digitalized phenomenon. To the famous linguist of present time, David Crystal, “English in some form is spoken three times more by the non-native speakers as compared to the native speakers”. And the force behind this globalization of English language is the Digital Revolution consisting of the advent of internet and social media.

With the advent of the social media websites like Facebook, Twitter etc, the transformation of the language from a sophisticated style to more colloquial one is clearly discernable. Social Medias have prompted the evolution of an ‘abbreviated English language emerged in chat groups in the virtual world’. One of the leading linguists of the present century David Crystal’s book “*Txtng: the Gr8 Db8*” (2008) is an in-depth manifesto of such study. The book’s title itself is an example of such linguistic defamiliarization which is widespread in the digital social mediatic communication system. Use of emoticons like :-), ;-) and acronyms like LOL(laughing out loud) and others have provided a new dimension to the language. A well-known social media, Facebook, has also offered new meanings to words such as “status”, “wall”, and “profile”. Mark McCrindle and Emily Wolfinger in their book entitled *Word Up: A Lexicon Guide to Communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* interestingly envisage the conversation of Romeo and Juliet from a new social-media chat language:

Romeo: How would Romeo woo Juliet today?

Romeo: r u awake? want 2 chat?

Juliet: o rom. where4 art thou?

Romeo: outside yr window.

Juliet: stalker!

Romeo: had 2 come. feeling jiggy.

Juliet: b careful. my family h8 u.

Romeo: tell me about it. what about u?

Juliet: ‘m up for marriage f u r. is tht a bit fwd?

Romeo: no. yes. no. oh, dsnt mat-r, 2moro @ 9?

Juliet: luv u xxxx

Romeo: cu then xxxx

Like all revolutions, Digital Revolution also prospects the transformation of the society. However, the touchstone of Digital Revolution is felt by the present era. It is making uneven progress in several respects. The importance of Digital is ever-increasing and more and more old media are being digitalized in terms of transmission and usage. Now we can travel through the wilderness without a compass or through the forest without a forester.

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